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## ***Crime and Punishment,* Napoleon and the Great Man Theory**

One of the most hotly debated notions throughout Europe in the first decades of the nineteenth century was the idea of ‘the great man.’ The cause, of course, was the dominating presence of Napoleon whose exploits and achievements many compared to those of Caesar and Alexander the Great. The debate did not diminish in importance during Napoleon’s exile or after his death. Quite the contrary, the status of Napoleon as modern history’s ‘great man’ or extraordinary individual increased after his death, kept alive not only by many of his supporters but even by those who were ambivalent about his achievements and character. In 1828, seven years after Napoleon’s death, Goethe, a titan himself, aptly expressed his age’s idealization of Napoleon in one of his conversations with his friend, Johann Peter Eckermann.

Napoleon was the man! Always enlightened, always clear and decided, and endowed with sufficient energy to carry into effect whatever he considered advantageous and necessary. His life was the stride of a demigod, from battle to battle, and from victory to victory. It might well be said of him, that he was found in a state of continual enlightenment. On this account, his destiny was more brilliant than any the world had seen before him, or perhaps will ever see after him.<sup>1</sup>

Stendhal’s *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), one of the great novels of the nineteenth century – a work that influenced Tolstoy’s portrayals of the battles at Austerlitz and Borodino –<sup>2</sup> opens with a famous paean to Napoleon. “On the 15th of May, 1796, General Bonaparte made his entry into Milan at the head of that young army which had shortly before crossed the Bridge of Lodi and taught the world that after all these centuries Caesar and Alexander had

1 Johann Peter ECKERMANN and Frédéric Jacob SORET, *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*, trans. John Oxenford (London, 1850), vol. 2, p. 40.

2 “The best avowed of all Tolstoy’s literary debts is, of course, to Stendhal.” Isaiah BERLIN, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: Simon, 1953).

a successor. The miracles of gallantry and genius of which Italy was a witness in the space of a few months aroused a slumbering people". In the 1840s, especially in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, we encounter theories of history in which 'the great man' takes on a much more active role in shaping events, even changing the course of history itself. Napoleon becomes a giant who not only makes history, but also uses it as a means for realizing his own genius.<sup>3</sup>

Dostoevsky was conversant with these ideas regarding Napoleon's 'achievements' as well as Russian literature's take on the French emperor – the poems of Pushkin and Lermontov, among others. What most engaged Dostoevsky (and Tolstoy) was *the revival* of the great man idea in the 1860s, occasioned by the appearance of Napoleon III's *The History of Julius Caesar*, in which actions of great men are justified by the god-like nature of their vision and personality.<sup>4</sup> Implicit in Napoleon's III's *History* was a celebration of Napoleon and a justification of his deeds.<sup>5</sup> It was this contemporary valorization of Napoleon that

- 3 Although the idea of the great man was attacked many times in the second half of the nineteenth century – by Herbert Spencer for one – it never lost currency, and in the twentieth century it found proponents, perhaps most important among them, the American philosopher, Sidney Hook, in *The Hero in History*. See Herbert SPENCER, *The Study of Sociology* (Appleton, 1896). For a detailed discussion of those opposed to the idea of the great man, see Sidney HOOK, *The Hero in History* (Boston: Beacon, 1943), pp. 42-118. For a summary of the history of 'great man' theories and an analysis of these theories, past and present, see Leonid GRININ, "The Role of an Individual in History: A Reconsideration", *Social Evolution & History*, 9, 2 (2010), pp. 95-136. There has been little written about the great man theory in relation to Russian literature. Most of this work has understandably focused on Tolstoy, who explicitly addresses the question in *War and Peace*, especially in the second epilogue.
- 4 For a later idealization of Napoleon, Napoleon as an example of 'the higher man' (Übermensch), see Paul F. GLENN, "Nietzsche's Napoleon: The Higher Man as Political Actor", *The Review of Politics*, vol. 63, 1 (2001), pp. 129-158. "Napoleon therefore exemplifies how greatness is possible in a time of spiritual weakness and widespread cultural decay" (*Ibid.*, p. 131). Nietzsche describes Napoleon as the "ideal of antiquity incarnate" and "*the noble ideal as such made flesh*". See Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 16. The references to Nietzsche are not meant to establish connections between Raskolnikov and Nietzsche, which has been done many times before, but to clarify the implications of some of Raskolnikov's disjointed musings. As Shestov asserted, "Much that is obscure in Dostoevsky is clarified in Nietzsche's work": Lev SHESTOV, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 147.
- 5 Dostoevsky certainly read the famous preface of Napoleon III's work. For a good discussion of the reviews of the book, both in Russia and abroad, and its possible refraction in *Crime and Punishment*, see Федор И. ЕВНИН, "Роман Преступление и наказание", in *Творчество Достоевского* (Москва: АН СССР, 1959); с. 153-157. See also Molly W.

was to prove so influential in both Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's decision to make the idea of the great man central to the novels that they were writing concurrently: *Crime and Punishment* and *War and Peace*.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky incorporated a devastating critique of the myth and legend of Napoleon as the modern era's greatest man by presenting a double perspective on Napoleon as a great man – one explicit the other implied. Raskolnikov explicitly embraces the arguments in favor of Napoleon as a great man, whereas the implied author, Dostoevsky, subjects them to varying degrees of deflationary irony. First, Dostoevsky undercuts the conclusions of Raskolnikov's ideas by incorporating numerous mistakes and inconsistencies into his hero's discussion of his article on crime. He subjects to a devastating critique Raskolnikov's other ideas on Napoleon, ideas that radically contradict those in his article and that form the real basis for his commission of the murder. It is clear from Dostoevsky's letters that he planned on this strategy from the very conception of his hero. When he was preparing in September of 1865 to write a story about a crime – not yet a novel about a crime – Dostoevsky wrote a letter to the editor of the *Russian Messenger*, M. Katkov, outlining his plan and characterizing his hero's ideas. "A young man expelled from the university, a bourgeois by origin and living in extreme poverty, from *light-mindedness* and from *unstable notions*, has surrendered to several *strange half-baked ideas* which are in the air" (*ИСС* 28<sub>2</sub>; 136 – italics mine – *G. R.*).

Whatever Dostoevsky planned for Raskolnikov, there are those, Bakhtin for example, who argue that Dostoevsky does not attempt to undercut the independence and coherence of his hero's point of view, rather that the hero is engaged in an active dialogue with the author. This fact that this position can even be argued shows how differently Dostoevsky and Tolstoy work in their attempt to subvert the myth and legend of Napoleon. Whereas Tolstoy, especially in the second half of *War and Peace*, openly denigrates Napoleon, portraying him as unattractive, vain, clownish, corrupt, and historically insignificant,<sup>6</sup> the narrator of *Crime and Punishment* makes no explicit statement

WESLING, *Napoleon in Russian Cultural Mythology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 124, 139; Mikhail BAKHTIN, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 90-92.

6 Tolstoy's takedown of Napoleon has been subjected to a great deal of criticism. Dmitri SOROKINE – *Napoléon dans la littérature russe* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1974), p. 253 – notes that nowhere earlier than Tolstoy can one find in Russian culture such a systematic denigration of Napoleon, in which the desire to destroy the myth of Napoleon is so open. See АНТОН П. ЧЕХОВ, *Полное собрание сочинений*, в 20 тт., т. 15, (Москва:

about Raskolnikov's ideas concerning Napoleon and great men: his views have to be inferred from the distance that separates him from the hero. In fact, Dostoevsky does not disagree with his hero about the existence of great men, but his understanding and evaluation of their 'accomplishments' differ radically from Raskolnikov's. Furthermore, for Dostoevsky, lurking behind Napoleon, Raskolnikov's great man, are other great men: Peter the Great and Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, to understand the myth of Napoleon and the great man in *Crime and Punishment*, we obviously need to examine Raskolnikov's published article – or rather the summary that he presents to Razumikhin and the judicial investigator Porfiry Petrovich – but also Raskolnikov's other important statements about Napoleon in the novel as well as his actions done in presumed imitation of his hero. It is also helpful to contextualize Raskolnikov's ideas in terms of both nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of the great man, specifically the views of Carlyle, Tolstoy, and the twentieth-century American philosopher, Sidney Hook, the main proponent of the great man idea in the twentieth century. Hook identifies four areas that must be addressed in any discussion of the great man, areas which will provide a framework for our discussion of Raskolnikov and Dostoevsky: 1) the hero's historical influence 2) his field of endeavor 3) his cult status as an object of hero-worship;<sup>8</sup> 4) and his moral rectitude or lack thereof.

ГИХЛ, 1944-1951), с. 259-260; Robert Louis JACKSON, "Napoleon in Russian Literature," *Yale French Studies*, 26 (1960), p. 114; and especially Дмитрий С. МЕРЕЖКОВСКИЙ – Л. Толстой и Достоевский (Москва: Наука, 2000), с. 213-253 – ruthless take-down of Tolstoy's depiction of Napoleon.

7 I have confined myself to *Crime and Punishment* first because it is the only major novel of Dostoevsky where the great man idea is expressed explicitly and with reference to Napoleon. Also most of the references to Napoleon in the other major novels are facetious (General Ivolgin's stories), especially in *The Idiot*. For studies dealing with the image of Napoleon in Dostoevsky's other works, see Николай Н. ПОДОСОКОРСКИЙ, "Наполеон и 1812 год в творчестве Ф. М. Достоевского", in В. И. ЩЕРБАКОВ (под ред.), *1812 год и мировая литература*, (Москва: ИМЛИ им. А. М. Горького, 2013), т. 6, с. 319-365; Николай Н. ПОДОСОКОРСКИЙ, "Картина наполеоновского мифа в романе Братья Карамазовы", in Т. А. КАСАТКИНА (под ред.), *Роман Ф. М. Достоевского Братья Карамазовы* (Москва: Наука, 2007), с. 98-114.

8 For a study that is specifically devoted to the cult and legend of Napoleon in France, see especially Sudhir HAZAREESINGH, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta, 2005).

## Part One: Raskolnikov

### 1. *Historical Influence*

Although Raskolnikov harbors doubts about whether he is or could be a Napoleon, he never doubts the existence of great men in the past, their continued existence in the future, and their determining role in historical events. Raskolnikov's great men are Sidney Hook's 'event-makers'; individuals who are *uniquely* responsible for shaping and changing history. Raskolnikov considers such event-makers not accidental phenomena but as individuals arising from a natural process. "One thing is clear, that the ordering of people's conception, all these categories and subdivisions [of extraordinary and ordinary men], must be quite correctly and precisely determined by some law of nature. This law is yet unknown, of course, but I believe that it exists and one day may be known" (263; *HCC* 6; 202).<sup>9</sup> Great men play a role in a teleological process. There is an end toward which humanity is progressing; great men are the means by which nature realizes its beneficent goals. Like Hegel, Raskolnikov sees great men as the agents of a historical process.

### 2. *Hero Worship*

The worship – or veneration – of Napoleon during his reign and many years after his death was common among progressive youth all over Europe. In *War and Peace*, Andrei Bolkonsky wants to be a Russian Napoleon and imagines his military career replicating the most famous of Napoleon's battles and heroic gestures, which were celebrated in poetry, art, and legend. When Raskolnikov tells Porfiry Petrovich, the judicial investigator, that he does not consider himself a Napoleon, Porfiry is dismissive.

"But, my goodness, who in our Russia nowadays doesn't consider himself a Napoleon?" Porfiry suddenly pronounced with horrible familiarity. There was something particularly clear this time even in the tone of his voice. "Might it not have been some future Napoleon who bumped off our Alyona Ivanovna

9 The English translations from *Crime and Punishment* are taken from Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Crime and Punishment*, tr. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1993). The citations will appear directly in the text followed by the pagination from volume six of *HCC*.

with an axe last week?" Zamyotov suddenly blurted out from his corner (265-266; *ПСС* 6; 204).

Raskolnikov's objection sounds hollow given the Napoleon-emulation among Russian youth. Hero-worship can manifest itself in various forms. Carlyle observes it primarily among common men, who find meaning and direction in a man whom they can venerate and to whom they can relate as though he were a god in possession of a higher truth. This passive worship permits the hero to use the masses in effecting historical change. The Grand Inquisitor, who in some ways seems a follower of Carlyle,<sup>10</sup> assumes that what men want most of all is something, and even more, *someone* to worship, someone to whom they can bow down, someone whose truth they can recognize and embrace, relieving themselves of responsibility and freedom. But one rarely finds nineteenth-century novelistic heroes who identify with the masses or see sacrifice for a hero as the deepest expression of their being. The form of hero-worship that most concerns Porfiry – and, by implication, Dostoevsky – is hero-worship that manifests itself not as submission, but as emulation; not as the desire to worship, but as the desire to be worshiped.

In the ambitious nineteenth-century hero, idol-worship involves the desire to emulate the hero and to achieve the same kind of glory and adulation. On one hand, we see Andrei Bolkonsky trying to emulate his hero, Napoleon, by modeling his behavior on Napoleon's reported actions on and off the battlefield – at Toulon, at the Arcola bridge, and in the field-hospital in Jaffa. On the other, Andrei dreams of becoming a Napoleon, absolutely victorious in battle and bathed in Napoleonic fame and glory.<sup>11</sup> Raskolnikov plans, in imitation of Napoléon, to take the "first steps."<sup>12</sup> If he is brave, daring, and steadfast all

10 For a discussion of the fascistic implications of Carlyle's theories, see Ilya STAMBLER, "Heroic Power in Thomas Carlyle and Leo Tolstoy," *The European Legacy Toward New Paradigms*, vol. 11 (2006), pp. 742-743.

11 These signpost icons of Napoleon's career, the subject of famous paintings, played a key role in inspiring Andrei Bolkonsky's actions in *War and Peace*. For the importance of these events in the iconography of the time, see Steven ENGLUND, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 109.

12 As SOROKINE (*Napoléon dans la littérature russe*, pp. 244-245) correctly observes, Raskolnikov focuses on the initial stages of Napoleon's career ("les débuts du grand homme") and he points out many similarities between the young Napoleon and the young Raskolnikov. See also Shoshana M. KNAPP, "The Dynamics of the Idea of Napoleon in *Crime and Punishment*," in Alexej UGRINSKY, Valija K. OZOLINS, and Peter HAMILL (ed.), *Dostoevski and the Human Condition after a Century*, (New York: Greenwood, 1986), p. 38; МЕРЕЖКОВСКИЙ, с. 255.

will come to him. He will achieve fame and glory. The masses will set him “on a pedestal” and “worship” him (*ITCC* 6; 200). He will be “crowned” (*uvenchali*, *ITCC* 6; 400).” The aphrodisiac is power and adulation.

### 3. *Great Men and Their Fields of Endeavor*

The impoverished Raskolnikov hardly hopes to become a great military and political leader like Napoleon. He understands that the traditional path of great men – political and military leadership – is not open to him. His intellectual solution is to redefine or expand the nature of achievement and success in the manner of Carlyle, privileging culture as an appropriate ‘field of endeavor’ for a great man.

Most of Carlyle’s heroes are not political and military leaders – although they can also be famous for their political and military accomplishments; they are great because they have understood or intuited fundamental spiritual or religious truths and were able to communicate them to the rest of mankind. For Carlyle, spiritual truths make history. So it is not surprising that writers (poets and men of letters) and religious figures (prophets and priests) figure prominently among his heroes: Dante, Shakespeare, Johnson, Rousseau, Burns, Muhammad, Luther, and Knox. Others have gone still further than Carlyle, as does Raskolnikov, proposing scientists, inventors, and thinkers as creators of history.

Raskolnikov needs to liken the cultural geniuses he chooses as examples – scientists, spiritual leaders, and lawgivers such as Lycurgus, Solon, Muhammad, Kepler, Newton – to great military leaders, who could be disruptive, even destructive, to achieve their ambitions. He argues they have to be so in order to overcome the resistance of those who defend the status quo and to advance humanity to its historic destiny.<sup>13</sup> Raskolnikov’s examples are significant. Since Raskolnikov needs to advance intellectual genius as one of defining attributes of the great, he designates their contributions – and potentially his own – as ‘new words’.

In short, I deduce that all, not only great men [*velikie liudi*], but even those who are a tiny bit off the beaten track – that is, who are a tiny bit capable of saying something new – by their very nature cannot fail to be criminals – more or less, to be sure... I agree that it is somewhat arbitrary, but I don’t really insist on exact numbers. I only believe in my main idea. It consists precisely in people being di-

13 The idea that Napoleon had advanced humanity, as Raskolnikov implies, was a commonly held view in the nineteenth century.

vided generally, according to the laws of nature, into two categories: a lower or, so to speak, material category (the ordinary), serving solely for the reproduction of their own kind; and people proper – that is, those who have the gift or talent of speaking a *new word* in their environment (260; *ITCC* 6; 200).

All that Raskolnikov needs, then, to qualify for being one of the elite is the ability to say a new word. He does not need to kill, conquer, command; he needs only to make an important cultural contribution. He does not need – at least at first – to make the greatest of all intellectual contributions, he needs only to say something out of the ordinary, and by virtue of that extraordinary word he would have the same right as Newton and Kepler to kill anyone who tried to prevent that word from becoming known.

Dostoevsky's strategy here is going to be, first, to undercut Raskolnikov's arguments by the examples that he gives as great men and the claims he makes for them. Raskolnikov cites Kepler, Newton, Lycurgus, and Solon as examples of extraordinary cultural figures who would have been justified in eliminating hundreds of ordinary human beings in the interest of preserving and forwarding their discoveries and legal reforms. But what contribution did Kepler make that would justify his removing those preventing his discoveries from being known? What evidence can Raskolnikov give that Kepler's revision of the theory about planetary orbits changed human history and significantly advanced it toward its preordained goals? The same questions arise concerning Newton's theories. Why are the laws of gravity – and the further refinement of Kepler's idea on the motional relationship of physical bodies – so instrumental, in Raskolnikov's view, in advancing the goals of human history? Just whose lives were changed before 1866 by Newton's discoveries?

Dostoevsky is not an enemy of science and would be the last to deny that both Kepler and Newton made important contributions to knowledge. Obviously, he disagrees with Raskolnikov's idea of giving permission to scientists, however great their discoveries, to eliminate those who stand in their way, and not only because mediocre scientists might overestimate the value of their contributions. Rather, Dostoevsky does not think that scientific discoveries radically change human spiritual, cultural, and religious developments. This is clear from his position on Darwin, whose theories of evolution were especially influential when Dostoevsky was writing *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky is not unwilling to acknowledge the truths of natural selection, even human evolution, but Darwin's ideas are relevant only to man's physical nature; they do not address what is most important: his spiritual and religious reality, his soul.

By the way: think about the current theories of Darwin and others about the descent of man from the apes. Without going into any theories, Christ directly declares that in man there exists in addition to an animal world, a spiritual world. And what of it, it does not make a difference from what man descended (it is not at all explained in the Bible how God fashioned man out of clay, which he took from the earth), but it does say that God *breathed into man the breath of life*. It is terrible, though, that man through his sins can turn back into an animal (*ITCC* 29; 85).

On the surface, Raskolnikov makes a more persuasive argument about the greatness of law-givers. One could hardly imagine Kepler and Newton eliminating ordinary people who were actively preventing their discoveries from being known. By contrast, radical changes in the laws could easily evoke opposition, the suppression of which might require violent methods. Raskolnikov's theory about legal change rests on his view of ordinary people's innate resistance to change. Since the masses by their nature will oppose all change, those who are in favor of change, the benefactors and founders of mankind, must by definition be lawbreakers and as lawbreakers, ultimately, great shedders of blood. In fact, it may be their duty to shed blood.

Raskolnikov's theory about extraordinary lawgivers, like his theory about extraordinary scientists, is similarly undermined by the examples he gives. He maintains that great lawgivers are criminals (by virtue of transgressing the old law) and have few compunctions about shedding blood when they think it necessary to attain their ends. But Lycurgus and Solon hardly lend support to his thesis. According to Plutarch, Lycurgus, a legendary ninth-century BCE king responsible for significant legal reforms in Sparta, ruled by *common consent*. The changes he made were gradual and accepted by the people. His reign manifests none of violent change and bloodshed that Raskolnikov describes as necessary for the abolition of old laws and their replacement by new ones. The same can be said about Solon, a real historical figure, whose reign was characterized by gradual change and relatively little violence. Late in life he gave up his kingship to travel for ten years so his laws could not be changed.

Muhammad and Napoleon seem much closer to what Raskolnikov means by blood-shedding lawgivers. But how convincing to Dostoevsky's readers would Raskolnikov's example of the blood-spilling Muhammad be as a benefactor of humanity, given Orthodox Russia's frequent wars with Islamic Turkey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Further Napoleon, a great shedder of human blood, is in many ways the antithesis of the lawmaker that

Raskolnikov hypothesizes. Napoleon was not a transgressor of old laws, nor was he formulator of new laws that were violently opposed by the people. He was the inheritor of the laws of the French Revolution. In the mind of his supporters, he put an end to many of the Revolution's excesses and consolidated the best of the Revolution's legal accomplishments. For some, especially on the left, he was even seen as a conservative force, who consolidated his power by making concessions to Catholicism, the bastion of conservatism in nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>14</sup>

Since Raskolnikov is no Napoleon, and can never hope to become a great military and political figure, he must argue that cultural figures can also be great men and that their contributions are important enough to give them the right to eliminate obstacles to making their ideas known. But the examples he cites – the ones Dostoevsky gives him – simply do not support this theory. The scientists he alludes to did not shape *history*, the ancient lawmakers he cites did not shed blood, Muhammad, as a lawgiver, did not advance humanity to its goal, and Napoleon was more of a codifier of the law than a transgressor of it. Even if Raskolnikov's examples were valid, they cannot be flattering to Raskolnikov. He is not a Napoleon, but neither is he a Newton, Solon, or Muhammad. What new word does he possess that can compare with any of his great men of culture?<sup>15</sup> He does not offer anything resembling a 'new word', not to speak of history-changing cultural contributions. On his trial run to the pawnbroker, he tells himself the whole business "is not serious at all. I'm just toying with it, for the sake of fantasy. A plaything [*igrushki*]. Yes, a plaything, if you like" (4; *II*CC 6; 6). He has a fantasy about a new word, a theory about crimes that are permitted to those who have a new word, but obviously he himself has not yet come up with one.

14 Indeed many on the left (Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant) saw Napoleon as a despot who had betrayed the liberal ideas of the Revolution. For how this view is reflected in the early poetry of Pushkin, see Temira PACHMUSS and Victor TERRAS – "The Shift of the Image of Napoleon in the Poetry of Aleksandr Puškin," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 5 (1961), p. 315.

15 Merezhkovsky (МЕРЕЖКОВСКИЙ, с. 284) argues that Raskolnikov, though weaker than Napoleon in action, is greater than Napoleon in thought. But Raskolnikov's new word, his achievement, turns out to be that he has discovered a realm where no word exists or can exist – another Merezhkovskian paradox.

#### 4. *Greatness and Morality*

The word 'great' usually connotes largeness and influence not goodness or spirituality. No one would argue that Alexander the Great, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great were moral exemplars. For Hook, evil men can be 'great' if they are event-makers. But for those for whom the word great (*velikii*) has positive moral or ethical connotations, no evil man can be great. Can a *hero* really be evil? H. G. Wells refused to regard Napoleon as a hero because he disapproved of him morally. Raskolnikov states that great men do not have permission to kill for the sake of their personal pleasure or only to further their ambitions. They need a moral justification to transgress: "It by no means follows from this, incidentally, that Newton should have the right to kill anyone he pleases, whomever happens along, or to steal from the market every day" (260; *ICC* 6; 199). Raskolnikov insists that great crimes can be committed only if the contributions of the ones who commit them are of commensurate benefit. But when we look at what Raskolnikov says about Napoleon elsewhere in the novel, it becomes clear that his humanitarian views do not reflect his deepest inclinations, needs, and desires. Dostoevsky presents Raskolnikov's theory partly as a rationalization, a cover for more egoistic desires of self-assertion: a desire for fame and glory, and perhaps most of all, a lust for power. Raskolnikov's confession to Sonia, in which he attempts to explain the motivation of his murder of the pawnbroker and her sister, presents a very different understanding of the great man, especially Napoleon, and even the idea of 'a new word'. Dostoevsky shows that Raskolnikov actually worships Napoleon not as a man who shed the blood of millions of innocent victims to advance the cause of humanity, but as someone who was concerned only with himself and with power, and someone who could care less whether he was enhancing human progress or not.<sup>16</sup> What is great about Napoleon in Raskolnikov's eyes is that he let nothing come in his way and was willing to remove any obstacle in his path without thinking or thinking only about himself.<sup>17</sup>

The idea of hero-worship is closely related to the idea of glory and fame. Raskolnikov creates a theory with stark contradictions about the relationship between greatness (accomplishment) and glory: the recognition one receives for monumental achievements. The really great are often reviled in their own times and worshiped by the masses only afterwards. They achieve posthumous

16 As Napoleon famously said to Metternich: "A man like me doesn't give a fuck for the lives of a million men".

17 Glenn argues, against the grain of much Nietzsche scholarship, that Napoleon fell somewhat in Nietzsche's favor only because he wasted much of his last years trying to serve, trying to be the servant of the French people.

fame. But Raskolnikov's greatest desire is to achieve and enjoy the rewards of fame and glory in his own lifetime. If he had been successful, he says to his sister, he would have been crowned. Here he is clearly referring to Napoleon who enjoyed the rewards of his great success while alive and was crowned emperor while still a young man.

The idea of personal aggrandizement does not sit well with the idea of contributions to human progress, especially when Raskolnikov admits to Sonia that at times he was not thinking of humanity at all but only about himself (419; *IICC* 6; 321-322). In Raskolnikov's mind, however, Napoleon's every step was calculated to achieve power, domination, and mastery over others:

No, those people are made differently; the true *master*, to whom all is permitted, sacks Toulon, makes a slaughterhouse of Paris, *forgets* an army in Egypt, *expends* half a million men in a Moscow campaign, and gets off with a pun in Vilno; and when he dies they set up monuments to him – thus *everything* is permitted. No, obviously such men are made not of flesh but of bronze! (274; *IICC* 6; 211).

Everything that should not be permitted is, in effect, permitted for one who succeeds. People not only do not condemn Napoleon, they set up altars to him, including, of course, Raskolnikov. All is forgiven for those who succeed – and not only while they are living but long after they are dead. They are worshiped *despite* what they did. Raskolnikov worships Napoleon precisely *for* what he did, because Napoleon did not care about the destruction he left in his wake. He was above morality, above good and evil. Napoleon was great because he just did what was in his self-interest. In the end, Raskolnikov cannot act that way. But that is precisely how he would like to act, because that is the only way he can be a great man. He wanted to kill without casuistry, to avoid subtle justifications for murder; he wanted to kill without any compunctions whatsoever: “Oh, how well I understand the ‘prophet’ with his saber, on his steed. Allah commands – obey, ‘trembling creature! He’s right, the ‘prophet’ is right when he sets up a first-rate battery across a street somewhere and blasts away at the innocent and the guilty, without even stooping to explain himself!” (275; *IICC* 6; 212) The Prophet is not right because might makes right, but because he does not even think in moral categories. We are already far from Raskolnikov's arguments about the right to kill if it is in the greater interest of humankind. The ‘first step’ has replaced ‘the new word’. Raskolnikov maintains that he does not need to be a Napoleon to be instrumental in historical change; one could be a Kepler or a Newton. But it turns out that Raskolnikov is not really interested in histori-

cal change. His thinking is anti-historical: one can be a great man at any time independent of historical context. All one has to do is emulate Napoleon in his amoral egotism. This is an attractive alternative for Raskolnikov because he does not have to do anything on a grand scale. All he needs to do is to take a first step, to prove to himself that he can kill without casuistry and without pangs of conscience, to prove to himself that he is above good and evil. All else will follow.

In his article, Raskolnikov sees justification for self-striving in the benefit that will accrue to humanity. But there is something much deeper in Raskolnikov that despises the humanitarian motive as detrimental to his goal: amoral self-realization. This is why Raskolnikov hates the pawnbroker. He has chosen her to justify the murder that he is planning. He has chosen her as a way of reducing the guilt that he would feel after the murder. Her murder, therefore, represents the ultimate casuistry. He is a louse, just like the old woman, because he needed a justification for killing her: "I resolved to observe all possible justice in carrying it out, weight, measure, arithmetic: I chose the most useless louse of all" (273-274; *ITCC* 6; 211). Just as bad as the casuistry was the calculation, the simple arithmetic – and also the aesthetics. To let aesthetics get in the way of a Napoleonic experiment shows weakness. Nietzsche argues that the act of power is inherently aesthetic; it cannot create barriers – power creates beauty.<sup>18</sup> But the major point for Raskolnikov is that Napoleon would not have made a fuss about the pawnbroker. There would have been no calculation or casuistry. According to Nietzsche, Napoleon lived by instinct, "not by slow and careful calculation". The great man is self-confident.<sup>19</sup> Raskolnikov attempted to follow the example of his master.

I was terribly ashamed when I finally realized (somehow all at once) not only that he would not shrink, *but that it wouldn't even occur to him that it was unmonumental... and he wouldn't understand at all what there was to shrink from?* [...]. So I, too... stopped thinking about it... I throttled her... following the example of *my authority...*" (415; *ITCC* 6; 319 – italics mine – G. R.).

The point that Raskolnikov is making – and it is probably the most important point – is that the monumentality of the deed should not have been that important for Raskolnikov's project. Yes, the fame, glory, power, the universal worship are attractive but one need not worry about them since they are the inevitable consequences of being a Napoleon. Once one kills without guilt, without moral considerations, the essential groundwork for future success has been

18 GLENN, p. 142.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

established. Killing her would not have been any different than leaving five hundred thousand troops to die in the Russian campaign. They are equal manifestations of Napoleonic will and power. Here Raskolnikov prefigures a Nietzschean observation from *The Antichrist*, where the exaltation of power is lauded as the ultimate human aim: “What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness”.<sup>20</sup> There should have been nothing wrong in choosing the pawnbroker. The pawnbroker, however, turns out to be a problem precisely because he carefully and calculatingly chose her.

Raskolnikov thus conceives of his murder as an experiment or test.<sup>21</sup> Passing the test, killing without compunction and guilt, will give him proof of his extraordinary status. This is the idea that Raskolnikov believes is really new and original.

“Then I realized, Sonya,” he went on ecstatically, “that power is given only to the one who dares [*posmeet*] to reach down and take it. Here there is one thing, one thing only: one had only to dare! And then a thought took shape in me, for the first time in my life, one that nobody had ever thought before me! Nobody! It suddenly came to me as bright as the sun: how is it that no man before now has dared or dares yet [*ne posmel i ne smeeet*], while passing by all this absurdity, quite simply to take the whole thing by the tail and whisk it off to the devil!.. I wanted to dare [*osmelit'sia*], and I killed... I just wanted to dare [*osmelit'sia*], Sonya, that's the whole reason!” (418; *ITCC* 6; 321).

To show who he really is, to really dare, Raskolnikov needs to kill. A self-willed killing for its own sake is the test of true daring, of extraordinariness, of Napoleonism. The object of the murder should be of absolutely no concern.<sup>22</sup> Raskolnikov needs to kill, but only when he wakes up the next morning will he learn definitively whether he is a Napoleon or a louse. He wakes up a louse. He knows he is a louse not so much because of the blunders he made in the execution of the murder – although that is part of it – but because he is even more obsessed with the pawnbroker after the deed than before. Was he, and not the pawnbroker, the real victim? The pawnbroker haunts him both when awake and when asleep. He cannot escape her. In his own estimation and by the

20 Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *The Twilight of the Gods* and *The Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 2.

21 Some have argued that “The need to test is to fail it.” KNAPP, p. 38.

22 Merezhkovsky (МЕРЕЖКОВСКИЙ, с. 256) holds that morally speaking “crawling under the bed” and the taking of Toulon should have been one and the same thing.

standards which he himself established, he has clearly not stepped beyond. He seems less liberated and powerful after the murder than before.

Merezhkovsky has argued that Raskolnikov had crossed beyond good and evil as a result of his experimental murder but was constitutionally unable to bear the terrible burden of his newly acquired freedom. But a more plausible explanation is that Raskolnikov's obsession with the pawnbroker obscured the proof that he had actually succeeded in his endeavor, especially in the main point: he killed an innocent in his way and felt almost no remorse. Whereas Raskolnikov is haunted by the pawnbroker, he hardly thinks of Lizaveta, her half-sister. He is never visited by her in his dreams. The explanation that is most often given is that Lizaveta is an unintentional victim. She was not supposed to be at the apartment at the same time as Raskolnikov. Raskolnikov got there late. In terms of the great man theory, it is strange that Raskolnikov does not think more about Lizaveta because, in contrast to the pawnbroker, she provides the kind of proof that Raskolnikov wanted concerning the extraordinary state he might achieve after the murder: killing a perfectly innocent person and feeling nothing. Raskolnikov relates to her murder in the same way he imagines Muhammad and Napoléon reacting to the sacrifice of thousands of innocents. They do not react, they do not even think about those they kill and trample on. Raskolnikov has difficulty killing the pawnbroker both before and after her murder, that is in his dreams. He had little difficulty killing Lizaveta, even though at the moment that he killed her he noticed a resemblance to Sonia Marmeladova. The face of the crone haunts him, the face of the innocent does not. After his confession to Sonia, he never mentions Lizaveta again. Raskolnikov kills her as though she were an obstacle in his path and then he forgets about her as *his* Napoleon surely would have done. "Poor Lizaveta! Why did she have to turn up there!... Strange, though, why is it that I almost never think of her, as if I hadn't killed her". Lizaveta is, of course, mentioned a good deal in Raskolnikov's conversations with Sonia, but he never seems particularly disturbed that he killed her in contrast to his much more conflicted feelings about the pawnbroker. In fact, if the pawnbroker did not keep coming back to haunt him, he might have used the killing of Lizaveta as proof that he had indeed gone over to the other side, that he could kill without feeling pangs of consciousness, without suffering, without even thinking about what he had done. For Raskolnikov it is Napoleon's indifference that is the real proof that he is a great man.<sup>23</sup>

23 According to GLENN (pp. 143-144), Nietzsche interpreted Napoleon's indifference to the people he unintentionally harmed in pursuit of his own goals as essential to his strength of personality. The great man is not interested in promoting the interests of others, not inter-

## Part Two: Dostoevsky

It is perhaps possible to dismiss Raskolnikov's Napoleonic ideas as the product of his psychological and physical condition: his extreme poverty, the difficult situation of his family, his 'light-mindedness', and his propensity to adopt certain 'half-baked', fashionable notions characteristic of 'progressive' thinking. But it would be unwise to assume that Dostoevsky disagrees with everything that Raskolnikov says and thinks about Napoleon and great men. He does not. Engaged in an implicit dialogue with his hero on all aspects of the great man theory, Dostoevsky, one can infer, believes that great men create historical change, that cultural leaders have brought about some of history's most momentous transformations, and that ideas are paramount, far more important than military victories or political coups.

### *1. Peter, the Russian Great Man, and Cultural-Historic Change*

One might say that for Dostoevsky Peter the Great was Sidney Hook's Lenin. Writing during World War II, Hook viewed Lenin as a leader who radically changed the world. Had he not lived, the history of the world would have been considerably different. Dostoevsky could not make that statement about Peter the Great in terms of *world* history, but he could say much the same thing about Peter's role in *Russian* history. Historians still argue about Peter's role in the significant changes which occurred during his reign and which influenced Russia's development for many years after, but Dostoevsky had no doubt about Peter's historical and cultural importance and influence. Nor did many Russian thinkers of Dostoevsky's time; they may have disagreed on whether the changes that Peter brought were good or bad, but not on their significance. Pushkin was one of the earliest writers to manifest an ambivalent attitude toward the monumental changes brought about by Peter. He admired the transformations that Peter initiated, the new directions in culture, and Russia's growing influence on the world stage. At the same time, he recognized the tragic consequences of Peter's vision of empire for the Russian people.<sup>24</sup>

ested in 'accomplishing' anything. WESLING (p. 125) points out that Russian writers often called attention to Napoleon's contempt for humanity – and it is true Raskolnikov's contempt for ordinary people is unmistakable in his article and elsewhere – but it is Napoleon's indifference that Raskolnikov most admires, his not even paying attention.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed discussion of the changing attitudes toward Petersburg in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see the studies of N. P. Antsiferov – Николай П. Анциферов,

One of Dostoevsky's responses to Raskolnikov's great man theory in *Crime and Punishment* is Petersburg itself: Peter's legacy and Peter's descendants. For Dostoevsky Petersburg is clearly Russia's own autochthonous great man. Both poet and novelist are most concerned not with actual changes Peter made, but with the change in direction he initiated, the new path he laid down, because that is what turned out to be the most consequential effect of his reign. In the 1860s, Dostoevsky became more concerned with the rise of a class of deracinated progressive intellectuals, like Raskolnikov, who were rationalistic and materialist in their thinking, the product of the Western turn initiated by Peter. Peter was also responsible for an even more pernicious problem: the rift between Russia's educated and uneducated classes. Peter had created the foundation of a rationalistic state based on formalistic structures and institutions that were destroying Russian religious culture, which Dostoevsky believed would provide salvation not only for Russia but for the whole world. Right on the first pages of *Crime and Punishment*, we are introduced to the city's problems: alcoholism, disease, prostitution, unemployment, destitute families, uprooted peasants, deracinated intellectuals, and atrophied bureaucracy. But the city's truest and logical byproduct is Raskolnikov. He is the embodiment of the legacy of the great man. The novel is a response to that legacy.<sup>25</sup>

Dostoevsky completely disagrees with Tolstoy on the importance of culture, intellectuals, and ideas in the creation of historical change. In the second epilogue of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy argues that it is unbelievable that ideas could be the cause of hundreds of thousands of men (Napoleon's armies) venturing thousands of miles east to enter Russia and then the troops of the Alliance traveling thousands of miles west to enter France.<sup>26</sup> It was flattering for intellectuals

*Душа Петербурга* (Петроград: Брокгауз и Эфрон, 1922) and *Быль и миф Петербурга* (Петроград: Брокгауз и Эфрон, 1924).

- 25 For a discussion of Raskolnikov's ironic relation to Peter the Great, see, for example Gary ROSENSHIELD, *Challenging the Bard: Dostoevsky and Pushkin, A Study of Literary Relationship* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), pp. 150-183. By contrast, Merezhkovsky (МЕРЕЖКОВСКИЙ, с. 219) obsessed all his life with Napoleon, saw Napoleon as the source and cause of everything, including Russian literature. He was bound to see the influence of Napoleon on Russia as greater than that of Peter the Great. Peter woke up only the body of Russia, Napoleon its soul. Russia had a dual response to Napoleon: the War of 1812 in universal historical action and *Crime and Punishment* and *War and Peace* in universal historical thought. Napoleon's greatest achievement was *War and Peace* and *Crime and Punishment*, for which he was mainly responsible.
- 26 Because Tolstoy scouts the idea of the great man as responsible for historical change, it has not received much attention even from those who have dealt in detail with Tolstoy's theory of history in *War and Peace*. See especially Gary Saul MORSON, *Hidden in Plain View*

to believe such nonsense but no reasonable person who looked at the evidence could give credence to such absurdities.

Like Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky believes in the power of the word. Words matter because ideas matter. Dostoevsky's portrayal of the word is multifaceted. The new word that Raskolnikov most often speaks of is the word that advances mankind to its ordained goal, a word that leads to significant, if not radical, historical change. Peter was driven by such an idea. Peter's city came into being because of his word and idea. Many of the ills attending Russia since Peter's reign flowed from that word. Peter changed history because – at least according to Dostoevsky – his idea led to a transformation of Russian culture. The epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, specifically Raskolnikov's last dream, explicitly presents the idea as the main catalyst of historical change. Ideas are not only the main cause of radical changes, the conflict of ideas and ideologies has the potential to bring on an Armageddon.

But these creatures were spirits, endowed with reason and will. Those who received them into themselves immediately became possessed and mad [...]. They gathered together into whole armies against each other, but, already on the march, the armies would suddenly begin destroying themselves, the ranks would break up, the soldiers would fall upon one another, stabbing and cutting, biting and eating one another (547; *IICC* 6; 419-420).

Dostoevsky paints two scenarios of drastic cultural-historic change in *Crime and Punishment*. One is that engendered by a great man: Peter, by whose will and intelligence a whole country is hurtled, often by violent means, onto a very different and errant historical path. The other change occurs not by the will and intelligence of a great man, but quite the opposite, by hundreds, perhaps thousands of would-be extraordinary individuals, little Napoleons, who are absolutely convinced of the truth of their “new word” – and no one else's – who in a struggle for power engage in an internecine war resulting in the death of almost all but a few: those without such ideas. The scenarios are, however, genetically related. At least in the case of Russia, the soil from which the germs of will and intelligence – and pride and certitude – were generated, was prepared by the great man. The little Raskolnikovs of the dream in the epilogue, just like the innumerable little Goliadkins of *The Double*, are all the inevitable children of the great man, reduced or debased sons of Peter. *Crime and Punishment*

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Isaiah BERLIN, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: Simon, 1953); Jeff LOVE, *The Overcoming of History in War and Peace* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004).

shows that *the idea* of the great man in the minds of the many may be far more dangerous than the actual presence of the great man himself. Napoleonism, the idea of the great man, as Porfiry understands it, is more dangerous than Napoleon himself. The dream in the epilogue shows that the worship of the idea of the great man even more than the worship of the great man himself – constitutes a real and present danger not only for Russian society but for the world, as it harbors the greatest possibility of radical cultural-historical change.

## 2. *Hero-Worship, Egoism, and the Annihilation of Personality*

Carlyle argued that man's need for a hero was essential for heroes to arise. Dostoevsky is arguing that the emergence of a great man exacerbates an already parlous situation; it reinforces the desire among us for a great man and inspires many to emulate him. The great man is responsible for his numerous imitations partly because great men actively encourage the creation of their own cult. The cult feeds the legend, which represents the great man's fame among the public after his death. Pretenders to greatness understand cult. Tolstoy can parody Napoleon because he does not think that he created historical change; Dostoevsky takes the idea of the great man seriously because he believes that both great men and their worshipers pose great danger to society. Most of all, he believes in the danger of their legacies – their legend as against their cult.

Although both Dostoevsky and Raskolnikov believe that great men exist, they differ radically regarding great men's 'accomplishments', their legacies, and hero-worship. Whereas the 'humanitarian' Raskolnikov believes that the strivings of great men lead to mankind's advancement to its ordained goal, Dostoevsky undercuts, as we have seen, the accomplishments of some of Raskolnikov's extraordinary men respecting major historical change (Kepler, Newton, Lycurgus, Solon). Moreover, he disputes that the changes that great men initiate or for which they are ultimately responsible lead to the betterment of mankind. The changes that Russia's own home-grown, indisputably great man, Peter, initiated led to alienation, dehumanization, and a potentially fatal division in Russian society.

We have seen that Raskolnikov has two entirely different interpretations of the great man. In the discussion of his article he focuses on the great man's contributions to human progress; elsewhere he is obsessed with the great man's attainment of power for its own sake, most often, at the expense of others. Raskolnikov's quest for amoral self-aggrandizement, which is fostered by the Napoleon of his imagination, is again not directly criticized by the narrator.

Rather Dostoevsky's criticism of Raskolnikov's amoral Napoleonism rests on the religious and moral view of self he develops through the characterization of Sonia Marmeladova. Raskolnikov's ideal of the great man focused solely on self-aggrandizement is presented as the antithesis of the positive ideal, Christian self-abnegation. We can find the propositional key to this positive ideal in a statement that Dostoevsky made over his first wife's coffin as he was writing *Notes from the Underground*:

Masha is lying on the table. Will I ever see Masha again? To love another person as oneself is impossible. The law of personality ties us to the earth. The *I* prevents it. Only Christ could, but Christ was a perpetual, eternal ideal, to which every person strives and, by the law of nature, must strive. Yet, after the appearance of Christ as *the ideal of man in the flesh*, it became clear as day that the highest and final development of personality must reach the point (at the end of one's development, at the very point of the attainment of the ideal) that man finds, recognizes, and is convinced in every fiber of his being, that the highest use that a man can make of his personality, of the complete development of his self, is, as it were, to completely annihilate his *I*, to give it over completely to all and everyone wholly and selflessly. This is the greatest happiness. The law of the *I* merges with the law of humanism, and in their fusion, both the *I* and the *all* (clearly two extreme polarities), mutually destroy each other for the sake of the other, and at the very same time each individually achieves the highest degree of their individual development (*ITCC* 20; 172).

Sonia, conceived as an embodiment of a Christian ideal, becomes part of the author's response to Raskolnikov's Napoleonism. Raskolnikov says that she considers herself as nothing (*ni za chto*) (408; *ITCC* 6; 312) that she "destroys" or "annihilates" her personality for the sake of others. Sonia understands, perhaps more than anyone else in the novel, how deeply Raskolnikov's Napoleonism has taken root in his mind and soul. She witnesses the strange amalgamation of power morality and absolute egoism that Raskolnikov ecstatically embraces: his belief that those who pursue their own self-interest without regard for others will be worshiped and rewarded by the very people upon whom they trample.

What most disturbs Raskolnikov about Sonia, something that makes him intentionally torment her, especially in the scene in which she reads to him from the Gospel, is that her actions not only represent a moral world entirely opposite to his own, but that her beliefs, her 'faith and law', give her strength to bear her burdens far better than he is able to bear his own. He is nearly de-

stroyed by his faith and law (his Napoleonism), whereas she is strengthened by hers. Raskolnikov cannot comprehend how she has not already done away with herself. He does not understand the strength that ensues from the annihilation of the personality for the sake of others. And she continues to maintain that strength, accompanying Raskolnikov to Siberia and putting up with months of abuse.

One of the problems that Raskolnikov has, and it is a problem that faces most of Dostoevsky's major characters, is that his creator does not offer him a middle ground on which to work out his problems. Raskolnikov is an intellectual, and like his creator, will also remain so. In the epilogue's second chapter, Raskolnikov improves in body and spirit when he stops thinking – or at least stops becoming obsessed with the ideas that led him to kill the pawnbroker – but he will never be ready to just live, just feel. He needs another belief system, one that can replace all the demons of Napoleonism that led him to prison. He asks Sonia for her copy of Gospel and he wonders: "Can her convictions be my convictions now?" (550; *ITCC* 6; 421). Can he exchange the law of his personality (the absolute assertion of the *I*) for hers (the annihilation of the *I* in the interest of others)? Of course, that is not possible for Raskolnikov, as it is not possible for the majority of mankind, but striving to the goal is what is necessary. When Raskolnikov confesses to Sonia that he did not kill the pawnbroker, but that the pawnbroker killed him, he is saying these things not to absolve himself of responsibility, or to separate himself from the deed, but to indicate that he was trying to annihilate the part of his personality, the *I* that willed the deed. When he killed the pawnbroker he was attempting to kill the Napoleon deep within himself, that 'law and faith' that made the attempt possible in the first place, the antithesis of Sonia's Christ. This is why Dostoevsky thought that the murder was the first step in Raskolnikov's regeneration.

Dostoevsky also integrates Raskolnikov's symbolic bowing into the Napoleonic plot. Raskolnikov bows before Sonia's suffering. He bows down to the earth at the crossroads and before the common people. As Sonia implies, Raskolnikov needs to acknowledge his guilt before the people and to ask forgiveness of the earth that he has desecrated. These acts represent a supreme humiliation for Raskolnikov, who dreams of people bowing down to him, acknowledging his greatness and erecting monuments in his honor. But these acts can also be viewed as a necessary annihilation of egoism – not wholly successful – an attack, like the murder itself, against the 'law' of absolute egoism at the deepest level of his personality. After all, there is no reason for Raskolnikov to bow down to anyone, considering that *consciously* he does not think he has committed a crime. But some *unconscious* drive, against his conscious will and

intelligence, compels him to react against deep-seated egoistic drives for power and to “strive to an ideal to which every person strives and by the law of nature, must strive” (*IICC* 20; 172).

We have been dealing not with the real Napoleon but the Napoleon of Raskolnikov’s imagination. For Raskolnikov hero-worship provides a model and a goal. Napoleon is someone to emulate for he demonstrates the path (the first steps) to success. He also represents the goal: to achieve success and be the object of hero worship. Raskolnikov wants to be the one to whom the ordinary bow down – at best when he is still alive, but if not after his death. For Dostoevsky, the veneration of great men is inherently dangerous. The veneration of Peter the Great almost as a secular saint by many progressives had a deleterious effect on Russian society. Napoleon, or Raskolnikov’s Napoleon, was in danger of pushing not only Raskolnikov but a whole generation of Raskolnikovs, little Napoleons, down the wrong path.

Dostoevsky, however, found nothing intrinsically wrong with hero-worship, providing the ‘hero’ is worthy of worship, and for him there is no man other than Christ that deserves such worship. Whereas Hook argued that religious leaders were not event-makers, shapers of radical historical change, Carlyle considered the worship of Christ the “highest instance of Hero-worship”.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, both Dostoevsky and Carlyle maintained the giants of culture are the most important catalysts of historical change. Curiously, everything that applies to our current understanding of hero-worship, including some of Raskolnikov’s ideas, can be shown to validate Dostoevsky’s understanding of Christ as hero and the proper object of hero-worship. Bowing down can be a proper form of Christian humility and piety. This is how Sonia sees it. Moreover, bowing down is central to the Eastern Orthodox liturgy as expressed each day in the office of Vespers: “O Come, let us Worship and bow down before our King and God. O Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ, our King and God. O Come, let us worship and bow down to Christ Himself, our King and God”. Raskolnikov sees bowing as a form of humiliation, self-punishment for his abject failure. Yet unconsciously Raskolnikov is striving to achieve the Dostoevskian ideal of annihilation of the *I*.

The practices associated with hero-worship – adulation, emulation, and identification – manifest themselves quite differently when they are directed toward Dostoevsky’s implicit ideal: Christ. The ideal exists to encourage imitation. The attainment of the ideal, which can be realized only in heaven, is deification – becoming one with the ideal, with Christ. Raskolnikov’s version

27 CARLYLE, p. 18.

of hero-worship, in Dostoevsky's view, is distorted, if not perverted, by the germs of will, intelligence, pride, and ego, but it also may provide the foundation for a future transference. Raskolnikov needs to direct the impulses for adulation and imitation, which already have deep roots in his personality, toward more worthy ends (annihilation of the ego) and persons (Christ). The centrality of hero-worship for Dostoevsky's religious and ethical thought is confirmed by one of his most astonishing confessions, in a letter to N. D. Fonvizina from early 1854. Stating that there is nothing more beautiful, profound, sympathetic, intelligent, courageous, and perfect than Christ, he adds that "if someone proved to me that Christ was outside the truth, and that it was *actually* the case that the truth was outside Christ, then I would far prefer to remain with Christ than with the truth" (*ICC* 28; 176-177). The icon is more important than the idea. In light of Dostoevsky's devastating take-down of Napoleonism, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of Raskolnikov's hero-worship for Dostoevsky's own Christian project in *Crime and Punishment*.

The author of *Crime and Punishment* is in *dialogue* with his hero about all the important questions having to do with the great man. Unlike Tolstoy, Dostoevsky implies, along with Raskolnikov, that great men exist, that hero worship is an important cultural phenomenon, that culture and ideas effect significant historical change, and that Napoleonism has significant moral ramifications and consequences. Author and hero, however, disagree radically on the qualities and achievements of great men. Raskolnikov envisions two types of great men, the men he describes in his article whose achievements advance humanity to its goal, and the men in his meditations and confession to Sonia who exploit men for their self-aggrandizement. Dostoevsky undercuts Raskolnikov's notions about those advancing the cause of humanity by exposing the fallacies of his hero's arguments and by implicitly questioning the historical influence of the great men he chooses as examples. He further undercuts Raskolnikov's arguments by writing a Petersburg novel in which the untoward legacy of Russia's 'greatest man' is central throughout. Great men often do terrible things in their own times, but their legacy can be even more deleterious. Dostoevsky and the humanitarian Raskolnikov also agree on the importance of culture in effecting historical change but Dostoevsky sees the changes that Raskolnikov's cites, with the possible exception of Muhammad, as being insignificant in comparison to the enduring influence of Christ. Whereas both Raskolnikov and Dostoevsky are obsessed with hero worship, their heroes are diametric opposites. In Carlyle people worship great men because of the spiritual and religious truths that only great men are capable of revealing and articulating. But Dostoevsky's famous remarks to Fonvizina argue that the power

of the image (*simvol*) of the great man – and all the qualities that are associated with it – may be even more powerful and inspirational than the truth itself. In short, Dostoevsky does not at all dismiss Raskolnikov’s ideas about Napoleon – about historical change, hero worship, the power of culture, and the moral goals of humanity – he exploits them to his own ends, critiquing them while offering his own alternatives.

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