

Summer 2022

Truth and Identity in Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov and Prince Myshkin

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TRUTH AND IDENTITY IN DOSTOEVSKY'S RASKOLNIKOV AND PRINCE MYSHKIN

By

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Bachelor of Arts

University of South Carolina, 2020

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

Comparative Literature

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2022

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Abstract

Situated in the context of Bakhtin's understanding of Dostoevsky's narrative structure, the goal of this thesis aims to analyze the ways in which Dostoevsky's characters negotiate their identities through a dialogic process of truth-telling as it appears in two forms: an explicit expression of truth that is consciously made by a novel's characters in earnest dialogue, and an unspoken, even unconscious expression of truth that is not openly expressed, but can be inferred from the seemingly illogical reactions and behaviors of characters in the novel. The latter form is established in terms of Freud's discussion of the unconscious and unconscious behavior, while the former is established in terms of Foucault's work on veridiction and its relation to the subject. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that both manifestations of truth intertwine to form a character's coherent identity through a process of dialogic engagement. Constructing a sort of compound lens out of the Foucauldian and Freudian approaches to truth allows for an understanding of these novels in this dialogic structure. There are several situations and character types that are similar between two of Dostoevsky's novels, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*, and a comparative analysis of these features through the framework presented can be used to produce a reading that demonstrates the complexity of the dialogic nature of Dostoevsky's characters by illuminating the differences between the characters in these novels, many of whom are similar in behavior, motivations, contexts, etc., as well as the functions of interference with that dialogic process.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Dostoevsky's writing has a reputation for being far more interested in its characters than its narratives. There is often very little plot action in his novels, and the a great deal of development in these stories follows the characters as they interact with one another or go off on long tangents or soliloquies about their ideologies or motivations or beliefs. Much of what has been written on Dostoevsky hits upon the importance of his characters and their identities and development.¹ These writings tend to approach Dostoevsky's characters in terms of their self-discovery as they develop their own identities throughout the process of the novel. While I would agree that characterological development is paramount in Dostoevsky's writing, I would like to shift from this perspective somewhat to understand the process of a character's self-discovery more in terms of the development of a character's identity, that is, a character constructing his identity by expressing and interrogating certain truths about himself.

¹ Many scholars take an interest in the various legal and/or moral transgressions that feature in Dostoevsky's writing, seeking to analyze the personalities of the characters who commit these transgressions as a potential source for this behavior. Writing by Deborah Martinsen, Chris Barker, Robert Kloss, Richard Lower, and Alfred Bem in particular look at shame, guilt, or personality disorders as motivators or explanations. Others take an interest in the way that a character will illustrate or define themselves through language, including Garry Hagberg, Joseph O'Leary, Edward Wasiolek, Priscilla Meyer, etc. Still others seek to approach Dostoevsky's novels in terms of how a character's development functions as the vehicle by which the narrative is advanced. Albert Guerard, Leslie Johnson, Joseph Frank and Janet Tucker share this focus on the characters' relation to the narrative progression of the novels. These are all different approaches to analyzing these novels, but they each share a certain assumption of the primacy of character in the construction and realization of these novels.

Both of these ideas hinge on the prospect of self-interrogation as a basis for understanding one's identity, but the assumption in the former suggests the discovery of a hidden, preexisting identity which could account for or motivate the actions or beliefs of a character, while the latter suggests more of a process of identity negotiation which accounts for the often contradictory or illogical actions by, or beliefs expressed by, Dostoevsky's characters. Insofar as their identity is not established, or not fully established, these contradictory actions or beliefs can be understood as procedures of self-determination – trial and error.

In the first section of this thesis, I would like to work on constructing a framework for understanding the utterances made by Dostoevsky's characters as productive, self-determining truths. I aim to coordinate the approach of self-knowledge as a basis of characterological development with the notion of identity construction as a function of self-inquiry. Mikhail Bakhtin's extensive work on Dostoevsky's writing approach emphasizes the role of a character's own voice in establishing that character.

According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's writing is unique in that the authorial voice and the characters' voices are notably distinct from one another, at times even opposed to one another. "The author retains for himself, that is, for his exclusive field of vision, not a single essential definition, not a single trait, not the smallest feature of the hero: he enters it all into the field of vision of the hero himself, he casts it all into the crucible of the hero's own self-consciousness" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 48). In order to look more closely at how these characters go about establishing themselves, it will first be necessary to identify some of Dostoevsky's key narrative strategies as elaborated by Bakhtin. These are the means by which Dostoevsky's characters enact that negotiation of their identities.

These negotiations are, by necessity, dialogic, as dialogue is the means by which Bakhtin insists that ideas and truth are developed. This is what allows for emphasis to be placed on the meeting of voices, or opposing ideologies, within Dostoevsky's characters.

From there, I would like to place the strategies discussed by Bakhtin within two frameworks of veridiction as it relates to identity. In particular, I would like to discuss the differences between two types of truths expressed by characters: consciously expressed truth of the self and an unconsciously communicated, but no less consistent or substantive, truth. These consciously expressed truths which function to negotiate a character's identity can be interpreted in terms of Michel Foucault's elaboration of *parrhesia*, as this concept also relates to an openly expressed truth that interacts directly with the identity of the speaker. Unconsciously expressed truth can, naturally, be interpreted in terms of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic inquiry, specifically with regards to his discussion of repetitious behavioral cycles and what this reveals about the subconsciously held beliefs of the actor in question. A combination of these approaches will allow for a coordination between ostensibly conflicting or contradictory beliefs or behaviors by Dostoevsky's characters, which further allows a more cohesive summary of their characterological development to take place.

In the second section of this thesis, I would like to take a look at two characters in particular in relation to this dual perspective on self-developed truth. The first is *Crime and Punishment's* Raskolnikov, who is well-known for being one of Dostoevsky's most erratic, most conflicted and contradictory characters. In this sense, he is also rather exemplary of this structure of self-determination. As one of Dostoevsky's most well-known characters, much has been written on Raskolnikov, attempting to account for his criminality, his

pervasive shame, his (for lack of a better term) split personality. The concept of a split within his identity is a popular subject of scholarship on Raskolnikov, in no small part because of his rapid and frequent oscillation between two seemingly oppositional consciousnesses. The name Raskolnikov, constructed by Dostoevsky from the word “раскол” meaning “split,” underscores this split in consciousness. The progressive negotiation of this split is what advances the narrative of *Crime and Punishment*, so as one might expect, it is a highly significant topic of discussion when analyzing Raskolnikov’s characterological development. The relatively clear-cut distinctions between Raskolnikov’s warring ideologies are what make him such a great candidate for an analysis utilizing this structure of ideological negotiation and self-determination. His ideological battle takes place both in and between his explicit utterances of truth and his subconscious truth of himself. He will frequently express radical ideas and convictions which he has cultivated both before and during the events of the novel, and in the next breath he will flip his perspective and challenge those very ideas. There are also a number of cyclical patterns of behavior, or parallels between his actions or expressed truths and other situations in his life, which can reveal the subconscious negotiation of truth that is playing out alongside his openly expressed ideological debate.

The second character that I would like to analyze in terms of this framework is *The Idiot’s* Prince Myshkin. Myshkin is an interesting subject for a couple of reasons. Multiple scholars have noted the dramatic differences between Dostoevsky’s notes and plans for Myshkin, and the novel as a whole, and the finished product.² In Albert’s Guerard’s article “On the Composition of Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*,” he discusses certain character traits

² See Albert Guerard, Janet Tucker, and Joseph Frank for discussion of this topic.

(things like pride, sensuality, coarseness, and brutality), originally intended for Myshkin himself, that have been divided up, with many of them being transferred to Rogozhin (203-204). It is interesting, then, to consider the bond, the spiritual brotherhood, between the now purely good, Christ-like manifestation of Myshkin and the disaffected, murderous Rogozhin, and their intertwined fates which are realized in the conclusion to the novel. In his introduction to the English translation, Joseph Frank notes that Dostoevsky felt on multiple occasions while writing that Myshkin was underdeveloped as a character (*The Idiot* xxii). This can easily be understood as a result of the sudden and massive shift in the plans for Myshkin's character, or the inherent difficulties in writing a Christ-like figure that is truly good.

As he is the hero of the story, however, Myshkin by necessity possesses a character, which he elaborates and expresses at various points throughout the novel. Of the characters written by Dostoevsky with an eye towards goodness or Christ-like behavior (in the case of these two novels, Sonia and Myshkin), the latter is often discussed in terms of a "destructive" or even a "failed attempt at" goodness, patience, and humility. In Myshkin's case, this disconnect between his character's ideology and the results of his behavior may reveal a progressive negotiation of an expressed identity and a subconscious one. This will be discussed later.

Something that makes Myshkin particularly noteworthy is his ability to engage and interfere with the self-determination of other characters in the novel. It is this phenomenon that can potentially account for the paradoxical destructiveness of Myshkin's good intentions, and it reveals the importance of comparing and contrasting the protagonists of these two novels. Whereas Raskolnikov functions as the pinnacle of this model of

characterological self-determination, Myshkin reveals the importance behind a character's self-interrogation. By interfering with the development of other characters, he takes the ability to explore and elaborate their own truths upon himself, which interferes the requisite *self*-determination of a character and causes the truths of those characters to become invalid.

Chapter 2

Identity as a Function of Truth

In order to establish a framework for analyzing the ways in which Dostoevsky's characters formulate their identities within these certain discourses on truth, it is first necessary to outline the ways in which those characters can be understood as distinctive identities that are formulated independently of the authorial voice. To begin with, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by a character's independent identity, which may at times be referred to as the character's voice or, occasionally, their ideology. While these terms are not entirely equivalent, there are significant overlaps in their utility in establishing character which allow them to be interchangeable for the purposes of my argument. Following that, the means of development of these voices should be addressed in order to allow for the analysis of the complex, and often conflicted, layers of ideological development. Without addressing how this is achieved in Dostoevsky's writing, these features are artificially equalized and risk losing their significance in the realm of expressing constitutive truths of a character's identity. The structure for analyzing the means by which Dostoevsky develops his characters will be drawn from Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky's narrative approach, which will be outlined in terms of how these characters are conceptualized as independent voices who engage in a number of dialogic processes in order to further the development of their individual ideologies. Within this

context, three specific dialogic processes will be discussed in terms of their contribution to the negotiation of identity. From there, a connection will be drawn between these processes and the process (as regarded by Bakhtin) of reaching “truth” in order to establish the possibility for interpreting the negotiation of a character’s identity as the negotiation of a “truth of oneself.” Following this, it will be possible to discuss the negotiation of a character’s identity in terms of discourses on truth. There are two such discourses that will be particularly relevant to the development of Dostoevsky’s characters: the Foucauldian notion of *parrhesia* as a spoken truth of oneself, which will be discussed as a self-aware, more open negotiation of one’s own truth, and a subconsciously expressed (but no less constitutive) Freudian truth. It is through a combination of these two approaches to negotiating truth that a character’s identity is formulated.

2.1 Mikhail Bakhtin on Dostoevsky’s Narrative Approach, Truth, and Dialogue

Mikhail Bakhtin’s formulation of Dostoevsky’s unique narrative approach sets up the framework needed to separately conceptualize the conflicting or oppositional ideas that often appear in his novels by emphasizing the dialogic nature of his characters’ development. This approach asserts that Dostoevsky utilizes a “polyphonic” narrative strategy, which consists of a plurality of ideologically separate subjects that engage with one another to develop their worldviews. These characters’ ideologies are markedly separate from the authorial voice and engage with one another, with the authorial voice, and with the reader dialogically to develop their individual logics to the furthest possible extent. The intent here is to approach an (at the time) “new *form* for visualizing a human being in art.” This form emphasizes the “unfinalizability”³ of a person – all of the functions

³ (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 53).

of identity that constitute an individual are unfixed, destabilized, and transformed into objects of the characters' own, ever evolving, consciousness. It is through this approach – in which characters work to construct themselves – that we will ultimately be able to draw a connection between identity and truth within Dostoevsky's narratives, which will then allow for an analysis of this process through the dual lenses of Foucault and Freud. (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6, 48-49, 58-59, 68-69).

The progressive transformation of a character's identity is achieved through a number of techniques that Bakhtin identifies as core to the novel, or to Dostoevsky's novels in particular. At this point, it will be good to identify some of the major techniques that are used, elaborate on their construction, and function, and clarify the ways that they contribute to the negotiation of characters' identities. Following that, it will be made clear that the features of a character's identity that are developed by these techniques constitute the "truth" of a character, which is communicated, either directly or indirectly, by himself throughout the course of his development.

The topic of interest here is not simply "who is this character?" but also "how does he understand himself?" and "how does he understand himself in relation to the world and others around himself?" In fact, any approach to answering the question of "who is this character" can only be done by the character himself, and in his own voice, as his word relates to the author's, the narrator's, or anyone external to himself. Toward this end, I would like to focus on three main techniques: firstly, Bakhtin's discussion of heteroglossia insofar as it is contextualized within the novel, followed by the significance of double-voiced discourse in Dostoevsky's writing in particular, and finally the utility of what

Bakhtin called “loopholes” in a character’s speech, which contribute directly to the unfinalizability of his identity (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 54-58, 63-65, 68).

2.1.1 Heteroglossia

Heteroglossia in the novel can be described as a diversity of speech types or individual voices that are unified into one artistic form. These different voices are always, to a more or lesser degree, dialogized (*Dialogic Imagination* 262-263, 272). To explain further the implications of this style, we can look at the understanding given by Morson and Emerson, which states that these different languages consist of different ways of conceptualizing, understanding, and evaluating the world (141). Bakhtin states that, “[w]hen heteroglossia enters the novel it becomes subject to an artistic reworking. The social and historical voices populating language...are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch” (*Dialogic Imagination* 300). These combined ideas allow us to see the different voices populating the novel as a set of interacting ideologies. In the case of Dostoevsky, this is taken a step further by its combination with his polyphonic approach to writing. Since individual characters express their own voices in his writing, they are characterized by these ideologies that they are expressing, and furthermore are able to engage in that heteroglot dialogism on their own, in ways that may conflict with one another, as well as the authorial voice. That is to say, in Dostoevsky’s writing, the incorporation of heteroglossia goes beyond the stylization of speech that conveys context for an utterance by the authorial voice, and instead becomes the framework through which the character views himself and the world. In this instance,

heteroglossia contributes directly to the formation of a character's identity and exists as one of the key approaches to doing so.

The character of Nastasya Fillipovna in *The Idiot* is a fantastic example of this sort of ostensibly conflicting, multi-voiced self-definition. That is to say, she spends a great deal of time asserting that she is a low, fallen woman, "...a shameless hussy. You called me perfection this evening; a fine sort of perfection who, simply to boast of trampling on a million and a principedom, is going into the gutter!" (*The Idiot* 157).⁴ Throughout the novel, she oscillates between this assertion (tailoring her behavior to match) and the desire to pursue the salvation offered by Myshkin. The impulse behind her behavior as a "fallen woman" is to reinforce the damage done to her at the hands of Totsky, the rich aristocrat who had kept her as his mistress for a number of years. Her current behavior serves as a condemnation of such treatment – her own self-destruction demonstrates how she has been "ruined" – while her interactions with Myshkin convey her feelings on the sort of purity and love that he represents, even as she maintains that she herself is unworthy of it. Her pride and dignity, however, belie still her own assertions. Furthermore, her interference in the relationship between Aglaia Ivanovna (whom she professes to love and who represents to her the sort of innocence that she herself has lost) and Myshkin conveys her position on the purity of love and her position within (or rather outside of) it, although this also is complicated by her confrontation with Aglaia and the fact that she challenges Myshkin to leave Aglaia to remain with her.

⁴ "...что бесстыдница! Ты меня совершенством давеча называл; хорошо совершенство, что из одной похвальбы, что миллион и княжество растоптала, в трущобу идёт!" (*Идиот* 127).

If this seems messy, contradictory, irrational, that is because it is. Her character in this case is enacting a dialogue between a number of conflicted positions. In one sense, she is enacting a criticism of the immorality of society by embodying the negative effects that it has on a person. At the same time, she is claiming these circumstances as her own, utilizing these effects in order to “punish” Totsky by highlighting these negative features of society and his role in them. Further still, she is rejecting these negative effects by highlighting the shamefulness of her position and implicitly positioning herself against it. Finally, she is furthering her own pursuit of redemption by emphasizing the contrast between herself and Myshkin, which is highlighted in her struggle with both accepting and rejecting his offer to her. Each of these positions comprises heteroglossia in that each is a different utterance, a different voice, in dialogue with the others about a specific issue. The course of this dialogue, enacted entirely by the individual voice of Nastasya Fillipovna, functions to elaborate her individual character as it develops itself over the course of the novel.

2.1.2 Double-voiced Discourse

Another prominent technique used by Dostoevsky in his writing is double-voiced discourse, which is speech that is made with an implication of an additional meaning beneath its apparent meaning (usually directed at another’s speech or understood within another context). The importance of double-voiced discourse lies in its internally (or hidden) polemical function. Within this sort of literary speech is a clear anticipation of the speech of another (be it the narrator, the reader, or in Dostoevsky’s case, likely another character), and this speech engages with that anticipated response in order to contradict, refute, or otherwise respond in turn (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 197). This is a

mechanism by which Dostoevsky's characters are able to engage dialogically with others' speech in a way that still functions as self-development of their identities. It is important to distinguish double-voiced discourse from heteroglossia as it functions in Dostoevsky; the latter, as has been mentioned, consists of multiple voices utilized by the same character in order to enact a dialogue between ideas that contributes to the negotiation of that character's unique voice, while the former incorporates the speech of others (as it is anticipated by the character) as a referent for the character's own voice. It may also be questioned why double-voiced discourse, with its usage of the anticipated speech of others, is significant here, rather than actual dialogic interaction between characters. Keeping in mind here that the question of a character's development remains within the purview of the character himself, it is particularly relevant that the speech of others to which the character is responding is anticipated by himself, meaning that its meaning exists within the framework of understanding held by the character himself. This is the realm within which the development of a character must take place, as Bakhtin has established that a character is the only one able to credibly answer the question of who he is.

This technique is so significant in Dostoevsky's approach to writing that Bakhtin states that "almost no word is without its intense sideward glance at someone else's word" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 203). In his discussion of the internal dialogization of Dostoevsky's work, Bakhtin brings up the example of Raskolnikov entering into an impassioned dialogue with himself regarding his position within his family and his sister's upcoming marriage. Within this dialogue (which is one of several similarly structured dialogues that he has with himself throughout the novel) he will utilize others and their speech as symbols that aid him in his argument with himself (*Problems of Dostoevsky's*

Poetics 237-238). One example which does a good job of demonstrating how double-voiced speech takes place immediately following Raskolnikov's receipt of his mother's letter, announcing Dunia's engagement to Luzhin. He makes it very clear that he is orienting his words within his perceived understanding of the voices of his mother and Dunia herself.

I know too what you were thinking about when you walked up and down all night...you have determined to marry a rational business man, Avdotia Romanovna, one who has a fortune (has *already* made his fortune, that is so much more solid and impressive), a man who holds two government posts and who shares the ideas of our most rising generation, as mother writes, and who '*seems* to be kind,' as Dunechka herself observes. That *seems* beats everything! ...But I wonder why mother has written to me about 'our most rising generation'? Simply as a descriptive touch, or with the idea of predisposing me in favor of Mr. Luzhin? (*Crime and Punishment* 41-42)⁵

This is a particularly obvious example of Raskolnikov incorporating the speech of others into his own speech in order to enact a discourse with those other voices. The dialogic nature of the discourse here is what allows Raskolnikov's ideological development to take place, but it is the quoted nature of those other voices in the dialogue that makes this more significant for the development of his own voice than any actual dialogue taking

⁵ "...знаю и то, о чем ты всю ночь продумала, ходя по комнате...решено уж окончательно: за делового и рационального человека изволите выходить, Авдотья Романовна, имеющего свой капитал (*уже* имеющего свой капитал, это солиднее, внушительнее), служащего в двух местах и разделяющего убеждения новейших наших поколений (как пишет мамаша) и, "*кажется* доброго," как замечает сама Дунечка. Это *кажется* всего великолепнее! ...А любопытно, однако ж, для чего мамаша о "новейших-то поколений" мне написала? Просто ли для характеристики лица или с дальнейшею целью: задобрить меня в пользу господина Лужина?" (*Преступление и Наказание* 38).

place with those characters (as, for example, later on in the story when Dunia confronts him directly over his attitude towards Luzhin, enabling her voice to refute his).

There is another point about Bakhtin's discussion of double-voiced discourse that is important to note at this point and which will be considered further later. He elaborates various ways in which an utterance can be directed not only at its referent, but also at another's speech. The significant thing is the dual nature of these utterances, including the surface interaction (which only conveys part of the idea that the speaker is trying to develop, or possibly even contradicts the intended idea) and the hidden implication of the utterance. At this point, I would just like to establish the idea that, in order to capture the full meaning of an utterance, it is necessary for the speaker's interlocutor (whether this is another character, the reader, etc.) to work to interpret the underlying intention of the utterance.

2.1.3 Loopholes

Related to this concept of double-voicedness is yet another technique elaborated on by Bakhtin, which is the concept of loopholes within one's speech. This technique is very significant for Dostoevsky's writing in particular because of its role in maintaining the unfinalizability of a character. In his own words, Bakhtin describes loopholes as "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words." In essence, maintaining plausible deniability for the true meaning of anything one has said, as well as the conditionality of that meaning on the circumstances of the dialogue at hand. This, too, requires an anticipation by the character of the potential speech of others, but the technique here relies on the ambiguity of the speech leveled by the character, which

can then be manipulated in the course of dialogue with the other (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 233).

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the suicide letter written by Ippolit and read aloud by himself to the audience (although this scene has its own interesting contradictions that implicitly undermine the structure of self-analysis and self-determination that Dostoevsky so frequently uses – this will be discussed in more detail later on). Ippolit's letter reads like a monologue in which he explains the conflicted and agonizing development of his thought process and outlook on life as he rationalizes his decision to end his own life weeks before he is projected to die from his illness. In this letter, he engages in a rather heated dialogue with himself (both in his own voice and with his imagined audience as an interlocutor). Furthermore, he peppers this letter with assertions and disclaimers such as:

Oh, no doubt you think I don't know how I've humiliated myself as it is by my "Explanation"! Oh, everyone of course will look upon me as a sniveler who knows nothing of life...But let them laugh and say that this is all fairy-tales. It's true, I have told myself fairy-tales...But is it for me to tell them now, now when the time for fairy-tales is over, even for me?...Anyone into whose hands my Explanation falls, and who has the patience to read it through, may look upon me as a madman, or as a schoolboy, or, more likely still, a man condemned to death, for whom it's natural to believe that everyone else thinks too little of life... Well, I protest that my reader will be mistaken...or they'll say perhaps that I had something to say, but that I did not know how to "explain" it (*The Idiot* 361-362).⁶

Inclusions like this in his letter allow for a claim to be made for both the importance and legitimacy of his own musings while simultaneously acknowledging criticism and claiming this criticism for himself. By projecting the reactions of his audience, he not only provides direction for the interpretation of his words, he also makes it possible to both accept the criticism of his words as well as conceptualize an excuse for it, all within the accepted purview of his discussion. In other words, it is possible to both accept what he is saying and accept that what he is saying is flawed (and, even in doing so, still accept what

⁶ "О, неужели вы полагаете, что я не знаю, как унижил себя и без того уже моим "Объяснением"! Ну, кто же не сочтет меня за сморчка, не знающего жизни...Но пусть смеются и говорят, что всё это сказки. Я и вправду рассказывал себе сказки...Но неужели же мне их теперь опять пересказывать — теперь, когда уж и для меня миновала пора сказок?...Пусть тот, кому попадается в руки мое "Объяснение" и у кого станет терпения прочесть его, сочтет меня за помешанного или даже за гимназиста, а вернее всего, за приговоренного к смерти, которому, естественно, стало казаться, что все люди, кроме него, слишком жизнью не дорожат...Я объявляю, что читатель мой ошибется...или скажут, что я, может быть, и хотел что-то высказать, но при всем моем желании не сумел..."развиться". (*Идиот* 288-289).

he is saying). This is relevant to the understanding of a character's identity in the novel given Bakhtin's discussion of the function of this concept, which is the ability of a voiced character to utilize this technique to avoid any possible finalization imposed on his character. In those circumstances where a voiced actor (be it another character, the author, or readers themselves) is tempted to definitively conceptualize a character, this character will use the ambiguity of his speech in order to resist those attempts (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 55).

Using these three major techniques described by Bakhtin creates the framework in which to define how characters in Dostoevsky's novels use their own speech to enact a dialogic negotiation of their voices, which can be understood as their identity insofar as those voices function as the expression of their ideological position. Establishing an identity, Bakhtin has proposed, is a process in a constant state of negotiation (that is, unfinalizable), something that can only be carried out by each character for himself. Each of these narrative techniques has in common this specifically dialogic approach to the interaction between voices. This term *dialogue*, which comes up constantly in Bakhtin's writing, is key to his understanding of the way that voices interact not only to establish a character's ideology within the context of a novel, but even as an epistemological approach to truth (Morson and Emerson 60). It is important to discuss Bakhtin's understanding of truth as dialogue, since that will provide a basis for understanding the negotiation of identity as roughly comparable to a negotiation of truth, which will in turn allow for further analysis of the identity-negotiating dialogues enacted within Dostoevsky's novels (as characterized by Bakhtin) within the context of discourses of truth.

2.1.4 Dialogue as Truth

The definition for Bakhtin's dialogic approach to the novel, in keeping with this approach's ephemeral and transient qualities, is highly nuanced. In essence, dialogue must contain two or more independent speakers who enter into a conversation or other interaction that functions to mutually develop these speakers' ideologies, identities, etc. (Morson and Emerson 50-51). It is important to note what dialogue is *not*, and that is an interaction between finalized monads who fail to develop over the process of the conversation. What is key in the dialogic process is precisely this development. Without development, there can be no functional or knowable ideology. Instead, what is produced is a reduced facsimile of the ideas discussed that fails to accurately represent that to which they refer.

Paramount to the establishment of a character's identity is the confessional utterance. Bakhtin has established that a character's identity must be investigated and negotiated by himself; in a similar vein, a character is the only one who has the authority to speak on the truth of his identity. Elaborating on this, Bakhtin has noted that a truth about Dostoevsky's characters, when spoken by someone other than the character himself and not engaged with him dialogically, constitutes a lie (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 59-60). It functions to limit, to finalize that character. Therefore, not only is a character the only one qualified to speak a truth of himself, this truth can only function as a constitutive function of his identity if it is developed through dialogue with another voice (whether this is the voice of another character directly, another's voice imagined through the character himself, etc.). This idea reflects Bakhtin's own characterization of truth and its development, which is inherently dialogic.

Bakhtin's approach provides the important framework for understanding the structure of Dostoevsky's narrative and characters – keying in on the dialogic process of ideological development – and, in doing so, also provides an approach to evaluating truth. More specifically, he sets up an interpretation of truth as dialogue, which also allows for the identification of truth within the dialogic structure of Dostoevsky's novels. Bakhtin had also expressed that the literary form was, in fact, ahead of philosophical development in the appropriate representation of truth. This viewpoint is explained by the understanding of truth as a function of open-ended dialogue, which is how Bakhtin viewed it. He traces this concept of a literary approach to negotiating truth in the influence of Socratic dialogic tradition on the development of the novelistic genre. Additionally, his view was that philosophy, as well as other approaches to knowledge for its own sake, have a tendency to artificially monologize truth that has been painstakingly negotiated through organic dialogue. Bakhtin also describes a feature of Socratic dialogues that is shared by Dostoevsky's writing, which is the construction of extraordinary situations that allow for the exploration of a dialogue *on the threshold*. Whereas Socratic dialogues were syncretic philosophical-artistic explorations of truth, however, the novelistic genre, especially as it was used by Dostoevsky, places these discourses on truth within an artistic framework. This is what allows for the conflation of a dialogic exploration of truth with the identities of the characters in a work (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 110-112).

Having begun a foundation by which to understand the ideologies present in Dostoevsky's novels as a form of constitutive truth, it now becomes necessary to narrow in on some definitions for and approaches to truth-telling itself. How can we understand each of these conflicting expressions, double-voiced utterances, abrupt soliloquies and

confessions, etc. as sincere expressions of truth, let alone functional manifestations of identity? For this, two theorists help to formulate and balance separate understandings for the complex expressions of truth in Dostoevsky's convoluted dialogical form.

2.1.5 A Balanced Approach to Dialogic Truth

Michel Foucault offers a discussion of truth as a formative function of the subject, and more specifically, he develops the concept of *parrhesia* as an honest expression of truth that is directly tied to the identity of its speaker. This particular topic will be the most useful in conjunction with Bakhtin's approach to evaluating Dostoevsky because it emphasizes the importance of a verbal expression of one's own truth, which is in keeping with the notion of a character's voice directed at himself in its negotiation of his own identity. In this discussion, it will become possible to elaborate on an approach to truth that covers truth insofar as it becomes a *confrontation* in Dostoevsky's novels. The term confrontation has been chosen specifically because it addresses the Bakhtinian concept of ideological extension (where voices in the novel work to push the limits of their ideologies) in Dostoevsky's approach. Later on, this will be discussed in more detail as it relates to Foucault's idea of truth as found at the point of the transgression of an established border. At this point, though, it is worth mentioning that the concept of "borders" is problematic for Bakhtin (a problem which extends to Foucault's discussion, as well) in that it causes a necessarily paradoxical formulation of truth. Given that truth, as a dialogue, is an ever-changing (that is, ever transgressing) process of negotiation, there can really be no such thing as boundary (Morson and Emerson 50-51).

This discussion of Foucault's approach to direct (or explicit) truth-telling is later supplemented with an exploration of the approach to truth as it relates to Sigmund Freud's

approach. Limiting the analysis of self-developed identity in Dostoevsky's characters to Foucauldian veridiction risks overlooking the unspoken dialogic development of these characters (as mentioned above in the discussion of double-voiced discourse). By abstracting somewhat Freud's instruction for psychoanalytic practice, it is easily possible to apply the basis of psychoanalytic inquiry, in terms of extrapolating subconscious ideas from patterns in manifest behaviors, to Dostoevsky's dialogic approach. Understanding the development of his characters' ideologies as a dialogue with a psychoanalytic interlocutor (be it another character, the narrator expressing a contrasting point of view, or the reader himself) makes it possible to see the development of truth as an inquisition of truth as it has been misrepresented or refracted through the psychological mechanisms identified by Freud.

Through the combination of both of these approaches to truth – the self-conscious verbal expression of one's own truth as well as the impulsive expression of one's unconscious truth – it should become clear that a mutual interaction between these expressions of truth functions to clarify the negotiation of a character's identity within Dostoevsky's novels.

2.2 Michel Foucault on Truth, *Parrhesia* and Confession

Foucault's models are excellent for looking at truth that is conscious and openly and freely expressed. The purpose of this section is to establish truth as an apperceptive dialogue between interlocutors, as well as define what truth means and how it functions with relation to the truth-teller. In particular, the concept of *parrhesia* will be addressed, since it relates specifically to a truth that is openly expressed and directly related to the identity of the speaker. In addition, attention will be paid to the notion of confession (noted

by Bakhtin as a prevalent feature of Dostoevsky's narrative approach) as a dialogic process. The reason for taking this approach will be to allow for the understanding of an expressed truth by a character as a form of identity expression that contributes directly to the ongoing process of ideological negotiation. In this section, the term "subject" will be used, as this is the term most appropriate to use when discussing Foucault's approach to the development of truth. This "subject" is readily equated with the characters penned by Dostoevsky, as they work in the same ways to develop their notions of the truth of themselves.

Much in the way that Bakhtin ascribes to Dostoevsky, Foucault works to identify these systems of truth through the exploration of the outer limits of their reasonable applications. The analyses of madness, illness, crime, deviancy, etc. as transgressions of these practices of truth are able to illuminate their logical borders. "How do we stand, what should we do, how should we conduct ourselves, if it is truth that there is and must be a certain truth about us, and what's more a truth told to us through what we push furthest away from us, namely madness death and crime?" (*Subjectivity and Truth* 12). The states of flux or crisis that Dostoevsky uses as the platform for his characters' self-development fixate on this idea of transgressing a threshold in order to establish what is or is not an acceptable truth for himself as a character (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 61).⁷ As discussed in the last section, this strategy of using plots centered around transgression or states of dramatic transition emerges out of the similar tradition in the old Socratic dialogues (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 111).

⁷ "...for in fact Dostoevsky always represents a person *on the threshold* of a final decision, at a moment of *crisis*, at an unfinalizable – an *unpredeterminable* – turning point for his soul." (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 61).

2.2.1 Towards Defining Truth

Beyond the idea of truth as being located at the point of transgression of borders, it is necessary to define the basic terms of truth and subjectivity as Foucault has described them. From there, the discussion intends to elaborate how to identify these concepts within the parameters of Dostoevsky's work. In simple terms, Foucault defines truth as a "system of obligations" (*Subjectivity and Truth* 12). This can be interpreted to mean that, within a given ideological discourse, a thing can be understood as true insofar as it relates functionally to that discourse:⁸

...if all these analyses are necessarily carried out through historical material, the objective of this historical material is not to show the extent to which truth is changeable and definition of the subject is relative, but the way in which subjectivities as experience of self and others are constituted through obligations of truth, through the bonds of what could be called veridiction. (*Subjectivity and Truth* 13).

In essence he is saying that the subject must produce the truth about himself, which is precisely what Bakhtin says that Dostoevsky does. One such obligation of truth is to analyze and tell the truth of oneself. In terms of Dostoevsky's writings, if we understand that the characters are in possession of their own, independent structure of logic through which the events of the story unfold, this means that we can take their words, actions, motivations, and perspectives on the words, actions, and motivations of others to be true in

⁸ The "function" referred to here entails the process of transformation undergone by a subject in its relationship to the system of obligations that constitute truth.

some capacity. Since this is an extremely broad understanding, the applicability of these truths will need to be discussed more narrowly moving forward.

Foucault goes on to define subjectivity as “that which is constituted and transformed in its relationship to its own truth” (*Subjectivity and Truth* 12). In short, Foucault identifies subjectivity as the relationship of self to self. This is an assumption that is readily made by Bakhtin in his theory on Dostoevsky – that the identities of the characters are formulated as products of their dialogized discourses. The very object of their discourse is the formulation of themselves as subjects, which coincides with Foucault’s description of Western subjectivity as a process by which a subject reveals the truth about himself in order to transform himself into an “object of knowledge,” which allows him the ability to further transform his truth (*On the Government of the Living* 225). For Foucault, it is understood that this development in Western thought operates largely as a function of correcting sin. For the purposes of this analysis, the notion of the truth of oneself as an object knowable by the subject will be prioritized. In particular, this will be done with regard to the dialogic interaction of discourses of truth produced and utilized by the subject as he engages in that process of self-analysis, which Bakhtin says is paramount in Dostoevsky.

To narrow in a bit on the process of speaking truth and the way that this can relate to the dialogized notion of truth in Dostoevsky, I would like to turn to Foucault’s analyses on processes of speaking truth, in particular, his analysis on the concept of *parrhesia*. This is the form of veridiction that I think will be the most relevant for an analysis of Dostoevsky’s novels mostly because of the priority placed by the author on the self-analysis of his characters, as well as the unique feature that truth, when spoken about the

subject outside of a dialogic interaction, constitutes a lie. This last point makes the concept of *parrhesia* particularly relevant since it highlights the identity-constituting function of the forms of veridiction utilized by Dostoevsky. The link to identity that is inherent in *parrhesia*, as well as the potential threat that it poses for the subject himself, provides a basis for the rejection of external truths leveled against the subject. From here, I would like to discuss the different developments of *parrhesia* over time (as outlined by Foucault) and use examples from these novels that exemplify each (though, my point is of course not that these instances are examples of this sort of *parrhesia*, but that these models of *parrhesia* with their respective emphases illuminate what is significant about these expressions of truth in Dostoevsky).

Foucault defines *parrhesia* as a process of speaking out, speaking truth freely and concealing nothing. There are a couple of stipulations to this practice that he identifies. First, one must tie oneself (more specifically one's identity) to the truth that one speaks. That is, one must truly believe the truth that one speaks, and that fact must be known. Secondly, the one speaking must be putting himself at risk in some capacity by the profession of his truth (*Courage of Truth* 9-13). This notion of *parrhesia* is a precursor to more recent practices of self-confession (which features predominantly in Dostoevsky's writing) and is necessary to understand in order to see how the truths that his characters express come into play as formative structures of their identities.

2.2.2 Developments in *Parrhesia* Over Time

There are a number of developments in *parrhesia* over time that are relevant to the forms of veridiction that occur in some of the interactions between Dostoevsky's characters. The first development occurs with what Foucault terms *ethical parrhesia* or

Socratic *parrhesia*. This shift organizes the practice of truth telling around the imperative of self-care, or self-interrogation. Within the context of this thesis, this process will be discussed as a reference for the process of self-analysis asserted by Bakhtin to be the key defining feature of the development of Dostoevsky's characters. Beyond simply expressing a truth honestly held by the subject, the subject must now be able to account for that truth. In short, this process entails the ability to trace one's reasoning and the drive to expel false truths (*Courage of Truth* 85-92).

In *The Idiot*, Madame Epanchin and her daughters frequently question, even challenge, Myshkin on the unusual things he says. Their particular interactions often allow for Myshkin to spend some time expanding on his perspective, providing an explanation, or account, for his belief. One such conversation takes place at the start of the novel, when Myshkin meets Madame Epanchin and her daughters for the first time. Madame Epanchin, having had very low expectations of the prince before meeting him, is rather favorably impressed by his polite and well-spoken demeanor, and they begin a conversation in which Myshkin talks about his experience abroad. Between Madame Epanchin and her daughters, they often interject with questions for the prince, not so much about the events of his travels, but about his outlook and his beliefs as a person that motivate and influence his actions. This provides a space for Myshkin to enter into a long monologue that reveals his deep, empathetic love of humanity. What is relevant here is the characterization of this interview. At the end of their conversation, Madame Epanchin says to Myshkin, "Well, they have put you through your examination" (*The Idiot* 70).⁹ The goal in their conversation with him was precisely to get an account of him which, per the discussion of Bakhtin, can

⁹ "Вот и проэкзаменовали!" (*Идиот* 58).

only reliably be obtained through the prince himself. Throughout the discussion, the prince is described as “confused” or “disconnected,” and it is through questionings or challenges by the Epanchin women that he finally provides an account of his perspective and what it means to him. These accounts provide this sort of self-analysis that gives a clearer insight into how he thinks and understands the world.

Another significant development in the notion of *parrhesia* occurs with the Cynics. In Foucault’s telling, the Cynic development led to the linking of life and truth. Specifically, the Cynic form of life “[made] the form of existence an essential condition of truth telling. It [made] the form of existence the reductive practice which [made] space for truth-telling” (*Courage of Truth* 172). In other words, life in this mode must be lived in a way that optimizes veridiction. This development in the practice of *parrhesia* fits into this thesis in the sense that it allows for an understanding of the idea (shared by Bakhtin and Foucault) that truth can be found at the point of transgression of borders. As Bakhtin states, Dostoevsky centers his narratives around a point of transition, or a threshold, where the development of his characters’ identities takes place. This threshold and the plot action that takes place around it can potentially be interpreted in terms of a “lived truth,” or a connection between the practice of life and an expressed truth.

Foucault describes an aspect of the Cynic mode of life that works to extend to their logical limit the values of a “true life” (relevant to the practice of *parrhesia*) that include living in a manner that keeps one’s intentions unconcealed, practicing its key values independent of one another, keeping in line with the rules outlined by one’s structure of truth, maintaining individual sovereignty, etc. (*Courage of Truth* 231-247). The Cynic practice here takes these values and, by extending them, enacts a sort of “reversal” that

produces the aforementioned scandal of truth and transforms the “true life” into an “other life” that shamelessly utilizes its truth in an attempt to express it to others (*Courage of Truth* 283-287).

The idea that life and truth are fused, particularly in the sense of the transgression of borders in order to illuminate that truth, can be easily identified in Raskolnikov’s intention to demonstrate his ideology of crime and those who can excusably commit it. On the surface, it is his intention to commit his crime of killing the old woman who, per his conceptualization, does harm to others and, as a result, perform a service for society at large. He would be able to do this, per his conceptualization, because of his status as an “exceptional” human being who is able to perform otherwise morally reprehensible actions without guilt so long as it is done for the greater good of mankind. This intention could be seen as the willful transgression of the conventional borders of morality in order to reveal a deeper truth, and his attempts to perform this action constitute a linking of this truth to his life. It seems like an obvious logical step to understand this linkage of truth to life as a performance of the truth of one’s identity. Although, given the failure of Raskolnikov’s attempts to perform this “truth” as he understands it, one could question what this says about the potential for the legitimacy of his attempts to live a held truth.¹⁰ It may be argued, however, that this could also represent a sort of “reversal” in that it still demonstrates a certain truth of Raskolnikov’s identity as he transgresses borders of morality; it simply does not reflect a truth about himself that he will state openly (or may not even be

¹⁰ This will be discussed later on with regards to what Bakhtin has said about the flaws in any ostensibly finalized epistemology of truth, as well as its link to the unfinalizability of a character’s identity.

consciously aware of). This, too, will be discussed later on in terms of Freud and the idea of a subconscious truth of the self.

A final, yet keenly relevant, understanding of *parrhesia* comes in the connections that Foucault has identified to Christian asceticism. This is the final development that I would like to draw into this analysis, and it is particularly relevant to the function of self-confession and penance as it manifests in Dostoevsky's writing. The idea of confession here is particularly relevant to the discussion of the truth of oneself as dialogue, since it automatically assumes an interlocutor and, arguably, a functional process of negotiation with regards to the truth being spoken.

A key feature of this transition in *parrhesia* is the emphasis on an "other world" that can be reached through the practice of a good (understood as truthful) life (*Courage of Truth* 319). While Christianity does play a major role in Dostoevsky's writing, for the purposes of this analysis, to avoid clouding the issue of truth and motivations for truth telling, I believe it would be appropriate to reframe the understanding of the "other world" as a broader concept of the truth of one's identity. Also relevant are the notions of obedience, confession, and penance that appear in this new function of *parrhesia*. Obedience enters the equation on the basis of obligation to speak the truth, only now the obligation arises out of an institution – it is an obligation to God – rather than out of a relationship to the self or to humanity (*Courage of Truth* 320). The stress on obedience to an authority above oneself results in a necessary skepticism of knowing the truth of oneself, which undermines the value of *parrhesia* as a mechanism of self-investigation. It becomes possible to see this sort of investigation as faulty, presumptuous, and overconfident (*Courage of Truth* 335-336).

This is where the notion of confession becomes predominant in the practice of truth. In order to maintain an adequate relation to the truth and oneself (one that is determined by an institution of power, rather than by self-examination), one must persist in a process of veridiction through confession in order to externalize one's truth and verify it through that institution. "...if the indispensable mechanism of *discretio* (good judgement) that human nature lacks can be re-established by the fact of confession, or rather by the very form of confession that is the principle of *discretion*, this entails that confession be perpetual and continuous" (*On the Government of the Living* 306). This is where the connection to dialogue as it is used by Dostoevsky to reach a character's truth can be drawn. It is also important in comparison with the first form of *parrhesia* discussed, since it pushes the role of interlocutor into a stronger dialogic role with the speaker. For Dostoevsky's characters, who often speak to a projected or imagined interlocutor, the difference between introspection and confession is sometimes murky, yet interesting to consider.

The difference between the two usually lies in the function that the interlocutor's voice (be it real or imagined by the speaker) is performing. For an introspective (that is, self-analytical) role, this usually entails leading the speaker to explain or provide an account for their beliefs or actions. For the more confessional role, this function likely takes on the role of verbalizing an alternative ideology as an opposing voice to the speaker's. This difference might be seen in the example of Raskolnikov's confessions to Sonia and his sister Dunia. Although his confession to Sonia is complex and significant for a number of reasons, her role in the discussion is more to guide him through his own reasoning behind the action (that is, to help him to account for the truth of his actions and what that says about him) than to provide an opposing voice that challenges his reasoning. In

Raskolnikov's confession to Dunia, however, she is more direct in her challenges to his reasoning. He does more to elaborate his ideological position in response (although he ultimately fails to defend it in this dialogue) than to account for the reasoning behind his actions.

In *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault differentiates between the terms *confessio* and *exomologesis*. In essence, *confessio* is the verbal act of confession. It is a private act which describes the transgression and allows for the performance of an evaluation or analysis. Exomologesis, on the other hand, entails a public act – manifesting oneself as a sinner. Its meaning is derived from the act of attributing, publicly, to oneself the identity of “sinner” (211-215). In this sense, one is expressing a truth of oneself that is in and of itself a constitutive feature of one's identity. Within the framework of an unfinalizable person, as discussed by Bakhtin, this act of identifying oneself contributes to an ongoing dialogue of one's own truth, which I believe could help to account for the paradox of truthful humility discussed by Foucault to be a result of this public performance of one's identity as a sinner (*On the Government of the Living* 215).

The purpose of elaborating the difference between *confessio* and *exomologesis* is to provide a fitting structure with which to look at different types of confession that appear in these novels. With these two aspects of confession, we can identify different motivations for acts of confession in the novels that account for their seemingly strange or out of place nature. On the whole, it seems that the public practice of confession, these exomologesis-style outbursts, are more common in Dostoevsky's narratives. Given our understanding of the driving force of his narratives as being the dialogic development of his characters' voices (and their identities as a whole), this makes sense. In *Crime and Punishment*, we

see an example of confession that is by no means traditional, but which does follow this pattern of an enumeration and evaluation of sin followed by public performance of penance in Raskolnikov's confession to Sonia. Upon elaborating his crimes to her and undertaking a process of examination of those crimes, she directs him to confess. She tells him to perform a literal act of public penance by going to a crossroads, kissing the earth, and declaring aloud that he is a murderer (*Crime and Punishment* 399).¹¹

There are limits/assumptions made in the Foucauldian theory that don't account for the contradictions prevalent throughout Dostoevsky's novels. The approach based on Foucault is more conducive to those confessional models where truth is spoken consciously by the speaker and coincides with their ideology and self-image. For contradictions that occur with that understanding, we can turn to Freud to reveal subconscious manifestations of truth that are still constitutive to identity.

2.3 Freud on Indirect Truth

Before coming to Freud's conception of truth, I would like to take a slight detour to Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy on truth. This is necessary in order to firmly establish Freud's discussion of compulsion in human behavior as an acceptable expression of truth – a point which would otherwise remain unclear.

An article by Shai Frogel allows us to reclaim subconscious identity as a practice of truth. Frogel is able to equate Freud's death drive with Nietzsche's will to truth as a dialectic between life (guided by a principle of change) and death (guided by a principle of constancy). He privileges Nietzsche's new ethics on the basis of its metaphysical

¹¹ (*Преступление и Наказание* 366)

assumption of life as predominant over truth, due to the fact that life is the platform upon which truth is able to take place. From there, he utilizes Nietzsche's concept of the will to power as a synthesis between the will to life and the will to truth. The former prioritizes self-overcoming, the persistence of life as a changeable state, while the latter prioritizes self-identity, or maintaining a consistent framework through which to understand one's life as true. This is why Frogel would like to understand Freud's death drive as a truth drive, which still allows for psychological determination to occur as a process of stability but does not result in the paradoxical conclusion that the aim of life is death. Rather, the truth/death drive serves life by giving it shape (Frogel 90-91). With this understanding of Freud's death drive, we can say that the compulsive behaviors attributed to the drive can be understood as a manifestation of a subconscious truth – one that is integral to the formation of the subject's identity. In addition, a contemporary trend in psychoanalytical thought holds that the repetition compulsion that is central to Freud's death drive functions to "[fill] in psychic voids." The behaviors that repeat represent a sense of self that exists underneath or before a coherent, stable identity, and this sort of subconscious identity manifests itself in these repeated behaviors in order to achieve recognition (Levine III).

2.3.1 Repeated Truth

With the connection between Freud's theories of compulsion and human behavior and the notion of truth established, we can move on to a more detailed discussion of a couple of theories in particular. In order to understand Freud's approach to truth, we must resort to his concept of repetition compulsion, which constitutes part of the "death drive" that challenges and intertwines with the "pleasure principle" that guides human behavior. This concept describes the compulsion to restage unpleasant experiences from the subject's

past, which would seem to contradict the pleasure principle as the guiding behavioral force. Freud reconciles this contradiction by theorizing that the restaging of unpleasant experiences satisfies some other desire than the one that seeks pleasure in all things. Either by mastery of the unpleasant scenario, achieved by being the active force behind the occurrence of the unpleasurable situation, or by the exacting of vengeance against a proxy of the original active force, the restaging provides a kind of cathartic satisfaction for the subject (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 8-10).

These experiences are restaged in an attempt to “master” the situation by negotiating the unpleasurable identity and reasserting it on one’s own terms. Freud remarks in his essay, “What psychoanalysis reveals in the transference phenomena of neurotics can also be observed in the lives of some normal people. The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some ‘daemonic’ power...” (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 15).

This phenomenon is fairly clear in the character of Nastasya Fillipovna. As discussed previously, she oscillates between her inclination towards Myshkin as a symbol of redemption and her reversion to Rogozhin, who represents her status as a “low woman.” It can be readily argued that her repeated acceptance of Myshkin and what he represents, shortly followed by her running away from him and back to Rogozhin, represents this sort of compulsion to repeat an unpleasant scenario. In this situation, the unpleasantness consists of her integrity being violated by a man who covets her as a commodity to possess. Rogozhin, like Totsky who initiated this process, uses his wealth to, more or less, “purchase” her, but her participation in this process is not motivated by their money. Nastasya Fillipovna makes it clear that, to her understanding, her relationship to these men

reflects her status and character. By taking it upon herself to stage this process of retreat and return, she is able to assert this identity on her own terms.

Since it has now been established that the Freudian death drive, insofar as it consists of a compulsion to repeat unpleasurable experiences, constitutes a compulsion towards truth, it is also possible to say that the presence of these compulsions in Dostoevsky's writing fits within what Bakhtin described as a character expressing a truth of himself. This exists in contrast to, but still alongside Foucault's ideas of a more rigorous (or a more conscious and intentional) self-analysis, but it still functions as an identity-constituting practice of truth.

A connection might also be drawn between the expression of subconsciously held truths of oneself and the subtextual meanings of double-voiced utterances described by Bakhtin. As mentioned previously, the full meaning of an utterance that is directed at another's speech must be discerned by the speaker's interlocutor. In this sense, the "other's speech" to which the speaker is referring could be considered the subconscious characterization of himself that he holds. This helps to account for apparent contradictions between a character's speech and actions in a way that is still in keeping with the dialogue that works on a progressive negotiation of his identity.

2.3.2 Shame and Heteroglossia

Shame is an interesting emotion that seems to come up frequently in Dostoevsky's writing. In many cases, it seems to function as a motivator in a character's discourse on himself, which requires it to be analyzed in terms of its impact on a character's self-image. In Freudian terms, shame arises out of a tension between the ego and the ego-ideal. It is differentiated from guilt, for example, in that the latter arises from tension between the ego

and the superego. To clarify, guilt comes from the transgression of boundaries set by the superego, whereas shame arises when a goal, or vision of the self, held by the ego-ideal isn't being met (Piers and Singer, 10-12).

This final point, that there is an image of the self that is being transgressed or otherwise violated, follows the same sort of logic that we have so far seen again and again. It is possible to say that these two conflicting images, the dialogue between them, could comprise two opposing voices, in keeping with the Bakhtinian elaboration of heteroglossia. These warring ideologies of the self develop their dialogue through this mechanism experienced by the character as shame.

Perhaps the readiest example of shame is Dostoevsky is visible in the character of Raskolnikov. His shame is felt deeply, and even constitutes one of the major reasons behind his crime. In this case, shame is a product of the conflict between his perceived self (the sort of "exceptional" man that he envisions as the hero of his constructed ideology of crime) which is exacerbated by his mother's praise of him as a great and capable man, and the reality of his circumstances, which are marked by destitution, unemployment, mental and physical illness, etc. It is apparent that this shame constitutes a dialogic process which functions to elaborate the truth of the character's identity, rather than a singular product of the interaction between his opposing ideas of himself. This concept is visible in the strange and incongruous interaction between Raskolnikov, the policeman, and the intoxicated girl towards the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*. Upon first noticing that the girl is stumbling around and vulnerable (in fact, is being targeted by a nearby "dandy"), Raskolnikov's first impulse is to keep an eye on her and alert a nearby policeman to help in getting her home. He even hands over the last twenty kopecks in his pocket so that the

policeman can call a cab for the girl. Even as the officer is trying to help the girl, something “flips” in Raskolnikov, and he suddenly calls after the officer to leave the girl alone and let the dandy do what he will with her. It strikes the reader as strange that Raskolnikov would suddenly and without provocation reject his initial noble impulse to help her. The catalyst for this change (if indeed there is one) would seem to be the lamentation of the police officer of the rampant vice of the day and the shameful effect it has had on this girl. It may be possible to say that this commentary on contemporary society constitutes an ideological voice with which Raskolnikov then enters into dialogue. The fact that the police officer himself is perplexed by Raskolnikov’s sudden shift and immediately leaves the narrative indicates that it is not the officer’s voice per se, but the ideology that he expresses that Raskolnikov is in dialogue with. In the immediate aftermath, Raskolnikov has the following discussion with himself:

And why did I want to interfere? Is it for me to help?...Poor girl! She will come to her senses and weep, and then her mother will find out...She will give her a beating, a horrible, shameful beating and then maybe throw her out...and the girl will soon be slipping out on the sly here and there...Have I not seen cases like that?...Ugh! But what does it matter? A certain percentage of us, they tell us, must every year go...that way...to the devil, I suppose, so that the rest may remain fresh, and not be interfered with...But what if Dunechka were one of the percentage! (*Crime and Punishment* 51)¹²

These musings represent a conflict between two ideological positions regarding society – a conflict which is present and discussed throughout the story – but in addition to that, it can also be seen as a reflection of the conflict in Raskolnikov’s understanding of his own position. He refers to the predatory dandy as “Svidrigailov,” which is the name of Raskolnikov’s sister’s impertinent employer who had inappropriately propositioned her, causing a scandal about which Raskolnikov had only recently learned (*Crime and Punishment* 33-34, 48).¹³ This demonstrates that, in Raskolnikov’s view, there is a clear parallel between the vulnerable girl and his own sister. The lamentations by the police officer over the girl’s situations might, in this case, reinforce the failure of Raskolnikov to be the provider for his family, which is largely the core of his feelings of shame. Therefore,

¹² “И чего я ввязался тут помогать! Ну мне ли помогать?...Бедная девочка! Очнется, поплачет, потом мать узнает...Сначала прибьет, а потом высечет, больно и с позором, пожалуй, и сгонит...и начнет шмыгать моя девочка, туда и сюда...Разве я таких не видал?...Тьфу! А пусть! Это, говорят, так у следует. Такой процент, говорят, должен уходить каждый год...куда-то...к черту, должно быть, чтоб остальных освежать и им не мешать...А что, коль и Дунечка как-нибудь в процент попадет!” (*Преступление и Наказание* 46-47).

¹³ (*Преступление и Наказание* 30-31, 44).

his perplexing shift in demeanor could be seen as a product of his negotiation of that shame, which (per the above dialogue with himself) remains unresolved.

Through Freud, it is possible to see a deeper level of a character's identity as a manifestation of a held truth. Both the "death drive," conceptualized as a compulsion to repeat unpleasant circumstances (potentially also understood as conditions that contradict the ideology openly expressed by a character) and the experience of shame (or, more broadly, a contradiction between the perceived self and lived experience) function in dialogue with the more openly expressed forms of a character's truth to serve the negotiation of that character's identity. The significance of considering both of these levels of truth is to capture a fuller scope of the dialogic development of these characters' identities by incorporating the unspoken or implicit dialogue between these subsurface expressions of truth and the surface dialogue between openly expressed ideologies, all in keeping with the Bakhtinian characterization of Dostoevsky's writing. This will further allow for a more concrete foundation on which to analyze and compare certain characters who, while appearing to think and function in similar ways, engage in more complex inner dialogues that develop their characters differently.

As an example, characters such as *The Idiot's* General Ivolgin and *Crime and Punishment's* Marmeladov are similar in many ways. Both men are characterized by their bad habits, tendency to lie and to fail to support their families. Both men even have daughters who find themselves to be more or less the primary supporter of the family. Marmeladov, for his part, is relatively lucid with regards to his position. He seems to define himself, openly, as a perpetual squanderer. This might be seen as an open, self-conscious manifestation of a truth of himself which, per Foucault, could constitute a "lived truth"

which illuminates the truth of his identity as failure. At the same time, by virtue of acknowledging, even reveling, in this identity, he gives an impression that he regards himself, subconsciously, as a sort of martyr for doing so. He asserts to Raskolnikov that the beatings he receives at the hands of his wife in retaliation for having drunk away all of their money are “not a pain...but even an enjoyment” (*Crime and Punishment* 26).¹⁴

General Ivolgin, for his part, gives an opposite impression. Although he does occupy a very similar role to Marmeladov, the general’s enjoyment is in telling detailed and extravagant lies which, were they remotely believable, would reveal a noble past with excellent connections and reputation. He hates to be caught in any of these lies and will become very angry if confronted, which would seem to give the impression that his expressed truth of identity is characterized by his delusions, which allow him to maintain a still lofty opinion of himself. The sort of lying done by General Ivolgin is a very specific form of lying that constitutes a sort of “self-fashioning” behavior. Deborah Martinsen writes about Dostoevsky’s usage of this sort of lying (вранье) in the character of the general, which she identifies as a function of a shameful self-identity. As she states, “[Dostoevsky] identifies shame as one of its two primary sources, writing ‘Мы все стыдимся самого себя.’”¹⁵ The object of shame is one’s identity, i.e. who one is...Dostoevsky links lying and a sense of identity; thus, he claims that all Russians lie because they are ashamed of their true selves and want to be other than they are” (“The Cover-Up” 184-185). She discusses the context for these lies, which are always situations in which he is reminded of his shameful social position. At these moments, it becomes

¹⁴ “А побоев не боюсь...Знай, сударь, что мне таковые побои не токмо не в боль, но и наслаждение бывают” (*Преступление и Наказание* 23-24).

¹⁵ “We are all ashamed of ourselves.”

clear to the reader that he is, on some level, aware of the absurdity of his own lies and feels a deeper sense of shame and insecurity. One such example is the conversation that he has with Myshkin in which he expresses anger towards Lebedev for telling an innocent lie about having been present for Napoleon's 1812 invasion. This exchange strikes the reader as hypocritical, even funny, as it immediately precedes a lengthy and clearly made-up story by the general of his own even more unlikely experience of the invasion. The general states that, "an innocent lie, however crude, to raise a laugh, does not wound a human heart. One man will tell a lie, if you like, simply from friendship, to please the man he is talking to; but if there's a suspicion of disrespect...there's nothing left for a man of honor but to turn away and break off all connection, putting the offender in his proper place" (*The Idiot* 454).¹⁶ This could be taken as an indication of the general's insecurity regarding others' perception of him, which complicates his tendency to tell these extravagant, blatant lies. As it is a compulsion of his, it is easy to see it as a repetition compulsion which reveals an understanding of himself as dishonorable and deserving of abandonment. In this sense, he is revealing (through his lies) a subconscious truth of himself. This particular lie is notable because, later on in the story, the general thinks back to the reaction Myshkin has to his tale and realizes, much to his shame, that Myshkin did not believe his lie. In this sense, the general feels that Myshkin is rejecting a truth that he has expressed about himself (although it was cloaked in a semi-whimsical lie) which invalidates his self-fashioned identity.

The contrast between *Crime and Punishment's* Marmeladov and *The Idiot's* General Ivolgin is just one example of characters who, although they function in very

¹⁶ "Невинная ложь для веселого смеха, хотя бы и грубая, не обижает сердца человеческого. Иной и лжет-то, если хотите, из одной только дружбы, чтобы доставить тем удовольствие собеседнику; но если просвечивает неуважение...то человеку благородному остается лишь отвернуться и порвать связь, указав обидчику его настоящее место." (*Идиот* 360).

similar ways in their respective novels and can be read within this framework of self-negotiation of identity, reveal very different, even opposing dialogues of identity in the interaction between their openly expressed truths and the truths expressed below the surface. In the following section, additional examples from both novels will be discussed within this framework to further demonstrate the complexity of these dialogues.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Identity in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*

The psychologically complex characters found in Dostoevsky's novels provide excellent subjects through which to illustrate the functionality of the framework developed in the previous chapter. The often self-reflective nature of his characters brings to the forefront the negotiation involved as the character builds and explores the fluid truth of his own identity. This negotiation takes place through the various forms of dialogue described in section one, within which we can see the interplay of explicit and subconscious truths.

Beginning with Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, as the epitome of a Dostoeskian character, we can identify various places throughout the novel where the application of this framework illuminates the transition as the character develops his own voice. Due to this continual transformation, which constitutes the “unfinalizability” of a character's identity, our framework helps to show that a character's truth can only be spoken by the character himself as it is ever-evolving. The best way to illustrate this is by comparison. If Raskolnikov is the epitome of the typical Dostoevsky character, Prince Myshkin of *The Idiot* is the prime example of a character who breaks these rules. Myshkin speaks not only his own truth but tries to level truth against others. By doing so, he renders static what should be the fluid nature of those characters' truth, causing it to be an un-truth posited against that character from an external, non-dialogic perspective.

3.1 How Raskolnikov Negotiates His Identity as Peak Rogue

Crime and Punishment's Raskolnikov is easily one of the most developed of Dostoevsky's characters that exemplify his love for writing rogues and criminals. The entire process of his self-negotiation hinges on his identity as a criminal (or, as the distinction later proves relevant, one who commits a crime). Within Raskolnikov's numerous soliloquies, inner dialogues, and confessional utterances, we can identify a series of potential discourses of truth that he explores throughout the novel. These discourses are most visible in Raskolnikov's moments of confession, owing to his attempts to both summarize and account for his actions. It is his confession to Sonia, a moment which will come up again and again in discussion due to its pivotal role in Raskolnikov's identity negotiation, which most clearly enumerates his explicitly reasoned potential motives. The question for Dostoevsky, as stated by Bakhtin, is how a character understands himself in relation to the world around him. In *Crime and Punishment*, this question becomes intertwined directly with the question of Raskolnikov's motive for his crime. Since Raskolnikov is such an isolated character, his crime constitutes his key interaction with the world around him. As such, his motive directly comprises the relationship that he has with the world at large.

An article by Edward Wasiolek sees the "split" in Raskolnikov's identity as a structure of balanced antithesis, which has him undergo a shift from one set of ruling principles (characterized by his nihilism and self-absorption) to another (characterized by humility and selflessness). He sees the first half as portraying the rational Raskolnikov who attempts to organize his life according to his principles of will and reason. As this attempt fails, the second half sees him attempting to find a new organizing principle. According to

Wasiolek, both sets of principles are always present within him, which accounts for his erratic and irrational outbursts throughout the novel (noble impulses at the start, rebellious impulses at the end) (132). This perspective accounts for the discrepancies in his behavior in a way that underscores the importance of self-knowledge and the meeting of these two opposing sides in a functional process of negotiation. This adds an additional dimension to the question of self-knowledge, which is a procedural self-determination that arises from that knowledge, and it is this dimension that I think captures a significant aspect to the process of characterological development in Dostoevsky's writing.

3.1.1 Raskolnikov's Explicit Negotiations of Truth

"How could you bring yourself to do it?" Sonia asks after finding out what he has done. "To plunder, perhaps?" is Raskolnikov's initial answer. But as soon as Sonia assents to this potential motive, Raskolnikov disavows it. "No, Sonia, no...I certainly did want to help my mother, but...that's not the real reason either" (*Crime and Punishment* 392).¹⁷ From the outset of this discussion, we can see echoes of dialogues that Raskolnikov has had with himself throughout the novel. The question of money as a motive was introduced at the very start of the novel, where Raskolnikov is presented as "hopelessly in debt to his landlady and [is] afraid of meeting her" (*Crime and Punishment* 5).¹⁸ His anxiety surrounding money is further established by his receipt of his mother's letter informing him of his sister's upcoming marriage to the successful and wealthy Luzhin. Raskolnikov's interpretation of this news, that it represents the "sacrifice" of his sister to someone who has "*already* made his fortune," further establishes the idea that his financial insecurity

¹⁷ "да как вы...могли это решиться?" ... "Ну да, чтоб ограбить." ... "Нет, Соня, нет...я действительно хотел помочь матери, но...и это не совсем верно." (*Преступление и Наказание* 359).

¹⁸ (*Преступление и Наказание* 5).

constitutes the strongest motive for his crime. In contradiction to this neat and straightforward motive, however, Raskolnikov never fully addresses the issue of money as a result of his crime. He rather haphazardly steals the old woman's valuables after the murder, he acknowledges that he had only thought vaguely of money as an outcome for his crime, and therefore had not planned where to hide any valuable trinkets, and (most tellingly) he rids himself of his hard-won valuables very shortly after the event.

If all this has really been done deliberately and not idiotically, if I really had a certain and definite object, how is it that I didn't even glance into the purse and don't know what I had there, that purse for which I have undergone these agonies and have deliberately undertaken this base, filthy, degrading business? And here I wanted to throw into the water the purse together with all the things which I had not seen either...how's that? (*Crime and Punishment* 109).¹⁹

This quote explores his own questioning of his motives, and effectively rules out financial gain as a potential justification for him. The process through which he reaches this idea is a great example of an internal dialogue of truth. The dialogue between these voices demonstrates a conscious attempt on his part to interrogate and account for his hitherto expressed truth, which in turn results in the expulsion of this false truth. We can also see evidence of those heteroglot voices in dialogue with one another within this single utterance by Raskolnikov. The voice saying that he can justify this crime by the potential

¹⁹ “Если действительно все это дело сделано было сознательно, а не по-дурачки, если у тебя действительно была определенная и твердая цель, то каким же образом ты до сих пор даже и не заглянул в кошелек и не знаешь, что тебе досталось, из-за чего все муки принял и на такое подлое гадкое, низкое дело сознательно шел? Да ведь ты в воду его хотел сейчас бросить, кошелек-то, вместе со всеми вещами, которых ты тоже не видал...Это как же?” (*Преступление и Наказание* 97).

financial gain, which has followed him from the beginning of the novel, comes into contact with another voice, which refutes the first and instead calls for another possibility. “It’s because I’m very ill,” he concludes (*Crime and Punishment* 109).²⁰

This same pattern of potential motive borne out in dialogue and contradicted by a contesting voice plays out for each excuse offered by Raskolnikov. Another example that Raskolnikov confesses to Sonia is his desire “to become a Napoleon” (*Crime and Punishment* 394).²¹ This is the reason rooted in his idea that extraordinary men have a right, even an obligation, to transgress the law in order to realize their extraordinary ideas (*Crime and Punishment* 246-248).²² The formulation of this idea is attributed to an article written by Raskolnikov himself, although it is presented curiously in a roundabout way in the text – summarized by Porfiry in order to begin a discussion on the topic. For the reader’s sake, the key ideas of Raskolnikov’s theory are discussed plainly in this scene. But from this point, it becomes clear in retrospect that Raskolnikov had been toying with these ideas as part of his motive since the beginning of the novel. In a flashback shortly before he commits his crime, we see Raskolnikov sitting in a little tavern, reflecting on his first meeting with the old lady. He overhears a nearby conversation about the relative morality of murdering an evil old woman (the very same woman Raskolnikov is thinking about) and using her wealth to benefit the needy. Raskolnikov is incredibly affected by this conversation not because it inspires him to think along these lines, but because it reflects the very same ideas that he has *already* been considering. Taking this as a sign from the universe, Raskolnikov is spurred into action. This is not, however, the result of his having resolved his inner

²⁰ “Это оттого, что я очень болен” (*Преступление и Наказание* 97).

²¹ “я хотел Наполеоном сделаться” (*Преступление и Наказание* 361).

²² (*Преступление и Наказание* 224–229)

dialogue on the subject, and in fact the more he considers the points, the less resolved it seems to him to be.

We may note in passing, one peculiarity in regard to all the final resolutions taken by him in the matter; they had one strange characteristic: the more final they were, the more hideous and the more absurd they once became in his eyes. In spite of all his agonizing inward struggle, he never for a single instant all that time could believe in the carrying out of his plans. And, indeed, if it had ever happened that everything to the least point could have been considered and finally settled, and no uncertainty of any kind had remained, he would, it seems, have renounced it all as something absurd, monstrous and impossible. But a whole heap of unsettled points and uncertainties remained. (*Crime and Punishment* 70).²³

This passage summarizes the conflict of the two opposing voices in his head. It seems to represent another dialogized multi-voiced discourse on his part. On the one hand, he is engaging this voice that has had these debates on the relative morality of such an action and planned it all out. On the other hand, he is consistently challenging this voice with another that views the action as heinous to the point of absurdity. This challenge plays out in the sense that, even as the first voice succeeds in spurring him into action in a

²³ Заметим кстати одну особенность по поводу всех окончательных решений, уже приятных им в этом деле. Они имели одно странное свойство: чем окончательное они становились, тем безобразнее, нелепее тотчас же становились и в его глазах. Несмотря на всю мучительную внутреннюю борьбу свою, он никогда ни на одно мгновение не мог уверовать в исполнимость своих замыслов, во все это время. И если бы даже случилось когда-нибудь так, что уже все до последней точки было бы им разобрано и решено окончательно и сомнений не оставалось бы уже более никаких, -- то тут-то бы, кажется, он и отказался от всего, как от нелепости, чудовищности и невозможности. Но неразрешенных пунктов и сомнений оставалось еще целая бездна (*Преступление и Наказание* 63).

practical sense, the second manages to supersede the first by disavowing the decision even as it is happening and rendering it still undecided overall.

The fact that these two voices are interacting in an attempt to resolve a question indicates clearly that a negotiation of truth is occurring in some form. What makes this particular interaction interesting is that it is still relatively unclear what form this truth is taking. Initially, it seems that the goal of this negotiation is to resolve whether or not Raskolnikov should perform a certain action. From this, it is possible to conclude that the truth he is negotiating in relation to the ultimate question (who he is in relation to the world around him) will finally resolve itself in the form of an action based on that truth. This would indicate that what Raskolnikov is doing is attempting to link his life with truth, which coincides well and clearly with the Cynic mode of truth elaborated by Foucault. Upon further reflection, however, it seems that this performance of truth is undercut by the fact that the dialogue is still occurring even as the performance of action takes place. In fact, the more decisive the action, the more disconnected it becomes from the dialogue surrounding it.

That said, the idea that this dialogue represents a link between life and truth makes more sense if one considers not the crime itself to be the action, but the failure to carry it out effectively. One of the key points in Raskolnikov's inner dialogue is that criminals often fail to conceal their crimes because of a failure of will. The voice that is arguing in favor of his crime uses this musing to assert that, since he has decided that his own will would remain unimpaired, therefore his action could not be a *real* crime (*Crime and*

Punishment 71).²⁴ From the perspective of the voice which argues for the reprehensibility of his action, it makes far more sense to represent this scene as a linking of truth with life, as the unresolved decision to act in conjunction with his paradoxically decisive actions could constitute a failure of will in the moment of perpetration.

Although these dialogic negotiations have been taking place within Raskolnikov throughout the course of the novel, all comes to a head in his confession to Sonia. Since this is a confessional utterance, it performs that function of allowing him to check his logic (which he has been working on in fits and starts until this point) against Sonia as an interlocutor. She performs her role well by entertaining each of his potential justifications in turn and rebuking him for faulty logic where necessary. As Raskolnikov himself demonstrates, none of his potential motives is sufficient to answer the question of who he is in relation to the world. Each of these little dialogues that he enacts constitutes a conscious, explicit formulation of truth, which he negotiates and repeatedly refutes as faulty or incomplete assessments of his own character. Although these unresolved negotiations are in keeping with the unfinalizable nature of Dostoevsky's characters, they each constitute a negative formulation of identity. Still missing is a positive determination of Raskolnikov's identity, so in order to supplement these incomplete negotiations, it is necessary to turn to the subconscious manifestations of his identity.

The question of Raskolnikov's self-knowledge and conscious expression of truth, however, is complicated by the disjointed nature of his thinking. An article by Garry Hagberg describes Raskolnikov's loss of control over his thoughts, his language, and his

²⁴ (*Преступление и Наказание* 64-65)

retreat from coherent cognition. In this sense, psychic unity and stability are lost, and a resolution is sought in resolute, self-defining action. According to Hagberg, Dostoevsky is effectively portraying how a mind in such a fragile or undefined state will grasp towards identity, even an ill-constructed one (21-24). The loss of control over his utterances does not invalidate those utterances as expressions of Raskolnikov's held truths, however. Instead, they work to reveal truths that he is unable or unwilling to consciously formulate, but which still function within that framework of formative dialogue to establish an identity that Raskolnikov holds subconsciously. "The murderous idea," writes Hagberg, "that he attempts to declare as alien ('stopped as if suddenly struck'), as coming from a source outside himself ('enter my mind'), he actually knows – against this attempted self-deception – to be his own, to have emanated from within" (21). By addressing the expressions of truth that are being negotiated subconsciously by Raskolnikov, we can identify the form of self-knowledge that works to constitute a positive formulation of identity.

3.1.2 Raskolnikov's Subconscious Negotiations of Truth

Shame is a particularly relevant emotion when considering the topic of self-determination in Dostoevsky's characters. This is important for interpreting the dialogues of a character's truth because any shame that is felt gives a clear indication of that truth that is held, consciously or subconsciously, by the character. It is in moments of keenly felt shame that particularly significant dialogues are enacted by characters. Shame is a key component of *Crime and Punishment*, as it acts as a catalyst, even a motivator, for major narrative events. For Raskolnikov, shame manifests sharply at certain times following

instances of perceived failure or powerlessness, and each points clearly towards the unconscious perception that he has of himself.

Deborah Martinsen writes about the role that Raskolnikov's shame plays in his behavior throughout the novel. She reveals shame as a source of self-inquiry for Raskolnikov, as it functions as a primary motivator in his actions following his crime (rather than guilt, which one might expect from a remorseful killer). Both, she says, are manifest in the story. The dual murder reveals this; Raskolnikov kills the pawnbroker deliberately and her sister circumstantially, unintentionally. In the rare moments when he reflects on this, he feels guilt over Lizaveta's murder, but his primary focus always returns to his murder of the old woman, which is characterized by his experience of shame. This is incredibly significant to Raskolnikov's character, because shame relates directly to one's identity. According to Martinsen, "[s]hame arises when a person negatively evaluates his/her own self in relation to an idealized self, thereby arousing feelings of inferiority or inadequacy" (51-52).

With regards to Raskolnikov, the experiences of shame which mark the transgression of his subconscious ideal self tend to arise at moments where the realities of his condition (destitution, unemployment, physical and mental illness, and most significantly, moments when the success of his perpetration of murder is in question) bump up against his internalized perception of his own potential for greatness. If his experiences of shame reveal this about his subconscious ideal, how can we account for these shameful experiences as a representation of his own subconscious truth? The way in which Raskolnikov's shame can be understood to represent his own subconscious identity requires a return to the Freudian idea of the repetition compulsion. To recap, this is the

concept which describes the compulsion to restage unpleasurable events from one's life in an attempt to assert self-mastery or subtle influence over one's circumstances. Raskolnikov's sources of shame indicate that the repetitious cycle of unpleasurable behavior that he is repeating is one of *failure* to live up to expectations of greatness. From this, it is possible to conclude that Raskolnikov's subconsciously expressed identity is that of a perpetual failure.

In keeping with the pattern established by his cyclical restaging of failure, the process of Raskolnikov's crime is also marked by both failure and, subsequently, shame. It is true that the gripping conflict in the story is whether or not Raskolnikov will confess to his crime, but the investigation and suspicion directed towards him are certainly not insignificant. Raskolnikov sets the tone for his own shame later on with his elaboration on the significant failing of most crime – and how his own crime would be different. He comes to the conclusion that most criminals get caught because they are subject to a “failure of will and reasoning power” that causes them to panic and sloppily conceal their crime and leave evidence behind (*Crime and Punishment* 71).²⁵ He decides that his own case will not result in the same clumsy mistakes. As the reader soon sees, however, this is not the case, and Raskolnikov's crime is marked by a number of oversights and panicked errors. Taken in consideration with his careful preparation, rehearsals, and justifications, the reality of his crime can easily be seen as a colossal failure. The acute shame felt by Raskolnikov whenever this becomes explicit (when others suspect or outright accuse him of the murder) reveals that his crime fits perfectly into the established pattern of failure and shame.

²⁵ “упадку воли и рассудка сменяемых” (*Преступление и Наказание* 64).

The willfulness of Raskolnikov's failure in regard to his crime is illuminated by the fact that he feels compelled to perform the process to its completion whenever the situation arises. As mentioned earlier, the knowledge that, even upon completing his crime, he would consider himself to be lower than his victim reveals the compulsory nature of the action itself. His compulsive return to the scene of the crime the following day acts as another restaging of his failure by undermining his success in getting away with the crime. The shameful confession to Sonya after her father's funeral (which has the added bonus of undermining his successful bid to defend her when she was accused by Luzhin of stealing) directly contributes to his eventual arrest. When meeting with Porfiry, the detective hints repeatedly at his suspicion of Raskolnikov, and yet Raskolnikov makes only half-hearted attempts at deflecting those suspicions. During their final conversation, Porfiry makes it clear that he knows the identity of the murderer. "“Then...who then...is the murderer?” [Raskolnikov] asked in a breathless voice, unable to restrain himself” (*Crime and Punishment* 433).²⁶

With this perspective, the gaps left by Raskolnikov's convoluted and unresolvable explicit self-dialogue can be supplemented with the identity negotiation taking place within this subconscious dialogue of failure. The subtractive nature of his consciously formed dialogues of truth (his arguments for why his various motives cannot possibly be his *true* motive for his crime) is compensated for by this subconscious development of an extant identity.

²⁶ ““Так...кто же...убил?” спросил он, не выдержав, задыхающимся голосом” (*Преступление и Наказание* 396).

If Raskolnikov represents an ideally complex example of Dostoevsky's characters self-negotiating techniques, he can serve as a model of sorts against which to compare some of Dostoevsky's other rogues and scoundrels. *The Idiot* abounds with scoundrels, many of whom share similar circumstances or motivations with Raskolnikov. These similarities provide a useful basis for comparison, which will help to demonstrate that, although they share certain characteristics, they employ these strategies of negotiation differently to achieve unique dialogues.

3.2 Prince Myshkin – the Exception that Proves the Rule

In section one, we established that characters develop their own identities through a complex process of dialogic negotiation between an explicit and subconscious truth. Something that is worth considering about *The Idiot* in relation to our framework for analysis, however, is the unique and often interfering role played by the eponymous character in the ideological negotiations of other characters. In some ways, Myshkin is able to function as a productive voice for other characters to utilize as part of their dialogues of self-determination. Other times, Myshkin's interference in these dialogues arrests the development of dialogic negotiation and causes conflicts between characters. Myshkin seems to be a unique character for Dostoevsky largely because his identity is relatively consistent (although not stagnant). He is universally compassionate and diplomatic, which permits little in the way of the conflict in voices that so often characterize Dostoevsky's work. Instead, Myshkin's position often becomes one of the voices that factors into formative dialogue for other characters. That is to say, he frequently functions as the interlocutor for another character's dialogue in which they negotiate and determine their position. The success or failure of these endeavors tends to be determined by the degree to

which Myshkin's role as interlocutor infringes upon the speaker's attempts to negotiate his own dialogue, which further echoes the point that it is the speaker who bears the responsibility of negotiation. Later on, we will see some examples of this phenomenon for a couple of significant characters in the story, as well as the implications that Myshkin's role has on the process of these characters' formation. But before coming to this point, I would like to look a bit more closely at the character of Myshkin himself to clarify the ways in which he is typical of Dostoevsky's writing, and the ways in which he is unique.

3.2.1 Prince Myshkin and His Explicit Truth

Myshkin is a typical Dostoevskian character in many ways, not least of which is his experience of a dramatic shift which shapes the circumstances of his characterological dialogues. He appears at the start of the novel at a period of great personal transition. He is returning to Russia for the first time in years following an extended stay abroad where he was, until recently, unable really to take care of himself or to function normally in society. Arising from this period of transition, however, are Myshkin's opportune acquaintances with a number of the key characters who form that small circle of Petersburg society which constitutes the setting for the events of the novel. On the train ride in the very first chapter, Myshkin encounters Rogozhin. The effects of this meeting are twofold: it provides Myshkin with his first opportunity to explain himself and his circumstances, and it also introduces him to the complex dynamic of Nastasya Fillipovna, her position in Petersburg society, and Rogozhin's motivations and reservations in that regard. Both men are described as showing a "desire to enter into conversation" (*The Idiot* 5).²⁷ They are both particularly eager to speak to one another and take a great interest in what the other has to

²⁷ "...оба пожелавшие...войти друг с другом в разговор." (*Идиот* 5).

say. From the outset, there is an eagerness in these characters to speak of and for themselves. Myshkin's eagerness to speak at the beginning of the novel is possibly owing to his initial naivete, as it seems to die down as the narrative progresses and he becomes more established and more oriented within his social circle.

Myshkin's eagerness to speak finds an outlet in conversation with the Epanchin's footman, with whom he sits to wait for General Epanchin to be free so that he can introduce himself. He transitions easily from a simple explanation of his purpose for visiting the Epanchins ("I've simply come to make their acquaintance, that's all...I tell you all this that you may have no doubt about me, for I see you are still uneasy") to a deeper discussion of the barbarity of capital punishment ("I believe that so thoroughly that I'll tell you what I think. To kill for murder is a punishment incomparably worse than the crime itself." (*The Idiot* 18, 21)).²⁸ This transition seems strange and inappropriate (as the footman notes on multiple occasions throughout the conversation), but it demonstrates Myshkin's desire to provide an account for himself not only with regards to the purpose of his visit, but also in a more significant ideological sense. In a sense, since, as Bakhtin has noted, a character is responsible for his own self-determination, Myshkin cannot exist as an active character without establishing himself. Notably, the defining ideology that he pursues in this discussion is one that he developed over the course of his witness of an execution while abroad. He is not performing a check on the logic of this ideology, either within his own reasoning or according to input by his interlocutor, the Epanchin's footman. He is using this opportunity to define his own character by this ideology, which constitutes a sort of

²⁸ "Я просто познакомиться только приехал, и больше ничего...Вам же всё это теперь объясняю, чтобы вы не сомневались, потому вижу, вы всё еще беспокоитесь" ... "Я до того этому верю, что прямо вам скажу мое мнение. Убивать за убийство несоразмерно большее наказание, чем самое преступление" (*Идиот* 16–17, 19).

linkage of his ideological truth with the life that he is establishing for himself on the “threshold” of this new and undetermined setting. To further support Myshkin’s early forms of veridiction as manifestations of what Foucault identified as the Cynic shift in the notion of *parrhesia*, it is worth noting that these instances are identified by the narrator or by Myshkin’s interlocutor as being in some way strange or inappropriate. By insisting on sitting and speaking with the Epanchins’ footman, Myshkin is breaking traditional rules of decorum. This coincides with the reductive practices of Cynic veridiction, which optimizes and prioritizes the speaking of truth within the practice of one’s own life.

In addition to Myshkin’s early expressions of truth as a form of establishing his own life as a character (in alignment with the Cynic shift in *parrhesia*), he also on occasion speaks (even preaches in a sense) truth in other forms. More specifically, he makes attempts to speak and account for a certain held truth of his, which is in accordance with the Socratic shift. One instance in which this is visible is his impassioned diatribe against Roman Catholicism at the Epanchin’s high-society party. Much to Myshkin’s dismay, he hears that his late benefactor Pavlishchev had converted to Catholicism shortly before his death, which is a source of immense distress for the prince. This discovery is the impetus for a rather scandalous display by Myshkin, in which he makes certain strong declarations about the religion. “Catholicism is as good as an unchristian religion...And in the second place Roman Catholicism is even worse than atheism itself, in my opinion!” he declares with feeling (*The Idiot* 497-498).²⁹ These declarations are followed by his attempts to justify, to account for, his held truths. He argues that Roman Catholicism logically proceeds to

²⁹ “Католичество – всё равно что вера нехристианская...а во-вторых, католичество римское даже хуже самого атеизма, таково мое мнение!” (*Идиот* 395).

atheism, which further accounts for the crisis of faith plaguing the West. He works to tie Catholicism to the advent of Socialism – a companion to atheism – which poses a threat to Russia and her citizens. He follows his thread of logic to further explain why Russians are so prone to pursuing the sorts of radical ideologies that he has just been discussing.

On the contrary, from unsatisfied yearning...not from being *blasé*. There you're mistaken. Not simply from unsatisfied yearnings, but from feverishness, from burning thirst. And...and don't think that it's to such a slight extent that one can afford to laugh at it...As soon as Russians feel the ground under their feet and are confident that they have reached firm ground, they are so delighted at reaching it that they rush at once to the furthest limit. Why is that?...Because he has found the fatherland which he has missed here...Russian atheists and Russian Jesuits are the outcome not only of vanity, not only of a bad, vain feeling, but also of spiritual agony, spiritual thirst, a craving for something higher, for a firm footing, for a fatherland in which they have ceased to believe, because they have never even known it!" (*The Idiot* 499-500).³⁰

These various conscious expressions of truth by Myshkin, by which he works to establish the held ideological truths of his character and to provide accounts for those truths where necessary, demonstrate ways in which he is a typical Dostoevskian character.

³⁰ "...а напротив, от жажды...не от пресыщения, вы в этом ошиблись! Не только от жажды, но даже от воспаления, от жажды горячешной! И...и не думайте, что это в таком маленьком виде, что можно только смеяться...Наши как доберутся до берега, как уверуют, что это берег, то уж так обрадуются ему, что немедленно доходят до последних столпов; отчего это?...Оттого, что он отчество нашел, которое здесь посмотрел, и обрадовался...не всё ведь от одних скверных тщеславных чувств происходят русские атеисты и русские иезуиты, а и из боли духовной, из жажды духовной, из тоски по высшему делу, по крепкому берегу, по родине, в которую веровать перестали, потому что никогда ее и не знали!" (*Идуом* 397).

Another way in which he is typically realized is in regards to his expressions and negotiations of subconscious truths. As exemplified by Raskolnikov, a character's subconsciously expressed truths often exist in opposition to outwardly expressed sentiments by that character. In Myshkin's case, his subconscious truth centers around his relationships with other characters and their personal negotiations of truth.

3.2.2 Myshkin's Subconscious Truth

Identifying these manifestations of subconscious truth necessitates a return once again to the idea of the compulsion to repeat, as well as to those concepts of shame that came into play when discussing manifestations of Raskolnikov's subconscious truths. There are two notable instances of shame that Myshkin experiences. The first also takes place following his meeting with Rogozhin. During this meeting, Myshkin takes note of the violence that marks Rogozhin's passion for Nastasya Filippovna, and as he is wandering the streets later, deep in thought, he muses on Rogozhin's capacity for murder. Having had these dark thoughts about someone he considers to be a close friend and whom he likes very much, Myshkin rebukes himself strongly and uses the shame that arises from these thoughts to define his own character as ignoble and monstrous (*The Idiot* 210-212).

The second instance of shame occurs when Myshkin is confronted by the "son of Pavlishchev" crowd, which has come to claim a portion of Myshkin's inheritance from his former benefactor on the grounds that one of their number is actually the illegitimate son of Mr. Pavlishchev. The circumstances of this meeting are marked by the open rudeness of the "son of Pavlishchev" group in their demands, and the reactions of Myshkin's own entourage make the scandal of their behavior clear to the reader. In spite of this obvious rudeness, Myshkin is insistent on giving them the benefit of the doubt and consciously

refuting any suspicion towards their motives for pursuing him. He manifests this conscious opinion in response to his initial suspicion of the inopportune timing of their visit.

He wondered: had not someone arranged this business beforehand for that time, for that hour, in the presence of those witnesses and perhaps in anticipation of his shame rather than his triumph? But he felt too sad at the thought of his “monstrous and wicked suspiciousness.” He felt that he would have died if anyone had known he had such an idea in his head, and at the moment when his guests walked in, he was genuinely ready to believe that he was lower in a moral sense than the lowest around him. (*The Idiot* 237).³¹

This suspicion of his is instantly followed by an experience of shame, which is recalled later on towards the end of their conversation when Myshkin reflects on the folly of his presumptions about the simplicity and naivete of Mr. Burdovsky, who Myshkin suspects was tricked into believing he was Pavlishchev’s son (*The Idiot* 254).³²

With regards to conscious truth, both of these episodes constitute an open negotiation between two opposing voices of Myshkin’s. On the one hand, he has a rational, suspicious voice which takes into account various hints and circumstances of the people around him and draws certain pessimistic conclusions. On the other hand, he has another, much more sympathetic voice, which goes to great lengths to excuse and account for the

³¹ “Ему мерещилось: уж не подведено ли кем это дело теперь, именно к этому часу и времени, заранее, именно к этим свидетелям и, может быть, для ожидаемого срама его, а не торжества? Но ему слишком грустно было за свою «чудовищную и злобную мнительность». Он умер бы, кажется, если бы кто-нибудь узнал, что у него такая мысль на уме, и в ту минуту, как вошли его новые гости, он искренно готов был считать себя, из всех, которые были кругом его, последним из последних в нравственном отношении.” (*Идиот* 190).

³² (*Идиот* 204).

perceived injustices in the actions of others. These instances of shame would seem to reveal a subconscious tendency of Myshkin's to evaluate and make judgements about the characters of others. Consciously, Myshkin states on more than one occasion that he is loathe to judge others based on incomplete information, so it tracks logically that he would experience shame at transgressing this standard that he has set for himself. He enacts this transgression, however, at multiple points throughout the novel. In conversation with Aglaia, she criticizes him outright for this tendency, "I think it's very horrid on your part, for it's very brutal to look on and judge a man's soul...You have no tenderness, nothing but truth, and so you judge unjustly" (*The Idiot* 391). This habit of levelling truth externally against other characters is precisely what Bakhtin described as a "secondhand truth," which finalizes a character and therefore constitutes a lie (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 59).

As we have seen already through Bakhtin's work, though, characters in Dostoevsky's writings are prone to resist external attempts to determine or finalize their identities. The fact that these attempts to determine the identities of others are doomed to fail comprises the unpleasantness of the situation that results in the compulsion to repeat it (per Freud's characterization) and, more significantly, comprises a regular or typical form of characterological dialogue for Myshkin. So it is in this way that he is still a typical Dostoevskian character. There are, however, significant ways in which Myshkin is unique, and it is these unique features which allow for the greater portion of the novel's plot to unfold.

3.2.3 Myshkin's Interference with Others' Truths

While there is a trend for Dostoevsky's characters to elaborate their identities through accounts given of themselves, Myshkin's accounts of himself are usually limited

to resolving those already consistent features of his personality. The big question for Dostoevsky, per Bakhtin, is “how does this character understand himself in relation to the world?” Myshkin does seem to have answers for these questions, which he elaborates and accounts for at various points throughout the novel, but his accounts for these answers are often less of a negotiation and more of a description, or narration. It is for this reason that Myshkin’s typical forms of veridiction tend to follow the pattern of linking his life with an (already held) truth, in an echo of the Cynic shift in *parrhesia*, or an account of a truth that he has interrogated and negotiated in terms of the Socratic shift. He does not, however, openly engage in a confessional mode of truth that would challenge and develop truths that he holds. Myshkin’s interests lie less in a personal negotiation of truth and more in others’ negotiations of truth. This is the primary way in which he is unique as a character. Rather than seeking interlocutors to resolve his own dialogues of truth, he acts as an interlocutor for others’ dialogues. An article by Janet Tucker asserts him as a sort of rival to the voice of the narrator in the novel. In this article, she describes Myshkin as being “elusive” in the sense that he seems to embody a sort of alien (that is, Western) tendency towards dominant rationality, which is antithetical to the often anti-rational Russian psyche. This tendency of Myshkin’s manifests frequently in a seeming desire to manipulate the circumstances, even seize control of the narration, of the characters around him (Tucker 23-25, 33).

Tucker finds a potential root for this behavior in some of Dostoevsky’s early ideas for the character, which, per her discussion, would have him follow a lot more closely in the footsteps of some of Dostoevsky’s typical prideful rogues and criminals. This being the case, Tucker sees echoes of that sort of hubris in Myshkin’s desire to interfere with the fates of the characters around him. The point she makes is that he is attempting to play a

determining role in the negotiations of others' dialogues. I would posit that this role is not altogether unsuccessful – the moments in which he does engage in productive dialogue with other characters often go well and ingratiate him to those characters.

Unfortunately (and as we saw earlier in the discussion of Bakhtin), that's not where these interactions end. In negotiating a dialogue between these characters' voices, the dialogue goes well so long as the characters are able to perform the discursive tasks themselves, projecting Myshkin's voice as an interlocutor. Things become more complicated when he attempts to go beyond the role of participating in the dialogue and instead shifts to determining it. Per Foucault, the function of an interlocutor in these sorts of confessional dialogues is to challenge the account given by the speaker in order to enact a more rigorous analysis of their ideology and/or a corrective to their faulty reasoning. It appeals to an external voice less as a source of a final, determining word, and more as a way to check the speaker's word and to potentially guide correctives. This may seem like a nitpicky distinction, but it actually becomes very important when it comes to the interactions between Myshkin and other characters in the novel.

Towards the beginning of the novel, there is an altercation between Ganya and the rest of his family. His sister says something offensive about Nastasya Filippovna (who is at this point still expected to marry Ganya) and he, in his anger, goes to slap her. Myshkin intervenes, and prevents Ganya from striking his sister, and Ganya instead hits him. Everyone is horrified by this, and Myshkin tells him outright, "oh, how ashamed you will be of what you've done!" (*The Idiot* 108).³³

³³ "О, как вы будете стыдиться своего поступка!" (*Идиот* 88).

It turns out that Myshkin is right in this instance, and after having taken a moment to reflect, Ganya heads in to see him and to apologize for hitting him. This takes Myshkin by surprise, and he tells Ganya to his face that this is because he did not consider him capable of taking personal responsibility for his actions: “Just now I thought of you as quite wicked, and you have so rejoiced me all of a sudden. It’s a lesson to me not to judge without experience” (*The Idiot* 113).³⁴ Incidentally, it is the violation of this very lesson which is the source of Myshkin’s experiences of shame later on in the novel.

Following his apology, Ganya proceeds to discuss his intentions in his marriage to Nastasya Filippovna. He has identified the prince as someone with whom one can speak of such matters, which reinforces Myshkin’s role as interlocutor for the various characters in the novel. This exchange between Ganya and the prince emphasizes the importance of the prince’s role as interlocutor, as well as demonstrating the contention of their relationship:

³⁴ “Давеча я вас уже совсем за злодея почитал, и вдруг вы меня так обрадовали, -- вот и урок: не судить, не имея опыта” (*Идиот* 93).

“But tell me, by the way what do you think – I want to know your opinion particularly – is such ‘misery’ worth seventy-five thousand, or no?”

“I don’t think it’s worth it.” “Oh, I knew you’d say that! And is such a marriage shameful?” “Very shameful.” “Well, let me tell you that I am going to marry her, and there’s no doubt about it now. I was hesitating a little while ago, but there’s no doubt now. Don’t speak! I know what you want to say.” (The Idiot 111-112).³⁵

This exchange provides a fantastic example of characterological negotiation as a confessional utterance. Ganya is the one playing out this dialogue, which establishes his intended actions as “shameful” and thereby develops his character as a scoundrel. Myshkin’s voice in this dialogue is not playing a determinative role, and instead is being used by Ganya as a check on the logic of his dialogic utterances. As Myshkin agrees with his various assessments, Ganya proceeds to use them in his dialogue.

This productive instance of dialogue, however, is short-circuited when Myshkin goes on to tell Ganya that he considers him not to be a scoundrel at all, but instead considers him to be an extraordinarily ordinary person. Ganya takes this as a great personal insult (although it is seemingly meant as complimentary by the prince, as the alternative would be to consider Ganya a scoundrel of highest proportions) and insists that he will ultimately prove the prince wrong in his assessment. In discussing his intended marriage with Myshkin, Ganya had meant to negotiate a certain truth about the shamefulness of this

³⁵ “...а кстати, скажите мне, как вы думаете, я именно хочу знать ваше мнение: стоит эта «мука» семидесяти пяти тысяч или не стоит?” “По-моему, не стоит.” “Ну, уж известно. И жениться так стыдно?” “Очень стыдно.” “Ну, так знайте же, что я женюсь, и теперь уж непременно. Еще давеча колебался, а теперь уж нет! Не говорите! Я знаю, что вы хотите сказать...” (*Идиот* 91)

action, and his position as unaccountable scoundrel as a result of his intention to see it through. By negating what Ganya is saying, Myshkin moves from performing the role of interlocutor and helping him to check these truths to leveling a finalized impression of Ganya's character against his own assessment. The confrontation in this scene is not based on the falsity of the accusation against Ganya, since it is revealed later on that what Myshkin said is absolutely the truth and furthermore a source of great anxiety for Ganya. The issue with Myshkin's statement is that it comprises just that sort of external determining discourse that Dostoevsky's characters loathe and against which they will actively rebel. It is important to clarify, though, that a character's truth and a truth about them need not necessarily coincide. The accusation that Myshkin makes against Ganya is rendered untrue by virtue of its external source, but the material of that accusation proves to be entirely true in relation to the actual realization of his character. The fact that he is an entirely ordinary person constitutes the subconsciously negotiated truth that Ganya carries out by his perpetual inability to commit to any sort of extraordinary action.

Leslie Johnson gives a rather interesting perspective on the importance of identifying the "other" in *The Idiot*, which centers around the appearance and regard of the faces of various characters, and how they appear throughout the story as symbolic of those characters themselves.

The face, however, is more than a dramatic or psychological device. Characters in this novel preeminently *are* their faces. *Действующие лица*, they tend to realize the metaphor of this conventional designation, to comport themselves literally as “acting faces,” so that the entire novel may be viewed as an exploration of a primordial event: face-to-face encounter. This event – which I would argue is the basic unit of the narrative – is not a corollary of Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic principle. For Bakhtin, the vis-à-vis is a dramatic requirement of the Menippean genre, whereby characters countenance each other so that their voices may clash. In *Idiot* characters respond to each other’s faces before the polyphonic bickering begins. Their words and deeds may be ideological, but what matters first is that they take place in and sometimes even at or to the face of another...the prince’s susceptibility to the face is the very mark of his much-disputed goodness. For what the face means in *Idiot* has everything to do with how the face is regarded. Dostoevsky’s notion of the good in this, his most ethical, novel is a way of seeing the face of the other (Johnson 867-868).

This interpretation coincides nicely with the idea that Myshkin in particular perpetuates a relatively reductive practice of identifying (i.e. finalizing) other characters. Nastasya Fillipovna’s face features prominently, as it was her portrait that inspired Myshkin’s peculiar brand of pitying “love.” His fixation on her portrait can also potentially symbolize his inclination to finalize her character, as a portrait is an entirely static image. Her true character is highly dynamic, as evidenced by her dramatic and ever-changing behaviors. She, like Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, oscillates wildly between two

opposing identities. In contrast to this functional process of characterological development, however, Myshkin often attempts to evaluate Nastasya Filippovna's character. This results in a complication in her process of self-determination. At any point where Myshkin seems to evaluate her, she feels compelled to take immediate and drastic action to contradict his evaluation. During the scandalous confrontation at the Ivolgins', Myshkin tells her that she ought to be ashamed and that her behavior can't possibly reflect who she is. Nastasya Filippovna becomes confused, but outwardly agrees and is embarrassed. The reader soon discovers, however, that she goes immediately to make arrangements with Rogozhin to take her away that evening at her own party, thereby demonstrating that yes, she is exactly the person that her scandalous behavior at the Ivolgins' had suggested and deliberately refuting Myshkin's assessment of her. At that same party, she is entranced by Myshkin's poetic and impassioned declaration of love and the absolution that he offered her. She seems to agree at first to his offer of marriage, but as Myshkin elaborates on his notion that she is not to blame for the misfortunes in her life, and that she had been about to undertake to ruin herself irrevocably and irreversibly, an action that she would later regret, and that she is ill, proud, and unhappy, Nastasya Filippovna suddenly changes her mind (*The Idiot* 155-156).³⁶ She at this point elects to go with Rogozhin and reject Myshkin's offer, a gesture the rudeness of which was enhanced by her apparent sincerity and graciousness from moments before. By this action, she affirms herself as the agent of her own destruction as well as claiming for herself the pride and unhappiness that Myshkin attributed to an illness. As with other characters, the truths that Myshkin levels against Nastasya Filippovna are provably accurate, but it is the mere

³⁶ *Идиот* 126

fact of Myshkin's determination of those truths that renders them unbearable to their subject. Nastasya Fillipovna's own characterological development (most of which is anecdotal and takes place outside of the scope of the novel's action, thereby outside of Myshkin's narrative influence) leads her on multiple occasions back to Myshkin, but his persistence in evaluating her character repeatedly drives her away again. Finally, this interference in her characterological development leads her back to Rogozhin for a final time, and ultimately to a destruction of her character, which demonstrates the tragic conclusion to an arrested realization of identity.

Another character whose development is impaired by Myshkin's interference is Rogozhin, who functions interestingly as Myshkin's inverse. Rogozhin is another rogue and scoundrel (a true scoundrel, unlike Ganya and much more like Raskolnikov). The meeting between Myshkin and Rogozhin at the latter's Petersburg residence puts a great deal into perspective about his experience of shame and his understanding of the dynamic between himself, Nastasya Fillipovna, and Myshkin. In an exchange between the two, we see the way that Rogozhin incorporates his own understanding of Myshkin's voice in his double-voiced inner dialogue.

When you are not before me I feel anger against you at once, Lev Nikolaevich. Every minute of these three months that I haven't seen you I have been angry with you, on my word, I have. I felt I could have poisoned you! I tell you now. You haven't been sitting a quarter of an hour with me, and all my anger is passing away and you are dear to me as you used to be. (*The Idiot* 192).³⁷

Myshkin provides a great summary of this in his response, "When I am with you, you believe me, but when I am away, you leave off believing me at once and begin suspecting me!" (*The Idiot* 192).³⁸

There are two particularly notable scenes between Myshkin and Rogozhin that reveal the space in which the latter's character could (should) develop: the meeting at Rogozhin's house, mentioned above, followed by Rogozhin's attempted murder of Myshkin, and Rogozhin's actual murder of Nastasya Fillipovna and its immediate aftermath. A chapter by Elizabeth Dalton which identifies, significantly enough, a repetition compulsion between these two scenes reveals the parallels between these two scenes. In both instances, Myshkin arrives in Petersburg, feeling unwell (or at least unsettled) and experiencing a tormenting and unbearable idea. On the first occasion, he leaves Rogozhin's house and later encounters him again in public. On the second occasion, he meets him in public and accompanies him to his house (Dalton 171-172). In both of

³⁷ Я, как тебя нет предо мною, то тотчас же к тебе злобу и чувствую, Лев Николаевич. В эти три месяца, что я тебя не видал, каждую минуту на тебя злобился, ей-богу. Так бы тебя взял и отравил чем-нибудь! Вот как. Теперь ты четверти часа со мной не сидишь, а уж вся злоба моя проходит, и ты мне опят, по-прежнему люб (*Идиот* 155).

³⁸ "Тогда я с тобой, ты мне веришь, а когда меня нет, то сейчас перестаешь верить и опять подозреваешь" (*Идиот* 155).

these scenes, Rogozhin is in the process of an ideological negotiation which frames his impulse to commit murder, which affirms and is affirmed by his status as a rogue in the grip of violent passions. In the first of these scenes, he discusses with Myshkin his insecurity and violent behavior towards Nastasya Fillipovna, which positions her as an object of his self-negotiations. As mentioned before, Rogozhin's projection of Myshkin's voice (the moments when they are apart, and he is able to hate him) also factors into his process of negotiation. When Myshkin confronts him, though, and is able to insert his own voice into dialogue with Rogozhin, the violent impulses that arise as a part of Rogozhin's characterological negotiations are redirected towards Myshkin.

In an additional interruption of Rogozhin's dialogic negotiations, the resolution that the latter attempts to carry out (by assaulting Myshkin and realizing the violent impulses to which his negotiations have led him) is again interrupted by Myshkin's interference. Although involuntary, Myshkin's epileptic fit, which (thankfully, as the reader is rooting for him) saves him from Rogozhin's knife, interrupts the progression of Rogozhin's development of his opposing ideologies. In the later scene, this development is carried out in Myshkin's absence with the eventual murder of Nastasya Filippovna. The scene at the end of the novel, in which Rogozhin eventually breaks down into hysteria and is comforted by Myshkin, who has regressed back into a state of "idiocy," demonstrates a final interruption by Myshkin of a character's development. In each moment where Rogozhin exclaims hysterically, which could be considered a sort of acknowledgement of his wrongdoing and an attempt to process and discuss it (or a form of self-punishment, as enacted by Raskolnikov throughout *Crime and Punishment*), Myshkin quiets him. This reveals Myshkin's own impulse towards forgiveness and goodness, which is a feature of

his character that is unquestionable and incontestable, but it also interrupts any potential dialogic progress of Rogozhin's own guilt by failing to allow him to experience the psychological consequences of his actions.

Myshkin's regression at the end of the novel is, as Dalton identifies, a potential manifestation of the repetition compulsion (174). In this sense, it affirms once again Myshkin's status as a realized (or realizable) character, as it represents an outcome of his progressive negotiation of his identity within regular Petersburg society. His original recovery from "idiocy," which had begun before the action of the novel, was shaped by his development of a system of beliefs and ideologies, which allowed him to enact a functional dialogue of truth. In the end, however, Myshkin finds himself repeating a scenario from his childhood, the descent into "idiocy," which constitutes a manifestation of a particular sort of identity – one which is unable to negotiate the tensions and casual evils of society at large, and which regresses to the childish state of incorruptible non-being.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to formulate and demonstrate a method of understanding some of the techniques used by Dostoevsky's complex characters to explore and develop their own identities. This method hinges on the idea that individual characters are not established so much as they are continually establishing themselves. The process through which they do this is a continual negotiation of that character's own truth, or as Bakhtin summarizes, by answering the question of who they are in relation to the world around them.

In the first section, we identified each part of the overall structure of our method of analysis. The foundation of this method is grounded in Bakhtin's approach, which elaborates various forms of the dialogic processes through which characters work to construct themselves. Within Bakhtin's approach, we narrowed in on three forms of speaking that I believe provide an adequate categorization for formative character speech. To this foundation was applied an abstract filter constructed from a dual lens of an interpretation of Foucault's analyses of different forms of veridiction and a Freudian understanding of possible subconscious manifestations of truth. The purpose of combining these two approaches is to account both for truths openly negotiated by a character as well as the unspoken truths that are nonetheless communicated clearly, if indirectly, in the contradictions and hypocrisies of these characters. The second chapter consists of a

demonstration of how this method can be applied to analyze the techniques used by various characters to present and evolve their own truth in the context of the broader novel. The psychologically dense and self-reflective nature of Dostoevsky's characters makes them perfect subjects through which to demonstrate this method. Raskolnikov, being the epitome of the sort of conflicted rogue beloved by Dostoevsky, can function as a more or less ideal model for the utility of these character-establishing strategies. In spite of his persistent psychological chaos, the dialogic negotiation of his truths is carried out faithfully and consistently over the course of the novel.

Prince Myshkin is, in many ways, the total opposite of Raskolnikov. He possesses certain deeply held, unchanging truths to which he adheres throughout the course of the novel. There are, though, many ways in which he still works to negotiate and establish these truths as constitutive functions of his identity. In addition, he also finds himself negotiating a certain subconscious truth of himself in spite of his otherwise unique convictions. In addition, Myshkin's machinations throughout the events of *The Idiot* help to demonstrate not only the validity, but the necessity of these peculiar negotiations of truth for other characters in the novel. He interferes with the ways that characters are able to negotiate their own truths, which constitutes a violation against which those characters rebel. Myshkin is in some ways typical of Dostoevsky's characters; and in other ways he is the exception that proves the rule.

This method shines a new light on the continual push and pull of the dialogue in Dostoevsky's novels and its function in creating open-ended characters. The counterpoint created by comparing and contrasting *The Idiot* with *Crime and Punishment* prevents us

from oversimplifying the complexities of Dostoevsky's characters while at the same time emphasizing the validity of this method of analysis.

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