Dialogism and recognition: Identity formation of Dostoevsky's protagonists

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Contents:

Abstract:

This dissertation examines how the depiction of human consciousness in Fedor Dostoevsky's novels embodies the intersubjective model of human identity formation established in philosophy and social sciences. The sociological relationship of Dostoevsky's protagonists to other persons and to the portrayed social environment embodies the principles of intersubjective recognition, which stands for interpersonal and societal channels of acknowledging an independent and autonomous self-consciousness. I argue that Dostoevsky's polyphonic literary form, as explicated by Mikhail Bakhtin, inherently contains a recognitive vision of the emergence and existence of a self-consciousness. I ground the dialogical consciousness of Dostoevsky's protagonists in the sociological framework of recognition by showing that Bakhtin's underlying premise of an intersubjective structure of self-consciousness is shared, to varying extents and within their own theoretical frameworks, by Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, Jurgen Habermas's discourse ethics, Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics, and George Mead's social psychology, among others. These theoretical parallels help to define and interpret the identity formation processes of Dostoevsky's protagonists within the sociological worlds recreated in his novels *Poor Folk, The Double, Crime and Punishment,* and *The Demons*. These novels' protagonists experience a loss of their individual autonomy when they are denied recognition of their rights and status by the ambient societal regime, and when they, in turn, fail to recognize the independence of another selfhood. When Dostoevsky's characters seek

recognition from others, be it persons or social institutions, without recognizing the inviolability of the other in turn, they are compelled by the force of objective circumstances and the deterioration of their psychological state to realize that recognition can only be mutual and cannot be attained unilaterally. The protagonists examined here present the pattern of a self-inflicted loss of moral, psychological, and social autonomy due to their effacement of the other from their ethical horizon. This process affects not only the protagonists' own existence, but also the persons with whom they come into contact and who may suffer from the protagonists' actions. My research indicates that Dostoevsky's fiction, owing to its unique formal features, embodies the recognitive principles of human identity formation in the lives of his characters.

Titre :

Le Dialogisme et la reconnaissance : la formation de l'identité

des protagonistes de Dostoïevski

Résumé :

Cette dissertation examine comment la description de la conscience humaine dans les romans de Fédor Dostoïevski incarne le modèle intersubjectif de la formation de l'identité humaine établi en philosophie et en sciences sociales. La relation sociologique des protagonistes de Dostoïevski aux autres personnes et à l'environnement social dépeint incarne les principes de la reconnaissance intersubjective, laquelle représente les canaux interpersonnels et sociétaux reconnaissant une conscience de soi indépendante et autonome. J'argumente que la forme littéraire polyphonique de Dostoïevski, comme elle a été expliquée par Mikhaïl Bakhtine, contient en soi une vision recognitive de l'émergence et de l'existence d'une conscience du soi. Je base la conscience dialogique des protagonistes de Dostoïevski dans le contexte sociologique de la reconnaissance en montrant que les prémisses de Bakhtine sous-jacentes d'une structure de conscience de soi est partagée, à un certain degré et dans leurs propres cadres théoriques, par la théorie de la reconnaissance d'Axel Honneth, l'éthique du discours de Jürgen Habernas, les dialectiques négatives de Theodor Adorno et la psychologie sociale de George Mead, parmi d'autres. Ces parallèles théoriques aident à définir et à interpréter les processus de la formation d'identité des protagonistes de Dostoïevski dans la cadre des mondes sociologiques recréés

dans ses romans *Les Pauvres Gens*, *Le Double, Crime et châtiment* et *Les Démons*. Ces protagonistes de roman éprouvent une perte de leur autonomie individuelle quand ils se voient renier la reconnaissance de leurs droits et statuts par le régime sociétal, et quand ils échouent, à leur tour, à reconnaître l'indépendance d'une autre individualité. Quand les personnages de Dostoïevski cherchent la reconnaissance des autres, que ce soit par des personnes ou des institutions sociales, sans reconnaître l'inviolabilité de l'autre à son tour, ils sont contraints par la force des circonstances objectives et par la détérioration de leur état psychologique de réaliser que leur reconnaissance peut seulement être mutuelle et ne peut pas être atteinte unilatéralement. Les protagonistes examinés ici présentent le modèle d'une perte d'autonomie morale, psychologique et sociale infligée à eux-mêmes due à leur effacement des autres de leur horizon éthique. Ce processus affecte non seulement la propre existence des protagonistes, mais aussi les personnes avec qui elles ont été en contact et qui ont pu souffrir des actions des protagonistes. Mes recherches indiquent que la fiction de Dostoïevski, grâce à ses caractéristiques formelles uniques, incarne les principes de reconnaissance de la formation de l'identité humaine dans la vie de ses personnages.

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Technical notes:

Russian names and titles of works are transliterated according to the US Library of Congress transliteration system, except for the established spelling of Dostoevsky (not Dostoevskii). The names of literary protagonists are used as they appear in the novels. All citations to Dostoevsky's novels and letters are given in the body of my dissertation where the first number refers to the volume and second to the page number(s) in the complete Leningrad edition of his works (1975-1980s). Translations of short citations from the Russian sources are mostly my own. Block citations are based, with minor changes, on the English translations of Dostoevsky's novels by David McDuff or Hugh Aplin (*Poor Folk*), George Bird (*The Double*), Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (*Crime and Punishment*, *Demons*). Translations from Dostoevsky's letters are either my own or are based on David Lowe's and Ronald Meyer's translations. All references to Bakhtin's *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* appear in the body of the thesis and are abbreviated as *PPD*, followed by page number(s) in the fourth edition (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1979). Citations from this text are either in my own translation or are based, in the case of longer passages, on Caryl Emerson's translation of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Translated citations from Bakhtin's "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti" are my own or use Vadim Liapunov's translation available in *Art and Answerability*, edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). Translation of citations from Bakhtin's other works is my own. Names of scholars are used with first and last names upon first appearance, and last name only afterwards. I do not use what appear to be middle names or their abbreviations (i.e. George Mead instead of George Herbert Mead, Georg Hegel instead of G. W. F. Hegel).

To my Russian “grandmother,” Zoia Sergeevna

Introduction

This dissertation develops the argument that in Fedor Dostoevsky's novels, the protagonists' relationships with each other and with their social environment are structured according to the principles of intersubjective recognition as defined by political philosophy, sociology and social psychology. The inner world of Dostoevsky's characters, their interactions with other individuals, and with society at large reflect the theoretical models of human identity formation premised upon the intersubjective nature of human personality. In Dostoevsky's novels, the protagonists' individual autonomy and the integrity of their self-identities are dependent upon the intersubjective ties of mutual acknowledgement and respect. The normative framework of the philosophy of recognition informs the existence of Dostoevsky's characters and explains their moral, intellectual and political predispositions. The application of the theoretical framework of recognition to Dostoevsky's novels is warranted by the fact that they portray human consciousness as innately dependent upon the meaningful interactive presence of another being. The latter dialogical mode of existence in Dostoevsky's art is made evident by Mikhail Bakhtin through his twin concepts of the "polyphonic novel" and "dialogical consciousness." By combining Bakhtin's formulations with the philosophy of recognition in its classical and contemporary versions, I argue that the framework of recognition as a model of the intersubjective development and existence of human self-identity is embedded in the nature of Dostoevsky's literary form. The

relationship of mutual dependency exhibited by Dostoevsky's protagonists is conditioned by the philosophical and sociological ramifications of the polyphonic form, which have not been studied until now. Therefore, the exploration of the sociological dimensions, in terms of the philosophy of recognition, of Dostoevsky's literary form constitutes the present study's contribution to the current knowledge and interpretation of Dostoevsky's art.

The philosophy of recognition offers the theoretical framework that traces the emergence of individual self-consciousness through its engagement with its social environment, from significant others to social institutions. The idea of recognition is concerned with "the ways in which structures of intersubjectivity are constitutively and regulatively related to the development of subjectivity."[1] In other words, recognition philosophy traces the emergence of a personal selfhood within the intersubjective dimension of human co-existence in society. The notion of recognition refers to the acknowledgement of an individual by others as an independent being and the resultant awareness in the individual of his or her independent and autonomous agency. The modern history of this concept begins with the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[2]

[1] Christopher Zurn, "Introduction," *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn (Lanham: Rowman, 2010) 2.

[2] Frederick Neuhouser, "Rousseau and the Human Drive for Recognition," *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn (Lanham: Rowman, 2010) 21-46.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte[3] and, most importantly, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.[4] According to Fichte's foundational postulate, human personality develops owing to its capacity to internalize the external demands of other individuals: "[t]he most basic relation between human beings is recognition, the making of demands on others and understanding their demands on you. Recognition in this sense is indispensable to being human."[5] To recognize someone as "a free and rational being" is to grant him or her a personal sphere of freedom and to demand that one's own sphere of freedom in turn be respected in a similar way.[6] Generally speaking, recognition "is constitutive of the basic features and structures that essentially distinguish persons and their lifeworld from mere animals and their natural environment – or the life-form of persons from a merely animal life-form."[7] The idea of recognition, therefore, lies at the core of what constitutes one's person: the sense of agency, independence and responsibility for one's own actions.

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[3] See Allen Wood's concise discussion of Fichte's concept of recognition as a precursor to Hegel's philosophy in *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 77-83.

[4] Wood, *Hegel's Thought* 83-93ff; Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[5] Wood, *Hegel's Thought* 80.

[6] Wood, *Hegel's Thought* 80-81.

[7] Hekki Ikaheimo, "Making the Best of What We Are: Recognition as an Ontological and Ethical Concept," *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Schmidt am Busch, Hans-Christoph and Christopher F. Zurn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010) 343-67.

According to Hegel, a self-consciousness realizes its independence through its ability to negate – to define, express and act upon its preferences and will in relation to other human beings and its physical environment. The idea of negation refers to the activity of denying an external object's being for itself and turning it into an object of one's consumption, a tool or any other means of attaining an end which is inimical to the object.[8] The ability to negate is not limited to the physical world and extends into the world of ideas since "in a wide sense [negation] covers difference, opposition, and reflection or relation."[9] According to Hegel, human self-consciousness needs an acknowledgement of its independence from another self-consciousness which can both resist attempts of its negation by others and exercise its own ability to negate. In other words, the independence of one's self-consciousness can only be actualized through recognition by another independent self-consciousness. The independence of a self-consciousness, therefore, is an intersubjective phenomenon.[10]

Hegel's description of an independent self-consciousness, possessing the ability to negate, is similar to Bakhtin's conception of dialogical consciousness, which he attributes to Dostoevsky's characters. Dostoevsky's protagonists,

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[8] Wood, *Hegel's Thought* 85.

[9] J.N.Findlay, Foreword, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by G.W.F.Hegel, trans. A.V.Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) ix.

[10] This is the conclusion that Hegel develops in the chapter on the master and slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. For an explanation of why the existence of an independent self-consciousness requires the existence of another, equally independent, self-consciousness, see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 152ff and Wood, *Hegel's Thought* 80-85.

endowed with this dialogical consciousness, are empowered by the will and capacity to define themselves. Such characters resist any external attempts to finalize them, to define their inner essence, to somehow close their very being in a final evaluative statement as to who they are as persons: "[t]he character is ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own, and not as the object of Dostoevsky's finalizing artistic vision[,…] as if the character were not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word" (*PPD* 5). Dialogical consciousness is characterized by the ability to overturn others' formulations about itself and assert its own, re-working others' discourse to articulate its own presence in the world: dialogical consciousness treats external discourse as "material" and reworks it by "consuming" it (*PDD* 62). As Dostoevsky's characters assert their existence and realize themselves as moral agents by contradicting external finalizing discourse, they make evident their ability to both resist acts of their negation by others and exercise their own capacity to negate.

We can, therefore, speak of parallels between Bakhtin's and Hegel's thought.[11] In the Hegelian framework of self-consciousness, an essential being

[11] Bakhtin denies any trace of Hegelian dialectics in his idea of dialogical consciousness (*PPD* 37ff). At first glance, the idea of pluralistic polyphony is indeed at odds with the Hegelian absolute spirit developing itself through stages towards a final resolution. However, particular concepts found in Hegel's philosophy, such as negation or recognition, need not necessarily be tied to Hegel's overarching monological system. Such ideas may be treated in isolation, especially since many of Hegel's concepts were not, strictly speaking, his but inherited from other philosophers before him, who

with the power to negate needs another independent self-consciousness to confirm its independent being: "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged."[12] Bakhtin expresses the same mutual dependency of self and other through the inner logic of dialogical consciousness: "To the all-devouring consciousness of the hero the author can juxtapose only a single objective world – a world of other consciousnesses with rights equal to those of the hero" (*PPD* 58). As Hegelian self-consciousness requires acknowledgement from others, so dialogical consciousness depends upon acknowledgements of its own being by other consciousnesses. The intersubjective structure of dialogical consciousness is consistent with the intersubjective nature of the recognitive model of human identity formation.

The unfinalizability of dialogical consciousness exceeds the boundaries of literary theory and is indicative of a normative relation of one consciousness to another, such that the dialogical relation of an author to his or her literary protagonist can serve as a model of relations between human beings in

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accounted for the same ideas within their own differing systems of thought. Bakhtin's opposition to a dialectical interpretation of dialogical consciousness is not related to his contention of specific Hegelian concepts per se but is indicative of his rejection of the overarching notions within the German Idealist thought which purported to resolve experiential contradictions in ultimate abstract syntheses.

[12] Hegel, *Phenomenology* 111.

principle.[13] To the extent that the dialogical approach allows recognizing one's irreducible freedom from the finalizing discourses of others, the dialogical form of a moral stance of one consciousness toward another is a normative model of intersubjective recognition in social thought. As I show in greater detail in the next chapter on theory, and in the subsequent close analyses of individual novels, there are crucial similarities in the constitutive features of the "dialogical position which affirms independence, inner freedom, incompleteness and indeterminacy of the protagonist" (*PPD* 73) and the emergence of an independent, self-aware member of society, according to the philosophy of intersubjective recognition.

There is little or no evidence to suppose that Dostoevsky was influenced by Hegel's philosophical works informing the idea of recognition. If such an influence can be ascertained, it is diluted, roundabout and mediated through larger, parallel cultural and intellectual exchanges of the period.[14] Dostoevsky's

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[13] Frank, A. W. "What Is Dialogical Research, and Why Should We Do It?" *Qualitative health research* 15.7 (2005): 964-74; Gardiner, M. "Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective." *Theory, Culture and Society* 13.2 (1996): 121-44.

[14] While Dostoevsky was in possession of a copy of Hegel, there is no indication he had read it before presenting it as a gift to Nikolai Strakhov (Robert Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1966] 185). Even without reading Hegel, "Dostoevsky, along with his contemporaries, grew up in an atmosphere of Hegelianism as one grows up breathing air" (Jackson, *Quest* 205). Inasmuch as Hegelian ideas were popular in Russia of the 1840s, they were also very broadly understood and freely interpreted, mostly in the utopian socialist vein, by liberally-minded Russians in the settings of private reading and discussion circles. References to Hegel in Dostoevsky scholarship typically involve the notion of Hegelian dialectics. At the same time, such comparisons between Dostoevsky and Hegel are fragmentary and ambiguous to an

polyphonic form embodies the philosophy of recognition because of the common underlying principle of the intersubjective basis of selfhood. Dialogism and recognition, as parallel literary and philosophical models of human identity formation, are both normative in nature: they cognize human selfhood with a view of the factors that inhibit its growth, vitality and free development toward actualization of its full potential. Both models show such inhibiting factors to be linked to ruptures in the formative intersubjective ties of individuals to their social environment, broadly defined. These ruptures of the intersubjective bonds may be conditioned by the social order and the historically given configuration of social institutions which fail to recognize a certain aspect of human selfhood, or by the faulty thinking and compromised moral outlook of the individuals themselves. The philosophy of recognition tends to focus on social barriers, while dialogism leans toward exploring spiritual and psychological self-inhibitions. Nevertheless, both approaches are complementary, mutually

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extent that forestalls their adequate assessment, due to a lacking contextualization or definition of the term "dialectic." Nevertheless, for alleged similarities between Dostoevsky and Hegel, see Martin Rice, "Dostoevskii's *Notes from Underground* and Hegel's 'Master and Slave,'" *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 8:3 (1974) 359-369, 361f; Vladimir Dneprov, *Idei, strasti, postupki: iz khudozhestvennogo opyta Dostoevskogo* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1978) 263; B. M. Engel'gardt, "Ideologicheskii roman Dostoevskogo," *F. M. Dostoevskii. Stat'i i materialy*, ed. A. S. Dolinin (Moscow: Mysl', 1924) 71-109, 91; Nadezhda Kashina, *Estetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1975) 83. On the other hand, Bakhtin categorically disagrees with even a possibility of a dialectical reading of Dostoevsky's novels (*PPD* 31f).

inclusive, and each subsumes a wide range of objective and subjective barriers to individual autonomy.

The assumption of the intersubjective basis of human selfhood makes the latter contingent upon the normatively desired functioning of social institutions. In other words, the private self cannot attain its full potential if certain social structures are not in place which make full recognition possible. The societal and political implications of the intersubjective structure of the human self, implicit in Hegel's philosophy, were taken up and explored in the 20th century and today by the scholars associated with the Frankfurt School of Social Research. Their multi-disciplinary and eclectic research is normatively informed by "the idea of self-determination for the human race, that is the idea of a state of affairs in which man's actions no longer flow from a mechanism but from his own decision."[15] One of the central concerns of the rich and varied tradition of "critical theory," as it came to be known, has been the notion of the "commodification" of human lives in the institutionalized pursuit of rationalized efficiency of economic production and political governance. In Dostoevsky's art, as in the works of critical theory, we find attempts to identify factors that impede human freedom and autonomy. The "struggle with the commodification of man" is integral to Dostoevsky's works which, in Bakhtin's words, aim to "liberate and de-commodify" the human being (*PPD* 73). Given the shared ethos of man's liberation from objective and internalized oppression, in my analysis of the

[15] Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Herder, 1972) 229.

intrinsic social-critical function of Dostoevsky's art I rely on the work of such representative figures of critical theory as Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, and Axel Honneth.

In chapter 1, I review current sociological interpretations of Dostoevsky's works in order to recognize the previously neglected role of literary form in portraying the relationship of man to society. Relying on Adorno's and, more importantly, Bakhtin's theories, I argue that the portrayal of the social environment in Dostoevsky's literary form is linked to the self-consciousness of a given protagonist. As Bakhtin shows, the sociological contexts inhabited by Dostoevsky's protagonists are constitutive parts of their self-consciousnesses – therefore, the individuality of a given protagonist must be studied in tandem with his/her environment because the latter is implicated in the intersubjective nature of dialogical consciousness. I explicate the inherent intersubjective basis of dialogical consciousness by grounding it in Bakhtin's early writings on aesthetic finalization. I conclude the theoretical discussion by drawing parallels between dialogism and recognition theory.

Chapter 2 focuses on *Poor Folk* to analyze the literary aesthetics of its main protagonist Makar Devushkin as an indication of his intersubjective stance toward others. By exploring Devushkin's sociological identity in the context of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, I show that the protagonist's search for recognition can be resolved successfully on the condition of his reciprocal acknowledgement of other independent consciousnesses. However, the philosophical underpinnings of his aesthetics undermine his ability to recognize

the normative autonomy of the other, thus annulling the prospect of Devushkin's own recognition. By consequence, Devushkin's intersubjective outlook hampers in principle the attainment of his desired individual autonomy and independence.

Chapter 3 offers a philosophical interpretation of *The Double* in the light of Bakhtin's idea of aesthetic finalization, Mead's psychological framework of personal self, and the critique of ethical rationalism which informs the moral outlook of Golyadkin, the story's protagonist. I argue that Golyadkin replaces the living beings with whom he interacts with his mental concepts of their human nature and his projections of their predisposition towards him. By undermining the presence of genuine others in his life, Golyadkin compromises the intersubjective basis of his own identity. The intrusion of a double into Golyadkin's life externalizes a subjective disintegration of his selfhood precipitated by the severed intersubjective ties to the other.

Chapter 4 interprets the murder committed by Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* as an act stemming from two historical paradigms of identity formation, which historically overlap in mid-19th century Russia and inform the social environment portrayed in the novel. On the one hand, Raskolnikov is driven by the feudal urge to defend his family honour, so that his attack on the pawnbroker may be seen as a displaced duel. On the other hand, Raskolnikov's crime is an expression of his struggle for the recognition of his family's legal rights for a guaranteed economic subsistence. Within both social paradigms, Raskolnikov seeks a moral and legal recognition of his selfhood, despite his belief in his moral exclusivity. Raskolnikov's crime undermines the

intersubjective basis of his selfhood and shows the futility of seeking one's own recognition while refusing to recognize the integrity of other persons.

Chapter 5 situates the ideological antagonism between the generations of Stepan Trofimovich and Petr Verkhovenskii in *Demons* in the theoretical framework of communication. Bakhtin's idea of dialogue as the splitting of a whole voice helps to view the intergenerational opposition in the novel as symptomatic of a single worldview and consciousness. Jurgen Habermas's conception of communicative action highlights the unethical engagement with the other evident in the communicative stances of both protagonists. The novel illustrates the philosophical distinction between the communicative goals of recognition of one's partner in interaction, and the commodifying objectification of one's addressee. Father and son Verkhovenskii, despite their differences and disagreements, enact the same communicative pattern which obliterates the unique voice of the other through manipulative propaganda or through inadvertent self-deception resulting from conceptualizing a false image of the other.

All four novels analyzed here demonstrate that the vitality and autonomy of individual human lives are dependent upon intersubjective networks of recognition. These novels show, from various angles and to a differing extent, that obtaining recognition of one's selfhood is impossible without reciprocal acknowledgement of the other. Dostoevsky's first novel, *Poor Folk*, introduces the sociological paradigm of recognition, which is ingrained in the dialogical consciousness of various other protagonists in his novels. It is left for the

author's subsequent works, including those examined here, to then explore and cognize artistically the moral suffering and anguish caused by the protagonists' claims to the benefits of recognition while withholding a reciprocal acceptance of the independence and autonomy of other persons. The trials and tribulations of Dostoevsky's characters examined here confirm the axiomatic principle of mutuality inherent in recognition as a sociological and philosophical model of human identity formation.

Chapter 1

The sociology of dialogical consciousness

As critics acknowledge, Dostoevsky's works, both fictional and journalistic, are steeped in the current affairs and trends of his day. More specifically, scholars link the literary imagery of Dostoevsky's fiction to the social conditions in place during his writing career. While existing studies contextualize Dostoevsky's novels in relation to various historical trends and facts, few critics address the role of the literary form in representing the relationship between individual subjectivity and social reality. The present study fills this gap by grounding the sociological analysis of Dostoevsky's characters in his literary form. I argue that the relationship of his protagonists to their social environment in Dostoevsky's novels is structured according to the principles of intersubjective recognition built into his polyphonic literary form. The concept of the polyphonic form, developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, implies that an interpretation of the protagonists, their sociological realia and the relationships between them must come from within a framework that sees an individual consciousness in an intersubjective connection with other beings and with the social milieu. I argue that the philosophy of recognition is precisely such a framework allowing us to analyze the dialogical protagonists vis-à-vis their environment while remaining within the formal boundaries of the polyphonic novel.

Among the numerous critics commenting upon the sociological qualities of Dostoevsky's novels, Vladimir Dneprov notes that Dostoevsky's fiction reveals the effects of the development of capitalism upon the inner world of the individual:

> Dostoevsky discovers a great deal of what is new concerning bourgeois psychology and ideology at the most generalized level, in the structural relations of the soul, in the form of the human "I"; Dostoevsky discovers a great deal of what is important concerning the bourgeois equivalents in the spheres of the soul, far from an economic incentive, concerning the projections of the bourgeois principle into the very forms of experience, into the very beginnings of thought.[16]

Dneprov links the external bourgeois forms of existence to the stirrings of one's inner world to suggest that the forces of capitalism alter human subjectivity. Dneprov's observations are very apt but they do not go beyond mere acknowledgements of the "projections of bourgeois principle" into the inner "spheres of the soul," failing to provide explanations or descriptions of such processes. Most importantly, Dneprov ignores the specificity of the literary form in its recreation of social reality.

Valerii Kirpotin makes penetrating remarks about Dostoevsky's interest in types from the lower ranks of the social hierarchy, whose moral self-consciousness is oppressed by the waning feudal social structure and who accumulate in their souls many grievances against what they perceive as social justice. Kirpotin points out, based on Dostoevsky's own pronouncements, that the latter was a prophet of a new type of man – "the man of a future estateless

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[16] *Idei, strasti, postupki*. *Iz khudozhestvennogo opyta Dostoevskogo* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1978) 262.

society" – who emerges in response to the changing social structure.[17] Kirpotin's observations remain very broad, and he is unconcerned with the specifics of the "new social layer, with new psychology and new ideas"[18] which pursues "their ideal of new morals, new happiness."[19] Kirpotin's remarks suggest that the appearance of such protagonists in Russian literature, protagonists with a new kind of moral claim goes hand in hand with the objective social changes in Russian society. However, he does not problematize the transfer of historical facts onto the literary plane.

Nadezhda Kashina connects the historical transformation of Russian society with the emphasis upon human subjectivity in Dostoevsky's fiction: "Dostoevsky's heightened interest in the problematic of selfhood […] was conditioned by objective factors, the critical state of the relationship between the private and public in Russia of the middle of the [19th] century, and it coincided with the processes of public consciousness characteristic of post-reform Russia undergoing capitalization."[20] In a similar vein, Leonid Grossman points out how Dostoevsky's portrayal of his contemporary reality is based on the novelist's thorough knowledge of it down to the minute details, so much so that Dostoevsky's novels could serve as sociological guidebooks to his era.[21] Georgii Fridlender also observes that Dostoevsky's powerful talent was defined by his

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[17] *F.M.Dostoevskii. Tvorcheskii put' (1821-1859)* (Moscow: GIKL, 1960) 67.

[18] Kirpotin, *Tvorcheskii put'* 35.

[19] Kirpotin, *Tvorcheskii put'* 36.

[20] *Estetika F.M.Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1975) 59.

[21] *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Gos. academia khud. nauk, 1925) 140.

ability to capture the "social-psychological tendencies and processes, related to the development of capitalism in Russia."[22] The list of such comments from other critics could be continued – all to the effect that Dostoevsky's novels capture the essence of social transformations of his epoch.[23]

It is intuitively clear that, as far as general relationships go, the social environment conditions our sense of self in its private and public manifestations. Accordingly, major changes in social conditions are likely to be accompanied by shifts in personal subjectivity. However, it is also clear that, when dealing with literary texts, one cannot freely transpose the effects of historical changes onto the literary plane, no matter how much a given fictional world may resemble the historical reality of its era. The major flaw of the scholarship cited above is that it ignores the question of the literary form by focusing on an isolated element taken out of its full literary context and by assessing the former against its historical background. While literary representation borrows many recognizable features of the world as we know it, it also rearranges them in accordance with the logic of the literary form by magnifying some and subduing other aspects of

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[22] *Realizm Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964) 33. See also 184ff and 193ff.

[23] One of the earliest works which treats, albeit in essayistic and intuitive terms, the emergence of capitalism in Russia as the philosophical backdrop of Dostoevsky's novels is Otto Kaus, *Dostoievski et son destin*, trans. Georges Cazenave (Paris: Rieder 1931). Among more recent examples of sociological approaches to Dostoevsky is Eva Milgrom's study "Fedor Dostoevsky: On Extreme Political Violence," *Sociological Insights of Great Thinkers: Sociology through Literature, Philosophy, and Science* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011). From the standpoint of literary analysis, Milgrom's examination of *Demons* as an illustration of her chosen social-psychological theories of group behavior ignores the question of aesthetics and the literary form.

social reality and private subjectivity. A part of a literary work must be considered in its integral relationship with other elements of the whole text, otherwise we lose its full significance and deal instead with watered down, impoverished remnants of a living image. Dostoevsky's literary texts rebuild and reconstitute social reality according to the principles embodied in their literary form, which express a specific kind of relation of an individual to his or her surroundings. Therefore, we should not compare isolated events and images in Dostoevsky's texts to known historical facts, but compare the interrelationships between individuals and their environments *in totality* as parallel and whole phenomena across literary and historical planes. We must first reveal in Dostoevsky's texts a paradigm of individual identity formation and identify the position of an individual element, such as a particular protagonist, vis-à-vis the overall structure in which it is embedded. Only afterwards can we compare the self-consciousness within the overall internal dynamic of the artistic world to a historically conditioned mode of self-consciousness outside the literary plane. To do justice to a literary work in its entirety, a sociological observation concerning the processes of identity formation in a literary work must show that the insinuated sociological patterns are grounded in the literary form. Otherwise we risk projecting historical knowledge onto a work of art and treating it solely as an illustration or reference to a system of knowledge that is imposed on it forcefully. To study the emergence of subjectivity vis-à-vis its social environment in a work of art productively is to treat the concepts of

"individuality" or "society" as systems of relationships, rather than as static and stand-alone concepts.

Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory addresses the sociological implications of literary form and helps to elucidate how Dostoevsky's fiction relates to the sociological realities of his epoch. Adorno views artistic form as an autonomous structure which borrows elements of the objective world and realigns them according to the logic of the artistic medium: "[o]bject in art and object in empirical reality are entirely distinct. In art the object is the work produced by art, as much containing elements of empirical reality as displacing, dissolving, and reconstructing them according to the works' own law."[24] Through its disinterested creativity, the autonomous artistic form captures and interrogates the nature of social reality: "[f]orm works like a magnet that orders elements of the empirical world in such a fashion that they are estranged from their extra-aesthetic existence, and it is only as a result of this estrangement that they master the extra-aesthetic essence." [25] Far from reproducing any pre-established conception of society, the autonomous form of a literary work generates alternative visions and perspectives which are otherwise suppressed by the objectively established patterns of thought and modes of living. From Adorno's perspective, the free form of art offers opportunities for political and social critique through its own intrinsic development: "[s]ocial ideas should not

[24] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 258-259.

[25] Adorno, *Theory* 227.

be brought to works from without but should, instead, be created out of the complete organized view of things present in the works themselves."[26] The social and political dimensions of the artistic form have little, if anything, to do with mimetic representation of what may be found in objective extra-aesthetic reality. To the contrary, any insights offered by art are made possible by art's focus on the essence behind the appearances: well-executed art brings "the essence into appearance in opposition to its own semblance."[27] Adorno's proposition that "striving for essence" is "the novel's true impulse" implies that the novelistic form of art is a form of thought about social reality.[28] Adorno's notion of art as a source of forms for conceptual thinking is a variation of Immanuel Kant's philosophical understanding of art.[29] Kant's critique of aesthetic judgement endows art with the ability to create the very mental and conceptual forms for reflective thought which transcend the constraining thinking schemata by allowing one to think independently of the socially and

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[26] Theodor Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," *Poetry and Cultural Studies: A Reader,* ed. Maria Damon and Ira Livingston (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) 26.

[27] Adorno, *Theory* 258-259.

[28] *Notes to Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991) 32.

[29] For discussions of how Adorno's aesthetics are indebted to Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment, see Robert Kaufman, "Red Kant, or the Persistence of the Third 'Critique' in Adorno and Jameson," *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (2000): 682-724 and Rudiger Bubner, "Concerning the Central Idea of Adorno's Philosophy," *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997) 147-76. For a brief comparison of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, see Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990) 73-76.

politically conditioned intellectual norms and concepts. In a similar manner, Dostoevsky's realization in fiction of a "poetic idea" carries within it an unmistakable "cognitive function."[30] In the world of his fiction, ideas and intellectual perspectives are personalized through being fused with the unique personalities and concrete life situations of his characters (*PPD* 10). Dostoevsky's fiction merges ideas and literary images thus uniting form and thought: "Art imposes order upon reality – not mechanical order, but the order of organic form; and artistic form for Dostoevsky is inseparable from idea."[31] In other words, Dostoevsky's artistic form is conducive to a mental processing of one's surrounding reality to the extent that literary images help readers conceptualize the objective stream of events. Dostoevsky acknowledges this ability of art to foster an understanding of social phenomena: "Now who has formulated the new ideas in a form that the people can understand them – now who, if not literature!"[32] Incidentally, Adorno credits Dostoevsky with the ability to bypass the external appearance of objective phenomena in order to capture their essence. Adorno finds in Dostoevsky's works "a psychology of intelligible

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[30] Robert Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) 123.

[31] Jackson, *Quest* 76.

[32] N.F.Bel'chikov, *Dostoevskii v protsesse petrashevtsev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971) 104. I used Robert Jackson's translation of the quote in his *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form* 33. Jackson contextualizes Dostoevskii's explanatory letter to the investigators of the Petrashevskii circle, from which the quote is taken, to note how the threat of punishment could have affected the wording of Dostoevsky's statements on the role of literature in society.

character, of essence, and not a psychology of empirical character, of human beings as we find them." [33] To the extent that the sociological elements found in Dostoevsky's novel correspond to the historical realities of mid-19th century Russian society, the representation of such empirical facts in his novels sheds a critical light upon the social conditions that hamper the full development of one's selfhood.

Adorno and Dostoevsky's views on art are remarkably similar concerning the nature of artistic form and its potential for social critique, although this similarity has remained unnoticed and unexplored. Like Adorno, Dostoevsky views art as something which is not slavishly tied to external appearances but which is free to, and indeed has to, rise above facts and create new images that could shine a new light upon reality. He famously defends his works against accusations that they portray everyday life in a fantastic light by saying that his type of "fantastic realism" allows him to glean and predict actual facts – and that this would not have been possible had his works been faithful to the reality's surface appearance in a more verisimilar and mimetic way:

> I have absolutely different notions of reality and realism from what our realists and critics do. My idealism is more real than theirs. Lord! If one tells the story sensibly of what we Russians have been through the last ten years in our spiritual development – won't the realists in fact yell that it's a fantasy! And meanwhile it is original, real realism! That in fact is what realism is, only deeper, but with them it's shallow sailing. […] With their realism you can't explain a hundredth part of real, actually occurring facts. But

[33] Adorno, *Notes* 31.

> with our idealism we have even prophesied facts. It has happened.[34]

The convergence of Adorno's and Dostoevsky's views on art is especially apparent in their pronouncements on photography as a medium of representation which, in their views, limits itself to an objective portrayal of reality without introducing interpretation or cognitive transformation into the process. Adorno's main thesis concerning the process of artistic creation is that a work of art must borrow certain elements from reality but rearrange them according to the internal and formal law of the work of art itself rather than mimic any objective situation: "[o]nly through such transformation, and not through an ever falsifying photography, does art give empirical reality its due."[35] Dostoevsky expresses the same idea through his disapproval of what he calls "photographic" art in his reviews of painting exhibits. He argues that an artistic portrayal must transcend realistic depiction for the sake of artistic representation. As Dostoevsky puts it, what can be seen with the "eyes of the body" must be complemented by an insight of the "eyes of the soul" (*PSS* 19:154). The spiritual and intellectual awareness made possible by a work of art is impossible to achieve without the artist's intellectual maturity and his or her thorough knowledge of the portrayed material – all of which determine the selection, angle and perspective of its presentation. Otherwise, Dostoevsky warns, blind faithfulness to the "photographic" appearances result in a "lie" (*PSS* 19:154).

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[34] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Complete Letters*, trans. David Lowe, vol. 3 (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990) 114.

[35] Adorno, *Theory* 259.

In order to explore further how social reality is constructed within the fictional world of Dostoevsky's novels, we can rely on Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky's poetics. Bakhtin observes that elements of objective social reality are not given from a neutral standpoint in Dostoevsky's works but are colored by the existential perspectives of the characters: "In Dostoevsky there is no objective representation of the environment, of everyday life, of nature, of objects [….] Upon entering Dostoevsky's novel, the enormously diverse world of things and relationships among things is presented as the characters understand it, in their spirit and in their tone" (*PPD* 115). The social reality in Dostoevsky's narratives is not a neutral, objective or historical background but is portrayed in its implication in, and as a part of the protagonists' consciousnesses as they examine, judge and react to it. In Bakhtin's words, "our artistic vision finds itself not before the reality of the character but before the pure function of his realization of this reality" (*PPD* 56). In such conditions, neither a character nor his or her social environment can be examined separately and in isolation because their full significance emerges in the dynamic unity of their inter-relationship. Instead of assessing the social environment of the characters directly and historically, critics must approach them from within the characters' consciousnesses by examining the relationship of the characters to other individuals and societal institutions within the fictional world. According to Bakhtin, external sociological realia are mediated and subsumed by the consciousnesses of Dostoevsky's characters. Bakhtin describes dialogical consciousness as "all-consuming" and "having engulfed in itself the

whole material world" (*PPD* 57). The surroundings lose their objective "explanatory function" because their meaning is defined by the consciousness of the characters (*PPD* 57). To be sure, we can always isolate a specific instance of a historical reality which made its way into Dostoevsky's world, be it changes in the legal system, growing suicide rates, urbanization, pauperization, the emergence of the middle class, etc. However, a mere identification of such facts treats Dostoevsky's novels as illustrations of historical tendencies and leaves the artistic form and a fuller complexity of Dostoevsky's art unexamined.

The shift in the perspective of observation from an objective or neutral standpoint to the subjective and deeply personalized points of view of the characters is a key feature of Bakhtin's concept of dialogical consciousness. A dialogical protagonist, according to Bakhtin, retains the liberty to change his or her self-definition so that ultimately no one other than the character him- or herself can have the "final word" about his or her essential being. Such a protagonist ceases to be an object defined and shaped by the authorial discourse but rather becomes a subject with his or her own voice:

> [T]he author's consciousness does not transform others' consciousnesses (that is, consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others' equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as itself. It reflects and re-creates not a world of objects, but precisely these other consciousnesses with their worlds, re-creates them in their authentic unfinalizability. (*PPD* 79-80)

The dialogical position of a protagonist does not only presuppose his or her independence within the polyphonic novelistic discourse, but the character's existence is conditional upon interactions with other consiousnesses. A protagonist's self-consciousness is defined by his or her relationship of acceptance or rejection of how he or she is viewed by other beings. In other words, dialogical consciousness exists in the dynamic tension between its self-conception and external conception. Interaction with another voice is an ontological necessity for the existence of dialogical consciousness given the latter's intersubjective nature:

> The hero's attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another, and with the attitude of another toward him. His consciousness of self is constantly perceived against the background of the other's consciousness of him – 'I for myself' against the background of 'I for another.' Thus the hero's words about himself are structured under the continuous influence of someone else's words about him. (*PPD* 240)

The inherent intersubjectivity of dialogical consciousness is not fully fleshed out in Bakhtin's mature works but is evident in his early writings where we find the genesis of the concept of dialogism. In one such early work, *Towards the Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin puts forth his philosophical credo concerning the function of aesthetic apperception. He argues that an aesthetic view of an object completes it by endowing it with all the characteristics which define the object not in isolation but in its relationship to its surrounding environment. Such a holistic image is unavailable to the object of the aesthetic gaze since the object can never fully perceive itself in its own full complexity including its position

vis-à-vis its surroundings. This extends even to uniquely private features, such as one's facial expression, body posture, or certain uncontrolled muscle movements which are picked up by the external gaze as part of the "architectonics" of an image: "The *subiectum's* outside-situatedness (spatial, temporal, and valuative) – the fact that the object of empathizing and seeing is not I myself – makes possible for the first time the aesthetic activity of forming."[36]

Aesthetic apperception, due to its extraneous origin in relation to the object of apperception, has a "creative, productive"[37] character, and is an act of grace or a "gift,"[38] because it endows the object with an aesthetic image which the object is not able to generate on its own. The principle of enrichment and endowment by another consciousness present in the activity of aesthetic finalization is not limited to the field of aesthetics, but extends also into psychological and legal aspects of selfhood. As Bakhtin notes in another early work, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," from the moment of birth, our sense of selfhood is conditioned by the characterizations we receive from those who surround us. Everything from spoken words to physical caresses contribute to shaping the boundaries of ourselves that separate us from the rest of the world in a manner that gives our identities a sense of stability and constancy which we accept as our own:

> The plastic value of my outer body has been as it were sculpted for me by the manifold acts of other people

[36] M.M.Bakhtin, "K filosofii postupka," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1996) 60.

[37] Bakhtin, "K filosofii" 89.

[38] Bakhtin, "K filosofii" 95.

> in relation to me, acts performed intermittently throughout my life: acts of concern for me, acts of love, acts that recognize my value. In fact, as soon as a human being begins to experience himself from within, he at once meets with acts of recognition and love that come to him from outside – from his mother, from others who are close to him.[39]

Just as we experience the value of our own external appearance in a "borrowed"[40] manner because we view ourselves through the prism of others' reactions to us, we can "never experience our own legal self in an unmediated manner because the legal self is nothing other than a guaranteed assurance of [our] recognition by other people" as having certain rights.[41] The idea of the

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[39] Mikhail Bakhin, "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1996) 127.

[40] Bakhtin, "Avtor i geroi" 127.

[41] Bakhtin, "Avtor i geroi" 128. It may be worth noting here that the principle of enrichment inherent in external finalization and recognition serves different functions in relation to the object of finalization depending on the nature of the object. In aesthetic apperception, which deals with artifacts, aesthetic finalization provides a holistic image to the reader and to the author of a literary work (or anyone in the position to behold a work of art, be it a sculpture, a painting, etc.). In our interpersonal encounters, our implicit acts of aesthetic finalization influence and nurture the self-awareness of our partners in interaction. In other words, when Bakhtin talks about the literary character being the beneficiary of such a finalization, such statements must be taken, in my opinion, in a normative and conditional sense, because any holistic image that we attribute to literary characters is the result of our own projection and participation in the act of reading – but such acts of finalization cannot be felt by the characters because this is the prerogative of human recipients of the grace of aesthetic finalization. Accordingly, when it comes to our contacts with people in our physical and psychological lives, the implicit aesthetic finalization, which unconsciously occurs at any point of contact through our observation and interaction, does have tangible and long term effects upon our partners in interaction, as seen in the effects of external finalization on the

constitutive dependency of selfhood upon intersubjective confirmations by others, articulated by Bakhtin in his earliest works, forms the core of his mature conceptualization of dialogical consciousness. The latter is premised on the idea of aesthetic finalization as the function and process of gathering disparate realia of our being into one holistic image attributed to us by others and accepted by us as our own. The assertion from within a dialogical position of one's independence and autonomy is linked to intersubjective dependence upon the confirming stance of another being. In his work on Dostoevsky, where Bakhtin expounds his views on dialogical consciousness, he emphasizes the independence and freedom of a self-consciousness from external definition. However, such an emphasis should not overshadow the fact that a dialogical stance is by nature intersubjective, i.e. a dialogical position is made possible through intersubjective recognition and acknowledgement. Bakhtin refers to this implicit fact throughout his monograph on Dostoevsky by reiterating the existential need of Dostoevsky's characters for moral and emotional confirmation from others. (However, as I said earlier, this existential need for external confirmation receives its explanation in Bakhtin's earlier writings and is not fully addressed in his work on Dostoevsky.)

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psychological development of children and legal selfhood. Bakhtin does not dwell on this difference between the fictional and social worlds, even when he momentarily crosses the boundary between them, probably because he is concerned with the very principle, aside from the effect, of the enrichment which remains equally valid in both fictional and social realms. Nevertheless, the difference is there in terms of the effects of finalization upon the object, depending on whether it is a literary character or an actual human being.

When Bakhtin points to specific instances of love or legal right as examples of how recognition by others creates a self-consciousness, he remains in the purely aesthetic domain and stops short of extending his framework into social theory. Nevertheless, Bakhtin's theories on aesthetic finalization and dialogism can be complemented precisely with theories that explore the intersubjective structure of human self in its psychological, legal and, more broadly, sociological aspects. In fact, Bakhtin acknowledges the possibility of sociological interpretations of Dostoevsky's novels: "It could be said that Dostoevsky offers, in artistic form, something like a sociology of consciousnesses – to be sure, only on the level of coexistence. But even so, Dostoevsky as an artist does arrive at an objective mode for visualizing the life of consciousnesses and the forms of their living coexistence, and thus offers material that is valuable for the sociologist" (*PPD* 38). While Bakhtin does not problematize what he calls the "sociology of consciousness," or the emergence of self-consciousnesses through social interactions with other consciousnesses in family and society, we can observe how the dialogical consciousness of Dostoevsky's protagonists reflects an intersubjective pattern of identity formation.

The social network of intersubjective relationships may be seen as the moral infrastructure of identity formation. The nature and effect of the intersubjective confirmations within recognitive social structures are equivalent to Bakhtin's notion of aesthetic finalization. The recognitive moral infrastructure can be compared to Dostoevsky's dialogical form in that the latter is also the

formal condition for the existence of a dialogical self. The social networks of recognition may be said to program, stimulate and allow unique spontaneity to happen which characterizes individual autonomy. In a similar manner, Dostoevsky's form affirms the "freedom of the characters" within "the bounds of the artistic plan" (*PPD* 75-76). In other words, the author controls the favorable conditions for the appearance of a dialogical self in a polyphonic novel by avoiding finalizing words that would destroy the character's autonomy:

> Thus the freedom of a character is an aspect of the author's design. A character's discourse is created by the author, but created in such a way that it can develop to the fullest its inner logic and independence as *someone else's discourse*, the word of the *character himself*. As a result it does not fall out of the author's design, but only out of a monologic authorial field of vision. And the destruction of this field of vision is precisely a part of Dostoevsky's design. (*PPD* 76)

The logic and nature of the dialogical form is recognitive to the extent that it determines the possibility for a self-consciousness to define its own horizon of being and its existential predisposition toward the surrounding world, that is, its individual autonomy. The normative pattern in which Dostoevsky as an author relates to his characters is that of recognition. The framework of recognition complements Bakhtin's vision of the dialogical self by confirming his premise of the innate intersubjectivity of human personality and explaining its dependency upon another self-consciousness. My analysis of the parallels between recognition and dialogism leads to the conclusion that the principles of intersubjective recognition are inherent in both the polyphonic form and dialogical consciousness that it creates.

Chapter 2

Aesthetic and personal freedom in *Poor Folk*

Dostoevsky's experimentation with literary form in his early works of the 1840s intrigued his contemporary readers and continues to resonate today. In *Poor Folk* (1846), the idea of literary form enters directly into the protagonists' conversations when they read and comment upon Russian literary classics, such as Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" and Alexander Pushkin's "The Stationmaster." Taken in the totality of its stylistic and thematic significance, the novel examines the notion of the autonomy of literary form in relation to the independence of an individual selfhood. This is the question of how literary aesthetics relate to the ethics of intersubjective interaction with their normative ideals of preserving the other's individual freedom and identity. By combining Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of dialogism with Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, I argue that the novel's protagonist Makar Devushkin seeks an acknowledgement of his independence and personal worth by other individuals and the society in which he lives. However, an examination of Devushkin's aesthetics also shows that this character does not recognize others in his own turn, thus violating the condition of mutuality inherent in intersubjective recognition.

The protagonists of the story are a middle-aged minor government clerk, Makar Devushkin, and a poor young woman in her late teens, Varia Dobroselova. The latter has recently arrived from the countryside, where she was taken advantage of by a much older wealthy man. Devushkin and Dobroselova

live across the street from each other in a poor section in St.Petersburg, but for reasons of propriety and a certain lack of courage prefer to write to each other rather than actually meet in person. In their prolific letters they confide in each other's travails of poverty, share their life stories, discuss literature and exchange their own literary writings. Following some incidents that test Devushkin's self-esteem and end with Dobroselova receiving a marriage proposal from her former abuser, the story concludes with her sad departure to her husband's estate much to the sorrow of the ever-lonely Devushkin.

The poor downtrodden clerk was a popular figure in the overlapping "physiological" and "naturalist" veins of Russian literature of the 1840s. Upon its publication, *Poor Folk* was hailed as a prime example of the so-called Natural School by its proponent and critic Vissarion Belinsky.[42] Despite Belinsky's

[42] Informed by the ideals of utopian socialism, the Natural School served the aims of social criticism through its detailed realistic portrayal of the lives of the poor. Having re-appropriated the term "natural school" from his ideological opponent Faddei Bulgarin, Belinsky instills it with a positive meaning as "natural, truthful, striving to the depiction of life without embellishments" (V. I. Kuleshov, *Natural'naia shkola v russkoi literature XIX veka* [Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1982] 12). Developing out of the genre of physiological sketches with its focus on objective details, the Natural School focuses on the portrayal of a "small person" with an injured or subdued sense of personal worth, oppressed by poverty and humiliation. For the "physiological" roots of the Natural School, see A.G.Tseitlin's *Stanovlenie realizma v russkoi literature* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965). Critics differ in the definition of the genres and periodization of the natural school as well as its overall significance in the history of Russian literature. While Kuleshov tends to see the Natural School as a more or less stable and cohesive literary movement in his *Natural'naia shkola*, V.I. Melnik argues that its characteristic features and "tendencies" can be found both within and outside the range of authors and works

whole-hearted acceptance of the work, the position that *Poor Folk* occupies in the history of the Natural School is dubious: while it seemingly embodies the School's aesthetic principles, the novel also challenges them on multiple levels.[43] Dostoevsky deepens and adds new dimensions to the familiar image of an insignificant, small person, immortalized in Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat." Before Dostoevsky, the figure of the clerk was typically portrayed in the "physiological" and naturalist vein through the objective social characteristics of class and occupation. Dostoevsky shifts the narrative perspective from the external sociological viewpoint into the inner psychological domain of subjective perception and feelings of the character's self-consciousness: "Dostoevsky portrays not a 'poor clerk' but the self-consciousness of the poor clerk" (*PPD*

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associated with the Natural School ("Natural'naia shkola kak istoriko-literaturnoe poniatie," *Russkaia literatura* 1978 [1], 50). An even more nuanced spectrum of the Natural School is presented by Iu.V. Mann in "Filosofiia i poetika natural'noi shkoly" (*Problemy tipologii russkogo realizma*, ed. N. L. Stepanov and U. R. Foht [Moscow: Nauka, 1969] 241-305). Mann develops a dynamic and two-tiered conception of the school's aesthetics shifting from social determinism on its one end to spontaneous individual agency on the other.

[43] The Natural School's aesthetics were based on the assumption of the innate goodness of man, distorted by a corrupt social environment. By locating egocentric ambitions in human psychology, as opposed to the external influences of society, *Poor Folk* contradicted the above belief. Moreover, Dostoevsky's attraction toward the inner psychological world diverged from the objectively sociological interests of the "naturalists." See Iu. V. Mann, "Filosofiia i poetika natural'noi shkoly" in *Problemy tipologii russkogo realizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969) 299 and 304; L. M. Lotman "Proza sorokovykh godov" in *Istoriia russkoi literatury*, vol. VII (Moscow: Izd. Akad. Nauk., 1955) 555; and O. A. Bogdanova, "F.M.Dostoevski" in *"Natural'naia shkola" i ee rol' v stanovlenii russkogo realizma* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1997) 152.

55).[44] Bakhtin interprets this shift of narrative perspective as an indication of the character's autonomy: "the character becomes relatively free and independent, because all that which defined him in the author's conception, sentenced, so to speak, and qualified him once and for all as a finished image of reality, – now all this functions not as a form finalizing the character but as material of his self-consciousness" (*PPD* 60). When Devushkin reads Gogol's "The Overcoat," in whose protagonist he recognizes himself, he is "infuriated that his poverty was exposed, his entire life examined and described, that he was defined once and for all" (*PPD* 67). Devushkin exclaims: "You hide sometimes, you hide, you conceal yourself inside whatever you've got, you're afraid at times to poke your nose out – anywhere at all, because you tremble in the face of gossip, because out of everything that could be found on earth, out of everything they'll make you a satire, and then the whole of your civic and family life goes around in literature, everything is published, read, mocked, gossiped about!" (*PSS* 1:63). The objectifying external perspective claims complete knowledge of Devushkin's *alter ego* Bashmachkin in "The Overcoat" by ignoring his private humanistic world and overwriting his independent selfhood. While Devushkin can empathize with Gogol's character, he also unmistakably and intimately feels the freedom and spontaneity of his own immediate being which are not predetermined externally but express his own volition. Bakhtin calls this core of

[44] Valerian Maikov was probably the first critic to write about this trait of Dostoevsky's art in 1846. See his citation in Lotman, "Proza sorokovykh godov" 120. See also Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Nauka 1964) 59 and Gippius, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966) 150 for similar interpretations.

inalienable human individuality "something internally unfinalizable in man" and intuits its existence as a moral axiom: "[i]n a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition" (*PPD* 68). Thus, Bakhtin explains Devushkin's protest against the reductionist literary image of Gogol's character through the dialogical opposition to a dehumanizing finalizing word.

According to Bakhtin, Devushkin's indignation against the determinism of the finalizing word of the other is rooted in his dialogical freedom and spontaneity. While Bakhtin includes Gogol's revelation of Bashmachkin's and, by implication, Devushkin's poverty among the reasons that upset Devushkin, the critic does not explore the economic, and more broadly, the sociological dimension of Devushkin's life. Gogol's story insults Devushkin because, in addition to the reasons cited by Bakhtin, it questions the protagonist's adequacy to occupy the social position he claims. Bashmachkin is portrayed in his humiliating struggle to keep up the external appearance expected of the social status of a civil servant. However, his poverty is humiliating not in absolute terms, but rather to the extent that it illuminates the gap that separates him from his aspirations. Devushkin opposes Gogol's characterisation of Bashmachkin because it shows the latter to be unworthy of his social status and professional occupation. This is why Devushkin's tirade against "The Overcoat" is laced with conservative overtones: "every condition is determined by the Almighty to the lot of man. It is determined that […] this one is to command, and that one to

obey, uncomplaining and in fear" (*PSS* 1:61). By expressing his wholehearted support for the social order, Devushkin implicitly defends his own current position in the civil service. As if to dissipate anyone's doubts of his adequacy to his social status, he cites his diligent work and faithfulness to the state bureaucracy: "I've been in the service for about thirty years now; I work irreproachably, am of sober conduct, have never been found in disorderly behaviour" (*PSS* 1:61-62). To the extent that Devushkin's reaction demonstrates his instinctive defense of his own social position and status, it points to the sociological aspect of his self-consciousness as the source of his response to "The Overcoat."

The fact that Gogol's Bashmachkin is so preoccupied with owning an overcoat points to the sociological paradigm of a traditional stratified society in which clothes, food, and housing define one's social status and, as a consequence, determine how a given person relates to the rest of society. One's appearance and publicly observable lifestyle are important because "within corporatively organized societies, 'honour' designates the relative level of social standing that people can attain when they manage to conduct themselves habitually in line with the collective expectations that are 'ethically' linked to their social status."[45] Devushkin belongs to the general civil servant class and he is keenly aware of the expectations it places on him: "I mean, it's for other people that you go around in a greatcoat, and I suppose you wear boots for them too. […] I need boots to uphold my honour and my good name; whereas in boots

[45] Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995) 123.

full of holes both the one and the other are lost" (*PSS* 1:76). Even in the privacy of his home, he drinks tea "for the appearance, for the tone" (*PSS* 1:17). Given the strong association of one's appearance with one's social status, Devushkin's negative reaction to "The Overcoat" is precipitated by Bashmachkin's meager and worn-out clothes, which cast a long shade upon Devushkin. His sense of personal worth hinges on the external attributes of social status, observable by others, who want to know "whether I have a good waistcoat or not, or whether I have all that I ought to have in the way of underwear; whether I have boots, and what they are lined with; what I eat, what I drink, what I am copying…" (*PSS* 1:62). Therefore, to betray the fact that one's clothes or other such symbolic effects are unfit for the social status one claims is to compromise the latter.

Bakhtin's discussion of Devushkin's dialogical consciousness highlights the way the character asserts himself psychologically but leaves out the sociological basis of his personality. At the same time, the dialogical consciousness of a character is rooted in the sociological environment that is implied or explicitly stated in the literary work. As I have argued in the preceding chapter, the general premise of Bakhtin's idea of dialogism is that "a complete person is a product of aesthetically productive point of view."[46] In other words, a person or a literary character attains independence and autonomy through his or her creative recognition by others. Occasionally, Bakhtin transfers

[46] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi deiatel'nosti" in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1. Ed. S. G. Bocharov and N. I. Nikolaev (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1996) 155.

the principle of aesthetic external apperception into the domain of sociology, broadly defined, when he remarks in passing that a "legal identity" cannot be felt directly and intimately by an individual because it must be bestowed upon the individual through "recognition" by others: "a legal person consists of nothing other than a guaranteed assurance of recognition of me by other people, which is experienced by me as their duty towards me."[47] However, such observations remain fragmentary and peripheral to Baktin's focus upon the psychological and moral dimensions of dialogical consciousness. Bakhtin's analysis of Devushkin can be complemented by an exploration of the sociological environment that conditions the protagonist's dialogical consciousness. The inner stirrings of Devushkin's self-consciousness can be explained through their contextualization in Axel Honneth's theory of recognition which offers a sociological model of human identity formation. Honneth's ideas are similar to those of Bakhtin: both thinkers approach selfhood as something that is not possessed unilaterally by an individual person, but rather is bestowed upon the person by others in the process of intersubjective relations. For Honneth, the emergence of a healthy and functional selfhood is conditional upon its recognition by others within the intersubjective dimensions he outlines.

Honneth's ideas are based upon his interpretation of Hegel's concept of recognition combined with 20th century research in psychoanalysis and social

[47] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:126-127.

psychology.[48] Honneth argues that recognition in its various forms is vital for the formation of an autonomous subject who is able to successfully forge interpersonal relations, make independent decisions and participate in public life. In this sense, recognition is not an optional privilege but rather a required condition for the existence and functioning of an autonomous individual. When recognition is denied in any of its dimensions, individuals suffer an impairment in their freedom and autonomy. Honneth paints a fully functioning and healthy individual in a society as someone who enjoys, first of all, a basic degree of self-confidence acquired through care and love from an immediate circle of family, friends and significant others. Second, such an autonomous person must feel that his or her rights as a legal subject are protected unconditionally so that one need not to appeal to protection by clans, associations, corporations, or class membership. Finally, everyone must be entitled to a sphere in which his or her special talents and abilities can flourish and lead to self-realization and recognition from peers in the moral climate of what Honneth calls "solidarity." In Honneth's terminology, an autonomous person must have self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem: "Unless one presupposes a certain degree of self-confidence, legally guaranteed autonomy, and sureness as to the value of one's own abilities, it is impossible to imagine successful self-realization, if that is to

[48] Honneth originally presents his theory of recognition in *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) in which he claims to reconstruct some of Hegel's early ideas, abandoned in his mature thought. Subsequently, Honneth reconsiders his periodization and interpretation of Hegel's philosophy in *The I in We* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

be understood as a process of realizing, without coercion, one's self-chosen life-goals."[49]

In Honneth's paradigm of identity formation, the initial dimension of relation to self is that of love recognition. Drawing on psychoanalytical research by Donald Winnicot and Jessica Benjamin, Honneth explains that the ability to function independently and autonomously depends on the ability to "mediate between the primary experience of being merged [through the bond between a mother and an infant. B.A.] and the awareness of separateness."[50] The feeling of security that an infant can maintain during a temporary absence of its mother results in "a pattern of interaction whose mature reappearance in adult life is an indication of successful affectional bonds to other people."[51] The development of confidence in the stability of the love of an other, be it a friend, a lover, or a parent, while realizing that the other is a completely independent being and can choose to withdraw his or her love, forms the basis for an "autonomous participation in public life."[52]

If we look at the epistolary relationship between Devushkin and Varia Dobroselova in *Poor Folk* in light of the above supposition concerning love-recognition, we can see how their friendship strengthens Devushkin's self-confidence and increases his feeling of self-worth. Dobroselova is Devushkin's significant other and the only person who intimately, even if platonically, cares

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[49] Honneth, *Struggle* 174.

[50] Honneth, *Struggle* 103.

[51] Honneth, *Struggle* 104.

[52] Honneth, *Struggle* 107.

about him. He experiences their epistolary friendship as a relationship of love-recognition:

> When I got to know you, I began, for a start, to know myself better, and I came to love you; before you came along, my little angel, I was lonely and as good as asleep, I wasn't really living in the world at all. They, my ill-wishers, said that even my appearance was indecent; they treated me with repugnance, and, well, I began to share it. They said I was stupid, and I really believed them. When you came my way you lit up the whole of my dark life, so that my heart and my soul were illumined, and I attained tranquility of mind, founded in the knowledge that I was no worse than other men; with the one reservation that I had no outstanding abilities of any kind, that I had no gloss, no style – but for all that, I was a human being, with the thoughts and feelings of a human being. (*PSS* 1:82)

In the light of Honneth's framework of recognition, Devushkin assimilates Dobroselova's affirmative relation to him as his own positive relation-to-self. As a result, he downplays the lack of social significance accorded to his persona and experiences his private self with a renewed sense of inalienable human dignity. As Honneth argues, "this relationship of recognition prepares the ground for a type of relation-to-self in which subjects mutually acquire basic confidence in themselves."[53] Again, Honneth's conception of the development of selfhood through love echoes Bakhtin, who remarks that love from one's "mother and other people" is crucial for the formation of one's "personal value."[54]

[53] Honneth, Struggle 107.

[54] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:128.

While love-recognition constitutes a feature of human identity which is ahistorical and present throughout civilizations, cultures, and ages, the notion of legal rights is a particular historical achievement. The advanced forms of legal rights were first realized in the social evolution of the countries of Western Europe and North America in the 20th century. The historical development of legal rights is rooted in the earlier form of social structure out of which the modern nation state emerges. This earlier social structure corresponds to feudal and monarchic states composed of separate and predefined social strata with limited upward mobility and differentiated sets of rights tied to social "status." Honneth interprets and contextualizes the idea of recognition in the framework of a modern nation state with a view of its historical emergence out of a traditional status-based corporate society. Broadly speaking, status-based communities existed before the universalizing notions of civil and legal rights – such as electoral rights or free mandatory basic-level education – began to take shape throughout the 19th century.[55] Russia would remain largely a status-based society and at the doorstep of developing universal citizen rights for the entire duration of the 19th century and up until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, despite the abolition of serfdom in 1861. As Jane Burbank points out:

> [In 19th century Russia, r]ights were assigned to people through their status as members of collective bodies. Belonging to a collective, with its assigned rights, gave an individual the possibility of engaging in many of the most fundamental aspects of social life. Getting married, buying property, changing one's place of residence, and bequeathing land and goods were not simply regulated

[55] T.H.Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1950) 10-12.

> but were regulated according to the estate, confession, ethnicity, or territorial location of the individuals concerned.[56]

The social structures defining and protecting universal legal rights developed historically out of the sphere of corporate protection based on one's membership in a social class. One's membership in a given social stratum, taken broadly, came with a pre-modern equivalent of "social insurance" maintained through group consciousness and identification. Belonging to a given social class provided certain formal and informal "rights" to the member of the corporate body. Prior to the modern legal right to a minimum economic subsistence, pre-modern group solidarity attempted to fulfill the role of a baseline economic protection of its members. Membership in a corporate body and the protection that it entailed in a traditional society were the pre-modern means of the legal formation of self-respect, which is linked to the notion of human dignity: the "traditional form of legal recognition grants one society's protection for one's human 'dignity.'"[57] The dynamics of such paralegal protection within a social class are evident in *Poor Folk* in the scene where Devushkin reports to the high-ranking supervisor of his office. A loose button fell from Devushkin's overly worn-out attire and "bounced on the floor with a ping, and rolled straight, just

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[56] Jane Burbank, "An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7.3 (2006) 407. For an historical overview and periodization of the Russian estate system, see also Gregory Freeze, "The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *The American Historical Review* 91.1 (1986): 11-36.

[57] Honneth, *Struggle* 79.

like that, the accursed object, to His Excellency's feet – and this while everyone was completely silent, too! […] His Excellency at once fastened his attention on my appearance and on what I was wearing" (*PSS* 1:92). The director, pitying Devushkin's shabby appearance, gives him one hundred rubles as an encouragement to fix himself up as befits a civil servant. Devushkin is moved, most of all, by the fact that the official shakes his hand "as if they were equals" (*PSS* 1:93). He recounts to Dobroselova: "I swear that the hundred rubles are less dear to me than the fact that His Excellency himself deigned to shake my unworthy hand, wretch and drunkard that I am! By doing that he restored me to myself. By that action he has resurrected my spirit, has made my life sweeter forever" (*PSS* 1:93). Devushkin feels that his human dignity was upheld because acts of recognition, such as he experienced, are a necessary component of an individual's identity formation, according to Honneth. When Devushkin runs aground financially and falls behind on his rent payments, he describes the scope of his hardships by citing the rudeness and refusal of his landlady's lackey to serve him, making Devushkin feel worse than a "passportless vagabond" (*PSS* 1:79). The fact that Devushkin measures the depth of his downfall by the social markers of being able to command a lackey or by the possession of a passport, which defines one's social rank and the accompanying social rights, demonstrates the degree to which his sense of identity is embedded in the intersubjective paradigm of recognition.

The third dimension of intersubjective recognition in Honneth's tripartite scheme is "self-esteem," which refers to the assurance that "one's achievements

or abilities will be recognized as 'valuable' by other members of society.[58] Appraisal of an individual's qualities by others is premised upon the existence of culturally negotiable "networks of solidarity and shared values within which the particular worth of individual members of a community can be acknowledged."[59] In *Poor Folk*, Devushkin seeks such recognition of his personal worth in the shared praxis of literature. He is happy to be invited to the literary circle of his rowdy neighbour Rataziaev,[60] where he learns that literature is "a profound thing" stoking his desire to write: "After all, what do I do now in my spare time? I sleep like an utter fool. Whereas instead of unnecessary sleeping, I could get on with something that was pleasant too; such as sitting down and doing a bit of writing. It's both beneficial for you and good for others. I mean, you just take a look at how much they earn, my dear, may the Lord forgive them!" (*PSS* 1:51). Throughout his letters, Devushkin frequently admits to wishing to develop a literary talent and improve his writing style. Accordingly, his letters are constructed as literary essays and betray the self-conscious trials of his literary apprenticeship. His vignettes about the tragic fate of his neighbour Gorshkov or

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[58] Honneth, *Struggle* 128-129.

[59] Joel Anderson, "Translator's introduction" in *Struggle for Recognition*, by Axel Honneth (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) xii.

[60] Judging by the excerpts from Rataziaev's works cited by Devushkin in one of his letters, the neighbour appears to be Dostoevsky's caricature of unscrupulous consumers and imitators of low-brow Romantic literature with a predilection toward the erotic and the exotic. According to Vetlovskaia, "Rataziaev's fiction is literary street, a rehearsal of worn-out tropes of the romantics of the period along with their epigones" imitating Walter Scott and Nikolai Gogol, among others. See her *Roman Dostoevskogo "Bednye liudi"* (Leningrad: Khud. lit-ra, 1988) 106.

the child beggar shivering in the cold can be read as polished literary scenes in their own right.[61] Reading and creative writing help Devushkin to "assert his independence from his social function."[62] When Devushkin and Dobroselova exchange and discuss literary works, they also nourish each other's private subjectivities.[63] For these reasons, literature is a vital part of his self-consciousness.

The above sociological contextualization of Devushkin's aspirations shows that his dialogical stance is conditioned by his need to be recognized as an independent person worthy of social respect and intimate love. According to Fichte's original postulate, foundational for Hegel's and, by consequence, Honneth's social theories, recognition is by nature reciprocal and intersubjective: for an individual to be recognized as an independent selfhood, he or she must recognize the independence of other beings in turn.[64] The intersubjective ties of recognition, therefore, can be compromised by the subject's own refusal,

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[61] Vinogradov draws attention to the fact that Devushkin's letters are also his literary works, embodying the naturalist aesthetics. See V. V. Vinogradov, *O iazyke khudozhestvennoi literatury* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo khud. lit-ry, 1959) 487.

[62] W. J. Leatherbarrow, "The Rag with Ambition: The Problem of Self-Will in Dostoevsky's "Bednyye Lyudi" and "Dvoynik"." *The Modern Language Review* 68:3 (1973) 609.

[63] Richard Kaplan, "Romantic and Realist Rubble: The Foundation for a New National Literature in Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk* and Melville's *Pierre*," *Comparative Romanticisms: Power, Gender, Subjectivity*, eds. Larry Peer and Diane Hoeveler (Columbia, SC: Cambden House, 1998) 50-51.

[64] Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 80-81. See also Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 152.

however implicit and involuntary, to extend recognition to others. Having established that Devushkin craves recognition along the above-discussed emotional and legal routes of identity formation, we can now examine to what extent this character, as an independent self-consciousness, manages to sustain the principle of intersubjectivity inherent in recognition. In other words, the channels of recognition that animate and nourish Devushkin's self-consciousness are dependent upon his ethical intersubjective stance toward others and his willful acknowledgement of their integrity and inviolability. However, Devushkin does not exhibit much by way of societal interaction with others, except for his epistolary relationship with Varia Dobroselova. Devushkin's main field of action in life is confined to literature, whether through his writing, reading, or responding to literary texts. Therefore, Devushkin's recognitive stance toward others can be assessed via an analysis of his literary aesthetics. The exact configuration of the latter encodes the relationship between self and other – as a result, the philosophical implications of Devushkin's aesthetics can illuminate the ethical core of his personality. Such an approach is justified to the extent that literary aesthetics occupy the minds of the protagonists in *Poor Folk*, constituting the essential "topic of their existence."[65] Devushkin's engagement with literature betrays his deeply held moral values and defines his worldview at the most intimate level.

When Devushkin reads Pushkin's "The Stationmaster," the story evokes his heartfelt approval. His captivation adds little to our understanding of

[65] S.G.Bocharov, *O khudozhestvennykh mirakh* (Moscow: "Sov. Rossiia," 1985) 140.

Pushkin's tale but reveals a great deal about Devushkin. Devushkin is amazed to discover that "the whole of your life is laid out in detail" in Pushkin's story: "I feel the same too, just absolutely like in the book, and I too have at times been in such situations myself as, to give an example, this Samson Vyrin, the poor man" (*PSS* 1:59). When Devushkin compares himself to Pushkin's protagonist in "The Stationmaster," Samson Vyrin, he draws a very effective parallel that works on multiple levels and contains an interpretative key to *Poor Folk*. Pushkin's "The Stationmaster" begins the tradition of realist, physiological and naturalist prose works depicting the fate of the "little person" in Russian literature of the 1830s-40s. This literary tradition culminates in Gogol's "The Overcoat" which Devushkin reads soon after "The Stationmaster." Devushkin is thus introduced to the literary tradition from which he, as a character, emanates and which he continues.[66]

"The Stationmaster" tells the story of Samson Vyrin, a widowed elderly manager of a posting station, whose lovely teenage daughter Dunia runs away with a passing young cavalry officer Minskii. On its surface, "The Stationmaster" embodies the Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, illustrated in the pictures hanging on the walls of the station, with the difference being that Pushkin's narrative focuses on the suffering father, rather than the wandering offspring. However, a closer look at the story dissects an interplay of multiple

[66] For an outline of the literary tradition linking Pushkin's "The Stationmaster," Gogol's "The Overcoat" and Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk*, see L. M. Lotman's "Proza sorokovykh godov" 530ff.

and equally valid perspectives, including Dunia's bid to escape the oppressive routine of her predictable life in the country, and Minskii's loving passion, maybe even eventual marriage, to Dunia. In such an emancipatory approach to the story, elaborated upon by Nikolai Gei, Vyrin's grief indicates his blind and self-centered relationship to his daughter, inviting a discussion "about didacticism, about a didactic positioning of one's own point of view, egocentric relation to another person, even if the latter is dependent by family ties."[67] Vyrin and Minskii, despite their antagonism, share the "claim of one person to determine the fate, life and even happiness of another."[68] Nevertheless, Pushkin's text certainly does not encapsulate any moral truths – a "conscious refusal to engage in any moralizing" is one of the distinguishing aspects of his art.[69] The totality of clashing viewpoints and life claims in "The Stationmaster" evokes the prosaic complexity of real-life situations, as opposed to an isolated thought that could be estranged from the text:

> Thus we are given not an idea as such, but given life in its deep, complex and unique, but all the same characteristic turns and collisions, which, however, with their characterization and typology up to the biblical story, are the "thought," but this "thought" is non-identical with a universal generalizability of a strict syllogism, it is incompatible with the usual conclusions of sentimental reasoning such as the one found in the story: stationmasters are "generally unhappy and kind people." In Pushkin's prose the "thought" is submerged in the concrete content of the prose, and therefore remains in the parameters of

[67] N. K. Gei, *Proza Pushkina* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989) 32.

[68] Gei, *Proza Pushkina* 32.

[69] V. V. Gippius, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966) 21.

> the whole, and not in isolated segments or structures of authorial extrapolations.[70]

Paradoxically, the above approach to "The Stationmaster," while pointing out the egocentric limitations of Vyrin's worldview, is also instilled with respect and sensitivity to this character by considering the minute movements of his soul that may be hidden from the reader's or the protagonist's own view. A "small person" like Vyrin "deserves (since he is not smaller than others) a most demanding and serious" attention; the complexity of his human nature calls for a "direct conversation without discounts due to his smallness."[71] In other words, to treat a "small person" as small is to confine him to a narrow pre-determined range of interpretation and thus limit in advance the scope of our understanding of the full complexity of such a character. I think that Gei's remarkably perceptive approach to Vyrin in "The Stationmaster" is equally valid in relation to Devushkin in *Poor Folk*, considering the similarities between the two texts in terms of the sentimental motif of seduction and abandonment. The "motif of seduction of a simple young woman – of a peasant or merchant stock – by a tempter from a higher class" was typical of Russian sentimental fiction of the early 19th century.[72] The primary emotional tone of sentimental tales is compassion toward the distress of the main heroine, sometimes extended to "her

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[70] Gei, *Proza Pushkina* 40. Gei's analysis, despite having no references to Bakhtin, is very Bakhtinian in its ethos. For a discussion of the prosaic ethos of Bakhtin's literary theory, see Gary Morson, "Bakhtin, genres, and temporality," *New Literary History* 22:4 (1991) 1071-1092.

[71] Gei, *Proza Pushkina* 30.

[72] Gippius, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka* 17.

fiancé, but more frequently her father."[73] The latter is usually the figure proclaiming "the value and inviolability of the family hearth, denunciation of the perpetrator and acquittal of his victim."[74] Driven by "fatherly affection," Devushkin clearly has the above sentimental moral in his mind, when he advises Varia to re-read "The Stationmaster" and give up any consideration of working as a governess (*PSS* 1:19). After noting "how many Samson Vyrins are there among us, just such warm-hearted, hapless men," he warns her of the dangers awaiting a young woman striking out on a life on her own:

> That's the way it is, my dear, and here you are wanting to leave us too; but, you know, Varenka, sin could take me unawares. And you could ruin both yourself and me, my dear. Ah, you little flower of mine, for God's sake turn all those wilful thoughts out of your little head and don't torment me for no reason. Well how are you, my weak, unfledged little nestling, how are you to feed yourself, to keep yourself from ruin, to defend yourself from villains? Come now, Varenka, pull yourself together; don't listen to nonsensical advice and slanders, but read your book again, read it attentively; it'll be of benefit to you. (*PSS* 1:59)

The book Devushkin refers to is Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin*, lent to him by Varenka, of which he only ever mentions "The Stationmaster" – we can therefore assume that this story is of a singular importance from among the other four tales included in Pushkin's cycle. As Gei's interpretation of "The Stationmaster" suggests, in trying to shield Varenka from insults and hardships, Devushkin may well be looking out for his own interests, rather than Varia's.[75]

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[73] Gippius, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka* 18.

[74] Gippius, *Ot Pushkina do Bloka* 18.

[75] Joe Andrew argues that Devushkin's role of a father figure to Varenka conceals his sexual desire for her. See his article "The Seduction of the Daughter: Sexuality in the

As I have noted before, given Devushkin's conspicuous literariness, we should look closely into the construction of this character in order to discern his ethical stance toward the other.

Devushkin's articulation of his search for recognition is made possible by the polyphonic form which expresses the autonomy of a dialogical character. The polyphonic literary form – in following the aspirations and needs of the protagonist, as opposed to those of the author – is autonomous in the sense that it is relatively independent of influences extraneous to the portrayed character. In other words, the autonomy of the polyphonic form embodies the individual autonomy of a dialogical self-consciousness that is posited as the other in relation to the author. We may say that Dostoevsky as the author recognizes his character as an independent being and allows the latter to steer the narrative. As Dostoevsky puts it in a letter: "Our public […has] gotten used to seeing the author's mug in everything; I didn't show mine, however. But they can't even imagine that it's Devushkin speaking, and not I, and that Devushkin can't speak in any other way" (*PSS* 28.1:117). As I have argued in the preceding chapter, a dialogical relationship of one being to another presupposes a relationship of recognition. To recognize another person is to acknowledge his or her power to negate: to disagree, to annul, to deny and otherwise have a say in whatever discourse, action or influence is imposed upon him or her. As Charles Taylor

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Early Dostoevsky and the Case of *Poor Folk*," *Neo-Formalist Papers*, ed. Joe Andrew and Robert Reid (Amsterdam: Rodopi 1998) 123-142. Andrew's analysis hinges on lexical comparisons linking Devushkin and Bykov (Varia's former abuser and eventual husband) to suggest their affinity.

explains, the principle of negation is inherent in mutual recognition, as it was conceived by Hegel: "[m]an, as a being who depends on external reality, can only come to integrity if he discovers a reality which could undergo a standing negation, whose otherness could be negated without its being abolished. But the negation of otherness without self-abolition, this is a prerogative of human, not animal consciousness. So that the basic desire of self-consciousness can only be fulfilled by another self-consciousness."[76] We come together as individuated and separate beings in an act of mutual recognition by virtue of keeping and retaining our power to negate that which we recognize. Only such a possibility of cancellation of mutual ties endows our choices with freedom. When this principle of freedom in recognition is transferred into the aesthetic domain, it appears that the autonomy of form, indicative of the independence of a self-consciousness, fulfills the recognitive functions of the other. In other words, the freedom of form is an artistic equivalent of what in intersubjective terms is recognition of one self-consciousness by another. If a dialogical self exists in the represented world of a polyphonic novel, it is because the author builds his or her relationship to the character according to the ethical principles of recognition. As a result, the character retains the power to deny an external discourse about him or her. Again, the same principle applies to aesthetic form in general: it is as if we expand the principle of dialogicity and recognition from a particular protagonist to the literary form itself, since it is the autonomy of form which

[76] Taylor, *Hegel* 152.

makes possible the autonomy of the character. A dialogical character does not exist outside the polyphonic form that makes dialogical relationships possible.

If we analyze Devushkin's relationship to the other of the literary texts he reads – where the other is the portrayed character – it appears that his treatment of aesthetic facts is precisely the opposite of the dialogical predisposition of an author toward his character. Devushkin reads literary works with a view of how he would have written them. In regard to "The Stationmaster," which Devushkin finds charming in its direct simplicity, he says: "[I]t's like I wrote it myself, […a]nd it's a simple matter, my God; nothing to it! Truly, I would have written it the same way too; why shouldn't I have written it?" (*PSS* 1:59). To say that Devushkin sees himself as the author of the works he reads is to highlight his attitude toward the character, who stands for the other: he does not endow the other with an independent existence but rather imposes and projects his own vision and understanding onto the fictional reality. Such an ethical stance is the opposite of a dialogical relationship which protects and nourishes the independence of the protagonists. Devushkin views "The Stationmaster" as a work that reflects his "own heart" and captures his "warm-hearted, hapless" personality – such a view greatly inhibits the richness of signification of Pushkin's story and turns Vyrin into an illustration of Devushkin's self-understanding and limited worldview (*PSS* 1:59). In his criticism of Gogol's "The Overcoat," Devushkin also shows his self-centered and colonizing approach to the literary world. He points out what is amiss in the story and tells how it should have been written:

> Well, it would have been all right if [Gogol] had at least turned over a new leaf towards the end, toned things down, included something, for example, even after the point where they scattered paper on [Bashmachkin's] head, such as "despite all this he was virtuous and good citizen, did not deserve such treatment from his colleagues, did the bidding of his superiors (here some example could be given), wished nobody any harm, believed in God and was mourned when he died" (if he really must have him die). But best of all would be not to leave him to die, the poor thing, but make it so that his greatcoat was found, so that the general, learning in greater detail of his virtues, asked to have him transferred to his own office, promoted him and gave him a good salary, so you can see how it would be: evil would be punished and virtue would triumph, and his colleagues in the office would all be left with nothing. (*PSS* 1:63)

Devushkin recognizes in Vyrin or Bashmachkin only those facts that relate to him – as their author, he would have molded them to suit his own desires and self-understanding, rather than those of the dialogical other. There is a slight difference in his treatment of these works, however. In the case of "The Overcoat," Devushkin wishes to project a desired, not actual, image of himself as a successful, respectable and morally irreproachable individual – whereas his treatment of "The Stationmaster" betrays his mimetic, representational understanding of art's relation to reality, as the latter is understood by Devushkin. Either way, however, Devushkin views art as an extension of his own self, be it his current self-understanding or his desired image of himself. Indeed, Devushkin's aesthetics reflect the idea he learned in Rataziaev's circle, that "[l]iterature is a picture and a mirror; an expression of passion, a kind of subtle criticism, an exhortation to edification and a document" (*PSS* 1:51). Each phrase in this definition makes literature subservient to various aspects of extra-

literary referential reality in a mimetic-representational or propagandistic-ideological fashion.

Bakhtin interprets Devushkin's protest against the finalizing discourse of "The Overcoat" as an indication of the non-identity of dialogical protagonists with conceptions imposed on them externally and unilaterally. It means that any attempt to delimit and identify such a protagonist would be futile to the extent that his nature would forever elude an external definition. As Bakhtin puts it, the person is non-identical with himself as a determined entity: "according to the artistic thought of Dostoevsky, the true life of a personality occurs as if at the point of this non-identity of the person with himself, at the point of his exit beyond all that which he is as a reified existence, which can be viewed, defined and predicted against his will, a priori" (*PPD* 69). Bakhtin's non-identity of a person with an external label that attempts to capture this person's essence is equivalent to Adorno's idea of non-identity as a dialectical contradiction. Adorno speaks of non-identity of reality in relation to the descriptive terms used to designate it: "the concept is always both more and less than the elements included in it."[77] For Adorno, "the name of dialectics says […] that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy."[78] The non-identity is evidenced by the "remainder" of conceptual thinking – all that evades the classifying net of naming and categorizing. The existence of the dialectical "remainder" is a

[77] Theodor Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) 7-8.

[78] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 2005) 5.

constant proof "that there is more to the object and more involved in thinking about it than what my present thinking acknowledges."[79] As Adorno points to the remainder of the living whole that is damaged in the process of rational thought, so Bakhtin draws attention to the living image of a dialogical protagonist which escapes finalization by another voice.

For Adorno, the idea of non-identity, or the individual particularity left out by a subsuming concept, finds its expression in the autonomy of artistic form. Adorno's aesthetic theory locates in the immanent development of artistic form the capacity to generate insights into the extant social forms of oppression because the laws of artistic form are not those of society. The emancipatory potential of art is premised on its freedom not to "comply[…] with existing social norms and qualify[…] as 'socially useful'"[80] A work of art develops its relationship to social reality intrinsically, according to the law of its own form, without any externally imposed ideological ties to an objective state of affairs: "There is nothing pure, nothing structured strictly according to its own immanent law, that does not implicitly criticize the debasement of a situation evolving in the direction of a total exchange society."[81] Adorno's formulations of the principles of autonomous art reflect the central tenet of Bakhtin's dialogism, whereby a dialogical consciousness is the source of an alternative vision of the world not identical with the author's perspective.

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[79] J.M.Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 232.

[80] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 225.

[81] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 225.

Dialogical consciousness, in its freedom from external definition, is a particular example and restatement of a more general principle of the autonomy of art, as defined by Herbert Marcuse: "[a]rt is committed to that perception of the world which alienates individuals from their functional existence and performance in society – it is committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity."[82] Whereas the concept of dialogism makes evident the freedom of the character from authorial intentions (relatively speaking, of course, to the extent that such freedom enters into the author's artistic plan), the notion of the autonomy of art presupposes that the development of art form is free from having to reflect and express a predetermined view of social reality. In other words, an author's monological influence over his or her character is equivalent to the instrumentalization of art for the purposes of propaganda or mimetic realism. According to Marcuse, aesthetic form allows one to look anew at "the established universe of discourse," thus inviting individual spontaneity and freedom of choice.[83] This idea is mirrored in Bakhtin's literary theory, where a dialogical protagonist "consume[s]" the surrounding discourse to assert his independent point of view (*PPD* 62). Again, where Bakhtin talks of an author as an external force that could possibly encroach upon the character's self-consciousness monologically, Adorno and Marcuse speak of the dictates of the

[82] Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 9.

[83] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* 43.

social, found in the referential or ideological functions of art, which can alter the immanent development of the artistic form.

In light of the above parallels between the autonomy of artistic form and the undamaged integrity of the dialogical consciousness, the philosophical implications of Devushkin's aesthetics betray his inability to recognize the other. Speaking from the vantage point of dialogicity, Devushkin, nevertheless, is not receptive nor ethically predisposed to acknowledge the presence of a genuine other because, as his literary aesthetics demonstrate, he does not acknowledge the autonomy of form and, by implication, the independence of the other. Devushkin's consciousness expands monologically, converting external phenomena into the language and concepts of his own immediate self. He translates the reality of the fictional world he encounters into the self-centered terms of the social reality he inhabits and judges the literary protagonists he reads about by the self-serving lessons he derives from his own experience. Devushkin's implicit non-recognition of the other is ironic given that his own dialogical existence is premised upon the intersubjective principles of recognition, as I have shown. The fact that a given character is portrayed from a dialogical perspective does not necessarily mean that this character's ethical stance toward other consciousnesses will be also dialogical. In fact, it is a characteristic of Dostoevsky's fiction that his characters refuse, for various reasons, to recognize the other while desperately seeking recognition themselves. The epitome of such a conflicted intersubjective outlook is found in "The Legend of the Great Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the Inquisitor

refuses Christ, who stands for the other, entry into the human world and lays out his reasons for doing so. Devushkin, however, unlike the mature Dostoevsky's characters, is not yet able to fully own and enact his position of non-acceptance of the other, even though it is present in his literary aesthetics as an indication of his future development. What is not yet evident in *Poor Folk* but will become a distinguishing feature of Dostoevsky's art, beginning already with his next novel, *The Double*, is that while endowing his characters with the dialogical freedom to accept or evade the responsibility of recognizing others, Dostoevsky also shows that the prospect of one's recognition by others is conditional upon such recognition being mutual. Given the condition of mutuality inherent in recognition, Devushkin's implicit inability to recognize the other precludes the possibility of the recognition of his own selfhood. What moral choices such a character would make and how they would affect his and others' well-being remains to be seen in Dostoevsky's subsequent works.

Chapter 3

The fraudulent other in *The Double*

Fedor Dostoevsky had great hopes for his second novel, *The Double*, which appeared in 1846 on the heels of the dizzying success of *Poor Folk*. He brimmed with enthusiasm and ambition as his work on *The Double* progressed: "Golyadkin [the novel's main protagonist] is turning out superbly; this will be my chef d'oeuvre" (*PSS* 28.1:116). However, upon its publication *The Double* was met with mixed reactions from both the reading public and literary critics. Crushed by the cold reception, Dostoevsky went from praising to blaming himself and came to think of *The Double* as his failure. Retrospectively in 1859, Dostoevsky's views of *The Double* softened and he even thought of rewriting it: "Why should I lose a superb idea, a great type in its social importance, which I was the first to discover and of which I was the herald?" (*PSS* 28.1:340). At the height of his career in 1877, Dostoevsky still believed the novel's "idea was rather bright, and [he had] never attempted in literature anything more serious than this idea" (*PSS* 26:65). Dostoevsky never realized his hopes of rewriting this work, nor did he ever explain why he had found its idea to be so profound.

In this chapter, I would like to outline the philosophical idea contained in *The Double* – which, I believe, captures the gist of what Dostoevsky had in mind when he thought so fondly of this work, despite its lukewarm reception. As with all great works of art, Dostoevsky's ideas find their full treatment in his literary works through the lives and dialogues of his characters – taken out of their

literary context, his ideas lose their vitality and complexity. Nikolai Strakhov, Dostoevsky's close friend and colleague, notes how Dostoevsky "felt thoughts" and "thought in images."[84] Dostoevsky's works exemplify Mikhail Bakhtin's proposition that literary works and their genres are forms of thought "about time, society, and human agency."[85] Nevertheless, I believe that the idea of *The Double*, and of most of Dostoevsky's major works, can be expressed by evoking a cluster of notions related to the effects of conceptual thinking on our quest for individual identity. Through the adventures of the main protagonist of *The Double* and his attempt to come to terms with the existence of his double, the story questions the origins of personal identity, its relation to the thought patterns introduced by the Enlightenment, and its dependence upon intersubjective relationships with others. I argue that *The Double* situates the constitution of individual autonomy and individual identity firmly in the ethical context of intersubjective relationships. The story's implicit ethical principle of the relation between self and other, articulated through deviations from it and the rationalized conceptions of morality, explains the origins and nature of the fantastic double that haunts the main protagonist. At the highest level of historical abstraction, Golyadkin's double symbolizes the rational by-product of

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[84] Nikolai Strakhov, *Biografiia, pis'ma i zametki iz zapisnoj knizhki F.M.Dostoevskogo* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Suvorina, 1883) 195, quoted in Robert Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) 184.

[85] Gary Morson, "Bakhtin, Genres, and Temporality," *New Literary History* 22.4 (1991) 1077.

the Enlightenment which lies in the self-estrangement of the human being from his or her own nature. Golyadkin's doubling illustrates the split, introduced and legitimized by the Enlightenment, between the rationalizing thought in terms of categories and classes on the one hand, and the holistic and unique life experience, on the other.

Publication of *The Double* dampened Dostoevsky's newly acquired literary fame among critics and ordinary readers alike, who were puzzled by the fantastic, almost bizarre, nature of the story with its long, winding narrative and repetitive turns of phrase. The influential democratic critic Vissarion Belinsky even admitted to having overrated Dostoevsky's talent, lamenting the fact that the young author had taken a different direction from the one promised by *Poor Folk*. The connection and creative lineage between the two works lies in the ethics of intersubjective relations and, more specifically, the idea of replacing one's partner in interpersonal interaction with a mental construct. This psychological tendency is only tentatively introduced in *Poor Folk* alongside another, more central idea for that story: the relationship between literary aesthetics and individual autonomy. *The Double*, however, picks up and further develops the parallel idea of the fraudulent other to explore its psychological and moral ramifications. In order to recognize the beginnings of the psychological theme of *The Double* in Dostoevsky's first novel, we can briefly return to *Poor Folk* to identify the roots of doubling in Devushkin's dialogical consciousness.

According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky changes the perspective from which the author and the reader see the character of the poor government clerk, a

familiar figure from the fiction of the Natural School. Devushkin is portrayed not from without but from within his own consciousness: "Dostoevsky depicts not 'a poor clerk' but the self-consciousness of the poor clerk" (*PPD* 55). As readers, we observe this self-consciousness in its self-reflexivity: we don't simply observe the character's reactions to the external world but rather share his intuition of the image he has in the eyes of others. For example, Devushkin surmises his own appearance in the imaginary perspective of an onlooker by metaphorically capturing the image he must have in the eyes of his coworkers: "And I was sitting in the office today like such a baby bear-cub, such a plucked sparrow, that I almost burned up in shame for myself" (*PSS* 1:69). As Bakhtin argues in his early works on aesthetic finalization, a person cannot behold his or her own image – this is the prerogative of another consciousness. If Devushkin thinks he looks like a clumsy and scared cub, this image is only his supposition because he cannot perceive himself from a genuine external perspective. In another example, when Devushkin, terrified of having to see his superior over a mistake he has made, glances at his reflection in the mirror, he finds the sight appalling: "I looked into the mirror on the right and could simply have gone crazy over what I saw" (*PSS* 1:92). While it is plausible to assume that Devushkin's reaction to his own reflection in the mirror anticipates how others would perceive him, i.e. that he is able to assess objectively his own image in the eyes of others,[86] I believe the implicit tragedy of Devushkin's situation is that

[86] Such is the interpretation offered by Robert Jackson in his *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form* 24.

however pitiful, lowly, or insignificant his persona may appear to others, it is ultimately Devushkin's own fears and insecurity that determine his reaction rather than any external feedback from others. After all, the same physical features of one's face, body and clothes may resonate differently for different people, depending on their mood, social class, personality type, etc. Only another person as such can provide feedback pertaining to our appearance and persona – any attempt to surmise it from within one's own self-consciousness is a hypothetical extrapolation. In other words, Devushkin's horror at the sight of his own reflection is a product of his own mental projection of the imaginary reaction of a generalized other. The fact that he finds his image appalling or that he thinks his persona is deemed utterly insignificant by others may indicate not only the real possibility of his humiliation but is, first of all, symptomatic of his replacing the role of another consciousness in his self-appraisal. To be sure, we can find objective instances in *Poor Folk* which demonstrate that Devushkin's fears are not unfounded: for example, his director at work offers him money to repair his clothes. Nevertheless, it is not only the poverty of his appearance but also the external perspective of an onlooker that is internalized by Devushkin. This fact indicates his potential to usurp the evaluative position of the other. There is an inherent ambiguity in *Poor Folk* as Dostoevsky's initial exploration of the moral universe of interpersonal relations and the subject's responsibility within it. It may be said that *Poor Folk* contains an intellectual forking of psychological and aesthetic strands where the latter becomes the eventual focus

of the story. In his next work, Dostoevsky returns to the psychological path to elaborate upon its nature.

The protagonist of *The Double* is Iakov Petrovich Golyadkin, a clerk in a government office. (He is not as poor as Devushkin – at least, financial concerns are of a higher order in this story compared to *Poor Folk*.) The story begins with Golyadkin preparing to attend, uninvited, the birthday party of the woman he pursues. Upon his arrival at the party filled with guests of higher ranks, he is unceremoniously pushed out by the servants as an unwanted intruder. During his lonely walk home in the rainy St.Petersburg night, tormented by humiliation, he encounters an exact copy of himself in a stranger. Initially timid and subservient, Golyadkin Jr., as the double is called in the story, becomes more assertive with time and even comes to sardonically patronize Golyadkin Sr. The double gradually replaces the original Golyadkin in his work functions and gains success in the higher society to which Golyadkin aspires in vain. As a result, Golyadkin Sr. comes to question his own identity, his social position, and his image in the eyes of others. However, the appearance of the double is only an external manifestation of the brewing derangement of Golyadkin's own mind, which begins to manifest itself before the double appears. Quite on his own and without the derisive pranks of his double, Golyadkin gets himself into various socially awkward situations as a result of his exaggerated self-consciousness and unsettled self-esteem. He suffers from a fixated dependency on the opinion of others to the point of self-effacement. At the same time, he is pulled by an irresistible inner urge to demonstrate his independence. He oscillates between

such seemingly irreconcilable traits – self-effacement and ostensible independence – due to an utter lack of judgment as to the boundaries separating him from others. Overly self-conscious, Golyadkin is unable to adequately assess others' expectations of him, or the impressions he makes upon others, because he never leaves the confines of his own imagination, even when talking to others. In fact, the primary conundrum of Golyadkin's existence is the question of whether his experiences are real – including, of course, the presence of his double – or simply imagined.

More than one critic has commented upon the elusiveness and difficulty of interpretation of *The Double* – which explains the wide range of interpretations of this relatively short work. The two most common approaches to this text focus on the fantastic and the psychological imagery found within it. *The Double* has been seen as a variation of the Romantic theme of doubling exemplified in the tales of Hoffmann, who was popular in Russia in the 1830s and 40s, and also in Russian appropriations of the same theme in the works of Gogol.[87] While the psychological intricacies of autoscopy (seeing one's own image) as a mental state were of interest to Dostoevsky's contemporaries, a purely psychological examination, from a psychoanalytical perspective, of *The Double* is performed in the 20th century by Otto Rank, a student of Sigmund

[87] Charles Passage identifies the Hoffmanesque themes and imagery in Dostoevsky's works in *Dostoevski the Adapter: A Study in Dostoevski's Use of The Tales of Hoffmann* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954). For links between *The Double* and Gogol's works, see A.L.Bem, "'The Nose' and *The Double*," *Dostoevsky and Gogol: Texts and Criticism* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979).

Freud.[88] Lawrence Kohlberg[89] and, more importantly, Richard Rosenthal[90] situate the psychological insights offered by *The Double* in their discussion of the story's literary imagery. Within a wider philosophical and historical framework, the psychological schism of the story's protagonist is also symbolic of the self-consciousness of an entire generation of the Russian intelligentsia. Dmitrii Chizhevsky's analysis subsumes purely psychological perspectives into a general assessment of the epoch of which *The Double*'s protagonist is a vivid representative.[91] Finally, Mikhail Bakhtin's study of Dostoevsky's polyphonic form explores *The Double* as an example of the dialogical consciousness.

In my approach to this text, I attempt to combine an appreciation of the dialogical form explicated by Bakhtin with the psychological and historical contextualization of the story. While Rosenthal, Chizhevsky and Bakhtin, each in his own right, contribute to understanding the novel, their approaches treat an isolated aspect of the text and are not mutually informed. At the same time, the sociological insights advanced by Chizhevsky, although in a very preliminary and perfunctory manner, can be explained by the sociological potential of

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[88] Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971).

[89] Lawrence Kohlberg, "Psychological analysis and literary form: a study of the doubles in Dostoevsky," *Daedalus* 92.2 (1963): 345-62.

[90] Richard Rosenthal, "Dostoevsky's Experiment with Projective Mechanisms and the Theft of Identity in the Double," *The Anxious Subject: Nightmares and Daymares in Literature and Film*, ed. Moshe Lazar (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983) 13-40.

[91] Dmitry Chizhevsky, "The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky," *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Rene Wellek (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962) 112-129.

Bakhtin's polyphonic form. The latter can also subsume the nature of the psychological schism outlined by Rosenthal from a strictly psychological perspective. Even though Rosenthal meticulously contextualizes his clinical-psychological observations in the textual imagery of *The Double*, I believe that ultimately the justification for any psychological observations must be warranted by an analysis of the literary form itself. Otherwise, we are left with a literary illustration of psychological symptoms but no explanation as to why the literary imagery can successfully embody psychoanalytical knowledge. In other words, I suggest looking more closely into the form of the novel to see how it contains both psychological and historical aspects commented upon by critics from their isolated perspectives.

Bakhtin's analysis of the dialogical consciousness and polyphonic form is pioneering in relation to Dostoevsky's art in general, but remains somewhat fragmentary in its treatment of *The Double*. The reason for this is that Bakhtin's analysis of the dialogical consciousness in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* does not include an interpretation of the significance of doubling as such. For Bakhtin, dialogical consciousness is characterized by the urge to intuit and control others' impressions of oneself. From this urge one cannot deduce the appearance of the double; the link must be provided by a larger philosophical framework of which dialogical consciousness is a constitutive part. Here is how Bakhtin summarizes the gist of *The Double*: "The novel tells the story of Golyadkin's desire to do without the other's consciousness, to do without recognition by another, his desire to avoid the other and assert his own self, and

what resulted from this. […] At the base of the intrigue, therefore, lies Golyadkin's attempt – in view of the total nonrecognition of his personality on the part of others – to find for himself a substitute for the other" (*PPD* 250). In order to see how the above diagnosis relates to Bakhtin's discussion of the polyphonic form, we must return to his earlier writings on doubling, to which he does not openly refer in his work on Dostoevsky, but which are its philosophical foundation and precursors. When it comes to studying the notion of doubling, Bakhtin's early writings are more theoretically rigorous than his Dostoevsky monograph where the significance of doubling is only adumbrated and left unexplained.

Bakhtin's assumptions about the relations between self and other are modeled upon his understanding of the aesthetic act as a relationship between an author and a hero. This relationship is based on Bakhtin's idea of internal and external perspectives of apperception. According to Bakhtin, what is available to me as my sensations, feelings, emotions and field of vision is unique to my position. I can never look at myself from the position of another person, except for momentary and, ultimately, illusory projective glances. Another person's vision and appreciation of me as a whole, as a complete and separate individual with a certain appearance and character, directly contributes to the development of my self-identity. I appropriate another's vision and reaction to me in a way that confirms my being, outlines my boundaries, and shows to me how I relate to the outer world. Bakhtin interprets the feedback that we receive from others about our presence in the world as a form-giving grace bestowed upon us by

others. This external perspective is necessary and irreplaceable for the existence of my inner self so that any attempt to usurp the other's position in relation to me by subjugating it to my internal perspective, by trying to complete myself without the graceful finalization of me by the other, by trying to appropriate the other's form-giving privilege in relation to me – all this is going to be not only futile, but also self-destructive.

> If, however, an authoritative position for such concrete axiological seeing – for perceiving myself as another – is absent, then my exterior – my being-for-others – strives to connect itself with my self-consciousness, and a return into myself occurs, a return for the purpose of selfishly exploiting my being-for-others for my own sake. In this case, the reflection of myself in the other, i.e., that which I am for the other, becomes a *double* of myself. This double irrupts into my self-consciousness, clouds its purity, and deflects my self-consciousness from its direct axiological relationship to itself.[92]

In order to be completed through external finalization by others, one has to be open to how others see him or her. This is possible as long as the internal self-perspective remains separate from the external perspective of others. Some conflation is possible if it is temporary and does not permanently blur the boundaries separating one's own vision of self from another's vision of him or her. Bakhtin points out how people habitually take into consideration their appearance and generally take into account the impression they make upon others by seeing themselves from the imaginary perspective of another person. This entails the capacity to "become another in relation to oneself, to look at

[92] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1996) 136.

oneself with the eyes of another."[93] Under normal circumstances, such quasi-external considerations are absorbed and "translated" into the language of the originating consciousness.[94] However, when such instances of an external self-regard solidify into a permanent perspective, "they may condense to the point where they deliver up to us a double of ourselves."[95] Bakhtin seems to suggest that our momentary and temporary reflective gazes at ourselves may sometimes ossify, and that we may no longer be able to swiftly translate self-reflexive external perspectives back into our internal point of view. At such instances a perceptual-aesthetic rupture occurs because the self-reflexive point of view, pretentiously external to our natural selves and yet at the same time an extension of ourselves, takes on a life of its own and usurps the point of view of the other. Such an ossification of an otherwise fluid and momentary process destroys the intersubjective infrastructure of the normative relation to self, when instead of preserving the possibility of accessing the impressions of a true other, we replace them by our calculated expectations of others' reactions. In other words, the other as such is eliminated in principle, and a fraudulent figure standing in for the other, who is our own projection, appears in our consciousness so that we never leave the realm of our own self. The ossification of an external self-regard means that we come to rely exclusively on our self-projected image to the detriment of real-world input and feedback from other people. This kind of

[93] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:98.

[94] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:98.

[95] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:98.

communication blockage with others concerning oneself can be illustrated in *The Double* in the scene where Golyadkin by chance meets his co-workers at a fashionable restaurant. Golyadkin is wearing clothes above his social level, has hired a pretentious carriage for the day, and is playing the role of a rich dandy. When the co-workers express surprise at seeing him, he tries to convince them that his rented image is true and that they have been misled all along as to his real identity. He effectively shuns their company and conversations because their reactions do not confirm the false image he desires for himself. Such self-images not based on external input are sheer fancy and may lead to misjudgments of taste, violation of social mores, and a loss of touch with reality because we cannot be attuned to the intersubjective signals that saturate our interactions and presence in the company of others. A self-projected image, when ossified, becomes a parallel being whom we take to be true but who is false because a true image must be based on real-world confirmations from other people. Hence, while the initial premises of external regard may be common and mundane, and familiar to everyone, their deeper and long-term consequences have dramatic effects upon self-consciousness and upon an individual's relations to society and himself.

If we take Bakhtin's early writings into consideration when reading his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, his discussion of Golyadkin's doubling becomes clearer because we can see the perspective through which he arrives at his concepts. We can see that Bakhtin's conclusions are premised upon the crucial role that the other plays in the formation of oneself. We can also

recognize doubling as a consequence of the act of usurping the aesthetic perspective of another in relation to ourselves. The aesthetic mechanism of doubling is the philosophical explanation of the closed circuit of Golyadkin's internal dialogues, which illegitimately replace what should be an intersubjective communication between self and other. Golyadkin's internal dialogues allow him to "play the role of another person vis-à-vis himself" (*PPD* 246) and "substitute his own voice for the voice of another person" (*PPD* 247). Golyadkin's tragic flaw is that he is unaware of this fraud that he commits. He thinks that the voices of others that resonate in his consciousness are voices of real others, and remains oblivious to the fact that the voices are his own projections. This paradigm of the relation of self to a fraudulent other is confirmed by Rosenthal's observations about the psychological make-up of Golyadkin:

> [I]n a sense there really are no others in [Golyadkin's] world. With the exception of his double, the most important characters either never appear or remain undescribed. When Golyadkin does exchange words with other people - his doctor, his servant, various employees from his office - he, but often they, have so many expectations as to what the other wants to hear, so many preconceptions of what society deems appropriate, that what occurs is a series of brilliantly written non-conversations, in which neither side makes contact with the other. […] What Golyadkin hears in these interchanges are his own thoughts, sentiments and suspicions echoed back to him. The failure to see or hear what's really out there, because we are too busy attributing what is us to them, is, of course, the mechanism of projection. A psychological mechanism is given concrete representation in *The Double*, and becomes a central metaphor in the story.[96]

[96] "Dostoevsky's Experiment" 15.

Rosenthal's observations are accurate, but when it comes to the nature of Golyadkin's doubling, they are descriptive rather than explanatory. Such psychological observations form a segment within a larger philosophical framework which predicts the psychological pattern of projection. This is why, I believe, treating Golyadkin's personality from a purely psychological viewpoint provides a technical and descriptive illustration of an isolated segment of what is otherwise a complex and unified process of the loss of individual autonomy. When discussing the conflation of external and internal perspectives, Bakhtin speaks of "muddying the purity" of one's conscience; in other relevant instances he speaks of the "falsehood" that contaminates one's behavior.[97] By colonizing other people's aesthetic perspective of us, paradoxically, we make ourselves objects of extraneous influence: "We should not relate our form to ourselves, by relating it to ourselves we become possessed."[98] The notion of being possessed denotes the loss of control over one's own conscience and actions because our behavior is not guided by our complete and particularized being, but rather by a reduced abstract idea of ourselves. A double is an externalized symbol of one's renouncement of power over oneself: we see ourselves as another body and another person who is beyond our reach and is not subject to our will. Thus, doubling as a phenomenon is indicative of the fact that we relinquish influence over our own personhood and exist instead as another, independent from us, person.

[97] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:167.

[98] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:256.

The element of non-freedom and compulsion implicit in Bakhtin's framework of a corrupt aesthetic self-regard is evident in Askol'dov's general examination of the psychology of Dostoevsky's characters. Askol'dov compares Dostoevsky's characters to actors, who not only embody their roles but also continuously gauge their performance from the point of view of an imaginary audience. The "duality of unmediated sensation and self-reflection" results in the overall "principle of dual signification of sensations," ultimately leading to "the phenomenon of the double."[99] Askol'dov further notes that self-apperception through another person's perspective "creates a certain kind of skewed mirror," which can "distort and change, sometimes debase" one's self-awareness.[100] An artificial external perspective upon oneself "begins to intrude inside and deform the inner life."[101] Dostoevsky's characters exhibit the symptoms of the influence of "something indefinite" (*nechto*) which colonizes their relation to self and others: "In the inner stirrings of these protagonists we obviously see that at times something indefinite intrudes into their inner life that, to a greater or lesser extent, is alien to their nature and that changes substantially the flow of their thoughts, feelings and predispositions."[102] Askol'dov's analysis closely mirrors that of Bakhtin: in the approaches of both critics we see doubling as a result of self-projection through moral-psychological colonization of other people's

[99] S. Askol'dov, "Psikhologiia kharakterov u Dostoevskogo" in *F. M. Dostoevskii: Stat'i i materialy*, ed. A. S. Dolinin, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Mysl', 1924) 8.

[100] Askol'dov, "Psikhologiia" 9.

[101] Askol'dov, "Psikhologiia" 10.

[102] Askol'dov, "Psikhologiia" 10.

perspectives. According to the intersubjective structure of self, by colonizing other people's images in his consciousness, Golyadkin invites the influence of the alien and self-inflicted force – Bakhtin's "indefinite other"[103] or Askol'dov's "something indefinite."[104] We can observe this extraneous influence in Golyadkin's personality and behavior well before the appearance of his flesh-and-blood double in human form. The tangible existence of the double is an illustration and an externalization of the inner processes of doubling that are already underway in Golyadkin's personality prior to the appearance of Golyadkin Jr.

We can recognize an instance of internal doubling of Golyadkin's self when he is taken over by his inner double – who has not yet acquired an outer existence – in the scene of Golyadkin's uninvited appearance at the birthday evening of Klara Olsuf'ievna. Having arrived with great pomp, Golyadkin is denied entrance by the doorman of Olsufiy Ivanovich Berendeev, Klara's father and Golyadkin's former benefactor. Humiliated, Golyadkin nevertheless sneaks up the stairs to the back door of Berendeev's apartment. For a moment, Golyadkin contemplates returning home, but instead is compelled to enter the ballroom as if possessed by an external force. This external force is alluded to by Golyadkin's reference to "demons" and the narrator's reference to the "spring" that propels Golyadkin forward. Here are Golyadkin's thoughts as he stands on the landing of the back stairs, contemplating his next move:

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[103] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:136.

[104] Askol'dov, "Psikhologiia" 10.

> ["]And here I am standing around like a blinking idiot! I could be at home now drinking a cup of tea…. A cup of tea would be nice. Petrushka will grumble if I'm late. Why not go home? **Demons** may take all this! Come on, I'm off!" Having settled things thus, Mr. Golyadkin shot forward as if a **spring** had been touched off inside him. Two strides, and he was [inside…S]uddenly, like a bolt from the blue, [Golyadkin] entered the ballroom.[…] Propelled by the same **spring** that had brought him bounding into a ball to which he had not been invited, he continued to advance steadily. (*PSS* 1:132-133, emphasis added)

Just a moment before he crosses the threshold of the apartment, he has the intention to go back home. But suddenly Golyadkin does the opposite, as if driven by an alien force and having relinquished control over his own actions. The "spring" that propels Golyadkin forward is his own alternate self. It is the self that Golyadkin creates by projecting the fraudulent images of others, by creating the false voices of others with which he interacts and which guide his behavior and self-awareness. As we have seen from our discussion of Bakhtin's notion of doubling, an ossified self-reflexive gaze seals off our self-awareness from real-world input from other human beings: "At this point Mr Golyadkin became oblivious of all that was going on around" (*PSS* 1:133). This explains why Golyadkin may assume, upon entering the ballroom filled with guests, "that he was all right, that he was like anyone else, and that his position, as far as he could see, was at all events a proper one" (*PSS* 1:135). When he is physically pushed out of the apartment by the servants, this strikes Golyadkin as a contradiction in human relations and in the objective state of affairs in the world, rather than a mistake in his own judgment.

Since this "spring" propels the hapless Golyadkin not only in this incident but also throughout the entire story, it is worth a close analysis. Before Golyadkin actually enters the apartment through the back door, he stands for more than two hours on the back stair cage. As he contemplates his next move, he appeals to the judgement of an imaginary other, who – and here Golyadkin is essentially usurping the other's voice – finds nothing reprehensible or unusual in his position. The narrator's tone conveys Golyadkin's presupposition of a hypothetical other and, at the same time, reflects Golyadkin's own perspective: "He was just watching… He could go in if he wanted… After all, why shouldn't he?" (*PSS* 1:131).[105] Golyadkin recalls the appropriate encouragements he encountered in his readings and which speak to the effect of justifying his position:

> It was only after he had been standing between the cupboard and screens amidst all kinds of lumber and rubbish for over two hours in the cold, that to justify himself he quoted a phrase of the late lamented French minister Villèle, to the effect that all comes in due season to him who wisely waits. […] He then called to mind that the Jesuits had a maxim that all means were justified provided the end was attained. (*PSS* 1:131-132)

Such opinions are rather Golyadkin's own rationalizations, which he conveniently attributes to historical figures who would, he projects, have approved of his behaviour. Rosenthal observes that "[p]rojective mechanisms are utilized in [Golyadkin's] repeated efforts at viewing himself from other people's

[105] The narrator's voice overlaps with Golyadkin's stream of consciousness. See Bakhtin, *PPD* 253.

perspective."[106] Bakhtin's interpretation of Golyadkin is very close to treating this character's images of others as projections (*PPD* 246-248). According to Bakhtin's idea of external aesthetic finalization, our own being is brought into a whole image, or rather a whole image is bestowed upon us by others through interpersonal interaction. While engaged in such interaction, a self must be open to contact with another and be receptive to feedback and reactions, whether emotional or intellectual. We cannot attribute a whole image to ourselves because this is the prerogative of others, which we cannot usurp. This task of bringing the varied and fragmented parts of ourselves into a whole person that we become can only be performed by another person. If we assume the role of another person in relation to ourselves, we invite and produce our own person (i.e., our own double) out of ourselves. Since the others in Golyadkin's consciousness are his own projections, rather than real people who provide their feedback to him, it follows that the influence they exert upon his selfhood is Golyadkin's own, mediated through the false others.

Golyadkin's rhetorical allusion to "demons" acquires a deeper philosophical meaning. Indeed, "demons" have taken the matter into their own hands and are the "spring" that "advance [Golyadkin] steadily." In the Russian Orthodox discourse, demons are us; they cannot be seen as something extrinsic to the human being because the demonic is part of fallen humanity, just as

[106] "Dostoevsky's Experiment" 22.

selfishness is constitutive of our being.[107] In this sense, Golyadkin is possessed by the alien force of the demonic, which is of his own doing, and he is also the source of this demonic force, which is alien and deeply intrinsic at the same time. The demonic in this sense is not an esoteric evil force, but rather the underlying principle of doubling. A demon is my own double and represents the force of compulsion that results from the elimination of others from my ethical horizon through my own volition, however subconscious. In this regard, one's personal demon is a fairly quotidian phenomenon expressed in a variety of mundane situations. For example, overly self-conscious individuals may become clumsy and feel uneasy when being watched by others: at such moments, an "indefinite other" intrudes into their "gestures and movements."[108] The prosaic nature of demons and doubles is underscored in Dostoevsky's texts. We may recall Stavrogin's sickly demon with a runny nose or Ivan Karamazov's demon in demonstrably typical and quotidian clothing of the period. This everyday nature of the demonic and doubling is evidenced in *The Double* by the fact that no one at Golyadkin's workplace is surprised when one day an exact copy of him appears as a new worker:

> Mr Golyadkin raised his eyes, and if he did not faint away, it was solely because he had had from the first a presentiment of the whole thing, had been forewarned, and had already known in his heart who the newcomer was. His first move was to take a rapid glance around to see whether there was any whispering, whether any

[107] I am grateful to Marina Kostalevsky and Olga Voronina for pointing out this aspect of the Russian Orthodox worldview in response to my presentation of a draft version of the present chapter.

[108] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:136.

> office witticisms were taking shape on the subject, whether anyone's face expressed surprise, and finally whether anyone had collapsed beneath his desk with fright. But to his great astonishment he could detect nothing of the sort. He was amazed by his friends' and colleagues' behavior. It seemed beyond the bounds of common sense. (*PSS* 1:146)

Golyadkin's double is accepted as a matter of fact in the same way that doubling occurs in ordinary life. People routinely act under the influence of their own self-reflexive gaze, compelled to say and do things that they perhaps would not do if they were fully unself-conscious and freely authentic. In fact, it is often hard to recognize the subtle line that separates the authentic self from a self-projected one, whether in oneself or in another.

The matter-of-factness of the co-workers' (absent) reaction prefigures both Dostoevsky's own ostensible astonishment at how the most fantastic social facts of life in Russia are often accepted as ordinary, and his defense of the fantastic in his art. *The Double* thus inaugurates the fantastic which will become a consistent feature of Dostoevsky's mature novels. The latter often portray the most unusual and strange events and figures from everyday reality through the magnifying prism of artistic insights into the typical-in-depth behind the atypical-on-the-surface.[109] On the one hand, the figure of Golyadkin's double is an utter phantasm, and indeed this is how it was perceived by the critics and reading public of the time. On the other hand, it reflects the pitfall of self-

[109] For an exploration of the artistic mechanism of Dostoevsky's fantastic realism, informed by Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, see Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoevsky's Fantastic Realism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990).

reflection which bypasses the role of the other in our relation-to-self, and to that extent is prosaic and realistic in Dostoevsky's "higher sense," of which he will speak later. Dostoevsky's notion of realism was not tied to external photographic appearances, but rather penetrated deep into the hidden nature which could make itself obvious through the most convoluted and improbable combination of circumstances and surface appearances. Dostoevsky's approach to mixing the fantastic and the real can be understood through Adorno's explication of unrealistic elements in art: "[W]hat is unreal and nonexistent in art is not independent of reality. It is not arbitrarily posited, not invented, as is commonly thought; rather, it is structured by proportions between what exists, proportions that are themselves defined by what exists, its deficiency, distress, and contradictoriness as well as its potentialities; even in these proportions real contexts resonate."[110]

Looking back at the fate of *The Double* from the height of his literary career in 1877, Dostoevsky thought that he had failed to master the form of the idea: "I did not succeed at all with the form of the tale. […I]f I now were to take up the idea and elaborate it once more, I would choose an entirely different form; but in 1846 I had not found this form and was unable to cope with the tale."[111] To some extent, Dostoevsky's self-criticism is pertinent because the failure of the novel to engage readers reflects the incongruity between its idea and form. In

[110] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 7.

[111] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, K. A. Lantz, and Gary Saul Morson, *A Writer's Diary*, vol. 2 (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1993) 1184.

his mature novels, Dostoevsky develops ideas through the experiences of his characters. We, as readers, evolve with his stories and come to see what happens to the characters as the result of their own actions and choices.[112] In *The Double*, however, it is very difficult to recognize how Golyadkin is implicated in the genesis of his own double or what the significance of the double is at all. One has to link Golyadkin to his double through a theoretical paradigm, such as the aesthetic finalization of our personal identities by other people, in order to explain how Golyadkin is implicated in the appearance of his double. If we look at the characters from Dostoevsky's later fiction who also observe a doubling of their personalities (Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov), we can trace the doubling to its causes and observe its progression and results within the stories themselves. In *Notes from the Underground*, for example, the narrator seems to be aware that his own moral choices have led him to his current state. Moreover, the second half of the *Notes* describes the narrator's past and his lack of moral courage – all of which allows us to put his current mental state into perspective and link it to its causes. Likewise, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the reader can follow Ivan's moral implication in his father's murder from its inception and preparation to its

[112] Dostoevsky's narrative techniques involve and implicate the reader in the described events so that, for example, readers partake of Raskol'nikov's crime in *Crime and Punishment* by instinctively siding up with him in certain scenes. See Robert Belknap, "The Siuzhet of Part I of *Crime and Punishment*" and Horst-Jurgen Gerigk, "Narrative Technique as 'Maieutics': Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*," *Dostoevsky on the Threshold of Other Worlds: Essays in Honour of Malcolm V. Jones*, eds. Malcolm V. Jones, Sarah J. Young and Lesley Milne (Ilkeston: Bramcote Press, 2006) 153-56 and 170-174, respectively.

psychological aftermath for Ivan. The idea of *The Double* is not fully articulated so that the reader sees the double as something external to Golyadkin (i.e., something that happens *to* him) rather than as a materialization of Golyadkin's *own* pattern of self-consciousness.

While Dostoevsky may have left too many gaps for the reader to be able to understand the nature of the mysterious double in terms of the plot or psychological imagery, the dialogical form that he employs in portraying Golyadkin's self-consciousness provides us with clues about Golyadkin's moral universe and the origins of his double. The logic of dialogical consciousness stipulates the mandatory presence of recognitive relations of the protagonists to other consciousnesses embodied by other characters, readers, and the author. Dialogical consciousness, when portrayed in a novel, cannot be contained and isolated from its implicit and necessary existence in an implied social network, which alone imparts meaning to the portrayed self-consciousness. The existence of a dialogical self-consciousness is premised upon its meaningful interaction with another consciousness; this interaction is the existential condition of a dialogical self-consciousness because its existence is primarily determined by the intersubjective relationship between self and other, rather than by a supposedly realistic imprint of the material-external circumstances of the historical world. Therefore, we must look for the intersubjective bonds of Golyadkin's dialogical consciousness to its ambient sociological world that can explain the nature of his self-consciousness, just as the growth of a plant points to the required presence of certain nutritive elements in the soil. As Bakhtin has stipulated, it is not the

genre of the realistic novel per se that is suitable for a portrayal of dialogical consciousness, but rather the type of novel which takes as its primary object of portrayal a consciousness suffering from a lack of recognition of itself as an autonomous and independent being. Such novels portray the characters' awareness of their reflection in others, and re-enact recognitive features of identity formation. While Bakhtin does not consider the sociological framework of recognition, he nevertheless intuits that lack of intersubjective recognition is a primary psychological feature of Golyadkin's consciousness. The critic describes Golyadkin's struggle to regain his identity as a search for "recognition by another person" (*PPD* 248). Or, Golyadkin's suffers from "full non-recognition of his persona by others" (*PPD* 250).

Golyadkin's double, aside from being a fantastic event in itself, nevertheless points, as a deviation from the norm, to an inherent feature of human psychology: the innate need of a self-consciousness to address and be addressed by another being. The issue of the psychological fraud aside, Golyadkin's weighing of others' potential opinions of his actions is a feature of a normally functioning human self. In psychological terms, one's relationship to others, and one's consideration of what others think about him- or herself is an integral part of healthy individual identity formation. George Mead's psychological framework explains the appearance of an inner "I" as a function of successful socialization of individuals into the intersubjective networks of interaction, owing to which the individuals project onto themselves social roles and expectations, encompassed by Mead's concept of "me." As Mead explains,

"[t]he observer who accompanies all our self-conscious conduct is then not the actual 'I' who is responsible for the conduct in *propria persona* – it is rather the response one makes to his own conduct."[113] For Mead, the human voice, by virtue of its being heard simultaneously by both the speaker and the listener, is a medium and a symbol of being simultaneously within and without oneself. When we speak to others, we develop an image of a hypothetical other who listens and who reacts to our words and tone of voice. By reacting to the reaction of this generalized other, through empathy and shared understanding with this image of humanity, we are able to steer, adjust, and manipulate what and how we communicate, ultimately determining the direction and intensity of our relations with others. In fact, to the extent that we observe ourselves from the perspective of a generalized other, who judges and evaluates our behavior, we develop an "alter ego" and experience a certain innate doubling of personal identity:

> The actor takes the perspective toward himself of another participant in interaction and becomes visible to himself as a social object only when he adopts as his own the objective meaning of his vocal gesture, which stimulates both sides equally. With this self-relation, the actor doubles himself in the instance of a 'me', which follows the performative 'I' as a shadow. [114]

Thus, there is a healthy and natural element of doubling in human identity, which involves the construction of a generic image of a socially functional self and a satellite concrete image of private selfhood. We can speak

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[113] George Herbert Mead, *Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964) 145.

[114] Jurgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) 177.

of a dual structure of self, consisting of internalized values of the external social network, and a private individuality defined by how it matches or deviates from the socially projected expectations. In other words, people's reactions, expectations and various forms of feedback help to shape a sense of a socially constructed "me," which is the foundation for the existence of an individual "I." As Mead argues, receiving psychological feedback from others and internalizing the point of view of a generalized other into one's consciousness is a prerequisite for the adequate development of an individual self. Two-way communication between a self and its social environment is necessary for the self-steering sense of propriety, orientation, and navigation in the social world, as is evident in a thriving selfhood.

When we apply the Meadian paradigm to Golyadkin's interactions with others, it appears that his communication with another person is not genuine but rather conditional upon the other's confirmation of his own self-reflexive image. Golyadkin's attitude towards others is such that he accepts their input so long as it does not contradict his own vision, or challenge or threaten his ego. To put it simply, Golyadkin does not wish to risk being ridiculed, refuted, or ignored. Therefore, his relations with others are tainted by a seemingly nonchalant attitude towards their judgment: "I keep to myself, and so far as I can see am not dependent on anyone" (*PSS* 1:116). Golyadkin's ethical stance towards others is ambiguous: he appears willing to listen and take into consideration what others may think or say, but in reality he seeks to uphold his own rightness, value, and esteem. Golyadkin pretends to be open to interactions with others but withholds

his confirmation of the significance of their presence or opinions. Here is how Dostoevsky describes his character in a letter to his brother:

> Yakov Perovich Golyadkin is standing quite firm in character. A horrible scoundrel, he's unapproachable; refuses to move ahead at all, claiming that after all, he's not yet ready, and that he's fine for the meanwhile just as things are, that he's all right, has a crystal-clear mind, and that perhaps, if it came to that, then he could do that too, why not, why shouldn't he? After all, he's just like everyone else, he's just so-so, but otherwise just like everyone. What does he care! A scoundrel, a horrible scoundrel![115]

The central theme that can be intuited in Dostoevsky's somewhat haphazard and poetic depiction of his hero is that the latter wishes to preserve his own will at all costs, even when compelled by circumstances. Hence, Golyadkin pretends to be "like everyone else" (*PSS* 1:115), moved and attuned to his worldly interactions, but ultimately it is Golyadkin's own will that must prevail – such is the import of the idea that Dostoevsky has of this character. In the social-psychological framework of the intersubjective formation of self, Golyadkin's ambivalent, half-acknowledging and tentative predisposition towards others means that the role of others is fundamentally undermined in his consciousness because he does not fully recognize them. Golyadkin recognizes others only if they confirm his personal inclinations – he thus replaces others' reactions with substitute voices of his own consciousness. Therefore, such feedback from others is essentially his own, filtered through his own preferences but illegitimately promoted to the status of genuine intersubjective interaction. As a result, he lives

[115] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, David Allan Lowe, and Ronald Meyer, *Complete Letters,* vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988) 113.

in a simulated and artificial social environment which is a blown up version of his own inner world, rather than reflecting the selves of other people he encounters. Roger Anderson finds that Golyadkin's "world is a closed one in which he assumes all possible roles, in which he alone lives."[116] The formation of Golyadkin's individual self is achieved by skipping the inter-subjective stage[117] and creating an "I" out of an "I", not a private "I" out of a socially constructed "me." While Mead's framework provides for a certain form of legitimate doubling during normal psychological processes, Golyadkin's personality exemplifies an *il*legitimate form of doubling in which his social self is a by-product not of an outer circle of interaction but rather of his own atomistic self (i.e., a self producing itself). This kind of illegitimate doubling of Golyadkin's self occurs the moment he conceives of his own actions from the perspective of the fraudulent generalized other, who is no longer an assemblage of real-world information based on the input from other human beings, but rather represents his own fabricated projection of other people's reactions. Golyadkin effectively bypasses other individuals in his psychological closed-circuit, feeding back to himself the very impressions that he himself conceptualizes and attributes to others.

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[116] "Dostoevsky's Hero in the Double: A Re-Examination of the Divided Self," *Symposium* 26 (1972) 103.

[117] Doctor Rutenshpits recommends that Golyadkin spend more time with people: "Don't fight shy of the good life […] Go to theaters, go to a club, and in any case don't be afraid of an occasional glass. It's no use staying home. You simply musn't" (*PSS* 1:115). Such advice is a testimony to the lack of the presence of other people in Golyadkin's life.

The above rupture in the intersubjective link between self and other, in terms of Mead's theory, is a social-psychological restatement of Bakhtin's moral-aesthetic observations concerning the role of others in the formation of a self. For Mead, the sense of selfhood depends on one's continuous response to being evaluated by a generalized other. In Axel Honneth's rendition of Mead's thesis, "a subject can only acquire a consciousness of itself to the extent to which it learns to perceive its own action from the symbolically represented second person perspective."[118] This idea finds a direct equivalent in Bakhtin's description of "aesthetic apperception [as] a reaction to a reaction."[119] In the context of Bakhtin's idea of dialogical consciousness, this premise realizes itself as the dialogical character's capacity to react to an anticipated reaction of the other, to include another consciousness' future reaction in the administration of one's own behavior and outlook. Mead's discussion of a social self as that part of our self which is a reflection of external norms and expectations is equivalent to Bakhtin's description of the details of our own self which are "transgredient to our consciousness" [120] and which are picked up by others and attributed by them to us, as a "gift,"[121] in a manner that enriches and shapes our identities.

These similarities between Bakhtin and Mead are due, in my opinion, to the intersubjective implications of the polyphonic form. Bakhtin's dialogical consciousness as a form of literary portrayal is premised upon recognizing the

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[118] *Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) 75. See also 74.

[119] *Sobranie* 1:80. See also 1:89.

[120] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:98.

[121] Bakhtin, *Sobranie* 1:95.

power of the character to negate and assert his or her independent presence in the narrative. Portraying the character's capacity to negate and define his or her own being is essentially the process of recognition in social theory. The recognitive nature of the polyphonic form explains why Golyadkin's consciousness illustrates the intersubjective patterns of identity formation outlined by Mead. However, while the recognitive process of identity formation is evident as a structure in *The Double*, as in most of Dostoevsky's fiction, this does not necessarily mean that the protagonists recognize other self-consciousnesses present in the narrative. It is precisely Golyadkin's trouble that he does not recognize the power to negate that is inherent in others. His treatment of others is not directed to their innate and independent selves, but to their watered-down replicas projected by his own consciousness. Golyadkin evacuates the ethical core of others out of their being and into the realm of mental construction. In his dealings with others, he is facing his own conjured up notions of what must guide their actions and choices by excluding the actual person who is responsible for any moral choice.

When Golyadkin replaces others in his interpersonal relations by his projected images of them, this does not occur simply because he wants to uphold his self and present it to himself in the best light. The process is complicated by Golyadkin's belief that in his judgment of others and of his own self, he is appealing to a universal ethical paradigm which subsumes all beings. He does not miss an occasion to state his principles of honesty, integrity, and other staple virtues that he claims to adhere to: "I don't like odd words here and there,

miserable double-dealing I can't stand, slander and gossip I abominate. The only time I don a mask is to go to a masquerade, I don't go about in front of people in one every day" (*PSS* 1:117). This notion of what constitutes good behavior that Golyadkin holds on to and against which he measures his own and others' actions is implicitly present in his dealings with others. Whereas in Mead's framework the generalized other provides us with guidance as to how to act, in Golyadkin's world, his firm notion of what's good and bad provides him with the equivalent guidance. We can say that Golyadkin's moral credo replaces his need for others, because he arrives at a self-steering mechanism through his rationalistic understanding of human virtue rather than through being attuned to the signals that others send him. Golyadkin's faith in the fixed and universal picture of the moral world acts as a substitute for the image of a generalized other and is not attuned to the real-world input from others. Golyadkin believes that his mental conjectures of the ethical norms of society explain all individuals in principle and any particularized situations can be extrapolated from the general ethical principles he holds on to.

In his analysis of *The Double*, Dmitrii Chizhevsky argues that "Dostoevsky's introduction of the problem of the double appears as one of the most significant milestones in the nineteenth-century philosophical struggle against ethical rationalism."[122] Ethical rationalism is the belief that moral norms which guide our actions can be derived through a rational analysis. Moreover, such moral universalism (another name for ethical rationalism) presupposes that

[122] "The Theme of the Double" 129.

rules governing human behavior are external to, and can be treated separately from the situational context to which they apply. The idea that a rationalized morality can be isolated from the environment in which it is to be enacted and somehow preserved through reason "carries a schism into the psychic life of man, setting abstract duty against concrete inclination."[123] The psychological schism adumbrated by Chizhevsky can be made more explicit as a philosophical duality of reason and motive. Michael Stocker argues that ethical theories, to the extent that they abstract from concrete individuals, disregard individual motivation for an act of altruism by explaining it solely in terms of a pre-existing imperative:

> What is lacking in these theories is simply […] the person. For, love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community all require that the other person be an essential part of what is valued. The person – not merely the person's general values nor even the person-qua-producer-or-possessor-of-general-values – must be valued. The defect of these theories in regard to love, to take one case, is not that they do not value love[,..] but that they do not value the beloved. Indeed, a person who values and aims at simply love, that is, love-in-general or even love-in-general-exemplified-by-this-person "misses" the intended beloved.[124]

Stocker's characterization of rationalistic love, which gets its existential justification out of a notion of proper love rather than focused attention to a particular person, is illustrated in Golyadkin's fixation upon Klara Olsuf'ievna.

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[123] Chizhevsky, "The Theme of the Double" 127.

[124] "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character*, eds. Robert Kruschwitz and Robert Campbell Roberts (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1987) 40.

His thoughts about her abound with self-directed proof that his love is real, morally worthy, and superior to the feelings of others who may be courting this woman out of material interests for her dowry and social status. Critique of ethical rationalism as a mode of relating to people as members of the species rather than as concrete beings is paralleled in Dostoevsky's concern with finding "a person inside a person" and is a long-standing theme in Dostoevsky's art. Dostoevsky expresses his aesthetic views in a series of review articles on painting exhibitions.[125] Dostoevsky writes that he is "terribly afraid of 'tendentiousness' [*napravlenie*]" in the art of painting precisely because a tendentious portrayal beats its own humanistic purpose (*PSS* 21:72). Dostoevsky's term for such tendentiousness is *mundirnost'* (*PSS* 21:73): something that transparently radiates "a well-known social thought of the unpaid debt of the highest classes to the masses" (*PSS* 21:74). Dostoevsky's aesthetic pronouncements are in fact also ethical since he wishes that artists could focus upon individual human beings and see them undistorted by ideological (i.e., universalist ethical) prisms. Dostoevsky states that portraying people as individuals rather than as impersonations of certain values or classes would be more effective than artistic propaganda at instilling a sense of empathy and concern for the fate of such people in real life. Dostoevsky's aesthetic position is incompatible with ethical rationalism since he warns artists of

[125] Although these articles are written on the topic of visual art, the aesthetic ideas transcend the boundary between literary and visual forms. This is why, for example, Dostoevsky can discuss the artistic value of Repin's paintings by alluding to Gogol and Dickens (*PSS* 21:75).

passing over the particularity of individual human beings because of an overwhelming concern with social or class values. In Dostoevsky's assessment of tendentiousness in painting, and in the philosophical criticism of ethical rationalism, we hear an opposition to treating our dealings with others as instantiations of general rules on the ground that such an approach introduces an element of uniformity (*mundirnost'*) and certain dehumanization (missing the person) of human relations. In his interpretation of Bakhtin's philosophy, Gary Morson speaks of the ability to meet the momentous and unique demands of fluctuating ethical situations "a matter of sensitivity to particular cases."[126] The predilection towards this or that action is not conditioned by any stand-alone theory that can be safely transposed from one situation to another, but is rather to be based on the continuous responsiveness to the unique conflation of changing circumstances at particular points in time and space. This ability to meet the fluctuating demands is what Morson aptly calls "prosaic wisdom."[127] The moral lesson of *The Double* is prosaic in this sense: it points out that, in our dealings with other individuals, we should be less concerned with external rules and prescriptions and should be guided by our sensitivity to the integrity of the individuals we encounter at each particular moment.

Since a sincere act of friendship or love requires that we be authentic and spontaneous (i.e., that we desire the act in question), obtaining "these great goods while holding those […] ethical theories requires a schizophrenia

[126] "Bakhtin, Genres, and Temporality," *New Literary History* 22.4 (1991) 1076.
[127] "Bakhtin" 1076.

between reason and motive."[128] This ethical schizophrenia, which marks the split between individual motive for action and an abstract imperative, is evident in Golyadkin. Chizhevsky is right in pointing to the forces of the Enlightenment as being responsible for causing the psychological havoc in Golyadkin's identity. It is a common assumption among Dostoevsky scholars that his oeuvre is characterized by a strong opposition to certain ideological movements, originating in the Enlightenment, such as utilitarianism, as they were popularized in Russia in his time. But the actual mechanism of how the Enlightenment philosophy can bring about a psychic split within a concrete individual can only be explained in a highly mediated conceptual form – something which Chizhevsky points out but stops short of explicating. The lack of critical explication, beyond general and passing remarks, as to how the Enlightenment is implicated in the events of *The Double* is understandable because the images of the text are not directly transposable into the 19th century philosophical terminology (unlike, for example, the explicit references of *Notes from the Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*). To relate this story to the intellectual history of its time requires identifying some of its key elements and magnifying them, so to speak, through the prism of philosophical paradigms, such as ethical rationalism, of a higher level of abstraction. Only after such an extrapolation and explication has been performed, can one show how the unique psychological state of Golyadkin can relate to the rational principles of the Enlightenment.

[128] Stocker, "Schizophrenia" 41.

The Enlightenment as a historical phenomenon refers to the period of great scientific discoveries in post-Renaissance Europe (roughly from the 17th century onwards) and the practical application of rational and scientific principles across a wide range of human activities. The philosophical import of the Enlightenment loosens the grip of irrational superstitions and results in, to use Theodor Adorno's term, a certain "disenchantment" of the world. The desacralization of the human cosmos is accompanied by an increasing ability to control various parameters of one's living environment, other people, and ultimately one's own self. The tendency towards total rationalization of private and public life, inaugurated by the Enlightenment era, means that religion and morality come to be questioned by rational inquiry as well. The rationalisation of the moral sphere, according to Adorno, leads to "duality within the moral agent" by introducing a divide between moral universal justifications for actions and private motivating reasons.[129] Golyadkin's doubling is an artistic image which illustrates what in philosophical terms is the dislocation of "rationalized moral reasons" from "the motivating reasons of concrete moral agents."[130]

When Golyadkin approaches others on the basis of his rationalistic idea of ethics, which dictates what the guiding principles of one's actions should be, he stops treating them as unique individuals and becomes oblivious of their unique situational impulses. Instead, he calculates and falsely perceives their

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[129] J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2001) 15-16.

[130] Bernstein, *Adorno* 15.

reactions as instantiations of general rules. Such an existential attitude, however, is neither equally applied nor unbiased. Ultimately, Golyadkin selects those impressions of others of himself which uphold him in the best possible light. In other words, Golyadkin's claim that he evaluates others and himself on the basis of detached moral standards is not entirely true because he instrumentalizes the appeal to moral integrity by recognizing those opinions of others which confirm his own. The appeal to ethical rationalism becomes an extension of Golyadkin's extra-rational and purely egoistic desire for self-aggrandizement. As such, this mechanism mimics within an individual psyche the larger philosophical pattern found in the rationality of the Enlightenment.

In the chapter on the Enlightenment in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel analyzes the ideology of the Enlightenment as a mode of thinking which defines rationality in opposition to nature and superstition. By disproving unfounded folkloric and mythical explanations of natural phenomena, rational science and reason propose an alternative explanation, which is based on objective and neutral formal criteria of logical thought independent of extra-rational subjective inclinations of self-preservation or emotional import. Hegel argues that despite its opposition to superstition, Enlightenment is a form of ideology which absorbs myth into its own being and recreates the mythical functions at a new level by proclaiming a clean separation between rational forms of thought and their natural content.[131] Drawing on Hegel's analysis,

[131] For an analysis of Hegel's philosophy concerning the Enlightenment, see Jurgen Stolzenberg, "Hegel's Critique of the Enlightenment in "The Struggle of the

Adorno radicalizes both the notion of rationality as a form of mythical ideology and the intertwinement of reason with nature to suggest the instrumental nature of reason, as opposed to an objective and neutral one, in his *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. Adorno argues that by conceiving of reality in rationalistic terms, which are assumed to have a separate and independent existence without being implicated in the interests of self-preservation tainted by immediate material and non-rational desires, we are creating a false image of ourselves and the world, making ourselves oblivious to the instrumental and ideological use of appeals to rationality. For Adorno, reason itself becomes corrupt and blind to its origins when it "interprets itself as independent of bodily inclinations and drives rather than being a certain formation of inclination and drives."[132] Therefore, any claim that can be made by moral rationalism to represent a universal and objective moral perspective is undermined by the interests of instrumentality and self-preservation inherent in rationality. The above framework of ethical rationalism, originating in the objectifying ideology of the Enlightenment, explains Golyadkin's ethical stance towards others and the appearance of his double. Golyadkin interacts with others through the screen of the mythical image of the other which he creates on the basis of his rationalized understanding of the universalist ethics of intersubjective relations. These ethics

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Enlightenment with Superstition,"" *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Kenneth Westphal (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 190-208.

[132] Bernstein, *Adorno* 143ff.

are fraudulent because, as I have been arguing, they are based on the false image of the other, which is a projection and an extension of Golyadkin's ego.

The above analysis illustrates how the formal aspects of the polyphonic form determine the intersubjective dimensions of dialogical consciousness. Bakhtin's early conceptualization of aesthetic apperception and its implicit role in identity formation processes explains the social-psychological implications of dialogical self-consciousness. The ethically illegitimate practice of replacing other people's presence in one's lives by their conceptual replicas, and its concurrent practice of weighing individuals against a universalist scale of moral values, dehumanizes one's partners in interaction and, as a result, leads to one's own dehumanization, as is evident in the image of Golyadkin's double, who gradually supplants him in all his life functions. In the larger historical-philosophical paradigm of the Enlightenment, the appearance of Golyadkin's double is symptomatic of self-reflexive and rationalistic thinking found in the extra-literary realms of social psychology and philosophy. These extra-literary realms are implicated and subsumed by the recognitive nature of the polyphonic form and must be included in an analysis of *The Double* in order to arrive at a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of this complex work, which speaks to the reader on multiple levels of abstraction.

Chapter 4

Honour and legal rights in *Crime and Punishment*

In the 1840s, the liberal wing of the Russian intelligentsia developed an awareness of and an interest in the ideas of socialism in response to European influences in philosophy and literature. Ranging from speculative curiosity to wholehearted embrace, this interest animated intellectual discussions in private circles of Moscow and St.Petersburg. The more serious and devoted students of socialist theories certainly had reason to maintain the confidentiality of their meetings, given how subversive the nature of their discussions was to Russia's oppressive political regime. In what may be considered a tribute to the intellectual climate of the era, young Dostoevsky participated in discussions of utopian socialism in the clandestine circle led by Mikhail Petrashevsky. Dostoevsky's involvement proved fateful, because in 1849 he was arrested, along with other members of Petrashevsky circle, and sent to a Siberian labor camp (the initial death sentence was changed to imprisonment during a nerve-racking mock execution). Ten years later Dostoevsky returned to St. Petersburg as an ardent supporter of the autocracy and a staunch opponent of those who carried on the legacy of the revolutionary thought of the 1840s. He resumed his literary activities in the 1860s and became heavily involved in journalism as a contributor and journal editor. While there was a notable reversal in his political leanings as a result of his Siberian experiences, his subsequent novels continued to develop the same aesthetic form that he had realized in his earliest works. It

may be said that Dostoevsky's growing anti-socialist political perspective of the post-Siberian period, consistent with the evolution of his moral and spiritual outlook, is ingrained in the intersubjective ethos of his literary form from the beginning of his writing career. Mature Dostoevsky comes to openly oppose the socialist ideas with which he once felt an intellectual affinity; yet this ideological opposition is implicitly present in the literary form of his earliest works. The difference between his pre- and post-exile works lies in the thematic treatment of political ideology. While his early works embed political and philosophical questions implicitly into the subtle complexity of his literary form and images, his mature novels address philosophical and political questions explicitly and in a more transparent manner. Dostoevsky's polyphonic novelistic form recreates the recognitive intersubjective bonds of individuals to their social environment and, therefore, inherently contains a critique of the social factors that make recognition difficult or impossible to obtain. In Dostoevsky's mature works, the inherent critical potential of the polyphonic form is reinforced through the content by thematizing the philosophical ideas which constrain individual freedom. This powerful symbiosis of formal and ideological elements is a hallmark of Dostoevsky's mature novels and evident in *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

Crime and Punishment presents the story of Rodion Raskolnikov, a young man in his mid-twenties who plans and executes the murder of a pawnbroker and her sister, owing to a cluster of motifs and circumstances. The reasons behind the murder are complex and involve Raskolnikov's dire financial

need; the precarious situation of his mother and sister, both of whom he loves dearly; the influence of rationalistic philosophical ideas about the justification of means to attain noble ends; and his own intellectual and spiritual search for identity. In this chapter, I would like to place Raskolnikov's quest and the novel's events in the conceptual context of legal rights, modern subjectivity, and individual autonomy. I argue that Raskolnikov's motivation stems from the moral injuries to his personality sustained in Russia's suspended transition from a status-based corporate social structure to a modern nation state. Raskolnikov is caught in a legal and existential gap when his personal rights are not yet recognized by society, although he has already developed expectations for them to be upheld.

As critics point out, the period of the Great Reforms (1860s-70s) constitutes the historical backdrop for his mature novels. For instance, Fridlender notes that one of the central concerns for Dostoevsky has been the effect of developing capitalism on the mindset of people who could no longer occupy a stable niche in the rapidly changing contours of the social structure.[133] Bachinin similarly observes that the Hegelian notion of the self-alienated spirit, which the critic identifies in Dostoevsky's works, is characteristic of a transitional period between "two epochs and consists in merging the parts of differing systems of spiritual values in the consciousness of an individual."[134] Indeed, as Bachinin

[133] *Realizm Dostoevskogo*, 193.

[134] "Dostoevskii i Gegel': K probleme "razorvannogo soznaniia,"" *Dostoevskii: Materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. V.G.Bazanov (Leningrad: Nauka, 1974) 14.

notes, Dostoevsky's world "is no longer feudal, but not yet capitalistic."[135] Such comments are correct in identifying the general principles, but in order to advance our understanding of the sociological realities in Dostoevsky's works, we have to identify more specific mechanisms of the transition from one historical epoch to another and show how such transition informs the consciousness of Dostoevsky's characters.

Russia in the 19th century had a stratified social structure consisting of estates, or *sosloviia*, constituted as collective bodies, each having its own group identity on the basis of property, occupation, noble status and official service rank. By virtue of belonging to a given *soslovie*, subjects of the Russian imperial state could claim and exercise the corresponding economic and civic rights, which varied from one estate to another. Despite the abolition of serfdom, progressive changes in the court system, and the introduction of self-governing administrative units in the countryside (*zemstva*) during the period of the Great Reforms, on the whole "the soslovia proved extraordinarily hardy and lasted until the end of the ancient regime."[136] The Russian *soslovie* system must not be seen exclusively as rigid and stunted in development, because it possessed resources to adjust and to accommodate newly emerging categories of the population. As Gregory Freeze observes, "the soslovie structure itself was highly flexible, enabling the creation of new categories to satisfy the various

[135] "Dostoevskii i Gegel'" 14.

[136] Freeze, "The Soslovie Paradigm" 26.

requirements of state and society" throughout the 19th century.[137] The estate system, due to its flexibility and its capacity to adjust to changing circumstances and demands, was the means of identifying and recognizing rights, not trumping or denying them. At the same time, the new social formations appearing within Russian society in the post-reform era, which were drawn from mixed segments of the population, were increasingly testing the limits of the status paradigm and finding themselves outside the paralegal framework of the traditional estate structure. From the industrial labor force in urban centers to skilled and semi-skilled workers in the new occupations, exemplified by "teachers, statisticians, agronomists, foresters," whole social groups "did not fit into the existing social hierarchy of corporate soslovia."[138]

When Dostoevsky talked about the new layers of Russian society which had not yet found their reflection in literary images, I believe he responded to the fact that the traditional social structure was no longer able to maintain the diverse and fluid boundaries between social strata. With the advent of the Great Reforms, class or group identities within the Russian population were no longer defined by stable social features, such as one's family origins or service rank, but were challenged by new and fluid social configurations attempting to organize themselves and define their rights. The newly emerging social entities protruded out of the official estate structure and required their own cultural "historian," as Dostoevsky remarked in the *Writer's Diary*:

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[137] "The Soslovie Paradigm" 33-34.

[138] Freeze, "The Soslovie Paradigm" 29.

> One senses that something is not right here, that an enormous part of the Russian order of life has remained entirely without any observer and without any *historian*. At least it is clear that the life of the upper-middle level of our nobility, so vividly described by our writers, is already an insignificant and "dissociated" corner of Russian life generally. Who, then, will be the historian of the other corners, of which, it seems, there are so awfully many?[139]

Among the symptoms and causes of the gradual disintegration of the estate system, we can point out the changes in the cultural and legal consciousness of those who saw the growing limitations of the estates when it came to meeting demands for the protection of individual rights. In his study of the emergence of the new legal consciousness in mid-19th century Russia, Richard Wortman argues that the Great Reforms were made possible by the existence of new cohorts of Russian legal thinkers and practitioners, who sympathized with and felt committed to the principles of the rule of law, judicial transparency, and equality before the law.[140] Coming of age in the 1830s to 1850s, and familiar with the concepts and principles of contemporary Western jurisprudence, these individuals were instrumental in preparing the ground for the reforms of the 1860s, which paved the way for greater uniformity and equalization of rights within the Russian population. Most of them were graduates of the new School of Jurisprudence tasked with filling the ranks of

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[139] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, K. A. Lantz and Gary Saul Morson, *A Writer's Diary*, vol.2 (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993) 847.

[140] *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976)

legal officials in the imperial bureaucracy.[141] Although their professional activities were limited to the legal sphere, the ideological influence of their conception of legal selfhood, individual rights, and social structure had effects far beyond the sphere of jurisprudence and influenced the cultural and moral expectations of subsequent generations of Russians.

The character of Raskolnikov evokes the ethical charge of this new generation of Russian legal specialists who came to question the ethical and legal foundations of the traditional social structure. As a law student who has published articles in legal journals, Raskolnikov has a deep and personal interest in the philosophical significance of jurisprudence. Raskolnikov is typical of the historical trends of the day: the numbers of law students, informal discussion circles focused upon legal matters, and periodicals on jurisprudence were on the rise throughout the 1860s.[142] In the figure of the police investigator Porfirii Petrovich we have an example of the "new type of a cultured investigator" who personifies the "actual task of the legal reform" by shedding the habits of the "old inquisitional process."[143] In other words, law and legality constitute both the

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[141] The Imperial School of Jurisprudence (*Imperatorskoe Uchilishche Pravovedeniia*) was founded in 1835 upon the initiatives of Prince Peter Oldenburg and Michael Speranskii. The school offered general secondary education with a specialization in law in the last years of study. By the standards of its time, this was an elite institution that enrolled the children of nobility who were obliged, upon graduation, to serve in the Imperial judicial offices across the Russian Empire for a certain number of years. For the history of the institution, see Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 49-50.

[142] Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 251-254.

[143] L.P.Grossman, "Dostoevskii – khudozhnik," *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo*, ed. N.L.Stepanov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959) 363.

theme and the ideological backdrop of the novel, firmly grounding it in the historical legal developments of the period and the atmosphere of the Great Reforms.

Raskolnikov personifies certain features of an individual with a budding sense of the new legal consciousness beyond the traditional notions, at an intimate and personal level. In his outline of the moral-psychological make-up of the new legal officials who broke the mold of traditional thought, Wortman points out the common biographical detail of "the absent father."[144] The absent fathers symbolize the rupture in inter-generational cohesion and the cultural transmission of traditional values, illustrating the fact that an increasing proportion of legal officials acquired and appropriated their life values not as part of a family heritage but rather "from their reading, education, association with peers."[145] Such a horizontal learning pattern made possible the acceptance of "new notions of social roles that would appear in the intellectual world."[146] Although the cohorts of legal specialists discussed by Wortman were, for the most part, of noble descent, nevertheless they included a proportion of non-nobles. Wortman's description of their channels of learning and appropriation of new ideas matches Raskolnikov's case. We learn in the novel that his father died while Raskolnikov was still a child. When Raskolnikov moved to St.Petersburg to study at the university, he was further cut off from the mores of traditional

[144] Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 91.

[145] Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 91.

[146] Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 91.

upbringing. As a result, his cultural and intellectual orientation, like that of the legal specialists who shaped the emerging new ethos of the Great Reforms in Wortman's analysis, was influenced by the "literary and philosophical currents of the time [which] explained and justified the world [and furnished] values to live by."[147]

The new legal ethos ushered in a new subjectivity which was at odds with the traditional social structure and a person's place in it. In both moral and legal terms, the new legal consciousness paved the way for a new sense of inalienable human dignity separate and independent from one's social position. As Jane Burbank points out, "the central element of imperial rule – the division of the governed into status and other groups with particular rights and duties [coexisted with] efforts to construct inclusionary and equal citizenship in Russia, a project that began in full force in the 1860s and continued by fits and starts until the collapse of the tsarist imperial system."[148] In broad historical terms, an appeal, however implicit, to universal citizen rights is inherently incongruent with the divisive estate approach to legal personhood: "[n]ational justice and a law common to all must inevitably weaken and eventually destroy class justice."[149] Within this historical paradigm of the opposition between the traditional class structure on the one hand, and the modernizing and progressive

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[147] Wortman, *Legal Consciousness* 91.

[148] Jane Burbank, "Thinking Like an Empire: Estate, Law, and Rights in the Early Twentieth Century," *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, eds. Jane Burbank, Mark Von Hagen and A. V. Remnev (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2007) 197.

[149] Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* 30.

impulse towards a universal definition of citizen rights on the other, Raskolnikov's crime can be understood as a manifestation of this ideological, legal, and moral conflict within the society at large. The character of Raskolnikov is a focal point of the conflicting forces of the old norms and the new ethical and legal demands of a modern subjectivity.

As Bakhtin argues, the narrative of Dostoevsky's mature novels is influenced by the implicit standpoints of his protagonists. The presentation of the social reality therefore is mediated through the deeply personalized and subjective responses of the protagonists to their surroundings. Such a decentralization or de-monologization of narrative is evident in *Crime and Punishment*, where the fixed sociological details of Raskolnikov's social environment are presented through his understanding and reactions to it in his internal dialogues and his conversations with others. In other words, external facts concerning Raskolnikov's life are not given on their own as separate and self-contained firm facts, but as reflected in Raskolnikov's actual or implicit reaction to them. Our knowledge of his environment is mediated through his self-consciousness and the significance he attaches to what goes on around him.

What remains to be added to Bakhtin's framework of dialogical consciousness is that the polyphonic form, to the extent that it is premised upon the participation of the protagonist in the narrative, must portray the characters according to the framework of intersubjective recognition. Recognition as a social-theoretical concept explains the dependency of individual identity upon intersubjective confirmations from others and also describes the configuration of

a person's relationship to his or her surrounding reality in general. According to the framework of recognition, the legal aspect of our selfhood, determined by our rights and responsibilities, is an integral part of our most intimate being. The legality of our selves, by determining our powers and ability to alter the course of our lives, goes deeper than purely formal and institutional relations by affecting the core of our self-consciousness to the extent that formal and external freedoms affect our individual autonomy. Legal freedom and legal personhood are inseparable from the most intimate and immediate sense of selfhood with its distinct, immediate and autonomous sense of "I." The latter is innately social and political even in its private-psychological dimension seemingly separate from the external social reality.

Grounding our analysis of literary characters in the social context found in Dostoevsky's novels allows us to reveal the previously overlooked significance of the defining sociological features of dialogical consciousness and to correct existing sociological commentaries on his fiction. When Dostoevsky's impoverished clerks or their families turn up at the doors of those placed higher than themselves on the social ladder, critics tend to interpret such scenes as quests for social justice by the "insulted and injured," or as situations calling for human acts of kindness, without attempting to contextualize such occurrences in the sociological functions of social status. Take, for example, the minor but dramatic character of Katerina Ivanovna in *Crime and Punishment*, who visits her deceased husband's superior to ask for help. When the latter refuses to

provide assistance, this does not merely show his lack of pity,[150] but rather indicates that a status-based society is erratic, unreliable, and unable to secure a baseline economic subsistence for its members. Prior to the development of universal legal rights, members of a social class could appeal to their status within the social ranks to acquire a degree of "society's protection for one's human 'dignity.'"[151] The 20th century differentiation between social, political and civil rights was, in the paralegal context of a traditional stratified society, amalgamated in the single concept of one's estate as one's social family, which provided for an individual's public needs. A man's right to what is now called social assistance or social support is "derived from the status which […] determined the kind of justice he could and where he could get it."[152] It is no coincidence, therefore, that upon being refused help from her late husband's superior, Katerina Ivanovna cries out in despair that she was raised in high society and attempts to demonstrate her knowledge of French while making her children beg in the street. By appealing to her class distinction, she is effectively claiming assistance according to the paralegal paradigm of class justice whereby members of an estate look out for one another following the tacit understanding of group solidarity. In a similar manner, the central event of the novel,

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[150] In a manner that exemplifies the common approach to such scenes, Vladimir Etov describes this incident in terms of the lack of pity on part of the superior. See his *Dostoevskii. Ocherk tvorchestva* (Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 1968) 202.

[151] Honneth, *Struggle* 109.

[152] T.H.Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1950) 12.

Raskolnikov's act of murder, awaits its proper contextualisation in the large-scale social changes within mid-19th century Russian society. The weakening status-based social structure was slowly giving way to pressing political demands for a more equal and inclusive distribution of legal rights. The novel is a literary document to the moral injuries suffered by people of Raskolnikov's social stature whose dignity was left exposed and unprotected, forcing them to seek ingenious ways to regain their selfhood. When Raskolnikov asks himself if he is "a louse, like everyone else, or a human being" entitled to a "right," our understanding of the novel can be enriched if this concept of "right" is interpreted as a legal proposition, not only a moral-philosophical one (*PSS* 6:322). The scope and content of legal rights of the historical social substratum which Raskolnikov represents explain the reasons behind his act and the psychological state that drives him to commit his crime.

Raskolnikov as a historical social type emerges at the overlap of two social paradigms of individual autonomy: a premodern conception of "honour" and a modern jurisdiction of legal rights. The notion of honour is historically symptomatic of status-based societies stratified into estates, such as those found in the Russian "soslovie" system, and prescribes a certain moral and cultural code of behaviour and outlook. While the historical practice of duelling is perhaps one of the more easily identifiable illustrations of the importance of "honour," this notion, properly speaking, is firmly rooted in the premodern feudal social functions of family in defining the economic rights and social identities of individuals: "'the ethics of honour' is not a purely private matter

between two isolated atomic individuals, but is grounded in the family as the fundamental pre-polis social unit."[153] The family is the primary social environment to nurture the independent self-consciousness of a person and facilitates the future socialization of a family member into the larger framework of society. In premodern societies, the requirement to defend family honour had been part and parcel of the economic need to secure personal and family property and the necessity to protect one's independent self-consciousness acquired through the family. An assault on family property or "honour" was therefore an assault on one's individuality and as such it threatened one's social position both morally and economically.[154] Since one's family was the root of one's social being, its disgrace or disintegration was equivalent to the loss of one's public self and position in society: "[t]he independent consciousness that emerges from the family with a full awareness of its responsibility must be prepared to lay down its life for the sake of its independence."[155]

We can recognize echoes of the above traditional notion of "honour" in Raskolnikov's ruminations over the fate of his sister, Avdot'ia, and his mother Pul'kheriia Aleksandrovna, both living in the countryside and both in dire financial need. Raskolnikov's sister also experiences the unwelcome but

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[153] Robert Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 86.

[154] Williams, *Recognition* 86.

[155] H.S.Harris, Introduction, *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (Part Iii of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4)* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, trans. H.S.Harris and T.M.Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979) 197.

persistent sexual advances of Arkadii Ivanovich Svidrigailov, the man in whose household she works as a governess. Raskolnikov's concern regarding his family's situation goes beyond subjective emotional reactions and is rather symptomatic of the sociological core of his being. Concern for one's closest family members in terms of their economic well-being and protection from physical or sexual assault is a deep-seated and sociologically conditioned cultural response "within the context of the noble, warrior consciousness, the defender of family honour and property."[156] Defending one's family honour in traditional status-based societies was equivalent to defending one's very selfhood and independence when the state apparatus had not yet developrd the means to guarantee one's "rights" (which in turn awaited their development into recognizable operational concepts) and when one's very identity was closely linked to the family or clan.

When he targets the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov chooses her by chance since he does not have a particular conflict to settle with her, even if he finds her worthless and despicable. However, to the extent that he focuses upon her as a detestable social type, as a flea on the social body, he may be said to have targeted her personally to avenge for the actual and hypothetical harm she inflicts on vulnerable people. In an act that is motivated both by empathy for her supposed victims and revenge for his own position of vulnerability, Raskolnikov selects Alena Ivanovna for his attack as a representative of the social type he deplores and which infringes on his family honour. In the days immediately

[156] Williams, *Recognition* 86.

preceding the murder, Raskolnikov stumbles upon a drunk young woman who, Raskolnikov assumes, has been sexually assaulted. This encounter makes him think about the "percentage" of women who are forced into prostitution. He wonders if one day his own sister "Dunechka will end up in this percentage!.." (*PSS* 6:43). Just as people may take advantage of an opportune moment to sexually exploit someone in destitute circumstances, so a money-lender like Alena Ivanovna draws profit from her clients' poverty. When Raskolnikov recognizes that his own sister could be in the role of the victim, in a similar fashion, he sees someone like the money-lender Alena Ivanovna among the perpetrators. By chance Raskolnikov overhears a conversation in a tavern about Alena Ivanovna, in which she is described as "a louse, a cockroach, and not even that much, because the old crone is harmful. She's eating up someone else's life […] She doesn't deserve to be alive" (*PSS* 6:54). Raskolnikov admits to having "exactly the same thoughts" (*PSS* 6:55).[157] While pawnbrokers do not cause the economic hardships that encroach upon the integrity of Raskolnikov and his family, Alena Ivanovna nevertheless readily draws profit from his destitute circumstances and is a symbol of damage to Raskolnikov's family honour. Having no other valuables left, but needing one last visit to finalize his plan of the murder, Raskolnikov pawns some family valuables, such as his deceased father's watch. He is unpleasantly surprised at the meagre amount offered by the

[157] To be precise, Alena Ivanovna's description cited here occurs in the novel in the larger context of the utilitarian position which justifies criminal acts if they serve the greater good of the society and mankind. Nevertheless, she is still presented as someone not simply dispensable, but definitely harmful to people and society.

calculating old woman, who does not fail to further reduce it by subtracting the accrued interest on Raskolnikov's previous debt. Just as prostitution commodifies the human body, so Alena Ivanovna indifferently puts a price tag on Raskolnikov's family belongings, which "are especially dear as memory" for him (*PSS* 6:193). To the extent that Alena Ivanovna impersonates the threat to the integrity of Raskolnikov's family, his assault on her is a misaligned response aimed at protecting family honour.

Hegel argues that in premodern societies, any threat to one's lifestyle or property may be perceived as a point of honour and a matter of a person's entire existence: "[t]hrough honour the singular detail becomes something personal and a whole, and what is seemingly only the denial of a detail is an injury of the whole, and thus there arises the battle of one whole person against another whole person."[158] In this light, the murder in the novel is a displaced duel in which Raskolnikov kills his opponent as a way of standing up for his dignity and answering the recurring question he asks himself: "Am I a trembling creature or do I have a right…" (*PSS* 6:322). The notion of honour, as an amalgamation of the premodern rights of a person, reflected the person's family background, possessions and public reputation. Raskolnikov justifies his act to himself by the fact that, in his interpretation, might equals right and that no external moral standards exist other than the ones set by those who dominate. Such a philosophy

[158] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, H. S. Harris, and T. M. Knox, *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (Part Iii of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979) 138.

is intrinsic to premodern honour-driven "battles" or conflicts which, in the course of social development, came to be resolved through courts within a formal legal framework: "[t]here can be no question of the justice of the occasion for such a battle; when the battle as such starts, justice lies on both sides [...] because the whole (personality of both) is at issue. [...] Might, or rather might individualized as strength, decides who dominates."[159]

However, the above Hegelian feudal model of a struggle for rights pre-supposes equal, conscious, and willing participation of the opposing sides in the conflict, with full knowledge of its reasons and payments extolled. If a brigand robs a random victim in a dark alley, for Hegel this is not a battle of two self-consciousnesses for recognition because no pre-meditation, no targeted attempt at a particular individual, and, most importantly, no demand for the recognition of one's rights and social status are involved. Moreover, a brigand merely aims for one's material possessions without threatening one's selfhood or attempting to prove his own. As such, a brigand is a mere social outcast whose actions do not have significance in the moral and paralegal sphere of honour and recognition of one's "mastery" of rights and powers:

> But it is a different thing when there is inequality in the negation and one-sidedness in the battle, which in that event is no battle. This inequality, where domination is purely on one side - not swaying from one to the other[,...] is oppression and, when it proceeds to absolute negation, murder. Oppression and murder are not to be confused with battle and the relation of mastery.[160]

[159] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 138.

[160] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 138.

While Raskolnikov's vision and understanding of his own act could be relayed in terms of the premodern function of honour, his actual deed falls short of defending his honour and is instead a criminal act of murder with the aim of material re-possession. It is devoid of the Hegelian condition of an open and fair battle which stems from the antagonism of two wills or two self-consciousnesses, each claiming the other's affirming recognition of itself as an independent individual. Obviously, Raskolnikov's assault on the pawnbroker is far from an open duel between equals, for the two sides do not exercise their might in the same sphere, one wielding monetary leverage and the other an unannounced brutal physical force. (He strikes the old woman from behind when she cannot even see him). When Raskolnikov admits that his murderous act must seem "funny" to others, it is the underlying context of an open and fair combat for honour and recognition that brings out the oddness of his incongruous act. The contextual paradigm of a battle for honour explains Raskolnikov's supposition of the moral impunity of his act. Annihilation of one's opponent is justified and beyond reproach in a premodern combat for recognition of one's rights and status, which serves as a conceptual template for a duel of honour. However, such an ethical context is not entirely applicable to Raskolnikov's act, even if he may have acted upon the moral impulse of fighting for his honour.

Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov oscillates between defining his deed as a robbery, by saying that he did it for money, and claiming that it was above all a personal moral and psychological test. The pangs of conscience that Raskolnikov feels are symptomatic of his half-awareness that his act must be

judged by external and objective criminal law rather than seen as a realisation of an insulated struggle for honour, carrying with it its own paradigm of assessment. When he confesses his crime to Sonia Marmeladova, he says: "I don't know… I haven't decided yet – will I take the money or not" (*PSS* 6:317). Raskolnikov's suffering results from his half-hearted and split belief in his own theory of moral impunity. As he puts it, he did manage to kill but he failed to cross the moral threshold. Beyond the threshold, as he sees it, are those like Napoleon who throw human lives in mass numbers on the dice of war but who are never accused, nor do they feel guilty, of a single murder as long as they remain victorious. Raskolnikov calls himself an "esthetic flea" because his act is not as glorious as those of the great military commanders, as if grandeur and scale were the only qualities separating him from historical figures. He wonders why killing thousands of people on a battlefield makes a commander famous, while killing a single person is persecuted as crime. By raising this question, Raskolnikov confuses two qualitatively different planes of human antagonism. Hegel compares a battle for honour between individuals and families to a war between states to suggest that a war is founded on similar principles to a battle for honour. In a proper war, there are no external standards of right or wrong; its purpose is the resolution an existing antagonism between nations, the possible absorption of one state entity by another, or the creation of the terms of a legitimizing peaceful accord.[161] Even though fighters in a war may not be

[161] H.S.Harris, Introduction, *System of Ethical Life*, 53.54ff. Just as Hegel discards mere criminals from the contest for honour, so his definition of a "proper war" excludes the

seeking to clear personal insults, and although the weapons of destruction (i.e., firearms) are rather impersonal and unselective in inflicting damage upon the opposite force, combatants are nevertheless fighting for "national honour."[162] So, when Raskolnikov looks up to Napoleon-like historical figures who determine the fates of human masses, he is still envisaging a sphere of human activity qualitatively contingent with an inter-personal antagonism, based on a code of honour and exempt from external moral assessment. A battle for honour, as we have seen, is an inappropriate paradigm for justifying his criminal act because of the absence of a demand for recognition of rights and status, and the absence of clear intentions on both sides to fight in order to resolve conflicting claims. In fact, the family or clan can no longer account for the rights to independence that Raskolnikov instinctively defends because such rights have become a matter of the state structure and apparatus. In the transition to modernity, issues of rights and independence cease to be matters that can be resolved through one's personal implication and action, but rather become a matter of structural objective regulations governed by impersonal institutions of courts operating with universal definitions of personhood and rights.

The premodern concept of honour was a realisation of the paradigm of individual autonomy at the feudal level of social development. To the extent that one observed the honourable conduct accorded to one's social standing, one was

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historical brute force of Asiatic hordes which strike anything in their way not in order to levy a legal submission but to plunder.

[162] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 149.

recognized as an autonomous and responsible individual. With the transition to a modern model of society – a process which, in the Russian context, took place in fits and starts throughout the entire 19th century and was not completed until the revolution of 1917 – honour gave way to new forms of subjectivity and social recognition. According to Honneth, the transition from a status-based social structure to a modern nation state with universal rights resulted in the evolution of the concept and functions of honour into those of universal legal rights. Legal rights replaced the traditional notion of honour tied to one's social status by endowing each citizen with a set of uniform rights to be respected and protected by the state. This form of "legal recognition can emerge only in the course of a historical development" since it requires a certain sophistication of state jurisdiction and the bureaucratic apparatus.[163]

Throughout its development in Western Europe and North America, the notion of legal rights expanded to include the right to a basic education (free mandatory schooling system for children) in the late 19th century and, subsequently in the early 20th century, a guaranteed subsistence level for adults, since basic levels of education and economic security were recognized as pre-conditions for a meaningful participation in the democratic processes of political will-formation.[164] Even though universal legal rights properly belong to the context of a modern nation state and representative governance, the link between economic subsistence level and individual autonomy was making itself felt

[163] Honneth, *Struggle* 108.

[164] Honneth, *Struggle* 117.

already in the late phases of premodern status-based societies, such as Russia during the period of the Great Reforms. Raskolnikov's indignation at his own helplessness and inability to stave off the looming downfall of his family, which he sees fast approaching, is a primary reason for his crime. His assertion of his "right," which distinguishes him from a "trembling creature," can be understood as his implicit demand for recognition of his personhood. In the context of a modern citizen state, such personhood is protected by a guaranteed level of economic subsistence below which a person must not fall. Although modern legal rights as such are not openly mentioned in the novel, Raskolnikov's financial need and his moral indignation point to the ideological impulse of protesting his and his family's loss of autonomy and dignity – which, in turn, points to the failure of the social structure to protect human dignity. Dostoevsky's contemporary and radical critic Dmitrii Pisarev points out in his review of *Crime and Punishment* how Raskolnikov's ability to act according to his moral imperatives depends upon his material independence:

> As long as Raskolnikov is provided with property, capital and work, he is given a full right and even a sacred duty to love his mother and sister, to protect them from need and insults and even, if the situation calls for it, to divert to himself the blows of the fate, predestined for them, weak and timid women. But as soon as the material means are exhausted, at the same time Raskolnikov loses the right to carry in his chest human feelings as a bankrupt merchant loses the right to be enlisted in this or that guild.[165]

[165] Dmitrii Pisarev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvenadtsati tomakh*, vol. 7 (Moskva: Nauka, 2000) 351.

As Pisarev's comment indicates, moral and financial autonomies are inter-related. This is quite in line with an intersubjective theory of identity formation which sees in "a basic degree of economic security" a minimal requirement for a healthy and functional individuality.[166] According to Honneth, it is important to see any fundamental requirement for the development of an autonomous self not as a normatively desired pre-condition, but rather as a moral right of the person in question. The right to a base subsistence level was realised historically through the introduction of social welfare system which forms an integral aspect of modern legal rights. Legal rights represent one of the main channels of identity formation, so much so that their withdrawal – and this applies equally to other forms of moral recognition according to Honneth's scheme, i.e. love and solidarity – "endangers the identity of human beings."[167]

The recognition theory of individual identity and autonomy explains Raskolnikov's act not in terms that are external to his consciousness but on the basis of his own dialogical relation to his environment. We learn about the poverty of Raskolnikov not simply through the narrative which mentions his debts to the landlady, his poor clothes and his rare meals. We learn about his poverty through its moral significance to him as he spends his days preoccupied with the fate of his family and the moral injustice of their situation. Unable to bear his own expenses let alone help his family, Raskolnikov experiences first-hand the state of being in which one has "nowhere to go," to use the phrase of

[166] Honneth, *Struggle* 117.

[167] Honneth, *Struggle* 135.

Marmeladov, another character inflicted by poverty and humiliation at the sight of his family's utter downfall. In effect, Raskolnikov experiences the disintegration of his moral self because he is unable to carry out the actions he deems morally necessary. Not only he is unable to help his family, but they send him what little money they do have from his mother's pension and his sister's earnings because he is expected to be the eventual breadwinner in the family. His sister Dunia's decision to marry Petr Luzhin, a man of questionable morals and dubious intentions but on a firm financial footing, forces Raskolnikov to seek an immediate solution to his family's "old, sore, long-standing" financial problems (*PSS* 6:39). The impoverishment of his family and the sacrifice that his sister is obliged to make lie at the root of Raskolnikov's feelings of helplessness and indignation at his lack of the economic and moral "right" to interfere in his sister's plans for marriage: "Forbid it? What right do you have? What can you promise them in return for such a right?" (*PSS* 6:38). The problem of helping his family is not, strictly speaking, Raskolnikov's own but a social one. If his mother and sister have to look up to him as their supporter and bread-winner, it is because the social welfare system is not in place in Russia, i.e. they have no welfare rights that would allow them to get by with their daily economic requirements.

On the basis of John Dewey's pragmatist psychology, Honneth proposes that "negative emotional reactions, such as being ashamed or enraged, feeling hurt or indignant" accompany the state of "being illegitimately denied social

recognition."[168] Negative emotional states result from having one's intentions disrupted and desired actions blocked so that "one's action [is] thrown back upon itself."[169] In such a situation, individuals acquire "the motivational impetus" for "active conduct" to "dispel the state of emotional tension into which they are forced as a result of humiliation."[170] This mechanism linking a moral indignation to an action explains the process through which the idea of the murder crystallizes in Raskolnikov's mind upon his receiving the news of his sister's looming marriage. He opposes this marriage because he sees in it his sister's solution to their family's economic hardships. Most importantly, he is appalled at the idea that his sister's engagement to a man she cannot respect is a sacrifice of her integrity partly for him, Raskolnikov: "for herself, for her own comfort, even to save herself from death, she wouldn't sell herself; no, she's selling herself for someone else! […] That's what our whole catch consists of: for her brother, for her mother, she will sell herself! […] It's clear that the one who gets first notice, the one who stands in the forefront, is none other than Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov" (*PSS* 6:37-38). Raskolnikov's moral being opposes this marriage yet he has no means of preventing it: his intention is thwarted by his inability to carry it out. According to Dewey, when one's intentions are frustrated and one faces barriers, one wants to act, because action is an outlet for the desire to reinstate one's autonomy. Raskolnikov begins to anxiously seek an

[168] Honneth, *Struggle* 136.

[169] Honneth, *Struggle* 137.

[170] Honneth, *Struggle* 138.

action to express his protest: "Clearly, now he had to not be anguished, to not suffer passively, by mere reasoning about unresolvable questions, but to do something without fail, at once, quickly. Decide at all costs to do at least something, or…" (*PSS* 6:39). Even though Raskolnikov has already entertained the idea of robbing the money-lender, the thought remained abstract and indefinite until the moment of concretization: a "month ago, and even yesterday, it was only a dream, whereas now … now it suddenly appeared not as a dream, but in some new, menacing, and quite unfamiliar form, and he suddenly became aware of it himself" (*PSS* 6:39).

The negative emotional reactions which follow a thwarted action have the potential of making it known to individuals "that certain forms of recognition are being withheld from them."[171] To the extent that individuals become conscious of an infringement upon their rights, their actions resulting from such awareness and aimed at rectifying their situation express their "struggle for recognition."[172] In light of Honneth's recognition theory it appears that Raskolnikov's criminal act is a realisation of his struggle for recognition of himself as an independent being with rights. Based on his interpretation of Hegel, Honneth argues that criminal acts could be viewed as assertions of under-recognized legal rights and legal personhood. By tracing "the emergence of crime to conditions of incomplete recognition", Honneth locates the "criminal's inner motive [...] in the experience of not being recognized, at the established

[171] Honneth, *Struggle* 136.

[172] Honneth, *Struggle* 138.

stage of mutual recognition, in a satisfactory way."[173] While Raskolnikov admits that he is not in a position to prevent his sister from marrying Luzhin, he also feels that morally the right should be his. Likewise, if he does not have the means to shelter his family from the hardships they are facing, this does not nullify his desire to do so. Hence the leitmotif of Raskolnikov's crime – his question "am I a trembling creature or do I have a right?" – can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of his moral entitlement to a right which is denied to him.

Whether an experience of disrespect provokes criminal behaviour or becomes a basis for an organized political movement "depends above all on how the affected subject's cultural-political environment is constructed."[174] In *Crime and Punishment*, we can gain an understanding of this environment and Raskolnikov's orientation within it from a number of perspectives. Raskolnikov overhears by chance a conversation in which one of the interlocutors presents a materialistic and rationalistic justification of murdering the same money-lender Alena Ivanovna in order to use her money for charity and other humanitarian ends. This conversation closely reflects Raskolnikov's own thoughts on this matter. Moreover, he has written articles in which he has presented and defended the moral immunity to accusations of crime, including acts of murder, of those who possess sufficient intellectual and psychological integrity, and whose actions benefit society. Raskolnikov easily recognizes such ideas, albeit in their seemingly benign and subdued form, in Luzhin's pretentious philosophizing,

[173] Honneth, *Struggle* 20.

[174] Honneth, *Struggle* 139.

when the latter tries to show that he is *au courant* concerning the subjects discussed among the radical youth circles by rehearsing certain utterly utilitarian principles of economic self-interest. These notions of the epoch as they find their way into the novel can be summarized, among other ways, by focusing on what may appear to be their central philosophical quandary: the prospect of committing griveous crimes with a moral, if not legal, impunity. Dostoevsky culled such radical theories from the periodicals of his day and his own past questioning of the social-philosophical foundations of the state. A struggle for recognition may realize itself not only in criminal acts but also in an organized political movement. This possibility is made evident in the fact that Raskolnikov's closest friend Razumikhin suspects him of being a member of a clandestine revolutionary movement. Such a guess is not entirely random considering that the motifs of Raskolnikov's crime are similar to those of Russian revolutionary groups of the period who demanded, in effect, recognition of certain rights, or respect for the denigrated aspects of selfhood of the under-recognized segments of the population (mostly peasants and serfs). The link between Raskolnikov's deed and a broader revolutionary movement is implied in the remark of the police investigator handling Raskolnikov's case: "It's good that you only killed a little old woman. If you'd come up with a different theory, you might have done something a hundred million times more hideous!" (*PSS* 6:351). The image of "one hundred million" human lives that are to be sacrificed for a new social order is prominent in Dostoevsky's novel *Demons* which focuses on the emergence of an underground revolutionary group. Raskolnikov

represents only one branch among others on the genealogical tree of the "developed man of the nineteenth century," to use the self-characterisation of the narrator in Dostoevsky's "Notes from the Underground."

The experience of social disrespect has as its objective corollary the individual's inability to engage in or honour contractual obligations. The novel opens with the depiction of Raskolnikov hurriedly leaving his apartment, hoping to avoid meeting his landlady whom he owes "all around" (*PSS* 6:5). In fact, the landlady obtains a promissory note from Raskolnikov and eventually decides to claim his rent payments through a police order. The landlady's complaint brings Raskolnikov to the police station where he faints, unable to cope with the accumulated stress, upon overhearing the officers' conversation about the murder he has committed. The incident proves fateful for Raskolnikov because it brings him under the attention of the shrewd police investigator Porfirii Petrovich. However, apart from pushing the story along, Raskolnikov's visit to the police station points to the underlying connection between Raskolnikov's failure to honour his contracts and his act of murder. First of all, by failing to honour his contracts Raskolnikov is already becoming, in a sense, an outlaw. By failing to observe a contract, according to Hegel, we put ourselves outside the law and deny our own legal status and rights. In some ways, Hegel treats a breach of contract in the same manner as murder in that both types of actions eradicate the violator's own selfhood by excluding the perpetrator from the domain of mutual recognition and interaction.[175] Raskolnikov's failure to honour

[175] Honneth, *Struggle* 52.

his contractual obligations illustrates the weakness of his status as a legal person. The landlady's complaint indicates that Raskolnikov's status as a morally and financially responsible individual is questioned. The police order obliging Raskolnikov to pay is an attempt to preserve, even if by force, his responsibility toward his commitments: "[t]he application of force is the final means by which the delinquent subject can be prevented from falling out of society's network of interaction."[176] Observing contracts is equivalent to the ability to engage in interpersonal relations with others because of the contractual nature not only of human interaction but one's very "status as a legal person in the first place."[177]

Falling out of the societal network of interaction is equivalent to the eradication of the vital existential ties to the other. The institutional frameworks which observe and protect one's individual rights are the historically evolved ways of securing the recognitive role that the other plays in the maintenance of one's self-consciousness. Therefore, Raskolnikov's failure to honour his legal obligations, as illustrated in the incident with the landlady, is symptomatic of his compromised relation with the other. In other words, the crucial role that other people play in the development of one's self-identity is reflected in the institutional and interpersonal channels of recognition. When the other's existential role in our well-being is compromised, this results in the loss of autonomy – we become subject to extraneous influence. We may recall here that Golyadkin in *The Double* acts under the alien influence of the "spring" or the

[176] Honneth, *Struggle* 52.

[177] Honneth, *Struggle* 52.

force of "demons." In a similar manner, when Raskolnikov confesses his crime to Sonia, he remarks: "It was not I who killed the old woman, but the devil" (*PSS* 6:322).[178] Likewise, Porfirii says that Raskolnikov's act resulted from a "darkening" (*pomrachenie*) of his consciousness (*PSS* 6:350). In both of these novels the demonic is evoked specifically to mark the loss of control over one's own behavior. The metaphor of being possessed by an alien force, acting as if under a "*pomrachenie*" or the influence of one's own double points to a deeper underlying principle at work in the images of both protagonists. Golyadkin, as we saw in the preceding chapter, attempts to replace another person with his own mental construct so that he remains within his own consciousness even when communicating with others. Raskolnikov also corrupts the external and independent position of the other by doing away with it altogether in his moral theory. Raskolnikov's moral theory divides people into distinct classes of those who blindly obey the moral law and the superior caste able to see through the artificiality and conditionality of traditional morality. The latter group, according to Raskolnikov, is exempt from such dependency upon others' approval because their self-consciousness is above and independent from the common opinion. Raskolnikov's moral theory amounts to the claim that certain people can exist outside the intersubjective framework of mutual recognition – they do not need

[178] Iakov Golosovker also traces the word "demons" to an external agency in *Brothers Karamazov* by locating its source in the rational system of the pure reason in Kant's philosophy. See his *Dostoevskii i Kant: Razmyshlenie chitatelia nad romanom "Brat'ia Karamozovy" i traktatom Kanta "Kritika chistogo razuma"* (Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963).

an existential confirmation by another being. Such a theory is not viable, both rationally and in terms of the conditions of the polyphonic form. At the level of the literary form, given the nature of the polyphonic novel, we can establish from the start that Raskolnikov cannot be exempt from the requirement of recognition precisely because the defining feature of his dialogical consciousness is that it actively seeks and defines itself against the approval of those with whom it comes into contact. The dialogical consciousness made possible by the polyphonic form is necessarily embodied and embedded in the principles of recognition. As for the rational content of Raskolnikov's moral theory, its moral quandary consists in attempting to provide a moral justification for amorality. Raskolnikov's moral theory is self-contradictory because it attempts to remain on moral grounds even in renouncing any appeal to morality.

As I have argued, Raskolnikov's search for recognition of his selfhood stems from the overlapping contexts of honour and legal rights. The motivation for the act of murder is rooted in Raskolnikov's existential need to be recognized and confirmed by others as an independent and responsible member of society. Therefore, his renunciation of the principles of intersubjective recognition in accordance with his moral theory stems from his attempt to gain the very recognition that he ostensibly denies. In fact, the further he advances towards the realization of his plan, the more he enmeshes himself in the framework of recognition which begets the moral impetus for his action in the first place. After the murder, Raskolnikov experiences an intense and immediate feeling of separation from society, friends and family. He experiences the state of

separation from the rest of humanity for the first time at the police station where he is called for failing to pay his debts:

> A dark sensation of tormenting, infinite solitude and estrangement suddenly rose to consciousness in his soul. […] What was taking place in him was totally unfamiliar, new, sudden, never before experienced. Not that he understood it, but he sensed clearly, with all the power of sensation, that it was no longer possible for him to address these people in the police station, not only with heartfelt effusions, as he had just done, but in any way at all, and had they been his own brothers and sisters, and not police lieutenants, there would still have been no point in his addressing them, in whatever circumstances of life. (*PSS* 6:81-82)

Raskolnikov's alienation can be explained by Hegel's view of an individual self as being deeply dependent upon recognition from others. Hegel's original and consistent premise throughout the entire course of the development of his ideas was "that the identity of the individual citizen cannot be divorced, except by abstraction, from the collectivity which shaped it."[179] This idea of mutual interdependence between an individual self and the surrounding social environment has been called by Hegel "mutual recognition" and, in his mature works, "universal self-consciousness."[180] Hegel's theory of crime is based on the assumption of an intersubjective relationship between criminals and victims, such that no single person's right can be violated without the violation of the given rights in principle and for all, including the criminals themselves. Likewise, Raskolnikov admits that he "didn't kill a person, but a principle" (*PSS*

[179] Lewis Hinchman, "Hegel's Theory of Crime and Punishment," *The Review of Politics* 44.4 (1982): 534 ff.

[180] Hinchman, "Hegel's Theory" 534 ff.

6: 211). On this view, a criminal act implicitly contains the prospect of its own negation: "The criminal has directly injured something he regards as external and foreign to himself, but in doing so he has ideally injured and cancelled himself."[181] Raskolnikov expresses this idea by saying: "It's myself that I killed and not the old woman" (*PSS* 6:438). The tragedy of Raskolnikov is that he commits his act in search of recognition which, according to Hegel, can only come from others. Yet, precisely through his act of crime, Raskolnikov also severs his ties to others, thus rendering his recognition impossible.

Hegel's framework of intersubjective recognition for the existence of an autonomous self is also a theoretical platform for defining the intersubjective nature of rights recognized within a social order. Hegel's philosophical formulations concerning the intersubjective nature of rights find their "naturalistic justification" in George Mead's conception of the development of individual self-consciousness.[182] According to Mead, "we cannot have rights unless we have common attitudes."[183] From Mead's perspective, the notion of rights is intricately linked to the idea of a community in which people share certain notions about how they should relate to each other concerning such issues as property, for example. In other words, a right exists only insofar as it is recognized and agreed upon intersubjectively. The notion of right is a derivative

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[181] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 132.

[182] Honneth, *Struggle* 75.

[183] George Herbert Mead and Charles W. Morris, *Mind, Self & Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1934) 164.

of Mead's concept of "me" as distinct from "I". The former corresponds to the social role or a way in which an individual deems him- or herself to be perceived by others at any given instant, while the latter concept corresponds to the unorganized, chaotic and free-flowing consciousness of sensations within us. One of Mead's main arguments concerning the emergence of self-consciousness is that social interaction, by enabling us to perceive ourselves from the perspective of a generalized other, creates the very psychological identity which we can then claim as our own.[184] According to Mead, "[i]t is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self."[185]A central characteristic of self-consciousness is its ability to internalize others' responses to one's own presence and behaviour with subsequent and ongoing self-adjustment according to the perceived reactions of others: "It is the social process of influencing others in a social act and then taking the attitude of the others aroused by the stimulus, and then reacting in turn to this response, which constitutes a self."[186]

Intersubjective interaction plays the same crucial role in identity formation for Mead as aesthetic finalization by an external author for the creation of a self-conscious character for Bakhtin.[187] Bakhtin's theoretical approach elucidates Dostoevsky's characters as "self-consciousnesses, who are

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[184] Honneth, *Struggle* 74-75.

[185] Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* 142.

[186] Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* 171.

[187] Caryl Emerson, "American Philosophers, Bakhtinian Perspectives: William James, George Herbert Mead, John Dewey and Mikhail Bakhtin on the Philosophy of the Act," *Dialog, Karnaval, Khronotop* 2-3 (1993): 6, 10-11.

conscious of the others out of whom they produce themselves."[188] Bakhtin's analysis of the consciousness of literary protagonists has been interpreted by many as prototypical not just of the relation between an author and a hero but between a selfhood and other beings in their various incarnations.[189] If we combine the social-psychological and literary-aesthetic planes in which Mead and Bakhtin respectively develop their ideas, it appears that my self is bestowed upon me by others: others complete me through their evaluative perceptions or aesthetic finalizations of me to the extent that they bring together various images of me into a whole which they attribute to me as my personality and which, subsequently, I use to construct my own identity.

Given the above similarities between Bakhtin and Mead concerning the intersubjective nature of selfhood, the dialogical principles embodied in the image of Raskolnikov, according to the polyphonic form of literary portrayal, find their corollary in the recognitive pattern of Raskolnikov's search for identity within the novel. When Raskolnikov destroys the principles of recognition by committing his crime, he deprives himself of the very foundation for his selfhood and personality. Therefore, his act of confession to Sonia can be seen as an act of necessity dictated by his need to regain his individuality and selfhood. In fact, Raskolnikov is described in the novel as losing his self and he feels the

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[188] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984) 246.

[189] Frank, A. W. "What Is Dialogical Research, and Why Should We Do It?" *Qualitative health research* 15.7 (2005): 964-74; Gardiner, M. "Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective." *Theory, Culture and Society* 13.2 (1996): 121-44.

urge to confess to Sonia as something which he cannot resist if he is to go on living (*PSS* 6:312). In Bakhtinian terms, Raskolnikov needs to be completed by the merciful finalization by another person: "The position of outsidedness makes possible (not only physically, but also morally) what is impossible for me in myself, namely: the axiological affirmation and acceptance of the whole present-on-hand givenness of another person's interior being."[190] Raskolnikov's confession is an attempt, even if unacknowledged by him, to rebuild the ties to community that were destroyed in the criminal act. It stems from his growing realization that his self is composed by others and that he needs their approval and partaking of his self. In this sense, there is no significant difference between mercy and punishment since both bestow recognition and incorporate a perpetrator into the social fabric. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Sonia encourages and compels him to confess publicly and to the authorities. She sees Raskolnikov's redemption and revival only in an act of public confession followed by punishment. By confessing his crime, Raskolnikov also rebuilds his ties to the other – to confess is to recognize the other and allow him to pass judgment on one's self. By thus giving the other a definitive word and judgment over himself, Raskolnikov is forced to incorporate the external perspective of the other into his own consciousness. By thus reconstructing lost ties to the other, Raskolnikov opens up the possibility of his own recognition as an independent being.

[190] Mikhail Bakhtin et al, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1996) 198.

Just as Raskolnikov is drawn to confess to Sonia, so is he inadvertently seeking his own punishment. By destroying the relations of mutual recognition between himself and others through his act of double murder, Raskolnikov undermines the very base that supports his own identity to the extent that it depends on recognition from others. Therefore, the only way in which he could still receive recognition, albeit in a negative form, is through being pursued and threatened with punishment. A guilty conscience, according to Hegel, "presses on to a totality" of its own confirmation through a punishment that logically concludes its own proposition extended through the criminal act.[191] After the murder, Raskolnikov is most disturbed precisely by the absence of forthcoming accusations from the police. At the same time, he feels most energetic and strong when responding to and evading suspicions. A guilty consciousness aware of its own demise "produces an attack on itself so as to be able to defend itself, and through this resistance to the attack it is at peace by defending against the threatened negation."[192]

When called to the criminal investigator's office, Raskolnikov demands to be interrogated according to the formal procedures (*PSS* 6:257). The detective Porfirii Petrovich abstains from an open confrontation, thus depriving Raskolnikov of his last resort to negative confirmation and recognition. Porfirii

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[191] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 132.

[192] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 132. Malcolm Jones notes "a basic agreement between [Dostoevsky and Hegel in] that there is something inherent in the committing of a crime which makes the criminal demand his own punishment" ("Some Echoes of Hegel in Dostoyevsky," *Slavonic and East European Review* 49.117 [1971]: 516-517).

does not wish to raise any charges against Raskolnikov until he has gathered complete evidence: "But if I were to lock him up at the wrong time – even though I'm sure it was him – I might well deprive myself of the means for his further incrimination. Why? Because I would be giving him, so to speak, a definite position; I would be, so to speak defining him and reassuring him psychologically" (*PSS* 6:261). Porfirii senses that Raskolnikov is to be captured "psychologically" rather than physically: "He won't run away from me psychologically" (*PSS* 6:262). In the detective's characterization, Raskolnikov is pulled towards justice in the same way that a "moth" is drawn to a "candle": "freedom will no longer be dear to him, he'll fall to thinking, get entangled, he'll tangle himself all up as in a net, he'll worry himself to death!..." (*PSS* 6:262). Porfirii's insight into the moral state of a criminal such as Raskolnikov echoes Hegel's description of a guilty criminal consciousness. The latter is bound to its own avenging justice: guilty consciousness "betrays itself, reveals itself, and works of itself until it sees the ideal reaction or reversal confronting it and threatening its reality from without and as its enemy."[193]

As I have attempted to show, the paradigms of legal rights (corresponding to a modern nation state) and honour (traditional status-based society) present two interpretative perspectives from which to approach Raskolnikov's crime. These historical contexts which offer different ways of actualizing individual autonomy explain the motivational forces guiding Raskolnikov. His act responds to the logic of both of these social environments

[193] Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* 132.

since the Russian cultural and legal horizon of mid-19th century was marked by massive legal reforms which brought about a change in legal subjectivity. These changes were indicative of the historical transition of Russian society from an estate society towards a state with universal citizen rights throughout the 19th century and well into the first decades of the 20th century. Raskolnikov's personality is a focal point from which one can study the changing legal landscape and its effects upon a particular individual. Given the fact that the dialogical form of literary depiction emphasizes the subjective perspective of the portrayed individual, this literary form is particularly suitable for embodying the principles of recognition which can be studied precisely through the intersubjective relationship of a self-consciousness to its social environment. Both the polyphonic form and the concept of rights within the recognition theory put an emphasis upon the human being, his or her self-consciousness and the way he or she feels given a particular social configuration and substance of rights, broadly defined. This ethical accent upon how a particular individual feels reflects Dostoevsky's artistic motto of "finding a person within a person." Such a conflation of the literary form and the theory of recognition brings to light the dialogical consciousness of Raskolnikov as a legal selfhood defined through his relationships with others.

Chapter 5

Ethics of communication in *Demons*

Dostoevsky's characters inhabit a dialogical space: not only are their actions, thoughts and conflicts revealed to the reader through the dialogues in his novels, but the protagonists define and learn about themselves through their intersubjective relationships with others, expressed through external and internal dialogues. According to Bakhtin, "a character's self-consciousness in Dostoevsky is thoroughly dialogized: in its every aspect it is turned outward, intensely addressing itself, another, a third person. Outside this living addressivity toward itself and toward the other it does not exist, even for itself" (*PPD* 293). More than a means of contact with another being, dialogue is a tool for the construction of one's own self. This is why Dostoevsky's characters have internal dialogues, or what Bakhtin calls "microdialogues," in which they realize their inner existential need for the presence of another consciousness. Bakhtin further stipulates that in Dostoevsky's dialogues we observe the interaction of "split voices" rather than "whole voices" (*PPD* 299). Bakhtin explains that such dialogues, while carried out between two or more protagonists, usually involve an externalization of an internal debate, disagreement and moral schism within a single individual (for example, Ivan Karamazov and Smerdiakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*; or Stavrogin and Kirillov, Shatov, and Verkhovenskii in *Demons*). In other words, dialogue becomes a form in which an individual's conflicting

and unrealized thoughts or inclinations receive their actualization in the voice of another being.

I would like to expand upon Bakhtin's idea of dialogue to reveal its wider framework as social dialogue between generations and intellectual political camps. Bakhtin treats the idea of dialogue primarily as dialogue between individuals: "The basic scheme for dialogue in Dostoevsky is very simple: the opposition of one person to another person as the opposition of 'I' to 'the other'" (*PPD* 294-295). However, I believe dialogical principles exceed the bounds of a concrete dialogue between particular individuals or a micro-dialogue within a single consciousness, and are applicable to people grouped into categories and types – therefore, we can speak of inter-generational dialogues or dialogues between intellectual camps. Such a broader approach to the notion of dialogue is implicit in Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue as mingling of diverse social languages, codes and worldviews so that "a dialogue of voices immediately emerges from the social dialogue of 'languages.'"[194] In such an expanded form, the idea of dialogue is the "embodied coexistence of social-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different epochs of the past, between different social-ideological groups of the present, between trends, schools, circles."[195] Ultimately, for Bakhtin a social language represents a certain worldview shared by a given social group so that we can speak of a dialogue

[194] M. M. Bakhtin, *Voprosy literatury i estetiki: Issledovaniia raznykh let* (Moskva: Khudozh. lit., 1975) 98.

[195] Bakhtin, *Voprosy literatury* 104.

between languages as between ideological viewpoints. This expanded concept of dialogue as a social and inter-generational dialogue can be used to analyze the conflict between Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovenskii and Petr Stepanovich Verkhovenskii in Dostoevsky's novel *Demons*. These protagonists represent two historical generations of revolutionaries: the liberals of the 1840s and the radicals of the 1860s, respectively. I argue that Petr Verkhovenskii's ideas and worldview constitute a latent part, a concealed segment of the voice and existential perspective of Stepan Trofimovich. While the two figures may appear to embody opposite ideological, political and cultural perspectives, a closer look at the nature of their dialogue and communication methods reveals their intimate affinity. In the end, we see two different variations of the same consciousness and world outlook – the two voices differ in emphasis and degree to which they realize their common innate principles, yet the underlying principle is the same for both parties.

Demons appeared in monthly installments in the journal *Russian Messenger* in 1871-72. This is Dostoevsky's most overtly political novel and, in his own words, "almost a historical study" (*PSS* 29.1: 260). Political, cultural, and literary events of the 1860s are brought together in such a way that the novel "is almost a compressed encyclopedia of the Russian culture of the period it covers."[196] The novel's narrator tells the story of a 27-year-old self-proclaimed socialist revolutionary, Petr Verkhovenskii, who arrives in a provincial town and

[196] Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky. The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995) 453.

turns its conventional order of life upside down by weaving intrigues, spreading rumors, confusing the local authorities, creating a clandestine group of followers, and committing a murder before his final escape. Dostoevsky explicitly and intentionally modeled Petr Verkhovenskii on Sergei Nechaev, the radical activist who found a following among St. Petersburg students in the late 1860s. Nechaev led his group of conspirators to murder one of their own, Ivan Ivanov, who rebelled against Nechaev's tyrannic and manipulative methods. The group was rounded up and put on trial, and the whole incident was dubbed "the Nechaev affair." Dostoevsky had long been considering the idea of writing about radical revolutionary ideology, and the Nechaev affair provided him with a timely impetus for it. He closely followed press reports on the trial of Nechaev and modeled after them some of the events and characters in *Demons*. The way Petr Verkhovenskii and his clique execute Ivan Shatov in the novel is similar to Nechaev's murder of Ivanov down to the minute details.[197] While Petr Verkhovenskii is the main catalyst of the events in the novel, his activities occur against the background of intellectual and spiritual musings from his father, Stepan Trofimovich. The father and the son represent the two historical generations of revolutionaries, the so-called men of the forties and the men of the

[197] For similarities and differences between Sergei Nechaev and Petr Verkhovenskii, see Joseph Frank, *Miraculous Years,* 443-46; F. I. Evnin, "Roman Besy," *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo*, ed. N. L. Stepanov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959) 226; Richard Peace, *Dostoyevsky: an Examination of the Major Novels* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1971) 146-50; K. Mochul'skii, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967) 417-18.

sixties. The novel is a reflection upon the historical legacy of the liberal thought of the forties and as such it has a prominent historical-political layer. In fact, most of the characters are closely linked to various historical figures, both in Dostoevsky's conception of the novel and in the audience's perception.[198] The novel captures the spirit and the ideological tensions of the historical era of the 1840s-60s, taken broadly as the transitional period from the early liberal freethinkers and proto-revolutionaries of the forties, such as Vissarion Belinsky, Alexander Herzen, Timofei Granovsky and Mikhail Bakunin, to the more radical and outspoken young generation of the sixties, whose ideological spokesmen were the likes of Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Varfolomei Zaitsev, Nikolai Dobroliubov and Dmitrii Pisarev.[199]

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[198] A thorough overview of the historical-political context of the novel is presented in F. I. Evnin's article "Roman Besy," cited above. For a Western source on the same topic, see D. C. Offord, "The Devils in the Context of Contemporary Russian Thought and Politics," *Dostoevsky's the Devils: A Critical Companion*, ed. William Leatherbarrow (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999) 63-99.

[199] In accordance with the established cultural paradigm, the "forties" refer to the period from the late 1830s to the early 1850s, while the "sixties" began in late 1850s and continued to the end of the 1860s proper. For an overview of the main ideological points of the "men of the forties", see Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism*, *1812-1855* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961). A lighter introduction to the period can be found in Isaiah Berlin's essay "A Remarkable Generation" in his *Russian Thinkers*, eds. Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (New York: Viking Press, 1978). Peter Pozefsky's *The Nihilist Imagination: Dmitrii Pisarev and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism (1860-1868)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) provides a useful overview of the radical ideology of the sixties, with a focus upon Dmitrii Pisarev.

The central theme of the novel is the question of moral, philosophical and political continuity between the generations of the forties and sixties in terms of their goals and methods of influencing the future development of Russian society. The novel may be seen as a critical examination in literary form of the contemporary belief held by the liberals of the forties that the new radical generation had abandoned and departed from the original principles and ideas brought into the public consciousness in the forties. This perspective is expressed by Stepan Trofimovich who initially disowns the revolutionary movement of Petr Verkhovenskii, his biological, but also ideological, son. Stepan Trofimovich abhors the lack of aesthetic taste, unscrupulous morality and a certain tendency towards violence that he detects in the new revolutionary cohort. However, at the end of the novel and on his deathbed Stepan Trofimovich owns up to the fact that the new generation is in fact a direct and accelerated realization of the principles inherent in the ideas of the forties. He recalls the Biblical scene of the Gadarene swine to compare himself, his son and the revolutionary movement as a whole to the demons that exit the sick body of Russia: "and out will come all these demons, all the uncleanness, all the abomination that is festering on the surface… and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine. And perhaps they already have! It is us, us and them, and Petrusha... et les autres avec lui, and I, perhaps, first, at the head, and we will rush, insane and raging, from the cliff down into the sea, and all be drowned, and good riddance to us, because that's the most we're fit for" (*PSS* 10:499). The parable of the Gadarene swine also serves as the novel's epigraph and expresses Dostoevsky's own understanding of

the role and place of the liberals on the political spectrum of Russian revolutionary ideology.

By expressing his own vision through Stepan Trofimovich's words, Dostoevsky is effectively using the novel for his ideological and propagandistic purposes. Dostoevsky admits to writing the novel with the intent of expressing his opinion on the current political developments: "For that which I am now writing for *The Russian Messenger*, I have great hopes, not from artistic but tendentious side; I would like to express a few thoughts even if it would ruin my artistry. I am drawn to express my heart and my mind; let it be even a pamphlet but I will speak out" (*PSS* 29.1:111-112). Bakhtin notes that some of Dostoevsky's novels contain passages that are not polyphonic and reveal Dostoevsky's monologizing vision. In terms of the polyphonic form, the revelation that Stepan Trofimovich experiences at the end of the novel detracts from the dialogical principles of a literary protagonist. As Bakhtin argues, dialogical characters typically do not experience growth and change, because the polyphonic novel brings together characters across space, at a single moment in time, without tracing their personal development chronologically. If a character undergoes a significant change of worldview, his or her dialogical features dissipate as well. While the dialogical depth of Stepan Trofimovich appears shallow in light of the above considerations of the polyphonic form, this protagonist is not meant to exhibit a strong dialogical consciousness to begin with, because his image is shot through with satire, irony, caricature and the comic. Satire finalizes and flattens the dialogical depth of a literary image by

pointing out its deviations from a presumed norm. Nevertheless, this protagonist embodies a dialogical insight into the generalized mindset of the whole generation of liberal thinkers and political activists of the forties. Through the character of Stepan Trofimovich, we gain an understanding of the liberals' worldview and their relationship with the new generation of radical revolutionaries in the 1860s who magnify certain innate tendencies within the liberal thought while ostensibly distancing themselves from it. The ideological opposition between Stepan Trofimovich and Petr Verkhovenskii is not a conflict between two individuals but a dialogical disagreement between their respective generations which informs and defines both sides in the process.

The differences between the two figures are varied and many but they can be focused upon their intersubjective stance towards the other. Stepan Trofimovich believes that an aesthetic appreciation of beauty represents that humanistic core which can be found in all individuals and which bespeaks of the deepest humanity present in all. In his interactions with others, Stepan Trofimovich acts on the presumption of this common humanity in order to find an agreement on issues that are both personal and social. On the other hand, his son represents the utilitarian position which views social relations as tools, which individuals use to pursue their own selfish ends. According to this latter view, it is morally justified to engage in strategic interactions with others in order to achieve one's personal goals. The difference between these two perspectives revolves around the notion of one's relation towards another person: for Stepan Trofimovich the other must be seen as a carrier of a universally shared humanity

and approached as such, while for Petr Verkhovenskii the other must be instrumentalized and seen as an appendage to one's own being. While it may appear that Stepan Trofimovich adheres to the ethical position which preserves the authentic personhood of another by addressing the inner human being within, I argue that Stepan Trofimovich's view is based on the assumption that the other is like himself. Effectively, by addressing himself to the common humanity which he assumes is to be found in all, Stepan Trofimovich has a rather limited understanding of this humanity which closely reflects his own ideas and desires, rather than those of a genuine other. Here then lies the dialogical distortion that can be defined as the central artistic idea of the novel: Stepan Trofimovich opposes in his son the very qualities that he possesses himself. It is Stepan Trofimovich's lack of awareness as to the ramifications of his own worldview that make him a vehement opponent of the radical ideology that grew out of his generation. Further explication of the ideological positions of the father and the son in the novel as multiple layers of the same type of mindset requires the use of theoretical tools best adapted for studying the political ramifications of communication.

In the preceding chapters, I focused on the recognitive dimensions of dialogical consciousness by contextualizing them in the sociological realities portrayed in Dostoevsky's novels. However, these recognitive dimensions are not exhausted by the intersubjective confirmations of rights and status. Both legal rights and status are particular manifestations of the principles of recognition within concrete historical environments. The underlying principles of

recognition remain the same while the particular social configurations of intersubjective relations can vary from one context to another – recognition is affirmation of the independent agency of individuals which strengthens their autonomous position in an intersubjective network of social relations. Such an affirmation empowers the individuals to engage in meaningful interpersonal relations and participate in public life, to claim and exercise rights, and to enjoy a sense of self-esteem. While legal rights and status are the results of recognitive social structures, the ethos of recognition expresses and realizes itself also in the patterns of intersubjective communication. When communication is studied with a view of how it promotes or weakens the functions of recognition, we arrive at a framework of communication not as a transfer of meaning and information but as a means of strengthening social ties on the basis of voluntary cooperation, not domination. Such is Jurgen Habermas's framework of communication as communicative action, which outlines the linguistic principles of human interaction most conducive to the preservation of the distinct individualities and freedoms of addressees while incorporating them into a wider communicative network of mutual understanding and social cohesion. Considering that different forms of dialogue are the predominant mode of existence and manifestation of the self-consciousnesses of Dostoevsky's protagonists, it is plausible to assume that the vitality and autonomy of a self-consciousness in Dostoevsky's novels depends upon the favorable dialogical conditions of communication in the portrayed social environment. Relying on Habermas's concept of discourse ethics, we can examine the ethical quality of communication between

Dostoevsky's protagonists, i.e. the extent to which their communicative stances and interactions observe recognitive principles.

The idea of communicative action is premised on the concept of communication as an ethical act which involves participants in a constructive exchange where linguistic acknowledgement of another person's rights and unique identity provides the platform for all further interaction. In other words, communicative action is a linguistically expressed act of recognition of the independent position of one's interlocutor and an attempt to arrive at common notions through which, overcoming their differences, interlocutors can understand each other. Such common ground allows interlocutors to maintain differences in identity, lifestyle, and values while providing an impetus for cooperation, respect and mutual understanding despite possible differences in moral and intellectual perspectives. For Habermas, our communication is ethical if we take our interlocutor "seriously" – meaning that we accept another person's reasons for holding a particular opinion, and have enough trust to follow through his or her line of reasoning.[200] Ignoring the reasons and the worldviews from which an argument or a statement springs is equivalent to refusing to see the other as such and leads to a break-down of the ethical communication. An open-minded and receptive stance toward our interlocutor speaks of our willingness to take into consideration his or her worldview and opinion concerning the matter at hand. On the other hand, to communicate on the assumption of a

[200] Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol.1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) 133.

predetermined "objective world as a totality of the existing affairs" in which our interlocutor's position is already defined and whose input does not matter is to address him or her "monologically, that is, without communicative intent" – such a linguistic predisposition reflects "an objectivating attitude."[201] In other words, to treat another being as a predetermined entity in our fixed worldview would deny this person the right to define and position him- or herself vis-à-vis our conception of him or her.

Habermas's normative standard of resisting attempts to objectify one's interlocutor and recognize his or her independence is mirrored by Bakhtin's idea of dialogism as "a special form of interaction between consciousnesses equal in rights and signification."[202] Like Habermas, Bakhtin stresses that another consciousness must be preserved in its distinctness and not be appropriated or swallowed by the observing consciousness: "with a monological approach (in its utmost and pure form) the other wholly remains only an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness."[203] Both thinkers concern themselves with the ethos of recognizing in another person an independent consciousness able to

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[201] Habermas, *Communicative Action*, 2:28. In another instance, Habermas points out that an "objectivating attitude" also undermines the potential of communication to bring subjects to a common understanding and, therefore, must be avoided: "the binding energies of language can be mobilized to coordinate action plans only if the participants suspend the objectivating attitude of an observer" (*Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996] 18).

[202] M. M. Bakhtin and S. G. Bocharov, *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moskva: "Iskusstvo", 1986) 327.

[203] Bakhtin, *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* 336.

voice its own choices. To understand another consciousness is to *address* it and evoke its participatory response rather than analyze it from a detached perspective. For Habermas, the possibility of such an address is contingent upon upholding the discourse ethics of the common communicative space where two consciousnesses can meet in an "encounter in which actors do not just observe each other but take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other."[204] Habermas's "second-person attitude" expresses the predisposition of respect and care toward the unique position of another being and an acknowledgement of his or her innate right to speak for him- or herself. Again, Bakhtin evokes the same ethos of recognition in his idea of dialogism and dialogical relationship between self and other as a formal-aesthetic and philosophical framework for realizing and preserving the integrity of another consciousness as a subject, and not merely an object of discourse. Bakhtin finds a model for such relationships in the world of Dostoevsky's novels where the innate nature of the literary characters cannot be revealed through an objectifying analysis but calls for a dialogical relationship in which the protagonist is a participant in a conversation about him: "the person in Dostoevsky is the subject of an address. One cannot talk about him; one can only address oneself to him" (*PPD* 293). As Bakhtin argues, Dostoevsky's characters cannot be finalized, or at least the narrative resists such finalization – instead, the literary form includes the characters' own input in the construction of the discourse which describes and defines them. This ethical space and freedom for

[204] Habermas, *Facts and Norms* 361.

self-construction that Dostoevsky as an author creates for his protagonists is the central feature of his polyphonic literary form. In creating the conditions for the existence of a dialogical consciousness, the author may be said to recognize the independence and integrity of the portrayed self by allowing it to participate in the construction of its own literary image. Such a predisposition on part of the author expressed in formal aspects of the polyphonic form is Bakhtin's version of the "linguistically constituted public space" in Habermas's conception of communicative action and discourse ethics.[205]

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[205] Habermas, *Facts and Norms* 361. Habermas (born 1929) does not seem to be directly influenced by Bakhtin's (1895-1975) ideas although he is familiar with them (Greg Marc Nielsen, *The Norms of Answerability: Social Theory between Bakhtin and Habermas* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002] 23-24). The similarity between Habermas and Bakhtin concerning non-objectifying discourse is related to their common notions about speech utterances. Bakhtin argues that utterances must be treated as part of the dialogical context in which they occurred where they can be recognized as reactions and responses to what was said or done prior, i.e. any implied threats, rewards and potential consequences, etc. For Bakhtin, attempting to analyze an utterance in its isolated signification as a linguistic unit taken out of its dialogical context is tantamount to ignoring the functional and performative meaning of utterances ("Problema soderzhaniia, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve," *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* [Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986] 62-65ff). In a similar manner, Habermas rejects the notion of propositions as "the basic meaning-bearing units of language" but argues instead that the meaning of speech is embedded in its pragmatic context (James Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005] 33ff). Despite certain similarities in the role of dialogue in both thinkers, there are also substantial differences in their treatment of the role of transparency of one's motives in communication. As Gregory Garvey points out, "the same kind of transparency that offers the possibility of rational and autonomous selfhood to Habermas signifies vulnerability and tyranny to Bakhtin" ("The Value of

According to Habermas's notion of communicative action, an ethical communicative stance toward another person presupposes an attempt to "harmonize [each other's] plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions."[206] Such an ethical stance means that we have to strive toward a "consensus" as the condition of communication with another being whose cooperation matters for achieving our objectives.[207] It would be wrong to simply use others without their awareness as to the role they play in our plans – only their willful and informed participation, however passive it may be, can justify our advance toward our individual goals. Habermas's argument amounts to the claim that whenever individuals are prevented from directly confirming and acknowledging their voluntary participation in the social processes which they help to propagate, this results in the estrangement of the individuals from their own fate. Habermas identifies the "steering media" of "money and power" as the force that breaks down "consensus-oriented" interactions:

> The transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media means an uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts. Media such as money and power attach to empirical ties; they encode a purposive-rational attitude toward calculable amounts of value and make it possible to exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while bypassing processes of consensus-oriented

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Opacity: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Habermas's Discourse Ethics," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33.4 [2000]: 370). Ultimately, there cannot be a wholesale comparison between the two thinkers' rich bodies of work because parallels between them must be assessed within their respective historical-philosophical contexts and the overall architecture of their theories.

[206] Habermas, *Communicative Action* 1:286.

[207] Habermas, *Communicative Action* 1:183.

> communication[….T]he lifeworld is no longer needed for the coordination of action.[208]

The above statement outlines the basic mechanism through which opportunities for consensus are exchanged for a direct exercise of power and influence by force. The avoidance of consensus-building processes in communication is present whenever we lie or knowingly mislead others, or deny them an opportunity to fully realize the role they play in the processes to which we subject them. Petr Verkhovenskii's communicative stance towards others exemplifies the mechanism of estrangement of individual decision-making capacities. The ideological atmosphere in the world of the novel can be traced to the manipulative propaganda of Petr Verkhovenskii, whose tactics of steering public opinion illustrate the modern practice of public relations. According to Habermas, the emergence of public relations as a distinctive tool of controlling public discourse both epitomizes and legitimates the practice of subverting a rational consensus and willing agreement of the public to a proposed project. [209] The term public relations, or simply PR, refers to a set of activities by an organization to create favorable publicity and public awareness of the organization's goals and functions. PR is a part of a general marketing approach to present and "sell" the company to its actual and potential clientele as well as

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[208] Habermas, *Communicative Action* 1:183.

[209] For Habermas's discussion of public relations as a form of commodification of political discourse, see his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991) 181-235.

other publics who are affected by the organization or who may in turn influence the organization.[210]

Petr Verkhovenskii employs the gamut of classical PR techniques, all of which have been described by Habermas as part of the process of the commodification of the public sphere: media-events, news leaks, and rumors. Public relations practitioners use media events, also called news event or "pseudoevents," to draw public attention and generate coverage by the media.[211] In a way that exemplifies this PR tactic, Petr Verkhovenskii obtains a patronizing influence and "control[s]" Iulia Lembke, the wife of the new *gubernator* (regional governor), to inspire her to organize a literary festive evening with a large audience (*PSS* 10:354). The festive evening is meant to bring together people from all layers of the local community, from the governor's family to the local factory workers, to raise funds for the progressive goal of the public education of women. For the purposes of Petr Verkhovenskii's propaganda, this celebration serves as a news event which is defined as "an occasion usually conceived and set up by a public relations practitioner and designed to attract attention."[212] One month prior to the fete, Iulia Lembke "babble[s] about her fete with whoever happen[s] along, and … even send[s] a

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[210] For an overview of public relations tools and methods from the professional practitioner's standpoint, see Dennis Wilcox, *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (New York: Longman, 2000).

[211] Wilcox, *Public Relations* 28.

[212] Richard Weiner, *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications* (New York: Macmillan, 1996) 369.

notice to one of the metropolitan newspapers" (*PSS* 10:356). The preparations for the fete and the expected publicity in its aftermath point to its news-generating function in the eyes of the organizers, Iulia Lembke and Petr Verkhovenskii. Iulia Lembke hopes that the toasts to be raised during the fete will be "passed on in the form of reports to the metropolitan newspapers … [and] go winging over all the provinces" (*PSS* 10:356). While her naïve hopes for the fete do not materialize, the fete nevertheless serves well to advance Petr Verkhovenskii's revolutionary propaganda. He purposefully distributes free tickets among the town's workers and radical youth whose boisterous presence, with their shouts and threats, morally overwhelms the local elite attending the evening. The aftermath of the event reverberates with a public image of social disorder and upheaval.

An ethically controversial technique in public relations is a news leak, by means of which a PR practitioner may use discreet channels to provide information to a mass media outlet and make it known to broad publics: "[A news] leak may appear to occur by accident, but the intent of the leaker may be to convey information that would otherwise not have been made public."[213] Petr Verkhovenskii effectively leaks news by dictating to Kirillov the latter's suicide note. The note points to the existence of an underground revolutionary movement which is functional enough – such is the impression to be made – to cleanse its own ranks. Petr Verkhovenskii knows that this note will become an object of public attention as soon as it is revealed.

[213] Weiner, *Dictionary of Media* 388.

Among other media, PR practitioners rely on rumors which they recognize as a powerful tool to influence public opinion. PR professionals admit that "informal conversations among peers and friends influence our thinking and behavior more than TV commercials or newspaper editorials do."[214] Petr Verkhovenskii also points out the power of rumors or "legends" as he calls them which, coupled with clandestine activities of revolutionary quintets, can surpass the periodicals: "The main thing is the legend!… These crews, these fivesomes – no need for the newspapers!" (*PSS* 10:326). He wants to position Stavrogin as the legendary Ivan Tsarevich, for whom people "weep" (*PSS* 10:325) in longing, to start a massive wave of rumors[215]: "[I]t's even possible to show [Stavrogin/Ivan Tsarevich], for example, to some one person out of a hundred thousand. And it will start spreading all over the earth: 'We've seen him, we've seen him'" (*PSS* 10:326).

The PR activities of Petr Verkhovenskii illustrate his instrumental and strategic use of others. His PR tactics allow him to avoid consensus-building processes and involve the townspeople in his revolutionary scheme without their full awareness of the falsehood of his propaganda. If Petr Verkhovenskii's media tactics are explicitly manipulative and overtly violate the ethics of communication, Stepan Trofimovich's communicative stance, on the other hand,

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[214] Wilcox, *Public Relations* 533.

[215] In the aftermath of Russian serf emancipation, the serfs spread the rumor that the true and more generous terms of the Great Reform have been swapped by the cunning gentry. A mythical Ivan Tsarevich, so the rumor went, was going to announce the true text of the law. See Joseph Frank, *Miraculous Years* 452.

is more subtle, complex and multi-layered. The nature of Stepan Trofimovich's ethical stance towards others is deeply psychological and reveals itself through his opposition to and interpretation of the new generation of radical revolutionaries.

As in the history of the period, in the novel the ideological differences between the two camps coalesce upon the issue of aesthetics.[216] The festive literary evening organized by Iuliia Lembke and Petr Verkhovenskii becomes the focal point which draws the fault lines between the ideological camps, separating former allies and friends, and ushers in the chaos of acts of arsons, murders, and a general state of confusion. The audience's vocal and audacious reactions to the literary performance on the stage illustrate the cultural context of the sixties where radical interpretations of culture were gaining popularity among the young audience.[217] Upon hearing the literary performance, some voices in the audience respond by stating that the story is simply not true and had been invented for the sake of the "form", they further advise the writer to "check with the natural

[216] Given the strict governmental censorship of publications, political commentaries and insinuations found their way into the press in a mediated and coded language of literary criticism. Critics, by making comments upon the literary heroes or their environments, were also passing judgments upon the extant social reality beyond the realist novel. Aesthetics served as the battleground for the differing ideological camps seeking to present and defend their visions of the human being and society.

[217] For an overview of the main tenets of the radical critique of culture, see Charles Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

sciences" (*PSS* 10:368).[218] The so-called "realist" approach to art advocated by the radical critics of the sixties focuses solely on the representative function of art. The exclusion of humanistic and formal aspects of art is a part of the wider ideological and moral tendency to boil down the image of humanity to the essential elements of its biological, economic and political survival. In his quixotic speech, Stepan Trofimovich speaks out against the utilitarian principles which he sees to be encroaching upon culture, and proclaims that beauty and art are infinitely above any utilitarian value: "Science itself would not stand for a minute without beauty – are you aware of that, you who are laughing? – it would turn into boorishness, you couldn't invent the nail!" (*PSS* 10:373). From Stepan Trofimovich's viewpoint, the young "nihilists" and their sympathizers blatantly deny a crucial dimension of the human being – the aesthetic and humanistic sensitivity found in art.[219] In the broader sense, Stepan Trofimovich accuses "nihilists" of abandoning the distinctly human qualities of kindness, altruism and

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[218] "You never saw any Ancus Marcius, that's all just style," came one irritated, even as if pained, voice. "Precisely," another voice picked up at once, "there are no ghosts nowadays, only natural science. Look it up in natural science." […] "In our age it's shameful to read that the world stands on three fishes," a young girl suddenly rattled out. "You couldn't have gone down to some hermit in a cave […] Who even talks about hermits nowadays?" (*PSS* 10:368).

[219] The term "nihilists" as a reference to the radical youth of the sixties first appeared in Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*. It was then accepted, defined and reused in the journalistic discourse by the radical writers, such as Dmitrii Pisarev. See Peter Pozefsky, *The Nihilist Imagination: Dmitrii Pisarev and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism (1860-1868)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) for a biography and a discussion of Pisarev's role in the journalistic debates of the period.

honesty in their uniformly utilitarian approach to human nature and society. According to the nihilist ideology adumbrated in the novel through its signature ideas and mottos, traditional religious values cover up and further propagate the extant forms of oppression and exploitation: "charity corrupts both the giver and the receiver and, on top of that, it does not reach its goal, because it only increases poverty" (*PSS* 10:264). In the history of the period, the nihilists argued that they were motivated precisely by the concern for human freedom in a dehumanized society and wanted to act on the basis of a more authentic morality, freed from its implication in the unjust social regime.

Stepan Trofimovich was initially hired by Varvara Petrovna Stavrogina, an influential and wealthy widow, as a live-in tutor for her son Nikolai. After the latter grew into an adult and started a separate life of his own, Stepan Trofimovich continued to live at Varvara Petrovna's estate with a monthly allowance in a dubious role of a close family friend or a distant relative. From Petr Verkhovesnkii's point of view, the intimate and sentimental friendship between his father and Varvara Petrovna was "just a mutual outpouring of slops" (*PSS* 10:239). From the nihilist perspective, individuals must pursue solely their own selfish interests and if Stepan Trofimovich, according to his son, was "milking [Varvara Petrovna] like a nanny goat" while living at her expense on her estate, this is his "only way of acquittal" in the eyes of a nihilist (*PSS* 10:239). On the other hand, for Stepan Trofimovich the meer pursuit of food and shelter "has never been a guiding principle" of life (*PSS* 10:266). He tells Varvara Petrovna: "I always thought that there is something between us that is

higher than food – and never, never have I been a scoundrel!" (*PSS* 10:239). Stepan Trofimovich utterly denies that his self-interest could have tainted his relation toward Varvara Petrovna and he declares his readiness to give up "all his belongings, all the gifts, all pensions and promises of future benefits" in order to prove the sincerity of his friendship (*PSS* 10:266). The ideological divergence between the materialistic and the noble worldviews can be expressed by the difference between the utilitarian justification of selfishness as a morally legitimate mode of relating to others, on the one hand, and the ideal of a genuine disinterested friendship, on the other.

Stepan Trofimovich's perceived ideal of disinterested relations with others on the basis of common interests and shared values belongs to the culture of the public sphere as described by Habermas in his early work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). The Habermasian public sphere is a cultural and social space where participants can set aside their economic self-interests and engage in intellectual exchanges (discussions, debates, conversations) that are "emancipated from the constraints of survival requirements" and "dictates of life's necessities."[220] The public sphere can be seen as a platform where partners in interaction face each other as human beings, not as carriers of titles or claimants to certain social positions. The public sphere may be thought to allow the recognition in one another of the universal human being behind and above one's social role. Habermas' early notion of the public

[220] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991) 160.

sphere is a precursor to his mature concept of the "linguistically constituted public space" – in the latter Habermas accounts for the limitations and contradictions present in his initial idea. However, the early notion of the public sphere, precisely because of its contradictions and limitations, captures Stepan Trofimovich's vision of his generation and of the changes in the revolutionary outlook that he witnesses in the transition of ideological production of revolutionary political ideas from his generation to the next. According to Habermas's early notion of the public sphere, in order for critical-rational exchange to occur, it is necessary that interlocutors are able to separate rational conclusions and argumentation from their own immediate benefits or losses. Such a separation allows for an unbiased consideration of ideas and taking sides on issues in response to their rational and moral appeal to the universal community of rational beings rather than their specific consequences to the interests of particular individuals. Habermas finds such a critical community in the private gatherings of Western Europe in the 18th and the first half of the 19th century: "The rational-critical debate of private people in the salons, clubs, and reading societies was not directly subject to the cycle of production and consumption, that is, to the dictates of life's necessities."[221] The culture of "familiar associations" of private salons and circles developed in Russia in the late 18th century and reached its heyday in the 1840s.[222] The circles of the 1840s

[221] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 201.

[222] I am borrowing the term "familiar associations" from William Todd's study of the Russian salon culture in the first half of the 19th century and its role in the development of the Russian literary tradition. See William Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of*

provided the breeding ground for the Russian liberal discussions of what was considered to be the revolutionary aspects of Hegel's political philosophy or the social theories of Proudhon and Fourier. The Russian liberal activists and advocates, collectively personified in the figure of Stepan Trofimovich, both defined and were defined by the culture of the liberal circles.[223] In the liberal tradition of the forties, Stepan Trofimovich hosts his own friendly circle to indulge in "jolly liberal chatter" and reaffirm his self-imposed "highest duty of the propaganda of ideas" (*PSS* 10:30).

As Stepan Trofimovich sees it, the new generation has utterly distorted the ideas of the forties while seemingly pursuing the same goals of a progressive social change towards greater freedoms and rights for all: "Oh, my friends," he says, "you cannot imagine what sorrow and anger seize one's whole soul when a great idea, which one has long and piously revered, is picked up by some bunglers and dragged into the street, to more fools like themselves, and one suddenly meets it in the flea market, unrecognizable, dirty, askew, absurdly presented, without proportion, without harmony, a toy for stupid children!" (*PSS* 10:24). The distortion perceived by Stepan Trofimovich is the changed attitude

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Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[223] Stepan Trofimovich closely resembles Timofei Granovsky, a professor at Moscow University who used his class and public lectures to talk about the eventual, as he saw it according to his understanding of Hegel, course of the Russian historical development following the path of the European nations which overthrew monarchy. See D.C.Offord's article in *Dostoevsky's The Devils*, ed. Leatherbarrow, 75-76; Peace, *Major Novels* 144; Evnin, "Roman *Besy*" 236.

towards the other: in the forties, the other was to be convinced through a rational discourse and led to a new and objective realization. The rational discourse of the forties was to be based on the universal laws of history and the liberals felt that they were merely revealing these laws to others who, once they understood them, would follow. In the sixties, the dominant ideology was shifting towards a kind of free-for-all: the idea that individuals were permitted to pursue their own egotistic ends and consider another person's existence only insofar as it can be instrumentalized for realizing one's self-interest. A socialist state, on this view, naturally results from the realization that it conveniently serves everyone's selfish interests. In other words, the liberals thought to win over their interlocutors through rational discourse while the radicals simply proclaimed that to use another individual and see him or her as an extension of one's own needs was a natural order of life.

The change in the ideological content of political ideas from one generation to another is informed by the evolution of the mode, purpose and the nature of communication in the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere reflects not only the content of public communication, i.e. the ideas that circulated in private gatherings and, in more recent history, in mass media, but situates the content in the existing channels of communication and interaction. These channels influence the conception, presentation and reception of cultural ideas within the communicative infrastructure shaped by cultural, economic, and technological developments. The particular configuration of such an infrastructure affects the normative quality of the public sphere in terms of

communication that is free of intentions to instrumentalize one's partners in interaction as opposed to finding a common ground on the basis of common humanity in each other. *Demons* reconstructs this communicative infrastructure and its changes throughout the period of the 1840s-60s to shed light upon the transformation of the liberal ideas from the forties to the sixties.

According to Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the historical moment that gave rise to the public sphere was limited in its scope and duration. Initially emancipated from the demands of self-preservation, the public sphere was gradually incorporated back into the economic cycle of production and consumption in a process of "refeudalization" – this transformation subjected the rational public discourse to the extraneous, non-rational influences of political and economic interests. The rise of the publishing market and commercial publicity commodified the public sphere by turning communication into a field of "consumption."[224] Ideas circulating in the public discourse acquired an economic value irrelevant to their intrinsic rational soundness – this external use value is measured in sales, advertising, and the power to shape public opinion. Thus, the public sphere became an arena of ideological production where rational consent gave way to the volume of purchases of periodicals, numbers of subscribers, audience exposure and similar commercial parameters. Where a critical analysis and debate determined the flow of communication in private gatherings, marketing and public relations came to determine the audience's predisposition towards an issue or product. Habermas

[224] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 160.

argues that as a result of the commodification of public communication, rational-critical debate is replaced by a display of support: a rational "consent coincides with good will evoked by publicity."[225] Commodification of public communication results in the simplification of complex social issues to "facilitate[…] access to broad strata *psychologically*."[226] The critical force of communication has to compete against non-rational tastes and preferences of consumer choice: "To the degree that culture became a commodity not only in form but also in content, it was emptied of elements whose appreciation required a certain amount of training."[227]

Stepan Trofimovich points out a simplification of complex issues in public discourse which constitutes the change from the forties to the sixties. During his speech at the literary evening, Stepan Trofimovich questions the nature of the revolutionary leaflets that are being spread in the town: "Only this morning there lay before me one of those lawless papers recently distributed here, and for the hundredth time I was asking myself the question: 'What is its mystery?'" (*PSS* 10:371). He refers to the fact that such subversive leaflets attract public attention and help to propagate the new revolutionary ideology. However, Stepan Trofimovich declares that the success with which the leaflets and the new ideology draw public attention lies quite simply in that they place very little demand on the audience's intellect: "I have solved the whole mystery.

[225] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 195.

[226] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 166.

[227] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 166.

The whole mystery of their effect lies – in their stupidity! […] This is the shortest, the barest, the most simple-hearted stupidity" (*PSS* 10:371). The fact that Stepan Trofimovich chooses to criticize a print medium, the leaflets, as a symbol of the new ideology, helps to contextualize his perception of the ideological change in the transformation of the media of public communication.

Habermas traces the qualitative transformation of the critical capacity of the public sphere through the external changes in the infrastructure of communication which he identifies in the historical transition from private gatherings to the professional industry of the print media. The historical period of 1840-60 reflected in *Demons* is a period of transition from private circles to commercial print media disseminating political ideas. In the course of the novel, all of the members of Stepan Verkhovenskii's circle, except for the narrator, leave Stepan Verkhovenskii and join Petr Verkhovenskii's clique. This is symptomatic of the large scale changes that were occurring in the ways by which ideas circulated within Russian society. Aronson and Reiser trace the gradual transition of literary influence from aristocratic circles and salons of the forties to professional collectives of journals in the sixties. The loose and blurry membership of salons and circles in the 1840s was replaced by editorial offices of journals with "renumeration of literary labor [and] division of labor" by the 1850s.[228] Journals from the 1850s and onwards operated "on the material basis"

[228] Mark Aronson and S. A. Reiser, *Literaturnye kruzhki i salony* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat, 1973) 81.

of financial agreements between editors and contributors.[229] The commercially operated journals often had their origins in the free associations and circles of the 1840s. However, with increasing commercialization they severed their ties to the circles and replaced them:[230] "With the development of the book industry and journalism it became possible for writers to unite beyond the confines of a single time and space. This allowed for propaganda among readers who had no access to this or that salon. A journal replaces a circle."[231]

The fact that Petr Verkhovenskii and other radical voices in the novel rehearse the ideas of Pisarev, Dobroliubov, and Chernyshevskii links them to the radical pundits not merely in terms of the content of their ideas but also their medium. The new generation in the novel is actively involved in various publishing activities. Petr Verkhovenskii spreads revolutionary print proclamations. Aleksei Kirillov prepares an article for publication on the growing suicide rate in Russia. Shigalev publishes an article in a "progressive" journal and is writing a book on the new social principles he discovered. Other characters touched by the nihilist ideology or its carriers (Stavrogin) are indirectly associated with publishing activities. Liza Tushina intends to publish a book, an annual collection of facts and events culled from newspaper reports. Ivan Shatov operates printing presses, his wife Maria intends to open a book-binding shop. Books, journals, newspapers and publishing as an enterprise and

[229] Aronson and Reiser, *Kruzhki i salony* 297.

[230] Aronson and Reiser, *Kruzhki i salony* 297.

[231] Aronson and Reiser, *Kruzhki i salony* 81.

an activity loom large in the novel and project the new image of a public sphere where ideas spread as print matter, unlike in the oral culture of salons and circles of the previous generation.

If Stepan Trofimovich's apprehension concerning the new cultural context reflects the pattern of the transformation of the public sphere outlined by Habermas in his early work, this also subjects Stepan Trofimovich to the same limitations that can be found in Habermas' original concept of the public sphere. The latter has been criticized for its uncritical ascription of the normative standard of a neutral and objective discourse to the culture of private salons and circles. As has been pointed out by numerous critics of Habermas, in reality the circles culture was an arena for predominantly male, property-owning, up-and-coming bourgeois to develop an ideological leverage over the old aristocratic and monarchic families. The rational-critical discourse of the public sphere was not neutral in relation to the social balance of power, but was enmeshed in the struggle for political domination between the social strata even if it made appeals to reason and rationality.[232] In other words, there is a performative aspect to communication which explicates how communication can serve to promote certain goals quite apart from its content.[233] In his study of Alexander Herzen

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[232] See Nancy Fraser's article "Critique of an Actually Existing Democracy" as well as other articles on the topic of the public sphere in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

[233] John Austin's speech act theory outlines how communicative utterances can have a constative meaning (what is said) in addition to their performative function (what is done and communicated beyond the narrow content of a message). See his monograph *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975) and

and his generation of Russian intelligentsia, including such figures as Bakunin, Belinsky, Granovsky and others, Martin Malia comes to the conclusion that these figures were amplifying their own personal injuries, fears and ambitions to a national level and projecting their own desires onto the necessities of the entire Russian nation: "In its alienation this intelligentsia generalizes its discontent into the demand for the total renovation of society, and for the full liberation, not just of itself, but of all men."[234] Malia's approach to the Russian intelligentsia of this period sees their political zeal as a result of their personal and professional frustration of finding no outlet for their talents in the oppressive Russian state, rather than a result of an objective consideration of the needs for reform in society. Whatever the historical necessity of democratic reforms in Russia was, their advocates in the 1840s were driven by personal ambitions of leadership as much as by a zeal for public good: "The desire to know the truth and expound it, to be a moral authority and point the way to reform, is also a desire for leadership and power, however consciously disinterested the intellectual may be."[235] Stepan Trofimovich's studies in Germany were not only a matter of his intellectual quest but also a sign of distinction, allowing him to look down upon others. Varvara Petrovna reproaches Stepan Trofimovich for making her feel less

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article "Performative-Constative" in *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, ed. Charles Caton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963) 22-54. Habermas relies on Austin's theoretical formulations to determine his own distinction between ethical and unethical discourse in his mature works on the communicative action.

[234] Malia, *Alexander Herzen* 116.

[235] Malia, *Alexander Herzen* 116.

than his equal when she attempted to engage him on an intellectual level: "When you returned from abroad, you looked down your nose at me and wouldn't let me utter a word, and when I myself came and spoke with you later about my impressions of the Madonna, you wouldn't hear me out and began smiling haughtily into your tie, as if I really could not have the same feelings as you" (*PSS* 10:264).

In addition to the hidden biases of the seemingly objective and neutral discourse of the public sphere, pointed out by critics, Habermas's early conception of the public sphere can be further criticized in terms of its formal implications. Habermas's initial idea of the public sphere is premised upon the assumption that critical-rational communication operates on the basis of a transfer of knowledge, information and facts. In The *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the communication processes within the public sphere are based on the "transmission and amplification" of critical-rational argumentation.[236] In effect, the normative paradigm of critical-rational communication is that of the transmission model which "describes communication as a linear, one-way process" of moving a message from a sender to a receiver.[237] To conceive of communication, however implicitly, according to the transmission model is to presuppose that the subject (i.e. content, idea) of messages is objectively given and exists independently from the

[236] Habermas, *Structural Transformation* 189.

[237] Denis McQuail and Swen Windahl, *Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communications* (London: Longman, 1993) 17.

participants in the discourse. Moreover, for communication to occur successfully, the sender and the recipient must share the same interpretative approach and worldview to make the transfer of information meaningful. This means that the normative context of communication as transmission presupposes a similarity between the sender and recipient – the more similar they are, the more likely the recipient is to understand the communicated idea in the same manner as that intended by the sender. In other words, the public sphere and its structural transformation, as initially conceived by Habermas, assumes that communication occurs between people who share the same worldview or, in practical terms of the historical situation, same social status, education, lifestyle and mindset. The philosophical implications of the public sphere as a medium of transmission of ideas dismantle the notion of the public sphere as an arena where different people from different layers of society meet, presenting it rather a place where a narrow circle of people with already overlapping points of view confirm each other's position vis-à-vis the rest of society. In fact, such a public sphere based upon transmission of information ignores the vast spectrum of encounters between people who do not simply differ as various points on a single spectrum, but differ as voices belonging to qualitatively different dimensions of being, remaining separate and irreconcilable in principle.

Unlike Habermas's early and implicit normative assumption of a similarity and eventual agreement between the interlocutors in communication, Bakhtin's conception of dialogue is precisely an encounter between *different* worldviews, languages, and sensibilities which may not and need not end in a

harmonious agreement and resolution. According to Bakhtin, a genuine dialogue occurs when differences are preserved rather than subsumed under a single point of view or a single consciousness. Bakhtin argues against a possible reading of the polyphonic novel as a multitude of viewpoints whose mutual contradictions and differences could be resolved in a dialectical synthesis: "it is futile to seek in [Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel] a systemically *monologic*, even if dialectical, *philosophical* finalization – and not because the author has failed in his attempts to achieve it, but because it did not enter into his design" (*PPD* 37).[238] Any philosophical school of thought which assumes the possibility of a single all-encompassing point of view or doctrine will develop a monological worldview. As such, it is incompatible with the principles of a simultaneous coexistence of dialogical consciousnesses which must remain separate and irreconcilable because this is the philosophical justification of their existence and of the polyphonic form that portrays it.

In general terms, Bakhtin locates the origins of monologizing discourse of the modern "ideological creativity" in the Enlightenment, European rationalism, idealist philosophy, and European utopian thought, particularly utopian socialism (*PPD* 93). Bakhtin finds the clearest example of the monological principle in idealist philosophy, with its tendency to explain observed phenomena from the perspective of a single consciousness – regardless of the forms it may take, such as "consciousness in general", "absolute spirit",

[238] For Bakhtin's objections against dialectical readings of Dostoevsky's novels, see also *PPD* 30-31 and 36.

"normative consciousness", "spirit of the nation", "spirit of history" – which sees "the unity of being" as "the unity of consciousness" (*PPD* 91-93). Bakhtin's philosophical diagnosis is seconded by Adorno, who argued that "the thesis of the identity of concept and thing is in general the vital nerve of idealist thought."[239] According to the monological principle, communication between consciousnesses is akin to transmission from an enlightening center to the unenlightened periphery:

> In an environment of philosophical monologism the genuine interaction of consciousnesses is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can be only a pedagogical dialogue" (*PPD* 93).

The belief in the power of consciousness to grasp the entirety of the phenomenal world "is not a theory" but rather a "deep structural peculiarity" of the "ideological creativity" of the post-Enlightenment period (*PPD* 93-94). The assumption of the objectively given "systemic-monological context" of being evacuates knowledge from the particularized consciousness of an empirical individual into the generalized and ideal consciousness of "true" knowledge: "True judgments are not attached to a personality, but correspond to some unified, systemically monologic context" (*PPD* 92). From the standpoint of such true knowledge, "there are no individual consciousnesses" because truth "can be contained within a single consciousness", making multiplicity of different

[239] Theodor Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics: Fragments of a Lecture Course 1965/1966* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) 20-21.

consciousnesses unnecessary and redundant (*PPD* 92). Therefore, interaction between consciousnesses amounts to acts of sharing or mutual correction in regard to ideal knowledge – the very individual identity becomes secondary to the supra-consciousness. Particularized and individuated experiences are seen as "mistakes" in as much as they are perceived to deviate from ideal knowledge (*PPD* 92). The upshot of such a perspective upon the position of an individual human being and his or her experiences in the abstract context of truth is that particular individuals are not seen for their own experiences and worldviews, but are rather judged against what is supposedly an externally given standard. Particular individuals with their particular life histories are not taken into account, only whether they correspond to or deviate from the abstract ideal norm of being.

Bakhtin's conception of dialogue helps to reveal the implicitly monologizing aspect of the liberal discourse of the forties as it is voiced by Stepan Trofimovich. It is no coincidence that the latter studied in Berlin in the 1840s, the hotbed of the idealist philosophy to which Russians looked with adulation in this period. As a quintessential Russian liberal, Stepan Trofimovich carries in his ideological orientation the "monological principle" inherent in the European utopian thought which historically provided the basis of the liberal movement of the forties. For Petr Verkhovenskii the mechanism of public relations provided the tools for avoiding consensus building and to arrive instead directly at a forced and false consciousness of his organization in the public. In Stepan Trofimovich's case, the role of "steering media" was played by his

theoretical vision of progressive social change nurtured by his understanding of idealist philosophy. As I have tried to show, Stepan Trofimovich's self-perception as an actor in a neutral sphere of rational discourse was premised upon the idea of the objectivity of his intellectual notions while such a view obstructed the effacement of the other from his existential horizon. In his search for a sphere of human interaction based on pure reason, he assumed that he was free from non-intellectual and egotistic drives while in fact his intellectual constructs and his communicative stance promoted his personal position as a universal state of affairs. Therefore, both Stepan Trofimovich and Petr Verkhovenskii engage in the kind of communication which avoids consensus building by either forcing an opinion, a predisposition toward an ideological issue through manipulative publicity or by a more elaborate self-deception which results in the intellectual elimination of the other's presence in one's worldview.

Conclusion

The performed analysis shows that Dostoevsky's novels explore the existential dependency of an individual selfhood upon intersubjective recognition from the other, be it a significant other such as a family member or a friend, or the institutionalized other of a legal framework that grants and protects one's rights in society. When intersubjective ties are compromised through an external denial of recognition of one's selfhood or by one's own faulty thinking and behaviour which denies recognition to others, such ruptures of recognitive links to the other lead to the weakening and eradication of one's own individual autonomy and well-being. Dostoevsky's characters have the tendency to seek recognition from others while refusing to recognize the other in the first place. As a result, they are compelled by objective circumstances and by their own psychological deterioration to realize that recognition can only be mutual and cannot be attained unilaterally. The protagonists examined here present the pattern of a self-inflicted loss of autonomy due to their effacement of the other from their ethical horizon. The blockage of recognition *of* the other and *from* the other leads to the loss of individual autonomy psychologically, morally and socially. This process affects not only the protagonists' own existence, but others with whom they come into contact and who may suffer from the protagonists' actions.

The multifaceted relationship between self and other is addressed at different levels by Dostoevsky in his early and mature works. In the early works the notion of recognition of the other is built into the dialogical form of his

novels and informs the characters' quest for self-identity. The problem of the other is not explicitly thematized, however, and its definition requires the use of mediating theoretical concepts, which are nevertheless grounded in the texts under study. Such conceptual tools involve the notion of the autonomy of literary form in the case of *Poor Folk* and the social-psychological framework of identity formation in *The Double*. Dostoevsky's mature novels continue to address the vital role of the other in the emergence and existence of an individual consciousness. On the other hand, in *Crime and Punishment* and *Demons* the ethics of interpersonal relations enter directly into the content of the speech and thoughts of the protagonists. These novels thus present a multi-tiered treatment of the concept of the other both in their dialogical form, which calls for the recognitive presence of the other, and in the philosophical and political ideas of their protagonists. The philosophical message of Dostoevsky's later novels has its roots in his formal innovations of the 1840s: a healthy and stable selfhood requires the meaningful presence of another person in a relationship of mutual recognition. Eradication and non-acceptance of the rights and independence of the other leads to one's own loss of individual autonomy, which can lead to disastrous results for the person concerned and for society.

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