

ABSTRACT

The Psychology of the Criminal in Nietzsche and Dostoevsky

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At surface level, Friederich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky are two completely different authors, in that Nietzsche completely rejects the faith which is so important to Dostoevsky's novels. However, in his letters, Nietzsche refers to Dostoevsky as the only psychologist from whom he had anything to learn and comments on the deep kinship he felt when reading his work. In my thesis, I examine this affinity, focusing on the similarities in both men's portrayal of the criminal and demonstrating how these harmonies indicate a deeper likeness between the two. Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky emphasize the importance of the subconscious in the formation of the criminal and make a distinction between the weak and strong criminal's reactions to their crime and punishment. These similarities reveal Dostoevsky and Nietzsche's similar conceptions of the role of the subconscious in man's psychology and the difference between weakness and strength.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CRIMINAL IN NIETZSCHE AND DOSTOEVSKY

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CHAPTER ONE

An Unlikely Affinity

Amidst the disenchanting rationalism of the Enlightenment, Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky affirmed the deeper realities of human existence, plumbing the intricate depths of human psyche and behavior. Despite the legitimate differences in their thought, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky share many profound insights on contemporary thought and general human psychology. In fact, Nietzsche himself felt an extraordinary admiration for Dostoevsky, as illustrated by his references to Dostoevsky in his journals and correspondence. Nietzsche first discovered Dostoevsky at the beginning of 1887; in a letter to Frank Overbeck in February of that year he describes his joy at reading *Notes from the Underground*, stating “the instinct of affinity [*Verwandtschaft*] (or what shall I call it?) spoke to me instantaneously – my joy was beyond bounds; not since my first encounter with Stendhal’s *Rouge et Noir* have I known such joy” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, Feb. 23, 1887). Throughout the rest of 1887 and until the end of his writing career in 1888, Nietzsche often referenced Dostoevsky, praising his realistic portrait of Christ and his authentic representation of suffering. He particularly admires Dostoevsky for his psychological insight, identifying Dostoevsky as “the only psychologist from whom I had something to learn” (*Twilight of the Idols* 86-7). As seen in these references, Nietzsche esteemed Dostoevsky because he felt a profound kinship with him; according to Nietzsche, Dostoevsky’s writings reflect essential aspects of his own psychology.

This affinity is at first glance rather surprising, considering the obvious differences between the two writers. Nietzsche claims that man’s strength and nobility

ultimately come only from himself. He further asserts that the dependency on supernatural power advocated by religions like Christianity dishonors man's potential for true nobility. For this reason, he disapproves of Dostoevsky's attraction to the gospel and his dedication to God as the sustainer of human strength and goodness. He comments on this in one of his later fragments, listing Dostoevsky among those thinkers who "may be called nihilistic because they have all glorified the contrasting concept of life, nothingness, as the highest good, as 'God.'" (NF 14[25]). Dostoevsky affirms a good which transcends this world, dependent on supernatural power in addition to an affirmation of earthly life. However, despite these differences, Nietzsche himself continues to affirm his kinship with Dostoevsky, claiming, "I prize his work, on the other hand, as the most valuable psychological material known to me – I am grateful to him in a remarkable way, however much he goes against my deepest instincts" (Letter to George Brandes, Nov. 20, 1888).

The purpose of this project is to analyze the elements of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky's thought which demonstrate the kinship which Nietzsche felt with Dostoevsky. Thus, I do not intend to describe the influence which Dostoevsky had on Nietzsche's philosophy. Rather I will analyze Dostoevsky and Nietzsche's separate philosophies, focusing on the ways in which their psychological insights coincide. This process will enable a fuller understanding of both authors, illuminating their philosophies through their relation to each other.

Many scholars have similarly recognized and commented on the affinity between these two authors. One such study was undertaken by Edith W. Clowes in "Self-Laceration and Resentment: The Terms of Moral Psychology in Dostoevsky and

Nietzsche.” Clowes focuses on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky’s challenge to systems of morality which are based on “the utopian belief that the rational organization of society will bring freedom and moral perfection” (Clowes 119). Both men instead conceive of morality as self-formation accomplished through “an acquired consciousness of the action of the subconscious or semiconscious impulses in one’s own personality... [in order] to focus and channel them toward productive ends” (Clowes 133). In this way, humanity does not become moral by adhering to theoretical moral structures but by reforming its negative impulses to a “creative, life-affirming goal” (Clowes 133).

Robert Louis Jackson also focuses on the creative element of both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky’s thought in his book *Dialogues with Dostoevsky*. He, however, emphasizes the tragic aspect of this creation, claiming that, although the creative ideals of the two men are opposing, “each ideal emerges from a shared tragic vision” (Jackson 237). Because of their full recognition of the reality of suffering and destruction, both men “were despairing creators who, unable to reconcile themselves to the face of the world... were similarly unable to renounce their high idealism” (Jackson 249). Both men write amongst the tension between their high expectations for humanity and their continued disappointment at its failure.

In his article “A Note on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky,” Janko Lavrin illustrates how Dostoevsky and Nietzsche respond to the inevitable failures and sufferings of humanity, emphasizing the antirational nature of both men. Lavrin’s study focuses on the ways in which both men challenged nineteenth century rationalist ideals, describing them as “‘underworld minds’ unable to come to terms either with other people or with the conditions they saw around them” (160). According to Lavrin, Nietzsche and

Dostoevsky both represent a counter-cultural movement to affirm the anti-rational nature of existence when faced with the reality of unexplainable suffering (Lavrin 163-164). Ultimately, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky “reached, whatever their point of contact, diametrically opposite conclusions,” for, in response to their dire view of the world, Nietzsche vehemently denied the supernatural power which Dostoevsky continued to affirm (Lavrin 168).

Alan Woolfolk, in his article, “The Two Switchmen of Nihilism: Nietzsche and Dostoevsky” compares the nihilism of the two philosophers and describes their differing effects on the nihilism on the twentieth century. Woolfolk claims that the nihilism of both men is “the vision of a desacralized world—a symbolic and experiential world” (72). Dostoevsky’s desacralization stems from his claim that “compassion and understanding must subserve sacred limitations” (Woolfolk 82). Nietzsche, on the other hand, defies sacred boundaries through his affirmation of the will to power, making previous ideals of good and evil secondary to the force of man’s will (Woolfolk 72-73). In this way, Woolfolk claims that both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky laid the foundation for “utopian hopes for secular paradise” in their denial of religious limitations for the sake of compassion or power (82). In Woolfolk’s view, both men deny the presence of a sacred reality, setting the stage for the further rejection of the sacred in the twentieth century.

The four studies described above are broad examinations of the philosophical implications of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky’s affinity. While such an approach illuminates the general connections between the two men and effectively locates them in the context of nineteenth century rationalist philosophy, it does not fully account for Nietzsche’s explicit praise of Dostoevsky. The above studies do not specifically analyze Nietzsche’s

psychological connection to the works of Dostoevsky that he purports to have read, namely *Notes from Underground*, *Notes from a Dead House*, and *The Insulted and the Injured* (Heinrich Köselitz, March 7, 1887). These analyses instead focus on the similarities between Nietzsche's thought and the philosophy of Dostoevsky's larger works, especially *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*. Our understanding of the kinship between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky will be improved by an in-depth study of Nietzsche's connection to the novels he read. In these works, we will encounter the characters and psychology directly perceived and considered by Nietzsche and thus will be able to make more specific claims about the connections between the two authors.

Therefore, in my study I will focus specifically on *Notes from a Dead House*, analyzing how the criminal as portrayed by Dostoevsky is similar to the criminal as analyzed by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Twilight of the Idols*. I will begin with two chapters examining Nietzsche's portrayal of the criminal, connecting his distinction between the weak and strong criminal to his descriptions of society and the strong man. From there, I will spend a chapter examining Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House*. I will describe the psychology of the criminal which emerges from Dostoevsky's depiction of the prisoners and their responses to the reality of their crimes. In the fourth and final chapter, I will explicate the connections between the two accounts of criminality and demonstrate how these similarities signal deeper affinities between the two authors.

When he read *Notes from a Dead House*, Nietzsche discerned deep connections to his descriptions of criminality in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Twilight of the Idols*; he

understood that these likenesses indicated a deeper affinity in his and Dostoevsky's thought. In their analyses of criminality, both men explore how the subconscious motivates crime, and they differentiate between the weak and the strong criminal, asserting that a criminal's weakness or strength emerges from his response to his subconscious passions. Furthermore, they demonstrate how the criminal's reaction to his subconscious motivation directs his reaction to society's inevitable persecution. Where the weak criminal collapses under the pressure of his subconscious and the oppression of society, the strong man challenges society's indolent and unnatural system of morality through his honest expression of the deep and often unpleasant reality of the human subconscious. In this way, Nietzsche perceives in Dostoevsky's writings a representation of his own psychology of the strong man as one who unabashedly professes the reality of suffering in human life through his affirmation of the intricacies of the human mind.

CHAPTER TWO

The Weakness of Nietzsche's Criminal

Fredrich Nietzsche considered himself a psychologist – an analyzer of the influence of the subconscious on human thought, will, and action. As an investigator of human psychology, Nietzsche has an acute interest in criminality, particularly in the origin of crime and its psychological consequences. Nietzsche speaks directly of the criminal in *Twilight of the Idols* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, describing the psychological state of the perpetrator during and after his crime. In the next two chapters, I will analyze Nietzsche's examination of the criminal, outlining the internal and external pressures which contribute to his degeneration. My investigation will particularly center on how the criminal's reaction to his own internal tension and the oppression of society indicates his measure of weakness or strength. The first chapter will contain an analysis of the pressures which plague the criminal, demonstrating the nature of his internal tension and society's rejection of him.

The Herd

An essential aspect of the criminal's identity is his defiance of society. Nietzsche approves of this rebellion, for he harshly critiques society, conceiving of it as a herd of human beings who have rejected their inherent individuality and exist solely for their own security. Conventional morality achieves this by subsuming the individual into the group, embracing empty pleasures, and stifling the truly extraordinary. The tendency of

society to crush individuality is deeply connected to Nietzsche's understanding of human weakness and influences his conception of criminality.

Members of the herd fear individuality above all else and protect themselves with false emotions and empty triumphs. The herd rejects human distinctiveness because it perceives that individuality is a burden requiring honest self-awareness and cultivation. Thus, in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche states that most men "fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them" (127). Men become members of the herd when they avoid the inevitable suffering of a life which affirms the individuality of the human person, preferring the false but comfortable mentality of the herd. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche articulates this concept when he identifies the mentality of the herd as "the religion of comfortableness" (338). To worship comfort means to value one's sense of personal well-being over any other experience, desire, or goal. This dedication to comfort can manifest itself in an obsession with physical security, but it can also result in a mental apathy which avoids issues that might threaten one's spiritual stability. Thus, as Nietzsche claims, the herd "experiences suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation" (*The Gay Science* 338). Because security is the ultimate good, pain is bad, and any action or desire which causes suffering is considered evil. Therefore, the herd strives to eliminate experiences which cause the individual to be perturbed. This includes not only traditionally negative desires such as lust or greed but also any vibrant experience of individuality which causes a person physical or mental discomfort.

Nietzsche's primary critique of the herd centers on this rejection of what he considers to be authentic life. Nietzsche asserts that life "is a world of dangers and

victories in which heroic feelings, too, find places to dance and play” (*The Gay Science* 324). The search for authentic life entails facing these dangers and putting aside concern for self-preservation in order to seek out an understanding of the truth and beauty of one’s authentic self. Because this process requires facing danger, the reality of life necessarily includes suffering. In fact, pain not only accompanies an authentic experience of life, but is necessary for its affirmation.

Those worshipping comfort, however, reject certain aspects of reality based solely on their desire for security. Moreover, this loss of authentic life is often not recognized by members of the herd. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche describes this phenomenon; he claims that the essence of the false culture of society is “to hide from oneself how wretched and base one is” (168). In his article “Nietzsche and Pain,” O’ Sullivan describes this rejection as narcosis, since pain is avoided by closing one’s eyes to the painful realities of the universe (O’Sullivan 15). However, this self-imposed stupor has unfortunate consequences for the individual, for “these devices may conceal ourselves from ourselves, may involve forms of anesthesia, a dulling of the spirit” (O’Sullivan 15). The narcosis of the herd dulls the spirit and diminishes individuality, burying the individual’s distinctive characteristics behind layers of cowardice and apathy. Nevertheless, members of the herd convince themselves that their painless life is worthwhile; thus, they deceive themselves and crush their natural yearnings for deeper experiences of life.

Therefore, Nietzsche refers to members of the herd as those who “have left the regions where it was hard to live” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 17). According to Nietzsche the worshippers of comfort have rejected the dangers and victories of life which cause

them pain, and in doing so have effectively rejected life itself. They live a half-life devoid of any deep desire or worthwhile action, positive or negative. They ask “what is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?” (17). Having rejected pain, they lose their sense of beauty and no longer understand what it means to live.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche refers to such men as the “last men,” and demonstrates how their fear of pain leads to their dependence on morality and the subsequent loss of their individuality. In one of his introductory speeches, Zarathustra describes the last man as the “most contemptible,” the antithesis of the Overman (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 16-19). A key characteristic of the last man is his need for stability, which he satisfies through his dependence upon other men. Zarathustra claims that the last man “loves [his] neighbor and rubs himself against him; for one needs warmth” (17). The last men use each other to ward off the uncomfortable chill of authentic life. Asserting their individuality and investigating their own passions would result in a spiritual chill – a lack of comfort and stability – which the worshipper of comfort is unprepared to handle. Moreover, the last man falsely identifies this dependence as love of neighbor, using the language of goodness to cover up his fear, thereby displaying his pervasive self-deception.

In this way, an important aspect of the herd is its need for other herd members. Individuality is too unsettling; their apathetic life requires a group of likeminded fearful and shallow people. Zarathustra articulates this when he states that the world of the last men contains “no shepherd and one herd. Everybody wants the same thing, everybody is the same” (18). Members of the herd have suppressed their passions because they value comfort more than truth and are afraid of the pain contingent upon an authentic life. The

morality of the herd is the system that binds together such people, stripping them of their individuality and conforming them to the homogenous group. Through this morality, the herd huddles together against life's harsh realities and subsumes the individual into the larger group. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche further explains this concept in his aphorisms on the herd, asserting that "morality trains the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function.... Morality is herd instinct in the individual" (116). Morality is meant to turn men into a function of the herd, making the good of the herd a priority for the individual (116). The individual is made to exist for the sake of the community, which in turn exists for the sake of security. Therefore, individuals submitting to the morality of the herd are made to serve the comfort of the majority rather than personal excellence. Moreover, this is not done against the individual's will. The herd member who feels discomfort because of his own passions and desires "does not want to want anymore" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 31). Each member of the herd, desiring comfort above all else, relinquishes his will to the herd in the hopes that the comfort it promises will make him happy. He voluntarily rejects his desires and submits himself to the unfeeling existence of the herd member. He then becomes dependent on the worship of comfort which takes over any independent affirmation of life.

Some herd members spend their whole lives with no feeling of dissatisfaction, following the directives of the herd mentality with complete apathy. These are the members of society which Nietzsche terms "lazy" in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (127-8). O' Sullivan focuses on this aspect of the herd, stating that, according to Nietzsche, "suppression, false sublimation, a turning of the back towards earthiness, towards

creative responsibility, is the breeding ground of ennui and depression” (O’ Sullivan 17). In keeping with his discussion of the “narcosis” of the herd member, O’ Sullivan consigns to the herd only those men who have lulled themselves to sleep, lacking any strong emotions or desires.

While O’Sullivan’s description correctly identifies apathy as a key characteristic of society, it does not sufficiently account for Nietzsche’s full conception of the herd. Nietzsche, while acknowledging the apathy which leads to the herd’s rejection of pain, also indicates that some members of the herd cannot maintain this apathy, for they feel a deep dissatisfaction with themselves. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche speaks at length about this sort of herd member, who, because of his insecurity, hates individuality and actively lashes out against it. These members of society, often called the *ressentiment* by Nietzsche in this text, are threatened by whatever they perceive to be superior to themselves and will ostracize anything they see as a menace to their mental satisfaction. Nietzsche claims that such men are “denied the proper response of action;” in other words, they feel themselves incapable of asserting their individuality and sense that they are trapped in their fear and laziness (20). This failure leads them to “compensate... with imaginary revenge” (20).

Their desire to oppress and avenge stems from their dissatisfaction with the life they have chosen. Members of the herd are afraid of their own individuality, and they know that embracing their unique passions would result in a discomfort which they cannot accept. However, there is something inside of these men which will not allow them to be satisfied with such a life, for, as Nietzsche asserts in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, “in his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the

world only once... but he hides it like a bad conscience” (127). Although it is tempting to assume that all members of the herd are naturally inferior men and are incapable of escaping from their love of comfort, Nietzsche admits that even members of the herd possess the potential for the authentic life which they have rejected. Ultimately affirming the inherent individuality of every man, he does not relegate any man to the herd through the necessity of his personality. Therefore, men may reject their individuality, but they cannot escape the reality of their inherent distinctiveness. Some herd members completely ignore this aspect of themselves and use imitations of reality to deceive themselves. However, others feel their inferiority because they cannot forget their ultimate responsibility for their deteriorated state.

It is this feeling of self-disgust which gives these herd members their desire for revenge. As Nietzsche says in *The Gay Science*, “whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims” (290). In his analysis of Nietzsche, George Brandes elaborates on the vengeance of insecure men, stating:

the dissatisfied and the unsuccessful as a rule avenge themselves on others. They absorb poison from everything, from their own incompetence as well as from their poor circumstances, and they live in constant craving for revenge on those in whose nature they suspect harmony. (Brandes 25)

Because of his dissatisfaction with himself, the herd member takes revenge on any man whom it perceives has broken out of intoxication into the realm of authentic life. As Zarathustra warns, “beware of the small creatures. Before you they feel small and their baseness glimmers and glows in invisible revenge” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 54). In this passage, Nietzsche compares the men of the market place, the common herd members, to flies who suck the life out of those men who have a touch of greatness. “Far from the market place and from fame the inventors of new values have always dwelt,” for these

creative men cause the small to truly feel their insignificance (52). In the presence of those who are able to break away from morality, those who are overly attached to comfort recognize their own weakness and lash out in shame and anger.

The Criminal

The criminal is an example of one who breaks from the morality of the herd and incurs society's wrath. The criminal departs from the herd when he commits his crime, for he asserts his independence in this execution of his unique passions. In the passage "The Criminal and what is related to him" in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche analyzes the nature of the criminal's break from society. According to Nietzsche, the criminal is "a strong human being under unfavorable circumstances; a strong human being made sick" (86). This statement indicates that there is something inherently powerful in even the most twisted criminal's character. This strength is manifested in his "vivid drives" which are frequently repressed by society (86).

The concept of the drives is a key element of Nietzsche's psychology. According to Nietzsche, each man is a unique individual composed of singular drives which distinguish him from the rest of humanity. He hints at this in *Schopenhauer as Educator* with his claim that every man "will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so variegated an assortment as he is" (127). This "variegated assortment" is the collection of thoughts, desires, and passions which one must embrace to truly know one's distinctiveness. A helpful way of conceiving this aspect of human personality is found in Robert Miner's article "Nietzsche's Fourfold Conception of the Self;" he refers to the realm of the drives as the

“deep self,” composed of unconstructed and subconscious motives (Miner 351-352). While Miner insists that these underlying desires do not completely constitute one’s true self, he acknowledges that they contribute to one’s conscious self in complex ways unanticipated by those “who have not acquired the capacity and taste for ‘psychological observation’” (Miner 352). In this way, the drives are an important aspect of psychology, for they reveal complicated motivations even for actions which are seemingly simple.

To know these depths, one must investigate one’s passions, finding that which “has drawn your soul aloft, mastered it and at the same time blessed it” (*Schopenhauer as Educator* 129). An investigation of the deep realities of oneself “will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self” (129). In this way, investigating the realities of one’s independent drives contributes to the development of the true self which transcends one’s subconscious and conscious self. The relationship between the independent man and his drives is further developed in *On the Genealogy of Morality* during Nietzsche’s discussion of nobility. Unlike those adhering to slave morality, the noble man “grows out of a triumphant saying ‘yes’ to himself” (20). Nobility comes from the willingness to develop one’s self and explore one’s passions even amidst the hateful glare of the herd members. Discovering and affirming one’s drives therefore separates one from the herd, for it involves the development of one’s true self apart from the expectations and restrictions of society.

Moreover, Nietzsche recognizes that this process is painful, for it is difficult to coordinate one’s drives. Thus, as Walshon comments in his book *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, “although our potential is enormous, most of us are either vapid conformists or too disorganized ever to amount to much” (Walshon 148). The “disorganization” of

which Walshon speaks refers to the difficulty of self-formation which stems from the complex nature of the drives themselves. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche speaks of this struggle in his assertion that “our instincts contradict, disturb, destroy each other” (82). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche vividly describes the struggle of the passions: “it is a distinction to have many virtues, but a hard lot; and many have gone into the desert and taken their lives because they had wearied of being the battle and battlefield of virtue” (37). According to Nietzsche, the appropriate way to develop the drives is to closely regulate every drive except the one drive which the individual decides is fit “to become strong, to become master” (*Twilight of the Idols*, 83). Essentially, the man who wishes to nobly affirm and control his drives must be able to discern which drive is fit to rule the others and have the strength to regulate the lesser drives; he therefore chooses which drive will rule him, ordering the others around this primary passion.¹

However, man’s drives are not easily cultivated; they are often contradictory and refuse to be easily reconciled. In fact, Miner points out that these drives are virtually unable to be controlled by the conscious, for they represent a deep self which defies rational management (Miner 351-357). Man’s passions are extremely hard to control, and the man who undertakes the path to nobility is at risk of being overcome by his powerful and warring drives. Nietzsche warns against this, saying “abandonment to one’s instincts is one calamity more” (*Twilight of the Idols* 82). While the desire to affirm and develop one’s drives is noble, a failure to achieve this goal results in the degradation of the individual. In fact, ultimately much of Nietzsche’s psychological

¹ For further study on the importance of the ruling drive, see Walshon 149-153; Miner 355-356.

analyses focus on the consequences of unsuccessful attempts by individuals to order their drives, including his analysis of the criminal.

The existence of criminality is dependent upon the force of the drives and the criminal's genuine expression of them. On one level Nietzsche's psychology affirms the nobility of the criminal's motivations. For instance, in *Twilight of the Idols*, he affirms the presence in the criminal of "virtues" and "vivid drives" (86). When the criminal commits his crime, he affirms the drives which society condemns, asserting his independence through his willingness to assert his passions. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he calls this nobility the "madness" of the criminal, and he wishes that the so-called 'good' people "had a madness of which they might perish" (39). The "good" people who oppress the criminal are characterized by an apathy which causes them to ignore the depths of human existence exemplified in the pale criminal's drives.

Stern emphasizes this in his analysis of the drives, analyzing the threat they pose to society. "We used to be instinctive and aggressive creatures. Civilized and urbanized, we can no longer rely on our instincts, which turn against each other. The result is weakness, confusion, desperation, dissatisfaction: 'decadence'" (Stern 92). Historically, society suppresses these drives for the sake of secure and superficial civilization. This is seen in Nietzsche's characterization of the herd and the last men; both groups refuse to affirm the individuality of the human person and therefore live half-lives of "poverty and filth and wretched contentment" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 14). This is also a primary characteristic of society in *Schopenhauer as Educator*; through laziness and fear, members of society reject their inherent individuality and live in shallow ease. Zarathustra claims that such men need "the lightning to lick [them] with its tongue;" with

this madness, “they should be inoculated” (14). According to Nietzsche, this madness is a desire for independence which overcomes the pull of the herd and awakens one’s potential for authentic life. Nietzsche describes this phenomenon in *Schopenhauer as Educator* as the voice within man that cries, “be yourself! All you are now doing, thinking desiring, is not yourself,” pushing him to claim his distinct existence (127). The concept of madness in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is thus very similar to the idea of the drives in Nietzsche’s other works, for both emphasize the value of self-discovery in a society too apathetic to recognize the beauty of the individual.

The criminal expresses this desire for individuality when he commits his crime, for he acts upon a drive which is a unique aspect of his deep self. However, despite his assertion of independence, the criminal’s motivation for committing his crime is not completely praiseworthy in Nietzsche’s eyes, for the actions of the criminal indicate that he has not ordered his drives and his passions still war within him.

In his lecture concerning “The Pale Criminal,” an essay on criminality in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Karl Jung discusses Nietzsche’s portrayal of the criminal’s degradation, specifically emphasizing the role of the passions. He states that in his passage on the pale criminal, Nietzsche is confronted with “all the lowest as well as the highest qualities of man, the greatest possibilities of the depths as well as the heights” (Jung 462). According to Jung, the criminal proves the wide range of possibilities present in mankind through his aggressive assertion of individuality; an affirmation of the individual can lead to the discovery of what is great in mankind, but it can also lead to complete degradation. For Nietzsche, the criminal represents the potential of humanity’s passions to become “abnormal, asocial, or criminal” (Jung 463). His crime, although an

attempt to affirm his drives and passions, actually indicates that he is unnaturally overwhelmed by his instincts, for he has not subordinated his higher drives to his lower instincts. His noble attempt to say “yes” to his desires has morphed into an abnormal assertion of his most unruly drives. Thus, while the criminal displays an assertion of independence in his crime, this independence is tainted by the criminal’s slavery to his lower passions.

Moreover, according to Nietzsche, society contributes to the criminal’s deterioration because it hypocritically condemns his action, for “[the criminal’s] virtues are ostracized by society” (*Twilight of the Idols* 86). The criminal, weak or strong, commits his crime in a moment of strength, since in the act of his crime he rejects the dehumanizing and oppressive morality of society. In that moment, he decides he does not desire the shallow stability which the herd morality offers him. He wants something more, and he reaches out to take it. Envy of the criminal motivates the herd to ostracize the criminal, for he represents an attempt to find authentic passion outside the intoxication and apathy of herd morality. Those unable to follow him lash out from a veiled feeling of self-dissatisfaction which manifests itself in envy of the criminal’s moment of strength. Their anger results in rejection; they remove the criminal from society, lock him in prisons, and label him as an outsider. This ostracization is in part responsible for the deterioration of the criminal, for the deficient circumstances in which the criminal struggles are a result of the greater weakness of a society which is empty and deceived. The criminal, for all his faults, is placed in even more constricting circumstances because he rejected, even for one moment, the morality which characterizes the herd. This is the painful reality of every criminal. However, Nietzsche

recognizes that responses to this situation differ and thus makes a distinction between the weak and strong criminal.

The Weak Criminal

In his section on the criminal in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims that the criminal's complete deterioration after his ostracization from society is almost inevitable; only the strong criminal can even partially escape this eventuality. Thus, most criminals are characterized by weakness and end in a state of complete degradation. This decline takes place amidst the psychological turmoil already caused by the warring of the criminal's passions. Therefore, the weak criminal's deterioration begins with his inability to handle these passions even before society's interference.

"The Pale Criminal," a speech contained in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, illustrates the complex deterioration of the criminal. The criminal portrayed in this section is a pathetic creature; in fact, Nietzsche sympathizes with the desire of the judges, representatives of the herd, who wish to kill the pale criminal. The pale criminal should be eliminated almost out of mercy, for "there is no redemption for one who suffers so of himself, except a quick death" (38). The pale criminal committed his crime in strength; his crime was an act of defiance against the morality of the herd, showing a desire to assert individuality and break from the mentality of society. Now, however, he suffers from himself, viewing himself with "the great contempt" (38). The contempt with which the pale criminal views himself stems from his inability to stand firm in the crime he has committed. As Zarathustra states, "his [the criminal's] poor reason did not comprehend this madness and persuaded him" to reject the true motive of his crime (39). This

statement indicates that motivation for crime emerges from the subconscious drives which can only be plumbed by deep psychology. Nietzsche claims that madness ultimately underlies the criminal act even though it is not completely understood by the criminal himself, who insists on viewing his crimes through his conscious thoughts (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 38-39). Furthermore, he explains that the madness of the criminal comes from “the bliss of the knife,” an instinctual desire for destruction which flows from the drives (38-39). In this moment, he affirms his desire without thought for his obligations to the herd or his possible suffering, recognizing only his deep instincts. Thus, an urge for self-assertion and independence directs his action.

However, this motive is often ignored by the herd and rejected by the criminal. Nietzsche puts it this way: “he was equal to his deed when he did it: but he could not bear its image after it was done,” causing him to undermine the motive of madness which truly drove his crime (38). Thus, the murderer also becomes a robber because he, not understanding the true worth of his action, seeks some way to justify his madness. Still bound by the prejudices of the herd morality, the pale criminal incorrectly refuses to delve deep into his soul to understand and order the drives which motivated his crime. In this way, the weak criminal turns that which should have brought him freedom into another form of bondage. Moreover, Nietzsche states that, when the criminal rejects his madness, “the lead of guilt lies upon him, and again his poor reason is so stiff, so paralyzed, so heavy” (39). The criminal cannot handle the psychological repercussions of his crime, for he is incapable of accepting the truth about the act which he commits. Therefore, he finds an acceptable rationalization for his crime based on the herd morality on which he is still ultimately dependent. For this reason, his crime is tinged with guilt,

and the criminal is again controlled by responsibility and shame. In the end, the pale criminal cannot accept his thirst for independence from herd morality as an acceptable motive for his crime, and he searches for something which will better mollify his sense of guilt. The criminal becomes ashamed of his crime and is thereby ashamed of his individuality. He has thrown himself back into the realm of duty, obligation, and shame which he had for a brief moment left behind.

Moreover, the weak criminal is repulsed by this shame; as Nietzsche says: “He [the pale criminal] did not want to be ashamed of his madness” (39). The criminal is in a unique position, for he has tasted the independence rejected by the herd. Having experienced freedom in the act of his crime, he feels the indignity of his return to the realm of shame and duty. The criminal then becomes a “ball of wild snakes, which rarely enjoy rest from each other” (39). In addition to the already existing struggle between his many drives, the criminal also feels the tension between his urge to affirm his crime and his desire to justify it. He is too bound by the herd mentality to fully affirm his crime, but he has tasted freedom and therefore struggles to quietly return to a life of empty comfort. In this way, the pale criminal is at war not only with society but with himself. He can no longer fully live in the realm of comfortable society, for they have rejected him. However, because he is unable to accept his crime without justification, he has proven himself too weak for the realm of independence. At this point, he is “overcome by that evil which is evil today; [he wants] to hurt with that which hurts [him]” (39). The tension of his thwarted independence leads the pale criminal to lash out by doing harm to others through revenge.

This state is described by Kaufmann in his study of Nietzsche. Analyzing the struggle between man's desires for strength and pleasure, Kaufmann claims that, although the criminal ultimately desires the "Good Life" promised by strength, "in his frustration... the weak man... settles for some more or less petty form of power, such as that power over others which is found in positions of command, in bullying, or in crime" (Kauffman 280). However, "worldly power may thus cloak the most abysmal weakness," and the violent vengeance of the weak man is little more than an empty display of desperate bravado (Kauffman 280). The weak criminal exemplifies Kaufmann's description of the weak man; frustrated by his failure to grasp true strength, he settles for a superficial power based on vicious acts of bullying against those whom he feels have led to his discomfort. This is the essence of the weak criminal's deterioration; deprived of both strength and comfort, he lashes out at the world in an attempt to assert his false independence.

In this way, the weak criminal is merely an extension of the herd. Although society has rejected the weak criminal, he is undeniably connected to the herd mentality in two major ways: first in his ultimate desire for security and second in his rejection of authentic individuality. The weak criminal feels tension concerning his crime because of his yearning for security. The crime which he has committed makes him uneasy, for he is forced to face the cold reality of independence. He attempts to soothe himself with justifications of his crime which are appropriate to the herd morality he has just attempted to leave behind. If he would fully leave behind that morality, he could better face the discomfort which independence brings. However, he is ultimately unable to abandon the herd. Instead, he clings to the sense of duty and shame which controls the herd and lets

that regulate his interpretation of his crime. In this way, he denounces his act of mad independence and attempts to run back to the comfortable environs of the herd morality.

In doing this, the weak criminal rejects the fundamental distinctiveness of the individual. He, like the herd members described in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, “fears the inconveniences” of individuality (127). Instead of investigating his drives and discovering the way in which he might attain true internal order, he masks and condemns his true desires through the vocabulary of the herd morality, “interpreting murderous lust and greed for the bliss of the knife” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 39). The weak criminal cannot expect to make any progress in the development of his drives if he refuses to take responsibility for his actions and cultivate authentic self-knowledge. Thus, in his self-inflicted blindness, the weak criminal returns to the state of the herd, denying individuality and clinging to shallow moral principles.

Nietzsche’s connection of the pale criminal with the herd illustrates the weak criminal’s ultimate responsibility for his deterioration. Members of the herd are responsible for their own descent into numbness, for they willingly reject suffering and individuality for the sake of security. They cannot blame their state on the herd itself, for each individual becomes a member of the herd by suppressing his own individuality. In the same way, the pale criminal is ultimately responsible for his deterioration into weakness because he has rejected the suffering inherent to the individuality initiated by his crime. Although the herd is partly responsible for the tension which the pale criminal experiences, his rejection of individuality for the sake of comfort is due to his own defect. The deformed state in which the criminal now finds himself – neither herd member nor

strong man – comes from the rejection of independence and strength which was truly in his grasp. His fall into weakness was self-initiated.

Thus, the weak criminal cannot handle the implications of his crime and lives in a state of extreme tension, able to accept neither servitude to society's morality nor the implications of his newfound independence. A careless reading of Nietzsche will blame society entirely for this criminal's debasement, removing all responsibility from the individual himself. The failure of the criminal is attributed to society; his lack of freedom results from the prison atmosphere and inhumane treatment, and his decline is the result of the hypocritical morality of the masses. However, in his passages on the criminal in *Twilight of the Idols* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche portrays the weak man as one who has attempted to remove himself from society only to fall back, through his own error, into the same empty mindset from which he attempted to break. In Nietzsche's psychology of the criminal, the weakness resulting in the full deterioration of the criminal, while stemming in part from his oppression by society, ultimately originates from the criminal's inability to completely separate himself from conventional morality. In this way, the weak criminal is culpable for his own deterioration, for he rejects the independence which indicates true strength.

Nietzsche implicitly contrasts this man with the strong criminal who refuses to define himself according to the terms of societal morality, affirming his independence through his search for power outside of his conflict with the mentality of the masses. Nietzsche's passages on the weak criminal are meant to point us toward the strong criminal, who surpasses both the herd and the weak criminal in key psychological ways.

CHAPTER THREE

The Strong Criminal According to Nietzsche

The weak criminal has reverted to the mentality of the herd and in doing so has lost any chance of moderating the conflict among his drives. The strong criminal, on the other hand, continues to strive after independence, for he no longer depends on the morality of the herd. His continued allegiance to his drives even amidst his struggles is the essence of the strong criminal's strength. However, the strong criminal does not fully exemplify Nietzsche's ideal of strength, for he lacks the lightness which marks the truly strong man. Thus, Nietzsche, while acknowledging the authenticity of the strong criminal's struggle, asserts that he ultimately falls short of true strength.

Although he claims that every criminal is deteriorated because he has been overcome by his drives, Nietzsche still makes a distinction between the weak and strong criminal, demonstrating the difference between the criminal who can separate himself from the herd and the criminal who is still dependent upon the herd's morality. This contrast is explored in the first section of Nietzsche's "The criminal and what is related to him" in *Twilight of the Idols*. In the first portion of this passage, Nietzsche asserts that the original state of the criminal occurs due to the conflict of his drives. He then comments on the further decline of the criminal resulting from his ostracization from society, identifying the "unfavorable circumstances" in which society places this potentially strong man (86).

The strong man truly belongs in a place of freedom, where his madness can develop away from the envy and fear of the herd. However, this is simply not the reality in which the criminal, weak or strong, finds himself. Robbed of his freedom and ostracized from human contact, the man strong enough to assert his drives is almost always negatively affected by the consequences of his crimes and falls into the psychological state of the weak criminal, who lacks the strength to handle the unfavorable circumstances imposed by society and shows his weakness through his return to the herd mentality. He completely abandons his drives and refuses to explore and develop his passions, instead returning to the false security of the herd. When this happens, “the most vivid drives with which he is endowed soon grow together with the depressing affects – with suspicion, fear, and dishonor” (86). Thus, little remains of the strength with which he originally committed his crime. Unfortunately, according to Nietzsche, the decline of the criminal into weakness and dependence on herd morality is almost inevitable.

However, “there are cases in which such a man proves stronger than society” (86). Nietzsche claims that, although the criminal type is inherently disordered, and the criminal’s internal and external circumstances are not conducive to his development, there is a certain form of strength available to the criminal type which is manifested in the strong criminal’s continued dedication to his drives even when he is opposed and persecuted by society.

The Strong Criminal

The weak criminal's deterioration stems chiefly from his inability to fully separate himself from society. Buckling under the weight of his ostracization, he rejects what is noble in his crime, realigning himself with the values and expectations of the herd. In this way, the weak criminal lacks freedom, for freedom, according to Nietzsche, depends on separation from the herd. Nietzsche emphasizes the elements of danger and risk in freedom in "My conception of freedom" in *Twilight of the Idols*, asserting that these qualities can only occur when one is free from the constraints of society. According to Nietzsche, "the free man is a warrior," fervently battling anything that stands in the way of his cause. (79). With this martial language, Nietzsche calls to mind the intensity of the battlefield, asserting that the existence of the free man entails the danger of the soldier's life.

Moreover, Nietzsche clearly states that the goal of the free man's fight is not the acquisition of material goods or political power. Instead, the free man fights for the organization of his drives and the development of his self (79). Furthermore, Nietzsche specifically mentions the free man's successful domination over his instinct for security (79). This stands in direct opposition to the members of the herd, who sacrifice individuality for the sake of well-being and worship their own security. The mentality of the herd thus "makes men small, cowardly, and hedonistic" and stifles the potential of mankind (78). Members of the herd are afraid of suffering and thus remain unable to harness the power of their nobler instincts.

The free man rightly perceives the emptiness of such a life, and becomes "indifferent to difficulties, hardships, privation, even to life itself" for the sake of his

development (79). He refuses to be defined by fear or laziness, choosing instead to face suffering and possibly death. He can do this because he “has the will to assume responsibility for [him]self,” taking ownership of his character and passions, regardless of the discomfort this acceptance may cause him (78). This concept of self-responsibility reflects Nietzsche’s general concern with the development of the drives. The free man accepts his drives and takes responsibility for his own development.

However, the nature of this acceptance is difficult to explain, especially when speaking of the criminal’s conscious agency in the formation of his drives. Walshan points out this difficulty in his chapter on Nietzsche’s psychology, claiming that the will to accept and order one’s drives “is nevertheless a state that is, as are all psychological states, a drive” (Walshan 152). This interpretation removes man’s conscious agency in the struggle to control his drives, for it places the entirety of man’s will within the realm of the subconscious (Walshan 150-153). Therefore, it is almost impossible to speak of a person “accepting” his or her drives, for this would imply an agency which is not apparent in Nietzsche’s conception of self-formation. As Walshan points out, this tension between the subconscious and true agency is present throughout Nietzsche’s corpus, and it raises complicated questions about the relationship between man’s conscious and subconscious states (Walshan 152).¹

While I recognize the importance of these questions, a large-scale discussion on the nature of the will and agency in Nietzsche’s psychology is ultimately beyond the scope of this project. When I speak of the strong criminal “accepting” his drives, I am implying, like Walshan, that the strong criminal possesses a drive for ordering his

¹ Also see Miner’s discussion on the limits of self-construction (351-352).

passions which the weak criminal lacks, and I attribute this ability to the strong criminal's subconscious will. Nietzsche certainly did not conceive of the strong criminal rationally analyzing his drives and logically coming to a conclusion about their proper ordering. The strength of the strong criminal is ultimately irrational, and thus the ordering of his drives belongs in the realm of the irrational: the subconscious. However, regardless of the origin of the strong man's acceptance of his drives, Nietzsche does firmly assert that it is important for the strong man to take responsibility for his personality, even the parts of it which he does not fully understand. Thus, begins the development of his strength.

However, developing one's drives involves more than merely accepting their existence; it entails a re-evaluation and possible reordering of one's most oppressive passions. Nietzsche acknowledges the suffering which attends this process and asserts that the free man's ability to accept the reality of pain enables him to increase his strength because "danger alone acquaints us with our own resources, our virtues, our armor and weapons, our spirit, and forces us to be strong" (79). In his analysis, every noble attribute in history was obtained through peril, and strength is the product of humanity's interaction with danger. The man who, fighting to order his baser instincts, endures hardship and suffering develops his noble characteristics because of the pain and suffering which he undergoes. Such a man can master his drives without the laziness and timidity caused by the herd mentality because he sees the value of pain in his development.

However, it is important to note that the process of suffering will result in strength only if the man has "provoked the maximum of authority and discipline against [him]self" (79). A man who has not curbed his instincts for security and comfort will not

be able to summon the strength to face suffering. For this reason, the weak criminal attempts to justify his action and turns away from the drive for independence which originally motivated his crime. He fears the uncomfortable existence of the independent man; accepting his madness would entail the long and complicated process of developing and ordering his drives. Herein lies the problem of the weak criminal. Because he has not mastered his desire for mental security, he cannot bear the harsh implications of his crime. His action may have been motivated by a desire to assert his independence, but his fear of suffering ultimately suppresses this higher goal. The strong criminal, on the other hand, achieves freedom by overcoming his desire for a secure and painless existence. In contrast to the weak criminal, the strong criminal faces the danger associated with his crime, accepting the drives which are its true motive.

This subconscious acceptance of his drives indicates that the strong criminal is not a slave to his own security or the mentality of the herd. Having disciplined his desire for a painless existence, he can face whatever suffering he will encounter when rejected by society. He is free from a desire for security and therefore has no need to justify his crime using the morality of the herd. He takes responsibility for himself and his drives, committing himself to the cause which he has now taken up, regardless of his possible downfall. Therefore, where “The Pale Criminal” speaks of the weakness of the criminal who cannot face the consequences of his crime, Nietzsche’s passage on criminality in *Twilight of the Idols* posits the existence of a criminal who successfully separates himself from the herd. This man does not deteriorate in the manner of the weak criminal, for he is no longer dependent upon the morality of the herd.

The Dionysian Man

However, Nietzsche acknowledges that the strong criminal is not a complete manifestation of strength. The strong man as Nietzsche understands him is frequently characterized by the term “Dionysian” and is extremely essential to his philosophy. As Luyster says in his study of the Dionysian in Nietzsche’s works, “in many respects this tremendous phenomenon, the Dionysian, forms the groundwork of Nietzsche's whole philosophic enterprise, as he himself frequently insisted” (Luyster 1). Luyster, while stating that the Dionysian element underwent significant changes from Nietzsche’s earlier to later works, still affirms that “from the first through the last of his writings Dionysus continues to signify – at least nominally – this fervent embrace of the totality of life, ‘life whole and not denied or in part’” (Luyster 21). Throughout his philosophy, Nietzsche consistently uses the ideal of Dionysus to advocate a complete affirmation of life. The Dionysian man exhibits a joy in life which is not hindered but augmented by his sufferings. This gives him the ability to create life from the aspects of reality which are traditionally thought to bring only death. The Dionysian man redefines pain and suffering, making it a path not only to strength, but even to happiness.

Nietzsche gives an explanation of the Dionysian man in his work *Twilight of the Idols*. In this book, the Dionysian man is a response to what Nietzsche terms “the problem of Socrates.” Socrates represents the tendency of philosophers to observe the condition of life and declare that “it is no good” (*Twilight of the Idols* 7). Such men attempt to avoid the reality of suffering by completely rejecting the physical world. Nietzsche claims that the ideas of Socrates and Plato were indicative of the eventual degeneration of the Greeks, for they instigated a desire “to fight the instincts – [which] is

the definition of decadence” (*Twilight of the Idols* 12). In his study on the Dionysian element, Dienstag analyzes Socrates’ war against his instincts. He claims that, according to Nietzsche, Socrates “could no longer bear to live with the brutal truths of the human condition and sought refuge in an optimistic philosophy” (Dienstag 927-928). This false optimism “made life more tolerable but less genuine” (Dienstag 927-928). In other words, Socrates, through his hatred of suffering, attempted to escape the ugly realities of life by completely rejecting his so-called baser instincts. Socrates’ optimistic escapism leads to a system which encourages and celebrates the suppression of these instincts on the assumption that the pain caused by them can be eradicated. Thus, he does not develop his drives but rejects them. However, in the process he discards a legitimate reality of life, deceiving himself and his followers.

Nietzsche claims that such philosophy does not capture the true essence of the Greek spirit, for the pre-Socratic Greek culture embraced what Dienstag calls an active tragedy which “rather than purging, encouraged and strengthened” human life (Dienstag 927-928). Nietzsche claimed that this tragedy found its fullest expression and power in the Greek god Dionysus, for “it is only in the Dionysian mysteries... that the basic fact of the Hellenic instinct finds expression – its ‘will to life’” (98). In the Dionysian rites, Nietzsche perceived that all aspects of life were affirmed and celebrated. He claims that the Dionysian mysteries are characterized by “an expression of force,” and involve a celebration of sensuality which is often painful (98). Nietzsche exalts the physical pain of these rituals, commenting that “in the doctrine of the mysteries, pain is pronounced holy” (99). The holiness which Nietzsche sees in Dionysus is what he calls “the eternal return of life,” the life-giving cycle of destruction and creation which produces life

instead of destroying it (99). In the Dionysian mysteries, pain can contribute to a person's growth and thus should not be avoided but embraced.

In fact, pain is necessary for the production of life, a fact which Nietzsche illustrates by connecting suffering and the pains of childbirth. He asserts that, "[in order that] there may be the eternal joy of creating, that the will to life may eternally affirm itself, the agony of the woman giving birth must also be there eternally" (100). Just as the woman giving birth must experience the pains of labor in order to produce her child, so one seeking to affirm life must also undergo and affirm suffering. Thus, suffering is holy because it is an essential part of the production of life. The Dionysian man understands this reality and works to create life for himself out of his pain.

Nietzsche's analysis of Dionysus in *The Gay Science* also heavily emphasizes this creative element of the Dionysian man. According to Nietzsche, the strong man is characterized by an "over-fullness of life" (370). To such a man, "what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into a lush farmland" (370). The excess of life present in the Dionysian man allows him to bring joy and renewal into the worst aspects of existence. In fact, such a man often finds it necessary to initiate ugliness and pain in the world through his destruction of institutions and traditions which impede his affirmation of life. However, this upheaval does not come from the bitterness and resentment which motivates weaker men, but from "the desire for destruction, for change, for future, for *becoming*" (370). Although the Dionysian man is able to destroy without remorse, he does not engage in destruction for destruction's sake. Some studies of the Dionysian in Nietzsche tend to unduly emphasize the destructive aspect of Dionysus in

this way, including that of Luyster, who claims that Dionysus becomes for Nietzsche a “savage scourge of nature, whose chief pleasure consists in the pitiless slaughter of countless ‘failures’” (Luyster 24). While Luyster is correct in pointing out that the Dionysian man feels no remorse for his acts of destruction, he fails to fully acknowledge the purpose which imbues each of this man’s actions. Ultimately, for Nietzsche the Dionysian man exemplifies “the eternal joy of creating;” all destruction is employed only for the sake of creation, and the pleasure which may accompany such destruction is dependent upon this constructive goal (*Twilight of the Idols* 100).

This theme is further developed in *The Gay Science* when Nietzsche writes about the creation of true art. In aphorism 290, Nietzsche claims that the strong man is able to “give style” to his character, making something beautiful out of the imperfections of his nature (290). Moreover, Nietzsche asserts that in this process one should not remove or conceal one’s ugliness; instead ugliness is “reinterpreted and made sublime” (290). Ugliness, which usually renders humanity gloomy and heavy, is redefined, creating a light and pleasing work of art. In the process of creation, ugliness must not be driven out or hidden through shame, for to do so would be to reject a legitimate reality of life. Instead, all aspects of existence are willfully accepted and transformed into something beautiful. This is related to Nietzsche’s discussion of the drives in *Twilight of the Idols*; in the development of these drives, the strong man does not attempt to hide his ugliness. Instead, he works to make those things beautiful. Thus, the process of ordering his drives entails an affirmation of every drive through the belief that each passion can be employed nobly. This acceptance of life in whatever form it might take and the firm belief that any ugliness can be transformed into something beautiful gives the strong man his sense of

lightness. The power to turn ugliness into beauty gives him joy, for he has no regrets about the past nor fears for the future. Because all pain that has happened or will occur can be made beautiful, nothing need be taken too seriously.

Zarathustra and the Dionysian Man

Nietzsche's portrayal of Zarathustra similarly exemplifies the joy which can be found in suffering. In fact, Luyster speaks of the deep connection between Zarathustra and the Dionysian man, claiming that "Nietzsche has done his best in Z[arathustra] to recreate the values of the antique god: the prophet seeks to affirm life, the earth, and the passions of the body in the most classically accurate sense of the cultic Dionysus, god of nature's fertility and bounty" (Luyster 11). Both figures represent Nietzsche's desire to affirm the totality of life through the union of destruction and creation. Luyster further points out that this connection is particularly exemplified in Zarathustra's "ecstatic mode" of penetrating his entire life with joy (11).

The essay "On Reading and Writing" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* gives a sense of the joy possessed by Zarathustra, describing the nature of creation and emphasizing the role of destruction in the process of formation. Speaking specifically to writers, Zarathustra commands, "write with blood: and you will experience that blood is spirit" (40). An author who wishes to create something noble must be willing to suffer and shed blood for the sake of his creation. Nietzsche claims that life is found in this suffering, for from the blood of the creator comes the spirit of his creation. Therefore, pain can be a positive good in the process of creation because it is able to give life to what is made. The man who accepts this truth need no longer be afraid of suffering. Thus, Zarathustra

mocks the fear of the masses, saying “this blackness and gravity at which I laugh –this is your thundercloud” (40). Zarathustra has learned how to create life out of pain.

Therefore, the aspects of life which are typically avoided because of the suffering they cause are treated lightly by him, for they become to him as clay in the hands of a potter. Not only is he unafraid of hardship and suffering, he welcomes the chance to give life to destruction.

The lightness of the strong man is in direct contrast to the rest of mankind, particularly members of the herd. Herd members fear suffering because they have no sense of the value of hardship. They reject pain and therefore live a half-life, devoid of any real joy. Therefore, this portion of humanity does not understand the strong man, for they cannot fathom the lightness with which he views the world. Nietzsche illustrates this in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; in his wanderings, Zarathustra consistently comes across men who refuse his message, ridiculing him and rejecting the hardship inherent in his teaching. For example, in Zarathustra’s prologue, the villagers react negatively to his wisdom, ridiculing him and his speech. Zarathustra himself acknowledges, “they [the villagers] do not understand me” (18). However, Zarathustra feels no anger towards misguided man (32-33). He wants them to turn away from their illusions and their sickness, but he is not bitter at their weakness. Nietzsche portrays this clearly in Zarathustra’s interactions with the villagers; instead of reacting violently to their ridicule and rejection, he simply moves on to the next town, forever hoping to find men who will receive his message of life (23-25). In the same way, the truly strong man is not angry at his rejection but views it with the same lightness with which he views all of life.

In this way, the strong man's joy in the world is complete, for it is not hampered by the sense of vengeance which characterizes the rest of mankind. A defining characteristic of both the herd and those rejected by the herd is a desire for revenge born from an indefatigable sense of bitterness at their suffering. This is seen in the herd's rejection of the criminal and in the weak criminal's resentful reaction to the herd. The strong man, however, is free from this sense of vengeance, for he feels absolutely no bitterness at his suffering. Hamilton studies this characteristic of the strong man in his article on Nietzsche's concept of nobility. According to Hamilton, "we find someone noble if he can affirm or love life without becoming bitter and resentful even if things do not go for him in a worldly sense in the way he wants" (186). The Dionysian man may undergo worldly failures and sufferings, but, bolstered by the confidence that he can create beauty out of ugliness, he resents none of these experiences. He accepts everything through a faith in his own ability to form and create. Thus, he has no desire to punish those who have caused him suffering. Because he understands that every hardship contributes to his own strength, he can love those who have caused him pain, believing that they have increased his current joy. His confidence in the resiliency of life gives him true freedom.

Therefore, the strong man contains a confidence akin to naivety due to his unswerving faith in the beauty of life. Nietzsche describes this naivete in aphorism 107 of *The Gay Science*. He asserts that nothing "does humanity as much good as the *fool's cap*," for it lightens mankind (107). Humanity should be able to "stand above morality... to float above it and play" (107). The task of the strong man is difficult; he must recreate his own drives, striving to transform them into something beautiful. However, despite

the pain of this process, he still possesses the ability to dance. He is childlike in his confidence that his suffering is beautiful, and this gives even his struggle an element of playfulness.

The Failure of the Strong Criminal

The strong criminal falls far short of this ideal of the strong man. Although he does not undergo the deterioration of the weak criminal, the strong criminal's strength is still hampered by society's oppression. In this way, he is one manifestation of the second metamorphosis of the soul in Zarathustra's discourse entitled *Of the Three Metamorphoses*. This metamorphosis is paired with the image of the lion, who affirms his own will despite the demands of the herd mentality (26-27). Like the lion, the strong criminal creates "freedom... and a sacred 'No' even to duty" (27). In order to develop his drives, the strong criminal asserts his own independence and rejects the claims of the herd. Now, his only duty is to himself. The third and final metamorphosis of the spirit is the child, which is "innocence and forgetting, a new beginning... a sacred 'Yes'" (26). This stage is connected to the character of the strong man, who is identified by his playful lightness of spirit. The transition from lion to child is accomplished through the space the lion creates for himself. Nietzsche declares that the second metamorphosis develops "in the loneliest desert," for it is only here that the lion can fully recognize his independence. Without the space and loneliness of the desert, the lion cannot progress to the next stage and thus cannot create new values (26-27). The importance of solitude is similarly an important aspect of Nietzsche's description of Zarathustra. Before Zarathustra can journey into the villages and undergo the harsh criticism of the townspeople, he "enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 9).

The fullness of independence possessed by Zarathustra flows from these years of solitude, and they are required in order to develop his creative power.

The problem, as Nietzsche sees it, is that the strong criminal never acquires the space to make the transition to the third metamorphosis because he never fully achieves the mental solitude of the lion. This is primarily a result of the harm done to him by society's rejection. "Let us generalize the criminal: let us think of men so constituted that for one reason or another, they lack public approval and know that they are not felt to be beneficent or useful.... All men so constituted have a subterranean hue to their thoughts and actions" (*Twilight of the Idols* 87). All of the strong criminal's efforts at developing his individuality are severely opposed by society, and in this atmosphere the criminal displays mental exhaustion. The amount of energy he must expend to master his drives while combatting the psychological attacks of society gives him a subterranean hue, the aura of a man who must conduct his labors surrounded by opposition and hatred.

Nietzsche further states that the criminal "lacks the wilderness...where everything that is weapons and armor in the instinct of the strong human being has its rightful place" (86). Man desires a lonely wilderness in which he can battle and remake his drives. However, there is no space in the criminal's life, for society does not give the criminal the psychological freedom to develop his uniqueness and affirm his individual character. Society leaves the criminal no space for growth because it constantly informs the criminal that the strength which he shows is worthless and evil. Thus, although the strong criminal has separated himself from the herd and avoided the internal strife of the weak criminal, he cannot gain the true solitude necessary for strength.

Furthermore, this lack of solitude makes the criminal callous, for it forces him to constantly consider his ostracization and its consequences. Nietzsche asserts that the criminal himself “feels the terrible cleavage which separates [him] from everything that is customary or reputable” because society has bestowed the “fatal mark of the chandala on his forehead” (*Twilight of the Idols* 88). The criminal’s outcast state constantly wears on him, requiring him to expend his strength resisting society. Thus, while he resists the temptation to fall back into the herd mentality, he finds himself in another state of tension, for he must handle the conflict between his desperate need for solitude and the psychological constriction of society’s hatred.

Thus, the strong criminal lives in a “feeling of hatred, revenge, and rebellion against everything which already is” (88). However, his feeling of revenge and rebellion is not identical to that of the weak criminal. The weak criminal’s hatred stems from a place of internal dissatisfaction, for he cannot bear the feelings of inadequacy which result from his inability to seize the independence of his crime. The strong criminal, on the other hand, feels a justified hatred towards any institution which demands his allegiance. The strong criminal, like the lion, claims that his only duty is to his own development and angrily opposes those who attempt to divert his attention from this great task. However, the lion eventually moves away from this stage into the state of childlike confidence; the strong criminal cannot. His strength is spent reaffirming his desire for individuality in the face of an adversary who ardently opposes his psychological development. In this way, the strong criminal is merely coping, not thriving, and he endures his pain without joy. Unlike the Dionysian man, he is always destroying, cutting ties with conventional morality, and tearing down the weakness which always threatens

to overtake him. The strong criminal lacks the lightness of soul which characterizes the strong man and therefore cannot truly create. He is weighed down by his struggle against society and therefore cannot dance with Dionysian joy.

The Strong Criminal's Contribution

However, despite his insufficiencies, the strong criminal still contributes to the development of strength in a way in which the weak criminal cannot. According to Nietzsche, the development of strength is furthered by the failures of strong men. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche states that “man is a rope, tied between beast and overman” and that man’s existence is a “dangerous across [and] on the way” over this rope, a continual movement away from the base man of the herd to the noble Overman (14). Zarathustra praises those who are driven to their downfall through their reckless strength and emphasizes the sacrificial nature of their actions. The madness by which they perish is not in vain, for it makes way for the Overman. Such men “herald the advent of lightening and, as heralds, they perish” (16). As prophets of the Overman, these men, with no thought for self-preservation, prepare the way for Zarathustra and fall short of his strength in the attempt.

Nietzsche also explores this theme in *Twilight of the Idols*, in his section entitled “Beauty is no accident.” According to Nietzsche, “the beauty of a race or a family... is won by work; like genius, it is the end result of the accumulated work of generations” (*Twilight of the Idols* 88). Thus, the attainment of beauty and nobility is not the product of one man, but a compilation of the steps taken by various types of strong men in the past. Furthermore, in this process “one must have made great sacrifices to good taste” (88). The development of beauty comes at great cost, and certain men will die in the

cultivation of a genius which they do not attain. Nietzsche states that this downfall is not in vain. Such men, while ultimately lacking, are still vital elements in the larger development of strength.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche applies this idea of progression to the criminal through his analysis of two historical figures: Napoleon and Cataline. Nietzsche first mentions Napoleon, whom he identifies as a criminal who “proves stronger than society” (*Twilight of the Idols* 86). There has been much study devoted to Nietzsche’s characterization of Napoleon, for Nietzsche frequently praises this figure. One such study done by Dombowsky particularly focuses on Napoleon as a criminal. He states that Nietzsche conceives of Napoleon as a criminal because he placed himself outside of the realm of moral demands (Dombowsky 110). Furthermore, Dombowsky claims that Napoleon is such a valuable figure for Nietzsche because “the criminal immorality is necessary in order to create ‘works of art’ in ‘the grand style’” (110). The defiance shown by Napoleon clears a path for further rebellion against the herd mentality and thus contributes to the development of human strength. Therefore, although Nietzsche identifies certain faults in Napoleon, he ultimately praises him because of his contribution to the future freedom of the fully strong man (Dombowsky 26-27).

Nietzsche also identifies the strong criminal as a Catilinarian type, one who has been oppressed and bears the marks of this rejection (88). Cataline fights the battle of every criminal ostracized by society because of his strength. Stern, however, claims that Cataline’s situation leads him to “mistrust his instincts... he is crushed by society’s hostility, which he eventually internalizes” (Stern 96). This description of Cataline connects him to the weak criminal, who is characterized by severe internal tension. Thus,

Stern contrasts Cataline with Napoleon, claiming that, in his section on criminality, Nietzsche intended to juxtapose the psychological states of the two men, identifying Napoleon with strength and Cataline with weakness (Stern 96-98).

However, in my reading, Cataline more naturally contrasts with the Caesarian man mentioned earlier in *Twilight of the Idols*. The Caesarian is “the most beautiful type,” capable of creating strength out of his pain (79).² Nietzsche claims that “Cataline [is] the form of pre-existence of every Caesar” (88). Just as, in the Roman Republic, the power of Caesar developed from the failures of Cataline, so the failures of the strong criminal contribute to the development of the strength of mankind. In this way, Nietzsche is not contrasting Cataline and Napoleon, for he acknowledges that both men represent the strong criminal’s contribution to the complete strength of the strong man represented by Caesar. Cataline bears the marks of rejection, but not because he has internalized society’s oppression. Rather, he displays the exhaustion of a man continually fighting for his independence in the face of society’s opposition. Cataline and Napoleon both prove stronger than society, for they do not cave under society’s pressure, and they continue to struggle for their freedom. By establishing the Caesarian ideal as the ultimate goal of these two personalities, Nietzsche affirms the ultimate value of both.

In this way, as opposed to the weak criminal, the strong criminal fights for the strength exemplified by the Dionysian man and Zarathustra. The weak criminal rejects the madness of his crime, thereby dismissing such strength. He does not fight for independence; he willingly reenters the herd mentality, fighting instead for his own

² I concur with Stern on this point, who also identifies Caesar as the epitome of strength.

security. The strong criminal, on the other hand, holds onto the freedom provided to him by his crime and fights for his separation from the herd. He faces the dangers of independence and enters the war for mastery of himself, even when it proves to be his downfall. The effort it takes him to fight the constraints of the herd prohibits him from attaining the strength of the Dionysian man. He squanders his greatness in his fight against society, never reaching the heights of joy. However, his abilities do point to a greater strength, and he falls while contributing to the Dionysian ideal.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dostoevsky and Russian Criminal

In 1850, Dostoevsky was imprisoned in Siberia for his involvement in the Socialist Petrahevsky Circle. Dostoevsky describes his experience in the Russian prison camps of Siberia in his novel *Notes from a Dead House* through the narrator Alexander Petrovitch, a lonely man living in a small village in Siberia.¹ After Petrovitch's death, a man who had attempted to befriend him finds his memoirs and discovers that he is an ex-convict imprisoned for murdering his wife in a jealous rage. In these papers, Petrovitch writes about his time in the prison, describing the dehumanizing treatment which he and his fellow prisoners experienced at the hands of the prison authorities. He also depicts the behavior of his fellow prisoners, examining the nature of their crimes and their responses to society's oppression.

Amidst this informative presentation of the prison camp, Dostoevsky develops a psychology of the criminal based on his experiences. His analysis highlights the struggle of the criminal to cultivate his personality amidst his own diseased human nature and the dehumanization of society. According to Dostoevsky, crime results from a disorder of the criminal's nature which the criminal cannot control and which for some becomes a source of identity. However, despite this disorder, the criminal does not relinquish his humanity and therefore still possesses the legitimate potential for nobility. The unique

¹ Frank 163-184. For more information on the circumstances of Dostoevsky's imprisonment, see Richard Pevear's foreword to his translation of *Notes from a Dead House*, Frank 163-184 and Konstantin Mochulsky 133-154.

psychological state of the criminal stems from his confrontation with his disordered nature and his struggle for nobility, a process made even more difficult by the constraints imposed upon the criminal by society. The vast majority of criminals respond in weakness to their situation, but a select few men are able to accept responsibility for their nature and face the persecution of society with a measure of strength.

Any study on *Notes from a Dead House* must begin with a discussion of Alexander Petrovitch, the narrator of the work, for Dostoevsky makes all his observations of the prison through his eyes. The relationship of Dostoevsky to his narrative persona is complicated for several reasons. The element which most undermines the congruence of Dostoevsky and this persona is the nature of the narrator's crime. Unlike Dostoevsky, who was imprisoned for his involvement in a political socialist movement, Petrovitch is convicted for "killing his wife in the first year of their marriage" in a jealous rage (*Notes from a Dead House* 5). Thus, the psychological state of the narrator should be vastly different from Dostoevsky's, and his observations tainted with a sense of guilt not experienced by Dostoevsky.

Nancy Ruttenburg explores the possibility of such separation in her study entitled *Dostoevsky's Democracy*, in which she analyzes Dostoevsky's development of Alexander Petrovitch's character and its implications for Dostoevsky's portrayal of the prison. According to Ruttenburg, Alexander Petrovitch is an extremely problematic character, for he experiences no authentic conversion, never fully accepting the hope of the gospel nor experiencing true companionship (Ruttenburg 40). Thus, the character development of Alexander Petrovitch is incomplete. From this observation, she asks why Dostoevsky would present such a flawed narrator if he wishes to present the narrator's thoughts as his

own. To answer this question, she posits that Alexander Petrovitch is “a point of self-departure around which an otherwise scrupulously honest confessional self-representation is constructed” (Ruttenburg 35). She claims that Dostoevsky’s development of Alexander Petrovitch heightens the fictional aspects of the narrative, making “Goranchikov’s [Alexander Petrovitch’s] failure to acknowledge his crime, and thus his failure to repent, central to both the text’s content and its structure” (Ruttenburg 86). Her interpretation therefore focuses on Dostoevsky’s construction of a fictional narrative and undermines the documentary nature of the work.

However, most studies tend to prioritize the autobiographical and historical nature of this novel, thereby identifying Dostoevsky with the narrative voice.² Frank’s study entitled *Dostoevsky: A Writer of His Time* claims that the primary purpose of *Notes from a Dead House* is to accurately communicate the physical and spiritual experiences of Dostoevsky while in prison (197). In order to achieve this, Dostoevsky adopts an “impersonal and collective” tone, peppered with hints of his personal journey in the insights of Alexander Petrovitch (Frank 196). Thus, as Ruttenburg rightly observes, this account is not merely a straightforward record of events; instead, the fictional elements are introduced to illuminate Dostoevsky’s mental and spiritual reality. In fact, Mochulsky comments that the impersonal style “heightens the illusion of documentation... [but] having carefully examined the creation, we notice that it is all a revelation of its creator’s personality” (Mochulsky 185-186). Thus, although the tone of the work is not that of a personal confession, Dostoevsky uses the documentary style to communicate his personal conversion, and the fictional elements are introduced to better

² Mochulsky, 185; Pevear xii-I; Frank 196-7; 361-8.

communicate the spiritual reality of Dostoevsky's experience. Any discrepancies between Dostoevsky and his narrator must be viewed in light of this consideration.³

Thus, Pevear claims that Dostoevsky chose Alexander Petrovitch's crime carefully, for "the notes of a man serving a sentence for a common-law crime were more likely to be passed for publication than the notes of a political criminal" (xii).⁴ Analysis of the text supports such a hypothesis, for, although Alexander Petrovitch is in prison for the murder of his wife, "the narrator's thoughts, preoccupations, and conscience are not at all those of a man who has murdered his wife" (Pevear xiii). Dostoevsky frames Alexander Petrovitch's crime as he does so that he might communicate his experiences without the threat of censorship. In this way, Dostoevsky introduces an element of fiction in his work in order to fully communicate his ideas.

Thus, where Ruttenburg perceives a failure to convert, Pevear identifies the emergence of Dostoevsky's personality, treating Alexander Petrovitch as a stand-in for the otherwise-censored thoughts of a political prisoner. In my analysis of *Notes from a Dead House*, I will adopt the general view of Pevear, Frank, and Mochulsky and will treat the voice of Alexander Petrovitch as Dostoevsky's. This approach emphasizes the historicity of the account and takes into account the huge personal impact these years in prison had on Dostoevsky's psychology of the criminal. Therefore, Dostoevsky's narrative voice is a reliable representation of his own thoughts about criminality, and his

³ Pevear comments on the unique nature of this fusion of documentary and personal analysis, claiming that Dostoevsky's novel launched the genre of prison memoir, later so important in Russian literature, which relies on this fusion. Pevear xii.

⁴ This view is corroborated by Frank 360-4.

views on the nature of the criminal can be discerned through an analysis of the observations of Alexander Petrovitch.

The Internal Disorder of the Criminal

Dostoevsky's psychology of the criminal is founded on his belief that the criminal's existence stems from an internal disorder. Dostoevsky illustrates this through Alexander Petrovitch's negative first impression of the prison and his fellow criminals; within the first pages of *Notes from a Dead House*, the narrator frequently comments on the great wickedness of the prisoners and despairs of forming any meaningful relationships during his sentence. The observations of Alexander Petrovitch reflect Dostoevsky's own initial abhorrence of the criminals. In his study, Frank comments on Dostoevsky's first impression of the prisoners, observing that Dostoevsky's initial moments in prison were particularly jarring and that his unrealistic depictions of criminality in his novels before his time in prison were immediately challenged by the horrible things of which the criminals were capable (Frank 198-199). Faced with this reality, Dostoevsky openly acknowledges the criminal's disorder in his novel and asserts that crime is a symptom of this internal discord. In fact, Dostoevsky often speaks of this disorder in terms of sickness, implying that the criminal is identified by moral illness. For example, Alexander Petrovitch describes his comrades in the prison as "morally sick" and elsewhere mentions the "unhealthy look" of his fellow prisoners (*Notes from a Dead House* 268; 250). In using this language, Dostoevsky indicates that the prisoners are unbalanced. Their crimes are produced by an unsound nature which continues to plague them during their incarceration like an illness which has not been treated.

Dostoevsky further develops this theme through his discussion of the hospital available to the convicts, connecting the physical illnesses of the hospital to the moral sickness of the prisoners. The narrator claims that the prisoners often desire to go to the hospital because “here in the hospital we were all on more of an equal footing, lived more amicably” (*Notes from a Dead House* 210). In the hospital, the prisoners experience a physical and spiritual respite; their sense of companionship is heightened, along with their sense of humanity. This is further seen in the affection of the prisoners for their doctors, who the narrator claims “are a veritable refuge for prisoners” (*Notes from a Dead House* 54). In fact, when Alexander Petrovitch goes to the hospital for the first time, the other convicts state that the doctors are “better than fathers” (*Notes from a Dead House* 168). An important element of the connection felt by the prisoners with the hospital is the presence of the doctors, for “the people who sympathize most with them [the prisoners] are doctors” (*Notes from a Dead House* 53). Those who were physically ill felt that they were cared for despite their status as prisoners because the doctors make no distinction between convict and free man. This moment of rest and care restores the criminals, even if only for a short time.

However, the hospital is not just a place of healing; in fact, according to the narrator, it is frequently the site of great suffering. Despite his favorable impression of the hospital, Alexander Petrovitch also describes several horrible occurrences, including the mistreatment of a mentally disabled man and the fate of a young consumptive who withers away and dies while in chains. (*Notes from a Dead House* 203; 178-9). Dostoevsky does not romanticize the hospital, nor does he identify it as a place of pure bliss and comfort for the prisoner. However, he does identify the connection to the

hospital felt by many of the prisoners. In fact, some prisoners enter the hospital “without an illness, ‘for a rest’” because something in the atmosphere of the hospital gives them a sense of peace (*Notes from a Dead House* 172). In this way, Dostoevsky asserts that the criminals, even those who are not actually physically ill, are at peace in the hospital because they are at home amidst the process of healing. This sense of belonging does not deny the real pain of the hospital; it instead relates the pain of the sick to that of the prisoners. Both experience a deficiency in their natures which results in restrictions on their lives and separation from society. This loss of freedom for the criminal and the sick man is due to insufficiencies which cannot be remedied without great pain. Thus, despite the suffering of the hospital, the prisoners often go there to rest and be tended to by doctors. Their moral nature similarly demands convalescence and the care of compassionate men, despite the suffering which will attend this process of healing. In this way, Dostoevsky connects the moral disorder of the prisoner and the physical disorders being treated in the hospital; the prisoners are at home among the physically ill because of the sickness present in their own souls.

Moreover, Dostoevsky does not attribute this moral illness to deficiencies in the criminal’s environment. Instead, he asserts that every man is culpable for his actions, stating, “often some clever swindler who knows his business skillfully conceals and justifies not only his weakness, but often simply his baseness, by the influence of the environment, especially if he has a gift for fine talking or writing” (*Notes from a Dead House* 182). Dostoevsky condemns such men because they do not take responsibility for their natures. While the environment may contribute to a man’s problems, the criminal

cannot blame anyone else for his crime. Ultimately the criminal's actions must be attributed to his own internal disorder.

The Uncontrollable Passion of the Criminal

The internal disorder of the criminal is a key component in the motivation for his crime. In his analysis of motive, Dostoevsky indicates that the criminal's action comes from an uncontrollable, passionate impulse of the will which defies reason and asserts the criminal's freedom from law and authority. In his study on the role of the conscious mind in Dostoevsky's novels, Orwin highlights the essential irrationality of such passion. According to Orwin, Dostoevsky's criminal is impelled by a "vitality" resembling that of a soldier going into battle (165). Men acting under this vitality do so "from a 'joy' that consists in destruction of consciousness that comes about only under the conditions of 'hopelessness'" (Orwin 165). Claiming that the criminal's "conscious stands by as a kind of helpless observer," Orwin implies that the passion motivating crime is uncontrollable, for it is based on an underlying desire for destruction which defies conscious reason (165). Squires confirms this view in his study on criminal responsibility in Dostoevsky, stating that, according to Dostoevsky, "the genuine criminal... commits crime for crime's sake, for the feeling he gets out of the anti-social act" (822). Notably, Squires mentions the anti-social nature of this passion; the destructive pleasure of the criminal is directed at the institutions and values of society. In this way, the subconscious passion which motivates the criminal is deeply connected with a basic desire for liberation from the structures and expectations of society. Thus, Dostoevsky's concept of motive also consists of the idea of power. The criminal acts out of a need to assert his own

individuality against the restrictions of society; his passion pushes against all restraint, indicating the criminal's subconscious yearning for a powerful assertion of his own will.

In this way, the criminal is driven to crime through an anti-rational and subconscious desire for power which manifests itself in destructive and violent force. Dostoevsky describes the way this assertion of power affects different criminals, identifying two primary reactions among the prisoners. In one sort of man, this assertion of will leaves the criminal feeling lost and dejected, despite his attempts at freedom or strength. One example of such a crime is an unnamed man's murder of his wife, Akulka (*Notes from a Dead House* 211-20). Discovering that his wife loved another man, he slit her throat, and seeing the blood pouring out the wound, he "ran, ran... [and] crouched under a shelf" in the old bathhouse (*Notes from a Dead House* 220). Having committed a murder in the heat of selfish passion, the man could not handle the sight of the blood or the reality of the crime. He therefore runs from his deed and finds himself in prison, repeating his story regretfully in a dark corner of the hospital.

According to Dostoevsky, "something in [such a man] comes unhinged" (*Notes from a Dead House* 107). A seemingly normal man is overtaken by the desire to murder, which grows into an uncontrollable passion and an irrational desire for blood. This man experiences a sort of freedom from morality,

as if, having leaped over a line that was sacred to him, he begins to admire the fact that nothing is holy for him anymore; as if he feels an urge to leap over all legality and authority at once, to revel in the most boundless and unbridled freedom, to revel in this thrill of horror, which it is impossible for him not to feel. (*Notes from a Dead House* 107)

The power of his passion has allowed this criminal to reject everything he had previously perceived as a restraint, and in the moment of his crime, he believes that he has achieved

liberation. However, such a man is only a slave to his passion and fails to attain true freedom. His yearning for the independence offered by his crime is akin to the yearning possessed by a man who throws himself from the top of a high tower, in order to put “an end to it” (*Notes from a Dead House* 107). Dostoevsky claims that, subconsciously, “such a desperate man is sometimes just waiting for a quick punishment, just waiting to be finished off, because it is finally hard for him to keep up this affected desperation” (*Notes from a Dead House* 108). This man senses the inevitability of his fall, perceiving that he is too weak to maintain the brutal freedom initiated by his crime. In this way, he responds to his passion by rejecting his crime and desperately seeks to be free from its implications.

Dostoevsky identifies another sort of criminal whom he calls the resolute man (*Notes from a Dead House* 107). The resolute criminal’s impulse of will is also an instance of uncontrollable passion, but it becomes for the criminal a source of identity to which he is completely dedicated. According to Dostoevsky, “these people are born with one idea, which unconsciously moves them here and there all their lives; so they rush about all their lives until they find something they really want to do; then they are ready to risk their heads” (*Notes from a Dead House* 104). One such man is Petrov, an acquaintance of Alexander Petrovitch who was “the most resolute and fearless of all men, and knew no constraint” (*Notes from a Dead House* 203). According to Alexander Petrovitch, Petrov was crossed by no criminal in the prison, for he was an unstoppable force when provoked. However, Petrov is not easily stirred up to anger. Thus, the narrator describes Petrov as an especially apathetic man who was neither boastful or quarrelsome. Petrov could have enacted anything he wished but was rarely driven by any desire.

However, the narrator asserts that when Petrov is overcome by an impulse of will, it is irresistible and all-consuming. At this point, reason no longer holds sway over Petrov, and he “fearlessly makes straight for all the knives,” disregarding any risk and crossing any line in order to achieve his will (*Notes from a Dead House* 106). In this way, his passion is like that of Akulka’s husband, instilling in him the desire and ability to grasp at unbridled freedom. The narrator recounts one such instance in their relationship, when Petrov stole his Bible in order to buy alcohol (*Notes from a Dead House* 104-5).

According to Alexander Petrovitch, “he evidently wanted very much to have a drink, and what he wanted very much had to be fulfilled” (*Notes from a Dead House* 105). The desire for alcohol consumes Pavlov and drives his crime. While this passion, like that of Akulka’s husband, is uncontrollable, it consumes its possessor in a different way. The drive of Akulka’s husband is akin to a tornado which enters a town, wreaks havoc, and then disappears, leaving only the negative results of its frenzy. Such passion enters a man like a foreign power and does not come to define its recipient. Pavlov’s one idea, however, becomes a part of his identity. While Petrov is still enslaved to his disordered nature, his passion becomes an internal force which gives him the strength to handle the consequences of his crime.

Thus, Dostoevsky asserts that after the resolute man’s action, he will not avoid his crime, nor will he feel remorse. In fact, Petrov openly admits to the theft of Alexander Petrovitch’s bible and “did not regret stealing it at all” (*Notes from a Dead House* 105). His dedication to his idea is so complete that he stays firm in his action regardless of its consequences. Akulka’s husband, on the other hand, is immediately horrified by his crime and therefore hides himself from the fruit of that action. This amounts to a type of

self-preservation; because Akulka's husband cannot accept his whirlwind passion as a defining characteristic of himself in the way that Petrov does, he must protect himself from the horrible reality of what he has done. Men such as Petrov lack this sense of self-preservation when it comes to their passion. Because they have accepted the internal nature of their desire, they need not hide themselves from the reality of their crime. This is the nature of Petrov's acceptance: it does not stem from a mastery of his passions, but an honest recognition of them. After committing a crime, he can stand by his actions because he accepts his own internal motivations and does not react to them with shame. Essentially, he willingly offers himself for enslavement to his internal desires and in doing so gains a twisted form of strength and freedom.

In this way, Dostoevsky makes a distinction between those men who recognize the passions which result in their incarceration and those who avoid the reality of their actions in desperation and fear. The overwhelming passion which causes crime is present in the actions of both men; however, Petrov has accepted that this passion is an impulse of his own will, while Akulka's husband has refused to recognize this reality. Akulka's husband sees his passion as an external force of which he is a victim. Because he does not accept it as his own will, he runs from it as from an enemy. However, he still feels a guilt for his crime which makes his desperate attempt at bravado unsustainable; because he cannot accept responsibility for his crime, he cannot rid himself of this guilt. Petrov, however, rightly connects his passion with his identity, accepting the motive for his crime as an uncontrollable manifestation of his own will. His drive to steal is not an outside enemy to be avoided but an internal desire to fulfill. He thus takes responsibility for his crime in a way that Akulka's husband does not. Therefore, when he steals Alexander

Petrovitch's Bible, Petrov is unmoved by his scolding, for no amount of friendly affection or humane feeling will produce guilt in Petrov (*Notes from a Dead House* 104). In feeling guilt, he would be rejecting not an external force, but a movement of will which has become an essential part of his identity. He has affirmed and internalized this passion, freeing himself from the inconsistent guilt of Akulka's husband.

In this way, Dostoevsky asserts that the nature of criminality is connected to the disordered passions within a person. Despite their differences, Petrov and Akulka's husband both commit crimes due to a fierce assertion of passion which amounts to a declaration of freedom from the restraints of morality. The force of their passion is what enables this freedom, but it also ultimately indicates the disease of the criminal's nature which enslaves the criminal to this passion. Some criminals, horrified at their enslavement and unable to develop the harsh freedom which attends it, are characterized by guilt and confusion. Another sort of criminal chooses to define himself by his passion and surrenders to it voluntarily. Such criminals are in a better position to take advantage of the freedom offered them by their crimes and possess a resolve which is frightening due to its unpredictable strength. However, Dostoevsky claims that this freedom can never be true freedom. While some criminals may attain independence from society through their crimes, this freedom ultimately stems from a disorder in their nature. The desire of the criminal for freedom is complicated by this disorder and any dignity he might possess is tainted by it.

Society's Oppression of the Criminal

Thus, Dostoevsky agrees with society that the criminal possesses a moral ailment which requires healing. However, in *Notes from a Dead House*, he asserts that the prisons do little to restore the criminal to health. Instead, society further complicates the criminal's internal struggle by denying the persistence of his human nature in the aftermath of his crime.

The Human Dignity of the Criminal

While Dostoevsky asserts that the state of the criminal results from a disordered and diseased nature, he does not deny the humanity of the criminals and frequently affirms their potential for human dignity in his work. The narrator articulates this in his comments on society's misconceptions of criminals. The fear with which many men view the prison and its inhabitants stems from a belief that such men are completely deranged and pose a danger to all of society. However, Alexander Petrovitch denies this, stating that "a living man cannot be made into a corpse" (*Notes from a Dead House* 52). The convicts do not lose their humanity by becoming criminals; they are still filled with the life which also innervates men outside the prison.

However, Dostoevsky's depiction of the criminals moves past an abstract assertion of their humanity; instead, he gives a clear illustration of the companionship and joy achieved by the criminals even in their disordered state. One example of this is the Christmas theater which the criminals organize. Dostoevsky shows the humanity of the criminals in this scene through his depiction of their childlike joy in the act of creation. As the day of the production draws closer, even the most taciturn of criminals are filled with anticipation (*Notes from a Dead House* 148-149). They eagerly speculate about the

final product – how certain actors will portray their characters and how the hostile Major will react to their production. This element of risk in the theater fulfills the criminal's desire for authentic life, for it enables them to share in the possibilities and perils of creation.

This is further displayed when the narrator describes the physical effect the preparations have on the criminal, stating that, right before the curtain rose, the naïve expectation of the prisoners produced a “strange gleam of childlike joy, of sweet, pure, pleasure... on those furrowed, branded brows and cheeks, in the gazes of these people, until then gloomy and sullen” (*Notes from a Dead House* 154). Before they have even glimpsed the final product, the anticipation of creation kindles a sense of joy in the men. The preparation leading up to the performance could result in any number of outcomes, and their anticipation is akin to the joy of childhood, which receives its beauty from the youthful potential present in the child. The prisoners regain this element of adolescence through the production, for they feel again the potential of youth in the recognition of the risks and possibilities of creation. In this way, the theater gives them hope for their own development, allowing them the childlike belief that creation is available to them even in their disordered criminality.

Furthermore, the theater offers the criminals an opportunity for companionship through its connection to the Russian spirit. Dostoevsky's love for the Russian spirit is well-attested; in addition, many studies assert that his patriotic passion was developed during his imprisonment and is articulated in *Notes from a Dead House* (Frank; Ruttenburg). Dostoevsky initially struggled to see the goodness of the Russian peasant, but, according to Ruttenburg, his conversion occurred when he “found a way to see with

new eyes the peasant-convicts who tormented him (Ruttenburg 35). As Frank asserts, Dostoevsky, a radical noble, entered the prison believing that the peasant required the support of the learned socialists because “he was too primitive and intellectually undeveloped to take any conscious objection to his own status and condition” (Frank 200). Such a view hardly emphasized the dignity of the peasant, portraying him as a servile creature incapable of asserting his own will. However, he found that the peasants bore an “implacable enmity... toward the nobles in general, and himself in particular (Frank 200). The peasants he encountered did not bow before him with grateful humility; instead they asserted their independence, often humiliating Dostoevsky. This hatred initially isolated Dostoevsky and ultimately resulted in the “destruction of Dostoevsky’s humanitarian faith” (Frank 203). However, both Frank and Ruttenburg analyze how Dostoevsky’s perception of the Russian peasant and the Russian spirit was rebuilt throughout his time in prison (Frank 210-211). This new view of the Russian soul emphasized the strength and individuality of the Russian and was formed because Dostoevsky perceived the persistence of human dignity and individuality even amongst the most depraved members of society.

Dostoevsky incorporates his passion for the spirit of the Russian peasantry into his works, particularly *Notes from a Dead House*, establishing a fundamental connection between the criminals and the free peasants. For example, in his description of the prisoners’ theater, Alexander Petrovitch comments that he “refuses to believe that everything he saw later on in our prison theater was invented by our own prisoners,” for “there is a need for a continuity of tradition... transmitted from generation to generation and through old memory” (*Notes from a Dead House* 149). The prisoners incorporate

this tradition into the music of their performance, capturing the Russian spirit through the simple folk music of the country. In fact, after hearing the music in the production, Alexander Petrovitch comments that “for the first time then I fully understood precisely what was so endlessly exuberant and rollicking in these exuberant and rollicking Russian dance songs” (*Notes from a Dead House* 155). In this way, the prisoners not only incorporate the Russian tradition into their play, they interpret it so as to exemplify the essence of the Russian spirit freshly to the narrator. In this way, the theater places the convicts within the traditions of their country and their ancestors, thereby proving that they are still Russian men despite their disordered nature. Despite their physical separation from the rest of Russian population, the criminals still embody an important aspect of the Russian people and can accurately represent what it means to be Russian. Alexander Petrovitch further confirms this portrayal of the criminals with his statement that “these men were allowed to live in their own way for a little while, to have fun like other people... and they were morally changed, even if only for those few minutes” (*Notes from a Dead House* 163). The production indicates that the prisoners have not lost their connection with the rest of humanity, and this reminder that they can still participate in their national tradition brings them joy. They are trapped in the confines of the prison, but they recognize that, regardless of their crime, they do not fully belong there. In this way, Dostoevsky asserts that the prisoners are still capable of human connection even amidst the horrible passions which overwhelm them.

This reality of human connection is also present in the prisoners’ Christmas celebrations. The criminal feels that “by observing the holiday he was as if in contact with the whole world, that he was therefore not entirely an outcast, a lost-man, a cut-off

slice, that things in prison were the same as among other people” (*Notes from a Dead House* 131). The meal which the criminals share and the religious ceremonies which they observe momentarily restore ties with other human beings which the criminals were led to believe had been permanently severed. In this way, the convicts are not devoid of human dignity, for they still participate in the festivals and joys of the outside world. Thus, even in the prison, where the criminals are truly quarrelsome and at times genuinely wicked, there is a possibility for human connection.

In fact, the narrator himself comments often about his surprise at the people he came to know while a prisoner. At one point he states

in prison it sometimes happened that you would know a man for several years and think he was a beast, not a man, and despise him. And suddenly a chance moment would come when his soul, on an involuntary impulse, would open up and you would see in it such riches, feeling, heart, such a clear understanding of his own and others’ suffering, as if your own eyes had been opened, and in the first moment you would not even believe what you saw and heard. (*Notes from a Dead House* 253)

A specific instance of this occurs in the development of the narrator’s relationship with Petrov. The narrator at first thinks nothing of friendship with Petrov, saying “we had decidedly nothing in common” (*Notes from a Dead House* 100). However, Petrov still sought his acquaintance, establishing a connection with the narrator which lasted for several years (*Notes from a Dead House* 100). After getting to know him better, Alexander Petrovitch speaks of Petrov’s strength and the admirable qualities he observed even amidst Petrov’s more fearful and dangerous traits. In this way, the narrator discovers nobility in men from whom he expects nothing but wickedness.

Thus, Dostoevsky presents the criminals as men still capable of creation, risk, and companionship. While never denying their disorder, he asserts that their natures still

retain an aspect of the dignity with which they were created and that this humanity is present and active despite criminality. In fact, Dostoevsky goes so far as to assert that there may be a dignity present in the criminals which exceeds that of the men outside the prison. When Alexander Petrovitch first enters the prison, he, like Dostoevsky himself, is filled with despair, believing that the men around him are permanently taciturn and unpleasant. However, he “hastened to think... ‘Who knows? Maybe these people are not so much worse than the remainder, who remained there, outside the prison...’ if I had only known then how true that thought was” (*Notes from a Dead House* 68). As his stay in the prison progresses, Alexander Petrovitch develops this conviction. At one point he praises the sense of justice present in the prisoners, commenting “there is not much our wise men can teach the people... on the contrary, they themselves ought to learn from them” (*Notes from a Dead House* 153). He also observes that the criminals “are perhaps the most gifted, the strongest of all our people” (*Notes from a Dead House* 196). Here, Dostoevsky particularly praises the wisdom and strength of the prisoners, suggesting that society could learn from their struggles. These sections suggest that Dostoevsky saw the lives of the prisoners as a challenge to those living outside the prison. Their strength and honesty oppose the indolence and hypocrisy of Russian upper-class society and stand as a reminder of the true strength of the Russian spirit.⁵ This is, in fact, the impression the narrator receives during the criminal’s production; their music is a unique manifestation of Russian dignity which he did not experience while living in society. The criminals, despite the legitimate flaws in their nature, still serve as an example of human dignity and

⁵ Ruttenburg particularly points out Dostoevsky’s abhorrence of the Westernization occurring in upper-class Russian culture (35). This is a recurring worry for Dostoevsky and makes its way into several of his novels.

have the potential to convict those members of Russian society who have lost the strength and integrity of the Russian spirit.

Lack of Freedom in the Prisons

However, the atmosphere of the prison makes it extremely difficult for the prisoners to express and cultivate this nobility. Society does not manage the criminals well, for it denies whatever humanity they might have and oppresses them out of fear and ignorance. Society rejects the humanity of the prisoners by taking away their freedom. The constraint imposed by society augments the mental privations felt by the prisoners, which Alexander Petrovitch claims “are more painful than any physical torments” (*Notes from a Dead House* 65).

However, on the most basic level, the prisoners face a lack of physical freedom. Although they are allowed free time in the evenings and can walk around the prison at their leisure, they are restricted in two important ways which, according to the narrator, have an extremely negative affect on the prisoners. The first is the forced labor imposed upon all the convicts. Alexander Petrovitch asserts that, although a free peasant may work harder and longer than a convict, “hard labor is incomparably more tormenting than any free labor, precisely for being forced” (*Notes from a Dead House* 22). The lack of freedom in the prison labor system makes the work seem meaningless, which instills in the criminal a sense of shame and humiliation.

Equally frustrating is the “forced communal cohabitation” (*Notes from a Dead House* 23). Alexander Petrovitch describes the difficulties of living in a small space surrounded by men who are quarrelsome, petty, and prone to thievery. Such a living situation hardly leaves a man open to companionship, for it breeds mistrust in him. He

sees the men who surround him as irritants and enemies, not potential comrades. Furthermore, this forced cohabitation cultivates a sense of isolation in the prisoner, who can no longer interact with the rest of his countrymen. Thus, in the folk song they sing on Christmas day, the criminals lament that “no one sees behind these walls/ the painful life we bear... No more I’ll ever see again/ the place where I was born” (*Notes from a Dead House* 139). The prisoners feel permanently cut off from their former lives, unseen by those outside the prison and unable to communicate their pain. The physical isolation of the prison thus denies the ability of the prisoner to make authentic human connections with the rest of his countrymen. In this way, the forced cohabitation undergone by the prisoners hinders their ability to form relationships with each other and with people outside the prison, amounting to a rejection of a legitimate aspect of their humanity.

This lack of physical freedom results in the constraint of the prisoner’s will, and from this comes a removal of authentic life from the existence of the criminal. The structure of the prison gives the prisoners no real power over their lives, for a criminal cannot decide where he will live or how he will work. Since they cannot fully assert their will, the criminals cannot truly experience the risk present in life. The ability of man to choose right or wrong generates life’s potential for hurt and suffering, and without this ability the danger in life is greatly diminished. By denying physical freedom and allowing them no authentic assertion of will, the prisons deny the criminals this element of risk.

But without legitimate risk, there is no legitimate life; for this reason, authentic human life is contingent upon freedom of will. Orwin articulates this quite well, stating that, for Dostoevsky, “freedom must inhere in the will if men are to be truly free as

individuals” (92). To live as a fully developed individual, one must be free to exercise one’s will; this is, for Dostoevsky, an essential element of human life and dignity.⁶ This assertion appears as a major theme in many of Dostoevsky’s works. For example, in *Notes from Underground*, the Underground Man argues that mankind desires to assert his will, regardless of pain, for it is in this and not in pure rationality that he can fully feel and experience life. (*Notes from Underground*, Book One).⁷ Dostoevsky further explores this idea in the character of Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*, who cannot experience the full joy and blessedness of the Wedding at Cana until he has experienced the painful conversations with Ivan and Grushenka and fully chosen good amidst these temptations. In this way, Dostoevsky asserts that the ability to make choices under the threat of real danger is essential to human life. Thus, the human dignity which Dostoevsky claims is undoubtedly present in the prisoners can only be fully developed when the prisoners are allowed the full exercise of their will. The prisons, in denying the prisoners their will and the danger attendant on its usage, take away a fundamental aspect of human life.

Throughout the work, the prisoners express their yearning for the rich and full life of legitimate danger which has been denied them. An instance of the longing felt by the prisoners occurs in the folk song they sing at their Christmas feast. “From the roof a screech owl’s call/ Echoes through the hollow;/ My heart is wrung, my spirits fall,/ For there I cannot follow” (*Notes from a Dead House* 139). The prisoners recognize that they

⁶ Frank particularly emphasizes the Dostoevsky affirms the importance of the will for human personality against contemporary claims that man was defined by “rational egoism,” or utilitarian reason. 370-1.

⁷ Frank’s study of Dostoevsky contains a fuller analysis of this point, 422-5.

are deprived of a certain aspect of life in their current situation. Their development is stunted, and they cannot stretch to the heights for which they were made.

Such a desire especially comes upon them in the summertime, when the prisoner feels a “longing to breathe in that faraway, free air and relieve his crushed, fettered soul” (*Notes from a Dead House* 221). In such a moment, Alexander Petrovitch reflects that “in the warm weather... with your whole being, you feel all the more oppressed by the locked prison, the convoy, and the will of others” (*Notes from a Dead House* 222). Recalling the life of the tramp, the narrator rejoices in its “mysterious enchantment... poor and terrible, but free and full of adventure” (*Notes from a Dead House* 222). This life of poverty and uncertainty is preferable to the life of the prisoner, for such a life allows for the assertion of the will and the possibility of life contingent on that freedom. Thus, Alexander Petrovitch exclaims of the tramp’s life, “though it’s hard still, it’s your own will” (*Notes from a Dead House* 223). The prisoners feel a desire to attain the difficult life of a tramp because they long to assert their own wills again and reclaim their humanity.

In the attempted removal of their will, the prisoners are also denied the full expression of their personalities; their individuality is rejected and with it is taken an important facet of their lives. Alexander Petrovitch comments that “almost any self-willed display of personality in a prisoner is considered a crime” (*Notes from a Dead House* 80). Affirming individuality would undermine the purpose of the prison: to control the overwhelming passions of the individual criminal which motivated their crime. However, according to Dostoevsky, this attempt to control the disordered nature of the criminal does nothing to heal the criminal. Instead, it augments the feeling of

desperation present in most criminals and suppresses any nobility present in them. Thus, Alexander Petrovitch bemoans the fate of the prisoner, exclaiming, “how much youth was buried uselessly within these walls, how much great strength perished here for nothing. I must say it all: these people are extraordinary people... But their mighty strength perishes for nothing, perishes abnormally, unlawfully, irretrievably” (*Notes from a Dead House* 296). In denying the criminal psychological space for the expression of his personality, society stunts his growth. The longing for life present in him is wasted because society oppresses his personality.

In this way, Dostoevsky does not deny the potential humanity of the criminal, while still acknowledging that the good present in the criminal’s nature is often wasted in the prisons when these institutions deny the freedom of will necessary for the development of the human person. Lacking real power of will, the criminal cannot experience life in an authentic way. As a result, the strength of his person remains disordered and his nobility is never cultivated. Thus, the narrator asserts that “it was morally harder” in the prison, for the prisoners must continually fight for their human dignity (*Notes from a Dead House* 210).

The Responses of the Criminals

Because of the morally harder atmosphere of the prison, most of the criminals react with defiance to society’s attempts to correct them. Thus, while Alexander Petrovitch claims that “no one dared to rebel against the internal statutes and accepted customs of the prison,” he also observes that “hardly a one of them acknowledged his lawlessness to himself” (*Notes from a Dead House* 13). Although the prisoners may follow the rules of the prison, they do not feel real penitence for what they have done, and they have no

desire to right the wrongs which they have committed. As a whole, the criminals reject conventional morality and, in this way, generally react to society's oppression with an air of rebellion and boldness.

However, Dostoevsky makes a distinction between the criminals. While all the prisoners face society's attempts at suppression with an air of defiance, this defiance manifests itself differently, depending on the criminal's initial reaction to the passions which motivate his crime. As discussed above, one sort of criminal sees the motivation for his crime as an external force of which he is a victim and therefore neither takes full responsibility for his crime nor accepts the reality of his inner disorder. The other man is defined by his crime; completely dedicated to his passion, he faces the true motive of his crime without fear or shame. Although the prisoners are diverse and cannot be completely split into two simplistic categories, Dostoevsky clearly develops this contrast, implying that the former group responds to the oppression of society with desperate, yet futile, attempts to assert its power, while the latter group displays an inner assurance of strength which need not be affirmed by society or the other prisoners.

The Desperate Criminal

Most prisoners display a desperate defiance which betrays their deep need for some form of affirmation from their fellows so that they might not feel weak. Thus, the narrator asserts that the majority of criminals "were silent and spiteful to the point of hatred, and did not like to display their hopes" (*Notes from a Dead House* 250). Because they are afraid to seem vulnerable through their hope for freedom, these men are obsessed with appearances, affecting a sullen and frightful countenance in order to seem strong. Furthermore, according to Dostoevsky, "it was because of [their] constant secret

dissatisfaction with themselves that there was so much impatience in these people in everyday relations with each other, so much resentment and mockery of each other” (*Notes from a Dead House* 251). For such men, weakness is the greatest enemy; they are “secretly ashamed” of their hope for freedom because they believe it displays their weakness to the other prisoners (*Notes from a Dead House* 251). In order to counteract these feelings of vulnerability, these prisoners quarrel amongst themselves, attempting to affirm their power through petty assertions of will.

This fear of weakness is also characteristic of the reactions of these men to their crimes. As discussed above, the desperate characteristic of such men stems from their subconscious fear of their own weaknesses which impels such men “to show off” to cover up their deep desire “to be finished off” (*Notes from a Dead House* 108). Thus, such men are characterized by a rejection of reality. They cannot admit that their crimes come from their own internal disorder, for they are frantically afraid of confronting their own weaknesses. Therefore, they fiercely assert that their crimes are the result of strength in order to convince themselves and others that they possess a strong nature to back up their crimes.

The oppression of society augments these characteristics, for it leaves these men feeling even more powerless. Such men, when they enter prison, “still maintain a certain swagger, a certain boastfulness” as if to assert that, despite their submission to the prison, they are still independent murderers capable of horrible things (*Notes from a Dead House* 108). Thus, their lives are geared towards asserting their wills and displaying their power in an attempt to bolster their own sense of self-worth. In an institution which denies any assertion of will or personality, such prisoners attempt to create a system of their own

which allows for a pseudo-assertion of will. For example, the prisoners will do anything for money because it gives them back a sense of freedom and enables them to act “by [their] own will” (*Notes from a Dead House* 79). In addition, such men participate in drunken carousing, in which they acquire alcohol, an illegal substance in the prison, and display their bravado without restraint. According to Alexander Petrovitch “this carousing involves some risk – meaning there is at least some illusion of life in it, at least some remote illusion of freedom” (*Notes from a Dead House* 79). These activities entail a challenge to authority which, however futile, still displays a small amount of power. For the prisoner, such actions are “the anguished, convulsive display of his personality, an instinctive longing for his own self” (*Notes from a Dead House* 80). The prisoners do not initiate brawls, purchase alcohol, or acquire money because they legitimately desire those things; rather, they do everything for the sake of self-assertion. With this futile assertion of will, they attempt to maintain the appearance of strength.

The desperate attempts at strength caused by their dissatisfaction with themselves is only increased by the oppression of will imposed by the prisons. However, in the end, these men “become submissive all the same” (*Notes from a Dead House* 108).

Dostoevsky claims that ultimately they do not have the strength to defy society, for they are much too afraid of pain and have no sense of self-confidence to bolster them in the face of humiliation and punishment. Thus, the desperation of which Dostoevsky speaks persists in the criminals’ frantic attempt to validate themselves despite their inability to accept their crimes and oppose the authorities in the face of certain annihilation. They are weak, they know it, but they will not admit it to themselves. They need validation, and they attempt to find it through swagger, boastfulness, and discord. These men are

thus overcome by themselves and society and are completely unprepared to handle the difficulties of the prison with composure and honesty.

Dostoevsky gives as an example of such a man Luka Kuzmitch, a former house serf who killed six men (*Notes from a Dead House* 109). In his analysis of Luka, Orwin describes the nature of this crime and its effect by comparing Luka to a brief but intense flame (165-166). He claims that “Dostoevsky associates [Luka’s] kind of desperado with fire,” for Luka’s name “sounds like such words in Russian as *luchina* (a splinter used for kindling or to light a hut) or *luch* (a ray of light)” (Orwin 165). Like such flames, Luka is passionate and quick; his fire is hot and bright but lacks the strength to endure longer than a few minutes. Thus, despite his horrible deed, in the prison “he was shown very little respect” (*Notes from a Dead House* 109). The narrator recalls one night when Luka, in an attempt to appear especially horrible, recalls how he boldly stabbed a particularly horrible major. In his description of the conversation, the narrator indicates that Luka tells his story “rather loudly and clearly... though he tried to pretend... that he was telling it to Kobylin alone” (*Notes from a Dead House* 109). Luka greatly desires to report his crime, although he attempts to hide this fact behind a veneer of indifference. In this way, Luka’s ultimate goal is self-promotion. He perceives that those around him have little respect for him and, because he is not himself fully confident in his own strength, feels that he must convince them otherwise. He therefore overexaggerates his story, even claiming that he was on the verge of death, and every word is an attempt to prove his own power. However, the narrator claims that “nobody in the prison was afraid of him” (*Notes from a Dead House* 113). Ultimately, men such as Luka do not fool the other prisoners, nor, it seems, do they completely fool themselves.

The Resolute Criminal

These desperate criminals comprise the majority of the prison. However, there is, in contrast to this group, a very small collection of characters who act not out of a need to impress others, but from their own desires. In this category is Petrov, the prisoner described by Alexander Petrovitch as a man of one idea. Petrov is portrayed as a man detached from the busyness of general prison life. In fact, the narrator states, “it always seemed to me as if he did not live in the same prison with me, but somewhere far off... and only came to the prison in passing” (*Notes from a Dead House* 100). The quarrels and anxieties of the other convicts are of little concern to Petrov, and, unlike the other convicts, he does not assert his power in order to expand his reputation. This interior confidence comes from Petrov’s sense of purpose, which flows from the internalization of his passion, making him a man of one idea. Petrov would risk anything for the sake of his defining desires, but he views everything else with indifference. He is secure in his identity, for he knows the reality of his passions and their consequences. Therefore, he does not need to assert his will in the manner of the other prisoners.

Furthermore, the prisoners recognize the firmness of his power. Although they look down on the braggadocios Luka despite all his assertions of power, they recognize that Petrov is “capable of anything... if the fancy takes him” (*Notes from a Dead House* 102). Petrov’s strength of will is undeniable, despite the fact that he does little to make himself seem important and authoritative. Because he has found his identity in his drive, he is filled with an inner assurance which gives him a strength not experienced by the other criminals.

The inner certitude of such men allows them to firmly endure the oppression of society. Dostoevsky displays such strength in his description of Orlov, a man whom Alexander Petrovitch meets while in the hospital. Orlov is a horrible murderer sentenced to run the gauntlet and is brought into the hospital near death, having completed only half of his punishment. Despite his wounds, he “looked at the world with a sort of unexpected calm... and though he realized that the other prisoners looked at him with respect, he did not pose before them in the least” (*Notes from a Dead House* 56). Orlov, like Petrov, lacks the need to impress other prisoners by his power; he is content in his own estimation of himself. Alexander Petrovitch asserts that “you could see that the man had limitless control of himself, despised all tortures and punishments, and had no fear of anything in the world” (*Notes from a Dead House* 56). Orlov is unperturbed by his punishment; he feels no remorse for his crimes but also does not run from the suffering inflicted upon him by society. The narrator claims that this strength of will came from “an infinite energy, a thirst for activity, a thirst for revenge, a thirst for attaining a set goal” (*Notes from a Dead House* 56). Orlov’s control of himself in the face of punishment comes from his acceptance of his passions and his assumption of a driving purpose. Thus, he, like Petrov, is a man of one idea, aimed towards a purpose for which he would risk his life without question. This internal motivation and satisfaction gives him the strength to endure the punishment of society.

In this way, both types of criminal are distinguished by their desire to defy society. Petrov and Orlov do this successfully; finding confidence and assurance within themselves, they challenge society’s attempt to “rehabilitate” them and live free from the need to elicit a reaction from their persecutors. Men such as Luka, on the other hand,

attempt to defy society by asserting their own horrendous strength. They desperately care what society thinks of them, and, plagued by their subconscious feelings of inferiority, lash out at their oppressors and everyone around them. Their defiance is therefore conditioned by society, and they never attain the independence achieved by Pavlov and Orlov. Their will is still defined by society's expectations and approval and therefore cannot achieve the constancy of the man of one idea.

In this way, Dostoevsky's analysis of the criminal depends on the reactions of the criminals to their drives. Their responses either give them legitimate strength to face society or a veneer of defiance which crumbles under society's persecution. In this way, the strength possessed by the criminal is displayed in his interactions with society and his independence from its expectations. However, Dostoevsky still asserts that, despite this opportunity for legitimate defiance and the dignity always present in his nature, the criminal is ultimately disordered and needs healing before he can achieve full nobility. The strength of the strong criminal is simply a realistic acceptance of weakness and, despite Dostoevsky's legitimate admiration of the strength of the Russian criminal, he never loses sight of his debilitating disorder.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Kinship of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky

As discussed in the introduction, Nietzsche saw Dostoevsky as a psychologist through whom he “understood himself” (Letter to Heinrich Koselitz). In reading Dostoevsky’s novels, Nietzsche encountered a representation of his own psychology in narrative form, and he frequently comments on the profound insights of Dostoevsky’s works. In his notes and letters, Nietzsche particularly praises Dostoevsky’s novel *Notes from a Dead House*. His first mention of this novel occurs in a letter to Heinrich Koselitz, in which he claims that Dostoevsky’s “memoir book to this time [in prison] ‘la maison des morts’ [*Notes from a Dead House*] is one of the ‘most human’ books to exist.” This book so profoundly impacted Nietzsche that he alludes to it in *Twilight of the Idols*, saying:

Dostoevsky, the only psychologist from whom I had something to learn, belongs to the most beautiful happiness of my life, even more than the discovery of Stendhal. This profound man, who had ten times the right to deprecate the superficial Germans, felt the Siberian brethren, in the midst of whom he lived for a long time, a very different criminal, for which there was no return to society - roughly carved out of the best, hardest and most valuable wood that ever grows on Russian soil” (*Twilight of the Idols* 87-88).

Nietzsche’s reference to the “Siberian brethren” demonstrate that he is alluding to Dostoevsky’s memoir about his years amongst the criminals in Siberia. Furthermore, the reference occurs in a larger discussion on criminality, indicating that Nietzsche perceived strong parallels between Dostoevsky’s depiction of the criminal and his own thoughts on the nature of criminality.

This chapter will examine the psychological consonances between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky through an analysis of their portrayals of the criminal and will show how these similarities indicate the deeper points of agreement between the two authors. I will begin with an examination of the role which the passions play in the formation of the criminal; then, I will show how, for both authors, these passions indicate the power of the subconscious over the human person. From there, I will examine how the criminal's reaction to his subconscious can result in either weakness or strength. I will conclude with an analysis of the criminal's strength, showing how it falls short of the ideal of strength espoused by both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky.

Drives and Passions

Nietzsche and Dostoevsky begin their analyses of the criminal with the claim that crime is motivated by destructive desires which most members of society ignore or deny. In this understanding of criminal behavior, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky rely on the assumption that man is heavily driven by subconscious desires of which he is often completely unaware. This is an idea which pervades the work of both men and is fundamental to their psychological analysis.

In his works, Nietzsche often uses the term "drive" and devotes much of his philosophical enquiry to an analysis of the drives' effect on human consciousness. According to Nietzsche, these subconscious drives are better explanations for human action than the conscious motivations espoused by the majority of mankind. In fact, in *The Gay Science*, he mocks the faith which modernity places in their conscious motivations, claiming that "the greatest part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt" (333). In this way, subconscious drives have great control over man's actions

regardless of his awareness of them. As Walshan points out in his book *Philosophy of Nietzsche*, this leads Nietzsche to question whether it can be said that man has any free will at all (135-156). The subconscious therefore holds such influence over human behavior that man's true underlying motives are beyond his comprehension.

Dostoevsky adopts a similar view in *Notes from Underground*, a work which displays the terrible power of the subconscious. In this work, the narrator speaks of the "overly-conscious man" who is hyper-aware of the beauty and baseness of which he is capable (*Notes from Underground* 6-7). He contrasts this with the men who are active contributors to society and disregard the deeper aspects of their nature; "they take the most immediate and secondary causes for the primary ones, and thus become convinced more quickly and easily than others that they have found an indispensable basis for their doings" (*Notes from Underground* 17). Conscious men, however, have explored the aspects of their personality which other men usually ignore and have discovered the plethora of ugly passions which undergird even seemingly unremarkable actions. Dostoevsky demonstrates this reality in his novels, for the development of his characters is frequently driven by their realization of the subconscious passions which motivate them.

An example of such a character is Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's work *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov's development as a character is centered on his realization that his murder of Alyona the pawnbroker stemmed not from rational humanitarian concerns but from his uncontrollable need to be the Napoleonic man for whom no boundaries exist. Raskolnikov's ignorance of his true motivations for his crime contributes to much

of his psychological turmoil, and his recognition of his deep desire for power greatly contributes to his eventual peace.

In this way, the psychology of both thinkers relies on the assertion that man's behavior is often the result of desires which form below his conscious motivations. The criminal commits his crime because of these fundamental subconscious desires, particularly the drive for destruction. As pointed out, Nietzsche demonstrates the criminal's especial desire for destruction with his phrase the "bliss of the knife" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 39). The criminal receives bliss from the murder which he commits, for it fulfills his deep passion for annihilation. A similar desire is displayed by Dostoevsky's criminal. Men such as Petrov and Akulka's husband are motivated by a desire for blood which underlies other superficial motives for their crimes. In fact, in his study of the role of consciousness in Dostoevsky's novels, Orwin claims that, for Dostoevsky, the passion for destruction in the criminal is a "bliss" found in overcoming one's conscious self and committing a horrific deed (166). The joy of such an act is recognized by both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky and indicates the basic pleasure which human beings have in destruction. Man cannot fully understand this joy; therefore, he is easily overcome by it and moved to acts of criminal devastation.

This drive for destruction is also seen in the criminal's desire for freedom from society. Both men comment that crime demonstrates a certain amount of independence from society, for in this act, the criminal undermines the order of society, defying the rules set up for the security of its members. In this way, the criminal exhibits his passion for destruction, for he threatens to destroy society's structure and the moral system which exists for the security of its members. Regardless of the conscious motives of the crime

which the criminal asserts, the drive for destruction in the form of the “bliss of the knife” and the transgressing of societal limits are the foundational motive of the criminal’s actions.

The Criminal’s Challenge to Society

Because he expresses his subconscious passions, the criminal often represents human instincts more accurately than do members of society. The criminal’s crime is an honest expression of his nature; while horrible, it represents the same repressed desires possessed by all human beings, even tame members of society. For this reason, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky acknowledge that the criminal possesses admirable qualities which many members of society lack. Thus, according to both men, the value of the criminal comes from his honest exhibition of the complications of human nature and the challenge which this display poses to society.

Dostoevsky’s criminals particularly display this concept in their theater production, when the narrator comments on their unique display of the Russian spirit. The prisoners in Dostoevsky’s novel interpret the Russian spirit in an accurate manner, and they display joy in the midst of their pain and disorder. They suffer and hide behind false confidence, but each criminal still displays an element of joy and companionship while in prison. Dostoevsky, while never denying the disorder in the criminal’s nature, does not ignore the legitimate nobility which each criminal possesses. In this way, Dostoevsky’s portrayal of the prison reminds society of the intricacies of human nature. Human life and personality are not simple and any attempt to make them so is a denial of authentic life.

Nietzsche also recognizes the challenge which the criminal presents to society, and he explicitly connects his own view on the criminal's worth with Dostoevsky's:

Nearly all crimes themselves express at the same time characteristics which should not be missing in a man. Dostoyevsky, not unjustly, said of the inmates, of those Siberian brethren, that they formed the strongest and most valuable part of the Russian people. If the criminal is a badly nourished and perverted plant in our country, our social conditions are dishonest (NF 10[50]).

In this fragment, Nietzsche points out that the criminals described by Dostoevsky contradict the dishonesty of society through their representation of qualities which, although hypocritically denied by most men, are still an essential part of human existence. Thus, in "The Pale Criminal," Nietzsche upbraids the "judges" of society, condemning their rejection of their own drives and their hypocritical denunciation of the criminal (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 38). In this way, the judges of Nietzsche bear an uncanny resemblance to the Pharisees whom Jesus criticizes in His Sermon on the Mount, asking "why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 5:3). Like the Pharisees, members of society deny the unsavory desires of their hearts and mercilessly destroy men strong enough to assert the reality of their nature. Nietzsche and Dostoevsky both identify this tendency of society to condemn the criminal and combat this hypocrisy with the assertion that the criminal represents a much-needed reminder of the subconscious realities of human existence.

However, the initial, honest, and justified defiance of the criminal's action is frequently lost as the criminal faces the internal and external consequences of his crime. Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky acknowledge that, although crime results from an honest expression of one's subconscious, the drives which motivate this action are not

completely positive, for they result from disorder in a person's nature. As Clowes illustrates in her analysis of morality in the thought of both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, neither author advocates indiscriminate affirmation of one's drives. On the contrary, "whatever freedom there is to be had comes in the process of apprehending and knowing oneself as one is and in the process of self-transfiguration" (Clowes 128). Thus, the criminal, having denied conventional morality, now has the responsibility "to make sense of [his] subliminal nature and apprehend the specific ground for moral integrity on [his] own" (Clowes 128). Freedom is not a wholesale indulgence of one's ugliest desires; instead it entails taking responsibility for oneself and ordering one's passions according to the law of one's own nature.

Neither Nietzsche nor Dostoevsky claim that the criminal has taken complete responsibility for his drives or completed the process of ordering them. As seen in Dostoevsky's description of the wickedness of the prisoners and in Nietzsche's legitimate critiques of the criminal in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Twilight of the Idols*, the criminal, in committing his crime, has not cultivated his passions but enslaved himself to them. While this mindset can be superior to the hypocrisy of the herd, it does not bring the true freedom which attends the ordering of one's drives.

Furthermore, the confusion in the criminal's nature cannot be completely attributed to society's dishonesty and hypocrisy. The drives and passions are not external forces, and both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky refuse to blame the environment for the disorders present in individual men. In *Notes from a Dead House*, Dostoevsky makes this claim in his discussion about the hospitals, asserting that men often blame the environment for their internal disorders (182). He also speaks against this tendency in

the Underground Man's assertion that man, even if he lives in a perfect civilization, will always be subject to certain irrational desires for suffering and destruction (*The Underground Man* 20-6). Man's internal disorder will not be fixed by his environment; he therefore must take responsibility for his own personality.

Nietzsche is also clear about man's ultimate obligation to his self; in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he emphasizes the inherent individuality of each man, and in *Twilight of the Idols* he speaks of the negative consequences of allowing this individuality to rage uncontrollably (*Schopenhauer as Educator* 127; *Twilight of the Idols* 82-3). Because man is responsible for his own development, he is also responsible for his drives. This responsibility entails molding his drives for a productive purpose. Every person must work to master his passions so that he is not overcome by them, for it is only in ordering these passions, that a person can cultivate the unrealized true self which transcends a man's conscious and subconscious self. One's subconscious drives must be made subservient to one's true self, and any man wishing to cultivate this lofty self must order his drives accordingly.

For Dostoevsky, this concept is more complicated, for, due to his attraction to Christianity, he asserts that no man is able to develop himself without supernatural aid. However, he does claim that each man is responsible for his own sin; no one can say that his wickedness is a product of the environment, for his evil truly comes from within himself. Man is responsible for his depravity, and he is culpable for the passions from which this wickedness stems. Dostoevsky explores this concept in *The Brothers Karamazov* as Dmitri struggles to understand the driving sensuality which plagues each Karamazov brother. Dmitri asserts that the sensuality contained in the Karamazovs "stirs

up storms in [the] blood” (108). This storm is “fearful because it’s undefinable” and its presence is undeniable, even in his gentle and holy brother Alyosha (*The Brothers Karamazov* 108). Dmitri laments that such passions make man “too broad,” for contained in man is the potential for extreme baseness and nobility (108). Man’s heart is a battlefield, and he is constantly faced with the choice between developing his passions or succumbing to them.

The passions described by Dmitri are similar to the drives identified by Nietzsche, and the need for development is clear in both cases. In fact, Clowes points out that Dostoevsky’s description of the Karamazov sensuality corresponds to Nietzsche’s idea of self-formation. She describes the raw potential of the Karamazov passion, stating that “in its naked form, it is a brutish display of violence, lust, and power... yet it is also the source of life and energy” (Clowes 129). Like Nietzsche, Dostoevsky recognizes that this raw force will produce life only if one “recognizes its potentially constructive form and transforms it through a process very like sublimation” (Clowes 129). Thus, Smerdyakov’s restless desires destroy him, while Alyosha’s ability to cultivate his passion results in “a transfigurative morality” which corresponds to Nietzsche’s Dionysian celebration of life (Clowes 130). In this way, Dostoevsky claims that the subconscious passions, when ordered properly, are capable of producing life which stands firm amidst confusion and suffering. The idea of self-formation and the production of life is also a key element of Nietzsche’s philosophy, especially in his descriptions of self-creation in *The Gay Science* and the energy of the Dionysian man in *Twilight of the Idols* (*The Gay Science* 290; *Twilight of the Idols* 98-100). For both men, one’s subconscious passions have the potential to contribute life and energy to one’s

existence. Thus, one's drives to do not have to be overwhelming; instead they can be transformed, bringing one closer to the fuller existence of one's true self.

However, this process involves deep pain. The suffering of characters such as Dmitri rightly exemplifies Nietzsche's claim that "all becoming and growing – all that guarantees a future – involve pain" (*Twilight of the Idols* 100). The struggle of mankind against himself is one which necessarily involves self-destruction; however, this discomfort is made endurable because of the purpose which imbues the entire process. This purpose gives man strength, for it provides him with assurance amidst his suffering. Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky claim that that is important for man to identify an underlying purpose for his existence. Nietzsche himself claims that "if we have our own why in life, we shall get along with almost any how" (*Twilight of the Idols* 3). A defined purpose enables man to undergo harsh suffering, for it fills his life with meaning.

From this realization comes the assertion made by both writers that man cannot truly live while adhering to a nihilistic philosophy. In his article on the similarities between the two authors, Lavrin also recognizes this, stating "both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky saw, each in his own way, the threat of nihilism and they gave unmistakable warnings to the whole of their age" (168). Dostoevsky does this by discrediting the nihilism of characters such as Kirilov in *Demons* and Ippolit in *The Idiot*, showing that such a philosophy is completely unsustainable and results only in death. According to Lavrin, "Dostoevsky... saw the only possible final solution in those religious-ethical values which he derived from his own conception of Christ" (Lavrin 168). In this way, Dostoevsky's adherence to the gospel directed his search for purpose and meaning amidst human suffering.

Nietzsche's rejection of nihilism is less straightforward because of his unrelenting challenges to conventional ideological, metaphysical, and moral structures, especially those of Christianity. In his study on the nature of Nietzsche's nihilism, Solomon claims that Nietzsche recognized that his destruction of Christian morality would result in a form of nihilism (Solomon 102). However, "nihilism is not a doctrine which Nietzsche endorses but a symptom which he attacks" (Solomon 102). According to Solomon, Nietzsche denies all values in order to create "a foundation for a very different set of values" (Solomon 203; Schact). Thus, even in his complete rejection of conventional morality, Nietzsche opposes nihilism by creating a new standard for nobility. In this way, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky ultimately discard nihilism and firmly assert that, in order to face the undeniable pain of existence, man must believe that there is a purpose which permeates life with meaning. For both authors, a key element of this purpose is the development of man's subconscious desires; this process gives meaning to man's deep and often horrifying drives and gives him the confidence that these passions can be transformed and recreated.

In this way, the criminal's drives, which motivate his terrible crimes, have the potential to be transformed through diligent development. When the criminal takes responsibility for his crimes and accepts the internal nature of his passions, he takes the first step toward the ordering of his drives. This gives the criminal a purpose which will enable him to endure the hardship which attends the development of his self.

However, although the criminal possesses the definite potential for development and strength, both authors the existence of criminals who reject the burden of their individuality out of laziness and fear. For both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, the criminal's

weakness or strength flows from his ability to accept and order his drives. Nietzsche differentiates between the weak criminal who rejects the madness through which he committed his crime and the strong criminal who accepts his drives and thus begins his organization of them. In this way, Nietzsche believes that strength lies in taking responsibility for these drives and shaping them in a productive manner. Dostoevsky also makes this distinction, comparing the weak man, who views his drives as an external force of which he is a victim, and the strong man, who internalizes the passion which motivated his crime and makes it his purpose. Thus, Dostoevsky also sees that strength lies in the ability to take responsibility for one's crime and one's drives.

The criminal who rejects his passion ultimately forfeits his ability to handle the psychological implications of his disorder. Because of his failure to commit to the development of his passions, the weak criminal receives society's punishment while already struggling to honestly evaluate himself and identify his purpose. On the other hand, the strong criminal, having accepted his passions, receives society's condemnation with a sense of purpose which grants him more self-assurance and composure than the weak criminal.

Society and the Criminal

Thus, the criminal undergoes his punishment having already either rejected his drives or begun the process of mastering them. In both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche's analyses, the choice which the criminal makes concerning his passions directs his response to society's oppression. According to Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, society oppresses criminals by taking away their freedom. Nietzsche claims that the herd oppresses the criminal out of envy and fear. The criminal's assertion of individuality

threatens the physical and mental stability of the herd; therefore, the herd persecutes the criminal, denying him the mental isolation which would allow him the freedom to develop his drives. Dostoevsky asserts that society takes away the freedom of the criminal because it believes that the disorder of the criminal's nature has destroyed his humanity. Society is afraid of the criminal's damaged passions and imprisons him in an attempt to avoid their negative effects. While these analyses of the herd's motivation for oppression differ slightly, both authors indicate that society feels threatened by some quality in the criminal, for the criminal, weak or strong, represents an aspect of human nature which society has striven to conceal and ignore. The result of society's bitterness is the physical restriction of the prison atmosphere which leads to the mental constraint of the prisoner.

Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky recognize that freedom is necessary for the successful development of individuality and assert that the removal of freedom in the prison system hinders the development of the criminal's individuality. However, this individuality is an essential element of human nature and should be developed by all people. Nietzsche demonstrates this need in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, when he describes the three metamorphoses of the spirit (25-28). The second metamorphosis, the lion, closely corresponds to the criminal, for both possess the drive for destruction which allows them to gain a measure of independence from society. Nietzsche further asserts that the lion requires the freedom of the desert, which allows for individual development apart from the accusations and persecutions of society (26). This concept is similarly explored in *Notes from Underground*, when the Underground man claims that man's "own free and voluntary wanting... is that same most profitable profit... because of

which all systems and theories are constantly blown to the devil” (25). Above physical comfort and psychological security, man ardently desires to assert his own will outside the imposed expectations of society. A system which completely controls its members does not allow for any sort of individuality and therefore will only hinder a man attempting to develop his self.

Thus, in placing the criminal in the prison system, society has obstructed the criminal’s assertions of individuality. This is seen primarily in Dostoevsky’s account, which connects the loss of choice in the prison to society’s denial of the criminal’s will and personality. According to Dostoevsky, the ability to assert one’s will is the primary means of asserting one’s personality and therefore stifling the will hinders one’s display of individuality. Without the ability to express individuality, the criminal cannot develop his passions and is therefore weighed down by the disorder in his nature. This is what Nietzsche means when he claims in *Twilight of the Idols* that society causes the degeneration of the strong man into a criminal (86). Taking away his freedom, society removes the space needed by the criminal to progress to the third metamorphosis of the soul. In this state, it is extremely difficult for the criminal to think and act as an individual. Thus, any attempts to develop one’s individual drives are thwarted.

The Weak Criminal

Most criminals respond to these conditions in weakness, crumbling under the weight of their own drives and society’s disapproval. Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky’s analyses of the weak criminal assert that the criminal compromises his own independence by deferring to the values of society. However, the strength originally asserted in the crime of the weak criminal is threatened even before he encounters the persecution of

society, for he removes his primary source of strength by rejecting his drives. According to Nietzsche, the weak criminal is tormented by the conflict between the horror he feels at his crime and his desire for independence from the herd. He is ashamed of his crimes and has rejected the opportunity to develop his drives; however, he is mortified by this shame, for he still desires the strength and independence originally entailed by his crime.

Dostoevsky also recognizes the internal tension of the criminal, claiming that the weak criminal's conflict stems from the inevitable guilt attending his crime. To avoid this guilt, he has refused to accept responsibility for his crime. Ultimately, though, he cannot completely deny the weakness in his nature from which it originated.

When this already existing turmoil encounters the punishment inflicted by society, the weak criminal feels completely vulnerable. Furthermore, when society denies any nobility or humanity possessed by the criminal, it renders itself unable to lend the criminal any real aid in his struggle with himself. Instead, it merely reminds the criminal of his rejection and asserts that he is completely worthless. Nietzsche articulates this with the word "chandala," asserting that society wants the criminal to feel his "terrible cleavage... from everything that is customary or reputable" (*Twilight of the Idols* 88). Dostoevsky gives a clear picture of society's ostracization of the criminal, describing how the prison authorities deny the prisoners' humanity and incur their hatred and bitterness.

In response to society's persecution, the criminal, trying to avoid the pain of rejection and his feelings of worthlessness, demonstrates a dependence on society, thereby rejecting the original implications of his crime. According to Nietzsche, this occurs when the criminal, who suffers mentally and physically because of society's

rejection, chooses to ignore his own individuality. In doing this, he attempts to return to the secure ignorance and laziness of the herd, which avoids rejection and suffering by denying the reality of individuality. Dostoevsky portrays a more aggressive criminal who displays a dependence on society through his desperate assertions of strength. In order to appear strong, the weak criminal attempts to conform to society's conception of criminality. Thus, he brags about all the terrible crimes which he has committed and initiates petty quarrels with the other prisoners. With these actions he hopes to be perceived by others as a criminal who possesses the necessary strength to defy society. However, by conforming to society's portrait of criminality, he ultimately displays a dependence on society's values which indicates a lack of true freedom.

Both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche describe a weak criminal who lacks individuality and rejects the potential freedom initiated by his crime. The weak criminal furthers the disorder inherent to the criminal's state by refusing to take responsibility for his actions and neglecting to develop the passions which it is impossible for him to deny. His cowardly course of action displays a denial of reality and an ignorance of true freedom. When faced with the persecution of society, the weak criminal, lacking true purpose and freedom, falls back on conventional morality and completes his deterioration. In this way, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky display a contempt for the weak criminal, for, while they disagree with society's view of criminality, they find little to emulate in the weak criminal's response to suffering and oppression.

The Strong Criminal

In the strong criminal, on the other hand, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky perceive an element of strength which resists conformity to society. The strength of such a

criminal comes from his internal assurance; the state of his personal drives is more important to him than his own comfort, and his strength flows from this internal sense of purpose. For this reason, he can accept the condemnation and punishment of society without fear or shame.

In fact, even before society's interference, the strong criminal shows a dedication to his drives which greatly contrasts with the weak criminal, who sees himself as the victim of his passions. He runs from the pain caused by his passion and refuses to accept the importance of his individuality. The strong criminal, on the other hand, displays his strength through his dedication to his internal development. Thus, according to Nietzsche, the strong criminal is still marked by an internal struggle, but this struggle is initiated by the criminal's acceptance of the motivation of his crime, indicating his desire to develop his drives despite the difficulty this process might entail. The strong criminal in Dostoevsky's novel displays a similar dedication to the passion which initiated his crime. Because he has accepted the reality of his nature, he faces society's reprimands with indifference and disinterested amusement. Taking responsibility for his action, he finds his purpose in his defining passion and therefore can undergo a great amount of suffering. Thus, in both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky's portrayals of the strong criminal, he is defined by a dedication to his personality regardless of its ugliness or the difficulty involved.

This dedication persists despite society's oppression. Because the strong criminal's dedication to his drives becomes his defining purpose, he has the strength to withstand society's assertions that he has lost his humanity and is completely worthless. The strong criminal knows that he is not useless, for he has accepted the responsibility of

cultivating the nobility and freedom present in his crime. He has not forgotten his humanity and therefore does not need society's affirmation to survive.

In this way, Nietzsche sees in Dostoevsky's portrayal of the strong criminal a reflection of his own conception of criminality. In his analysis on *Notes from a Dead House*, Konstantin Mochulsky comments particularly on the importance of Orlov's character, stating that the freedom from morality attained by Orlov represents a "Nietzscheanism before Nietzsche." Mochulsky's analysis of Orlov is quite accurate, for Orlov displays many of the characteristics of the strong criminal as perceived by Nietzsche. For instance, Nietzsche comments on the ability of a certain type of strong personality, as typified by the lion in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to "assume the right to new values" by destroying the morality of society (27). The lion's nature is characterized by an iron will which paves the way for the creation of new values. Such a man scorns the morality of the herd and feels no remorse for his actions. Dostoevsky's portrayal of the strong criminal Orlov corresponds to this personality. Orlov feels no pangs of conscience for his crime; when Alexander Petrovitch attempts to bring forth feelings of remorse in Orlov, he responds "with contempt and haughtiness" (*Notes from a Dead House* 56). Because of this disregard for society's approval, the narrator comments that he had "never in [his] life met a man of stronger, more iron character than he [Orlov]" (*Notes from a Dead House* 55). Orlov is a man free from the expectations of society and willing to turn his attention to the development of his own values.

Failure of the Strong Criminal

However, like Nietzsche, Dostoevsky recognizes the ultimate deficiency of the strong criminal. The strong criminal does not live up to either man's ultimate view of strength

and nobility, for he is constrained by his imprisonment and the disorder of his nature. Because of society's influence, he cannot fully represent the childlike joy which is essential to human strength.

Important to both men is the strength of the childlike man, who can better handle pain and suffering because of his authentic joy in life. For this reason, Dostoevsky often represents goodness and redemption through children or childlike characters. For example, he ends his novel *The Brothers Karamazov* with a scene exploring the joy of Alyosha and the children with whom he has become good friends. Despite all their sufferings, the children and Alyosha are filled with joy. Alyosha attributes their happiness to the joy of childhood and asserts that "there is nothing higher, or stronger, or sounder, or more useful afterwards in life than some good memory, especially a memory from childhood... That alone may serve some day for our salvation" (*The Brothers Karamazov* 774). He claims that in the midst of wicked actions which indicate their deterioration, the children will be sustained by the simple joy of adolescence. In this way, Dostoevsky displays a confidence in the power of the child to provide the strength for nobility even in the depths of depravity. This power is also shown in the redemptive strength of characters such as Elena in *The Insulted in the Injured* and Sonya in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky incorporates the strength of childhood into *Notes from a Dead House*, for the moments that give the narrator the most hope and love for his fellow criminals are their displays of childlike joy in their production and Christmas celebrations.

Nietzsche's idea of strength also relies upon the innocence and energy of the child. For example, his concept of the Dionysian man relies upon the vitality of childbirth

(*Twilight of the Idols* 99-100). Furthermore, the only metamorphosis of the soul capable of true creation is the childlike soul (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 27). Both men sense that the child represents true strength in his potential for original creation and new life. True strength aims for the new beginning typified in the child; with rebirth and transformation will come the innocence and forgetfulness of the child. This ability to transform oneself in the mist of disorder and turmoil constitutes true strength and is the ultimate goal of the development of one's passions and drives.

The strong criminal, despite his independence from society, does not achieve the full freedom and rebirth of the child, for he is stunted by his struggle to maintain his dignity throughout society's oppression. Mochulsky's analysis of *Notes from a Dead House* emphasizes this struggle undergone by each criminal to preserve their human dignity. He asserts that "outside of freedom there is no personality. As a result, the prisoners are so sullen and morbidly irritable; all their efforts are directed to the salvation of their own person, to the preservation of their human dignity" (Mochulsky 191). Nietzsche identifies the same problem in his analysis of the criminal in *Twilight of the Idols*, commenting on the "subterranean hue" acquired by the criminal as he continually wards off the temptation to compromise his dignity.

The strong criminal achieves this dignity better than the weak criminal, for he is not marked by vanity, desperate displays of strength, or a return to the herd mentality. But in the end, both Orlov and Pavlov, despite their moments of free amusement, are generally marked by the same gloomy sullenness as the other prisoners. Alexander Petrovitch comments that Orlov is a "wild beast;" his strength, far from giving him a childlike joy, has caused him to rejoice in physical pain and mental weakness. He finds

amusement in the deterioration of the other prisoners and earnestly desires to undergo physical punishment (*Notes from a Dead House* 55-57). In these desires there is little trace of the joy of creation or human companionship which attends the best moments of the prisoners; there is only a desire for destruction. Orlov may be committed to his own drives, and he may possess the mental strength to face society's punishment with dignity. However, he possesses the subterranean hue described by Nietzsche, for, ultimately, his personality does not have room for complete expression and development. This is the fate of the strong criminal; despite his faith in himself and freedom from the cares of society, his strength is wasted maintaining this independence and is not spent on his own transformation or rebirth. He is the Catilinarian man whose strength, while a noble contribution to the dead atmosphere of the prison, ultimately falls short of the strength of Caesar. Thus, in Dostoevsky's novel, the strong criminals "come to a bad end," perishing in the effort to affirm their drives (*Notes from a Dead House* 106).

In this way, Dostoevsky's portrayal of the criminal exemplifies the psychological observations made by Nietzsche concerning the difference between the strong and the weak criminal and the role of the drives in the criminal's fate. Both men recognize the nobility of which the criminal is capable when he accepts the reality of his passions and works to affirm them. They also affirm that this nobility contributes positively to human nature, giving an accurate portrayal of man's subconscious desires. However, they ultimately declare that the criminal is doomed for failure, for the lack of freedom in the prison requires him to use all of his strength opposing society rather than giving style to his personality.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, this project arose from a desire to understand Nietzsche's feeling of affinity with Dostoevsky, an author whom he admits contradicts many of his firm convictions. Selecting *Notes from a Dead House*, a novel by Dostoevsky with which Nietzsche felt a particularly deep connection, I pointed out the ways in which both authors similarly conceive of the criminal and demonstrated the deeper kinship between the two authors through these parallels.

In their depiction of the criminal, both philosophers emphasize the influence of the subconscious passions on human behavior. Criminality stems from an uncontrollable expression of these subconscious drives which indicates the criminal's break from the empty morality of society. Thus, through his crime, the criminal declares his independence from society and displays his potential for true freedom. However, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky recognize that the drives which motivate the criminal are unbridled and must be rightly ordered towards productive ends. This process is difficult and requires self-knowledge as well as psychological strength. Therefore, most criminals respond in weakness, denying the true motives of their crimes and rejecting the reality of their subconscious selves. Because of this, they continue to define themselves according to society's standards and lash out at those around them with vengeful malice. In this way, they forfeit the freedom asserted in their crimes. However, while this is the psychological state for most criminals, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky also recognize the rare existence of the strong criminal, who is defined by his drives and does not shy away from his subconscious passions. Instead, he begins the process of ordering his drives and

realizing his full personality. This process gives him a sense of purpose which enables him to face society's oppression with strength and dignity.

In this way, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky recognize that humanity is deeply influenced by desires which they do not fully understand and cannot control. Members of society deny this reality, pretending that they are superior to the criminal and free from the passions which drove his crime. They live a life of ease, free from the risk and pain of developing their personalities. However, because society rejects the psychological suffering which attends the exploration of the subconscious regions of the human mind, they also forfeit the full dignity of human nature. For this reason, Zarathustra cries that he wishes society possessed the madness which overtakes the criminal, and Alexander Petrovitch asserts that the prisoners in Siberia are better men than those outside the prison. Because the criminal has expressed the hidden depths of his personality, he possesses the potential for the authentic life rejected by members of society. The strong criminal represents a partial realization of this potential, for he, unlike the weak criminal, allows his drives to become a part of his identity. In this way, his strength is possible only when he accepts the reality of his subconscious drives. Thus, both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, despite their differences, connect strength with an affirmation of the subconscious and weakness with the poor self-knowledge which attends laziness and fear.

However, while the criminal is capable of displaying a certain type of strength, he ultimately does not embody Nietzsche or Dostoevsky's complete ideal for humanity. Both authors assert that true strength is exemplified in the character of the child, who represents the lighthearted joy of creation. Because of his ability to create, the strong

man is characterized by his carefree attitude and his joy even amidst suffering and destruction. While the strong criminal displays a similar independence from society in his destruction of its laws, he lacks the true psychological freedom to form new values out of his destruction. Instead, he wastes his mental energy affirming his individuality against a society which completely denies his humanity. Therefore, he is characterized by psychological exhaustion and cannot attain the lightness of the truly strong man.

Thus, for both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, true strength consists in ordering the destructive desires of the subconscious towards a creative purpose, producing in man a lighthearted joy at the vibrant potentiality of existence. In their psychology of the criminal, both men recognize the reality of certain types of men who possess aspects of this strength without exemplifying the whole. Such men present a challenge to a society which rejects all attempts at true strength, for they remind its members that authentic life can only be found when both beauty and suffering are fully affirmed. The strong criminal threatens society, for he demands space for the development of his personality with no regard for the fear and discomfort of those who have buried their deepest drives. In this way, although his affirmation of his subconscious self does not result in complete freedom, it depicts an aspect of human nature which cannot be denied and is necessary for the fullness of human life.

In this way, when Nietzsche read *Notes from a Dead House*, he perceived that Dostoevsky, like himself, affirmed the importance of man's subconscious and the potential of the criminal to challenge society's denial of this reality. Like Nietzsche, Dostoevsky recognized the complex psychological state of human beings and in his novels depicted the suffering which attends self-knowledge. However, amidst this

inevitable pain, there is also the potential for strength and vitality, even amongst those whom society has deemed worthless. Such men can serve as a challenge to meaningless conventions, encouraging members of society to seek after the individuality which they have buried deep within themselves. These similarities constituted the deep kinship which Nietzsche felt with Dostoevsky and elicited his deep respect for Dostoevsky's work. Nietzsche saw that Dostoevsky, like himself, refused to give into the soul-sucking constraints of society, instead affirming the individual's search for authentic life.

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