

**Being in Pain: The Phenomenology of Suffering  
in *Crime and Punishment***

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**Summer 2016**

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## **Being in Pain: The Phenomenology of Suffering in *Crime and Punishment***

Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) reveals Dostoevsky as an author deeply invested in the representation of consciousness through the negotiation of physical and psychological boundaries. To this end, the novel offers an understanding of the world through pain, vivifying psychological depth through corporeal suffering. The repetition of words such as “torment,” “anguish,” “oppress(ion),” and “pain” (*muchit'*, *toska*, *davit'* and *bol'*)—as well as others relating to pain (including *tiazhele*, meaning both painful and heavy, and *stradanie*, meaning suffering)—emphasizes the visceral qualities of suffering. These words occur in different forms roughly 200 times throughout the novel, resulting in about one reference to pain, torment, or suffering every two or three pages. Indications of suffering are manifest in the physiological symptoms afflicting the protagonist, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, who is, it seems, perpetually pale, sweaty, and feverish. His fainting spells and severe bouts of illness, prompted by a litany of psychological factors (thoughts, memories, and conversations), illustrate external manifestations of interior states of being. Though pain in the novel can wield a destructive power, distorting the narrative through its resistance to verbal language, it nevertheless retains a creative potential by shaping the ways in which characters, particularly Raskolnikov, experience their realities. The development of individual identity as founded on an interior experience of pain—a key means of differentiation between self and other—distinguishes *Crime and Punishment* as a novel invested in the phenomenological exploration of self.

Dostoevsky frustrates our attempts to attribute diagnostic causality to Raskolnikov's illnesses by withholding the details of the nature and origin of his sickness; the narrative suggests

an intimate relationship between constant mental anguish and the immanence of physical collapse, while never explicitly declaring a correlation. The repeated linguistic emphasis on painful sensations, which have no roots in physical damage or defect, constructs a relationship between interiority and exteriority: psychological, mental, and interior states of being are transmuted onto the body. Through pain, Dostoevsky enacts a disintegration of mind/body dualism, as emotions are experienced somatically. The body (specifically, pain) and the mind (conscious experience) are inseparable, constructing a relationship not grounded within a dualistic division.

This essay incorporates theories of pain and trauma in literature into a consideration of how pain affects both consciousness and language in *Crime and Punishment*. Pain has multiple effects on the narrative: it enacts a collapse of the boundaries between interiority and exteriority, and, when manifest in traumatic experience, it deconstructs language through its resistance to narration. More importantly, it structures the way Raskolnikov experiences what Martin Heidegger would call Being-in-the-World; the reality of his everyday experience is articulated through the language of pain, through descriptions of illness and injury, and through facial expressions which frequently connote the sensation of pain. In the novel, this sensation is presented as a sheer fact of existence, or what Jean-Paul Sartre (following Heidegger) would call “contingency.”<sup>1</sup> Because pain is an essential structure of consciousness, without purpose or meaning—that is, contingent—the painful body offers phenomenological insight into the conditions of such consciousness. Existence, for Raskolnikov, is an ineluctable cycle of illness, pain, and torment.

Ariel Glucklich’s exploration of ritualized pain in religious traditions offers a concise phenomenological framework for understanding pain: “pain is neither a simple biological

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<sup>1</sup> Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 356.

event—say, tissue damage—nor an idea. It occupies a space “in between,” a middle-of-the-road phenomenal position between the material organism and the mind ... To a large extent, then, the study of pain is the study of consciousness, or phenomenology.”<sup>2</sup> Glucklich’s insight on the “in between”-ness of pain offers a productive means by which to view Dostoevsky’s representation of this sensation in *Crime and Punishment*, which inhabits a space that is neither solely physical nor mental. Based on these nuanced understandings of how pain functions in the narrative, I propose moving beyond the tendency to attribute a solely religious—specifically Judeo-Christian—interpretation of the experiences of suffering and pain. While the theme of suffering as a test of faith necessary to achieve closeness with God is undoubtedly present in much of Dostoevsky’s work,<sup>3</sup> I suggest that pain acts a productive means of inquiry into the nature of conscious experience and the ability of painful, traumatic processes to resist narration. *Crime and Punishment* offers valuable insight into the nineteenth-century Russian novel’s investment in the everyday experiential aspects of life, and consequently into Dostoevsky’s understanding of the self as it relates to the external world. For Dostoevsky, pain is an essential medium through which the boundaries of self and other are negotiated. The suffering body, which relies on visual expression in its elicitation of sympathy, remains distinct from the actual felt-experiences of pain, which are necessarily private and internal. This distinction is critical to reinterpreting the representation of the psychological self in Dostoevsky as constructed through the experience of pain, rather than theological transcendence.

It is useful at this point to clarify the terminology. Pain and suffering are related terms, though they function to different ends within the novel. The former refers to the physiological

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<sup>2</sup> Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Several fairly obvious examples include the Job intertext in *The Brothers Karamazov*, which figures into one of the elder Zosima’s homilies, the recurring references to the story of Lazarus in *Crime and Punishment*, and Prince Myshkin’s innocent, Christ-like suffering in *The Idiot*.

experience of pain in the body, not necessarily accompanied by physical damage; in *Crime and Punishment*, pain rarely has a physical locative origin. Following Elaine Scarry, we might call this “felt-experience”; words such as “throbbing,” “beating,” “crushing,” and “burning” all express pain’s physical dimensions, demonstrating the many aspects and manifestations of painful feeling.<sup>4</sup> Suffering is a broader term, which may refer to mental torment not necessarily accompanied by physical symptoms. Significantly, suffering may remain *purely* psychological. As one of the more obvious tropes within Dostoevsky’s body of work, suffering has received significant attention; the pain attendant to such suffering, however, remains less acknowledged. In this paper I will address this lacuna in Dostoevsky scholarship by examining how the language of the novel constructs pain as a phenomenological necessity, complicating a straightforward Judeo-Christian interpretation of redemptive suffering. Dostoevsky’s vivid and nuanced representation of pain has just as much to say about the nature of being and language’s ability to articulate pain, revealing the epistemological stakes for an understanding of suffering as a religiously productive and faith-affirming concept. From this perspective, pain is defined not through its sacredness but through its contingency, as a fact of existence—albeit one with profound consequences on narrative consciousness.

### **Situating Pain within the Scholarship**

Dostoevsky’s explorations of human psychology, religious experience, and interior states of angst are the subjects of a wide range of scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Dmitry Merezhkovsky, a Russian literary critic active in the early twentieth century, famously declared Lev Tolstoy a “seer of the

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<sup>4</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>5</sup> See Robin Feuer Miller’s introduction to *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986) for an ambitious historiography of Dostoevsky criticism, much of which focuses on religious tradition within Dostoevsky’s work.

flesh” (*tainovidets ploti*) and Dostoevsky a “seer of the spirit” (*tainovidets dukha*), establishing a dichotomy that has remained influential throughout the course of criticism on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.<sup>6</sup> The tradition of serious scholarship on divinity and Christian thought in Dostoevsky’s fiction dates to the fin-de-siècle period, when critics such as Merezhkovsky and Nikolai Berdiaev emphasized the importance of spiritual analysis in reading Dostoevsky. Berdiaev, writing in the early 1920s, examined the philosophical reconciliation of human freedom, suffering, and justifications for God in Dostoevsky’s work, helping to pioneer the interpretive focus on suffering as offering a redemptive path to attain higher spiritual fulfillment.<sup>7</sup> In Berdiaev’s *The World View of Dostoevsky* (*Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*, 1923), the religious philosopher asserts Dostoevsky’s preeminence as a representative of Eastern Orthodoxy, who acted as a “herald of the Russian messianic idea.”<sup>8</sup> Berdiaev views Dostoevsky’s treatment of suffering as a solely inner experience, related to conscience. His statement that “Dostoevsky [sic] believed firmly in the redemptive and regenerative power of suffering” clearly demonstrates his insistence that problems of evil and suffering were, for Dostoevsky, religious matters with emancipatory potential.<sup>9</sup>

Scholars in the second half of the twentieth century have accordingly shown an historical emphasis on modes of spirituality and transcendence in their interpretations of Dostoevsky’s fiction. In her introduction to *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, Robin Feuer Miller presents Dostoevsky as “the supreme portrayer of that elusive commodity “the Russian soul”;<sup>10</sup> a brief scan of both classic and recent scholarship reveals a predominant emphasis on Dostoevsky as a

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Dostoevsky*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> Berdiaev, *Dostoevsky*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, 1.

psychological novelist and a religious thinker.<sup>11</sup> Rowan Williams, theologian and former Archbishop of Canterbury, follows the tradition of serious scholarship on Dostoevsky's "religious sensibility"; his own book attests to the influence the Russian writer has had on the religious community (Orthodox and otherwise), and vice versa.<sup>12</sup> Williams shares the concern of numerous other thinkers who are eager to analyze the influence of Orthodoxy on Dostoevsky's fictional worlds. In this vein, Malcolm V. Jones's recent book *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* seeks to further an understanding of how Russian Orthodox salvific traditions operate within Dostoevsky's fictional world.<sup>13</sup> George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson's collection of essays, which read Dostoevsky through a Christian ideological framework, offers an excellent cross-section of recent scholarship on the topic. In their introduction, Thompson and Pattison claim that biblical and doctrinal concerns feature so prominently in Dostoevsky's work that "it is almost impossible *not* to read Dostoevsky religiously."<sup>14</sup> Unsurprisingly, many of these scholars relate suffering to forgiveness, situating it firmly within a religious framework of redemptive suffering. While the volume of work addressing these tropes has contributed to a sophisticated understanding of the religious influences in Dostoevsky's prose, this emphasis has diverted attention away from the physical body and its relationship to suffering. Contrary to Pattison and Thompson's assertion of the primacy of religious interpretations of Dostoevsky, this mode of inquiry is not the sole means of

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<sup>11</sup> Scholarly work such as Sven Linner's "Portrait of a Saint: Moral Ideal and/or Psychological Truth," in *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. Robin Feuer Miller (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986); Jostein Bortnes's "The Function of Hagiography in Dostoevskij's Novels," in *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. Robin Feuer Miller (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986); Harriet Murav's *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Edward Wasiolek's "Dostoevsky, Camus, and Faulkner: Transcendence and Mutilation," in *Philosophy and Literature* 1, No. 2 (1977); and Nariman Skakov's "Dostoevsky's Christ and Silence at the Margins of 'The Idiot,'" in *Dostoevsky Studies, New Series* 13 (2009) have all contributed to the vast literature demonstrating a serious and sustained critical engagement with the theological aspects of Dostoevsky's fiction.

<sup>12</sup> Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).



analyzing the writer's multifaceted, subtly complex body of work. A more nuanced analysis of the physical—particularly the physicality of suffering—within Dostoevsky's literature is needed to adequately address how pain affects (by distorting, deconstructing, and creating) narrative, language, and identity. Doing so will elucidate what is at stake in the narrative's preoccupation with pain, redirecting our attention to how the phenomenology of pain shapes the more minor, prosaic aspects of everyday existence. To ignore this aspect of Dostoevsky's work is to perpetuate the critical lacuna that has prioritized the novel's final grandiose, dramatic theological gestures over its investment in the process of lived experience and the project of self-understanding.

The oversight in Dostoevsky criticism becomes conspicuous once we draw our attention to the presence of physicality in the novel, for the narrative is full of bodies in states of pain. Analyzing the relationship between Raskolnikov's interior states of being and the corresponding physical experience of pain, anguish, and torment imparts a new perspective on how the embodiment of pain affects the narrative, revealing the broader implications of its relationship to consciousness. To be sure, pain is everywhere present in the narrative. Raskolnikov is by turns shaking, pale, moaning, tormented, sore, wincing, twisting convulsively, aching, contorted, and crushed. Almost all thoughts are painful to him; conversations are often referred to as torture. The reader's confrontation with the suffering, painful body is immediate: the first page of the novel introduces our protagonist as feeling "some painful and cowardly sensation, which made him wince with shame."<sup>15</sup> In the next paragraph, he resembles a hypochondriac (a term with obvious medical connotations of physiological, often painful, symptoms) who is "crushed by

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<sup>15</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Random House, 1992), 3; «Какое-то болезненное и трусливое ощущение, которого стыдился и от которого морщился»; F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1972-90), 6:5.

poverty.”<sup>16</sup> These initial references introduce what will become perpetual qualities of lived experience for Raskolnikov—he is nearly always described as suffering from some unpleasant physical symptom, and many of his emotional states are preceded by the modifier ‘painful’ or ‘painfully.’ The description of poverty as crushing lends a material weight to his economic situation, an objectification that is echoed throughout the narrative through continual references to the “heaviness” (*tiazhest*) of both his destitution and pain.

The narrative is so consumed with the “felt-experience” of pain that it is difficult, if not impossible, to ignore its constant presence among the characters: pain habitually manifests on characters’ faces during conversations, interior monologues, or protracted deliriums. For Dostoevsky, pain is a revealing mode of experience: it makes the invisible (emotions) visible (through their inscription on the body). By constructing pain as an inevitable result of conscious thought, the narrative suggests an alternative to Berdiaev’s conceptual model of pain as redemptive by positing a framework of contingency. Jean-Paul Sartre’s understanding of the term provides a useful means of grasping how pain functions in the narrative:

[Sartre’s] ontology begins with the explicit recognition that the removal of a deity from the world leaves us with the sheer fact of the existence of things, sheer *contingency* ... Contingency is the concept that the world exists but does not have to be there. For Sartre, contingency means that there is no rationale, no overall plan, no intrinsic meaning in events. There is no necessity governing the fact of existence. Being just is...<sup>17</sup>

Pain, like “the fact of existence,” does not accomplish anything, it is not *for* anything, it does not *do* anything.<sup>18</sup> It simply *is*; it is a contingent fact of existence. It does not necessarily offer ultimate redemption, nor must it elicit a Job-like test of suffering as faith. Pain is a structuring state of consciousness for Raskolnikov, a phenomenon that provides more than teleological, redemptive possibilities—it *creates* his reality.

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<sup>16</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 3; «Он был задавлен бедностью»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:5.

<sup>17</sup> Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 356.

<sup>18</sup> Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 5.

## The Language of Pain

The repeated descriptions of pain as ‘heavy’ (*tiazhelo*) and an emphasis on the feeling of being ‘crushed’ (*pridavilo*) speak to the sensory qualities of suffering. In fact, the Russian word *tiazhelo* is often translated as ‘painful,’ although its primary meaning is ‘heavy,’ further highlighting the novel’s association of pain with heaviness. Raskolnikov is “crushed by poverty” and even self-identifies as afflicted by the oppressiveness of his situation: “‘I am a poor and sick student, weighed down’ (that was how he said it: *weighed down*) ‘by poverty.’”<sup>19</sup> The circumstances of his situation are depicted as physically distorting; Razumikhin, in his defiant objections to Porfiry Petrovich’s treatment of Raskolnikov, describes the student as “crippled by poverty and hypochondria.”<sup>20</sup> This characterization effectively constructs Raskolnikov’s reality as shaped by disfiguring circumstances; the word *izurodovannyi*, translated as ‘crippled,’ also means ‘mutilated’ or ‘disfigured,’ words that allude to a physical deformation. These and numerous other instances in the novel in which the words ‘oppressive,’ ‘suffocating,’ ‘burden,’ and ‘crushed’ (*ugnetenie*, *udushaiushchii*, *tiazhest*, *pridavilo*) are repeated affirm a sense of weightiness to Raskolnikov’s lived experience. Poverty is heavy—it crushes and debilitates—and has real, destructive effects on the functioning of the physical body.

Reminders of the consequences of his destitution are frequent; several of the novel’s most important scenes take place in Raskolnikov’s ‘coffin’ (*grob*) of an apartment, where the material realities of his life are ever present in the grime of the building, the shabby furniture, and the restrictive confines of his tiny room. As Raskolnikov frantically paces his room in a state of delirium, his confinement suggests that of a caged animal: “...[he] bumped into one corner, then

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<sup>19</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 101; «Я бедный и больной студент, удрученный (он так и сказал: «удрученный») бедностью.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:80.

<sup>20</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 268; «изуродованный нищетой и ипохондрией»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:206.

into another, as if forgetting how small his kennel was, and ... sat down again on the sofa.”<sup>21</sup> The space of the apartment literally restricts the characters, impeding their movement and reinforcing the sense of stifled space that permeates the novel. The suffocating atmosphere—of both his physical surroundings and his mental state of excitement and irritability—exacerbates his agony: “For everything had become too stifling and confined, too painfully oppressive, overcome by some sort of druggedness.” His life in the “cramped space” (*v tesnote*) of the apartment is a physical manifestation of his tense and overwrought conversations with Porfiry Petrovich, in which Raskolnikov feels cornered, “with no way out” (*bez vykhoda*).<sup>22</sup> The oppressiveness of these conditions is actually painful to Raskolnikov; as such, it is both the physical surroundings and his psychological state that combine to overwhelm him with a sensation of deep crushing pain. This rhetoric constructs Raskolnikov’s constricted state of being as an embodied response to his exterior, claustrophobic circumstances; in fact, his mother’s statement establishes an explicit causal connection between the two: “What an awful apartment you have, Rodya; like a coffin ... I’m sure it’s half on account of this apartment that you’ve become so melancholic.”<sup>23</sup>

Yet it is more than his impoverished state and anxious agitation over Porfiry Petrovich’s knowledge of the murder that lends a quality of heaviness and pain to Raskolnikov’s existence. Many, if not most, of his emotions are articulated as heavy, and he experiences both life and death in these terms. As he debates whether or not to inform Sonya of his responsibility for the murder, he suddenly hesitates before her door: “He did not yet know why it was impossible; he only *felt* it, and the tormenting awareness of his powerlessness before necessity almost crushed

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<sup>21</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 446; «толкнулся в угол, в другой, как бы забыв о тесноте своей конуры, и... сел опять на диван.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:341.

<sup>22</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 446-7; «А то уж слишком всё сперлось и закупорилось, мучительно стало давить, дурман нападал какой-то.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:341.

<sup>23</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 231; «Какая у тебя дурная квартира, Родя, точно гроб ... я уверена, что ты наполовину от квартиры стал такой меланхолик.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:178.

him.” When he finally decides to enter, it is only “in order not to reason and suffer any longer.”<sup>24</sup> After his confession and a lengthy discussion of the necessity of accepting suffering, Sonya and Raskolnikov sit “side by side, sad and crushed...strangely, he suddenly felt it heavy and painful to be loved like that.” As a majority of emotional encounters for Raskolnikov are experienced in an adverse physical manner, it is impossible for Raskolnikov to feel love as anything other than a “strange and terrible feeling.”<sup>25</sup> His reactions to death are expressed in almost the exact same terms. As he enters Sonya’s apartment to attend the funeral of Katerina Ivanovna, he pauses in the doorway, feeling “terribly heavy”; death, like love, is also given the unusual sensation of weightiness: “there had always been something heavy and mystically terrible for him in the awareness of death...”<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, upon hearing of Svidrigailov’s suicide, Raskolnikov again feels an unbearable heaviness, “as if something had fallen on him and crushed him.”<sup>27</sup> Dostoevsky’s attribution of a material quality to the protagonist’s emotional experiences indicates fluidity between the boundaries of the body and the external world, between mental experiences and physical sensations. The language of the novel enables a capacity to experience intangible and abstract concepts, such as death and love (and the “heaviness” of poverty), as physical realities.

If intangible states of being find their expression in the language of unpleasant physical sensations, then it is perhaps not surprising that these sensations lack a locative origin within the body. Rarely does Dostoevsky offer a physical explanation for the experience of pain. In fact,

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<sup>24</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 406; «Он еще не знал, почему невозможно; он только почувствовал это, и это мучительное сознание своего бессилия перед необходимостью почти придавило его.»; «чтоб уже не рассуждать и не мучиться»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:312.

<sup>25</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 422; «Оба сидели рядом, грустные и убитые...странно, ему стало вдруг тяжело и больно, что его так любят.»; «странное и ужасное ощущение»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:324.

<sup>26</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 441; «Ему стало ужасно тяжело.»; «В сознании о смерти и в ощущении присутствия смерти всегда для него было что-то тяжелое и мистически ужасное, с самого детства...»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:337.

<sup>27</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 530; «Раскольников чувствовал, что на него как бы что-то упало и его придавило.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:409.

most often, Raskolnikov experiences only the physiological characteristics of pain (such as profuse sweating, trembling, paleness, a pounding heart, and delirium) that typically accompany a person in an acute state of agony, but without any account of *actual* pain. These symptoms lack any form of causality—such as a weapon, accident, or illness. This pain-simulacrum, as I will call this nonspecific, physically unaccountable, yet purportedly painful condition, mimics the physiological reactions of acute physical distress. Dostoevsky uses the language of pain to articulate Raskolnikov’s states of consciousness; though significantly, the use of verbal qualifiers (‘as if,’ ‘as though,’ ‘he seemed,’ etc.) reinforces the imitative aspect of physical pain. After his infamous dream about the beating of the nag, Raskolnikov wakes up feverish, panting, and trembling. “His whole body was as if broken; his soul was dark and troubled ... He was pale, his eyes were burning, all his limbs felt exhausted...”<sup>28</sup> His physiognomy indicates that he is suffering from a severe illness or torturous ordeal, yet as he affirms in his confusion, “[b]ut what’s wrong with me?”, there seems to be no physical explanation for his altered state, which even the protagonist himself finds perplexing.<sup>29</sup> He experiences a pain-simulacrum: his body is *as if* broken, but it is not. His eyes burn and his limbs ache, mimicking illness, but these symptoms are purely psychological, provoked by an intense dream. The adjective ‘feverish,’ frequently employed to describe Raskolnikov’s mien, points to the imitative aspect of his condition, indicating the presence of symptoms in the absence of any actual medical ailment. The fact that this state of illness quickly dissipates once Raskolnikov diverts his thoughts—after he gets up, takes a breath, and gathers his resolve, the malady suddenly becomes “just [a] feverish

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<sup>28</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 59; «Всё тело его было как бы разбито; смутно и темно на душе ... Он был бледен, глаза его горели, изнеможение было во всех его членах...»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:49-50.

<sup>29</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 59; «Да что же это я!»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:49.

weakness, a momentary delirium”—insinuates that the pain is imitative and psychologically conditional.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, when his sister’s fiancé, Pyotr Petrovich Luzhin, pays a visit to Raskolnikov, the latter displays an outwardly incongruous reaction to the encounter: “[Raskolnikov’s face]... was extremely pale and had a look of extraordinary suffering, as though he had just undergone painful surgery or had just been released from torture.”<sup>31</sup> Raskolnikov has a *look* of suffering, *as if* he had undergone painful surgery or just been tortured, though of course neither is the case. When his mother and sister stop by for a visit, worried over his recent erratic and anxious behavior, he is paradoxically described as “almost well” (*pochti zdorov*) yet simultaneously gravely injured: “Externally, he seemed to resemble a wounded man or a man suffering from some acute physical pain: his brows were knitted, his lips compressed, his eyes inflamed... All that was lacking was some bandage or gauze wrapping to complete his resemblance to a man with, for example, a painful abscess on his finger, or an injured hand, or something of the sort.”<sup>32</sup> Once again, the verbal qualifiers—*as if* broken, *as though* he had just, *he seemed to resemble* (*kak budto, kak by*)—point to the *almost* quality of his pain, and the indefinite pronouns—some, something (*kakoi-nibud’, chto-nibud’*)—emphasize uncertainty and inexactness: these experiences are pain-simulacra, which co-opt the vivid language of extreme pain and employ it to make interior conditions visible.

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<sup>30</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 91; «просто слабосилие лихорадочное, бред на минуту»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:72.

<sup>31</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 143; «Лицо его...было чрезвычайно бледно и выражало необыкновенное страдание, как будто он только что перенес мучительную операцию или выпустили его сейчас из-под пытки.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:112.

<sup>32</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 222; «Снаружи он походил как бы на раненого человека или вытерпливающего какую-нибудь сильную физическую боль: брови его были сдвинуты, губы сжаты, взгляд воспаленный... Недоставало какой-нибудь повязки на руке или чехла из тафты на пальце для полного сходства с человеком, у которого, например, очень больно нарываяет палец, или ушиблена руки, или что-нибудь в этом роде.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:170-1.

This quality of indefiniteness is a peculiar aspect of the novel's descriptions of pain.

According to Scarry, pain is virtually the only state of certainty that exists:

[F]or the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that "having pain" may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to "have certainty," while for the other person it is so elusive that "hearing about pain" may exist as the primary model of what it is "to have doubt." Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed.<sup>33</sup>

What does it mean that Raskolnikov experiences *uncertain* pain? This indeterminacy constructs an epistemological barrier between Raskolnikov's experience of pain, other characters' understanding of that pain, and the reader's interpretations; significantly, it is via this barrier that the boundaries of self and other are explored and defined. The novel incorporates the language of pain into Raskolnikov's lived experience and the conditions of his everyday existence; it is unclear if Raskolnikov is experiencing actual physical pain—nor does it matter. Rather, the language of pain becomes a fundamental concept by which we understand Raskolnikov's states of experience; this quality speaks to Glucklich's understanding of the "in-between-ness" of pain and its phenomenological consequences.<sup>34</sup> Pain is not localized in the body; for Dostoevsky, it is an interior, and as such, uncertain quality. It is an essential component of Raskolnikov's identity—he is shaped by suffering, and his character is a manifestation of a ubiquitous interiority of pain.

Curiously, instances of actual physical trauma present us with the linguistic opposite of the pain-simulacrum. Two of the most complex instances of bodily trauma in the novel are Marmeladov's death and Katerina Ivanovna's fatal battle with consumption.<sup>35</sup> In neither scene is the pain of the victim a focal point. Solely exterior descriptions, which focus on blood, mangled

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<sup>33</sup> Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Glucklich, *Sacred Pain*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> The murders, while certainly vivid instances of physical trauma, are narratively uninteresting in terms of pain and suffering: they comprise less than two paragraphs, and the victims' immediate deaths result in a fairly superficial narrative treatment of physical suffering and/or pain.



bodies, and withered consumptive faces, resist the language of pain. After Marmeladov is trampled by horses, he is laid on the couch, bleeding profusely; the reader's perspective mirrors the doctor's as he bares the patient's chest and peers at the wound: "his whole chest was torn, mangled, mutilated; several ribs on the right side were broken."<sup>36</sup> Throughout the ordeal, the repetition of the word 'blood' (*krov*) reinforces the horrifying visual experience of the accident for those involved ("And the blood! So much blood!" screams Katerina Ivanovna).<sup>37</sup> Yet the narration remains at a surface level, describing others' external reactions and the physicality of deteriorating and mangled bodies, while ignoring the "felt-experiences" of the victims. Marmeladov is never explicitly described as "in pain," though his face shows suffering as he gazes at his daughter. One might expect that in such scenes the adjectives in wide circulation throughout the rest of the novel—"crushing," "pale," "trembling," "sweating"—would be most appropriate, but paradoxically, these sensory qualities of pain are almost always employed only in reference to pain-simulacra, and not to instances of physical trauma. In the cases of Marmeladov and Katerina Ivanovna, it is not their evident pain that is most important, but instead the sensational, gruesome ways in which they die. Put another way, it is others' *suffering*, rather than their pain, that matters. Both characters elicit pitying responses from others as they die—Marmeladov from his family and Raskolnikov, and Katerina Ivanovna from the public. At the memorial dinner for her deceased husband, Katerina Ivanovna is thrown into a hysterical fit at the framing of Sonya by Luzhin; the guests are moved to pity due to her pathetic condition: "The cries of the poor, consumptive, bereaved Katerina Ivanovna seemed to produce a strong

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<sup>36</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 182; «Вся грудь была исковеркана, измята и истерзана; несколько ребер с правой стороны изломано.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:142.

<sup>37</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 181; «Крови-то, крови!»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:141.

effect on the public.”<sup>38</sup> Her death is similarly spectacular, as she falls to the street and bleeds out of her mouth, literally choking on her own blood as gaping passers-by crowd around.

Katerina Ivanovna and Marmeladov’s capacity to provoke emotional responses in others speaks to the epistemological gulf between pain and suffering in *Crime and Punishment*. The novel suggests that the experience of suffering is intimately related to one’s relationship with others, due to its power to elicit sympathy and its connection with Christian doctrinal connotations that posit a necessity to suffering. Hristo Manolakev contends that *Crime and Punishment* engages with the discourse of social sympathy, which requires taking notice of the suffering body. Manolakev differentiates between compassion and sympathy, stating that the latter is focused on pain, while compassion is “a metaphorical seeing and sharing of the other’s soul.”<sup>39</sup> Manolakev perceptively distinguishes sympathy as an emotion characterized by exteriority, in which one feels *for* someone else, but remains distinctly outside the other’s experience (pain and suffering are not shared experiences, as are feelings of compassion). Yet Manolakev’s conflation of the terms ‘suffering’ and ‘pain’ ignores the important difference between the two, failing to account for the wide epistemological discrepancy between seeing suffering and experiencing pain in the novel. The suffering body is indeed the source of social sympathy, but that sympathy relies on a visual expression of suffering, distinct from the actual felt-experiences of pain, which are necessarily private and internal. Pain thus needs to be understood through a different paradigm than that of suffering: one that is personal, interior, and unable to be contained within a theological framework.

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<sup>38</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 397; «Плач бедной, чахоточной, сиротливой Катерины Ивановны произвел, казалось, сильный эффект на публику.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:305.

<sup>39</sup> Hristo Manolakev, “The Murder Plot in *Crime and Punishment*: A New Reading” in *Aspects of Dostoevskii: Art, Ethics and Faith*, ed. by Robert Reid and Joe Andrew (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 92.

Raskolnikov's article "On Punishment" and his discussions with Porfiry Petrovich offer insight into the novel's relationship with judicial and moral discourse of the time, which are intimately connected with Christian motifs of judgment and salvation. In his provocative article, Raskolnikov posits the idea of subjective criminality and the existence of two classes of people within society; the 'extraordinary' class of people, he states, is subject to a different set of laws and therefore possess the right to murder. Raskolnikov's explanation of his beliefs prompts Porfiry Petrovich to immediately inquire if he still believes in the New Jerusalem, in God, and finally in the rising of Lazarus; Raskolnikov answers yes to all. The immediate jump from criminality to Christianity suggests religious implications for criminal acts—specifically, the morally punitive nature of suffering. Yet Raskolnikov's conception of suffering moves beyond theological punishment; he understands it as necessary and ubiquitous in and of itself: "Suffering and pain are always obligatory for a broad consciousness and a deep heart. Truly great men, I think, must feel great sorrow in this world."<sup>40</sup> His theory constructs a link between the attainment of a more complete consciousness and both suffering and pain. It is significant that Raskolnikov uses the word 'pain' here alongside 'suffering,' as his rhetorical choice indicates the intimate, yet not synonymous, relationship between the two words. Raskolnikov's theory speaks to his perception of pain as a fundamental aspect of experience—necessary to achieve "broad consciousness"—departing from an Orthodox interpretation of suffering as punitive, faith-affirming, or sacrificial in Christ-like terms. Harriet Murav argues that Raskolnikov's very name (derived from *raskol*, meaning 'schism') "indicates his participation in a schism of his own

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<sup>40</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 264; «Страдание и боль всегда обязательны для широкого сознания и глубокого сердца. Истинно великие люди, мне кажется, должны ощущать на свете великую грусть»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:203.

devising,” which also alludes to Raskolnikov’s role as a dissenter and his capacity for thinking outside the doctrine of Russian Orthodox tradition.<sup>41</sup>

### **Narrating Trauma Through Pain**

Dostoevsky’s exploration of the effects of pain on consciousness has structural and semantic consequences on language within the novel. Alexander Burry, writing on *The Idiot*, astutely observes that Dostoevsky’s interest in psychological trauma anticipates the growing concern in contemporary scholarship on trauma’s relationship with linguistic modes of representation.<sup>42</sup> Pain is an experience intimately related to trauma, having similar devastating consequences on representation. Cathy Caruth’s etymological explanation clarifies the word ‘trauma’ as something that not only has the capacity to be either physical or mental, but whose meaning was initially associated with physical pain: “the originary meaning of trauma itself (in both English and German), the Greek *trauma*, or “wound,” originally refer[ed] to an injury inflicted on a body.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, trauma and pain both have silencing and destructive effects on characters’ speech and the structure of the narrative. The murder itself, while not physically traumatic for Raskolnikov, proves psychologically painful for the protagonist, who struggles with his deed throughout the rest of the novel. The crime retains an unspeakable quality for him, resisting his narration, a peculiar characteristic for an event around which the novel’s plot centers. Raskolnikov remains staunchly averse to naming the deed even in his own thoughts—notably even before he commits the crime. As he wanders around Petersburg in the opening

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<sup>41</sup> Harriet Murav, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky’s Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 63.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Burry, “Execution, Trauma, and Recovery in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*,” in *The Slavic and East European Journal* 54, No. 2 (2010): 258.

<sup>43</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

scene of the novel, he muses, “I want to attempt such a thing... Am I really capable of *that*? Is *that* something serious?”<sup>44</sup> This resistance is not solely a characteristic of Raskolnikov; other characters appropriate his phrasing by referring to the murder as ‘*that*’ (*eto*): “[Razumikhin was] embarrassed and excited by the mere fact that they were talking openly about *that* for the first time.”<sup>45</sup> Porfiry Petrovich and Raskolnikov rarely refer to the murder directly in their emotionally fraught conversations, preferring instead to circumvent the topic through veiled references and circumlocutions. When Raskolnikov confesses to Sonya, he avoids a direct declaration of guilt, instead relying on insinuations (“So can’t you guess? ... Take a good look”).<sup>46</sup> Even after Sonya finally accepts his responsibility for the murders, he eschews giving voice to the act: “You’re so strange, Sonya—you embrace me and kiss me, when I’ve just told you *about that*.”<sup>47</sup> The frequency with which Dostoevsky employs ellipses during these conversations denotes unfinished, inarticulate thoughts, which contest explicit articulation. For Caruth, inarticulateness is indicative of the tendency of trauma to remain unassimilated within an individual’s experience, thus perennially returning to haunt the victim. What this structure tells us, according to Caruth, is that stories of trauma are always those “of a wound that cries out.”<sup>48</sup> In the case of *Crime and Punishment*, then, Raskolnikov’s psychological wound cries out somatically, through the expression of physical, albeit phantom, pain.

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<sup>44</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 4; «На какое дело хочу покуситься ... Разве я способен на *это*? Разве *это* серьезно?»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:6.

<sup>45</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 267; «[Разумихин был] смущенный и взволнованный уже тем одним, что они в первый раз заговорили об *этом* ясно.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:206.

<sup>46</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 410; «Так не можешь угадать-то? ... Погляди-ка хорошенько.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:315.

<sup>47</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 412; «Странная какая ты, Соня, — обнимаешь и целуешь, когда я тебе сказал *про это*.»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:316.

<sup>48</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

Pain, like trauma, resists straightforward narration; it is tied up in the epistemological confusion of certainty (having pain) and uncertainty (knowing pain).<sup>49</sup> For Caruth, this is a fundamentally linguistic relationship, and literature that deals with trauma often explores “the complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it.”<sup>50</sup> Verbal language, then, may cease to be effective when transmitting traumatic experience to others. We see this breakdown in the very literal case of characters’ speech: the communication of pain to others throughout a majority of the novel is, in fact, entirely non-linguistic. When Raskolnikov and Sonya converse, their speech is abrupt, laconic, and fragmented, with one often finishing the other’s thoughts. Following Raskolnikov’s confession to Sonya, the pair’s interactions are filled with suffering, painful glances at one another that replace verbal interaction: looks of agony and “infinite pain,” “painfully caring eyes,” and anguished motions silently, quickly, and effectively relate the unspeakable (“her terror suddenly communicated itself to him”).<sup>51</sup> The barriers of spoken language are also clearly echoed in the frequency with which characters are without words, inarticulate, and unable to speak.

Caruth and Scarry posit that overcoming trauma involves giving voice to pain. To Scarry, this is the process of “remaking” the world; while for Caruth, it is the fraught experience with which authors and artists grapple to narrativize trauma. Given this framework, it is then appropriate that only at the very end, in one of the last few sentences of the novel, does Raskolnikov fully articulate exactly what happened, though only after he battles with incoherence: “[he] tried to say something, but could not; only incoherent sounds came out.”

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<sup>49</sup> Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 414, 409, 411; «с бесконечным мучением смотря на нее»; «до муки заботливый взгляд ее»; «[y]жас ее вдруг сообщился и ему»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6: 318, 314, 315.

Notably, though he repeats the statement—“*It was I who killed the official’s old widow and her sister Lizaveta with an axe and robbed them*”—the actual sentence is only narrated once.<sup>52</sup> The second time ellipses replace words, as if there is a limit to the narrative’s ability to “speak” the confession. His testimony sets up the narrative for the events of the epilogue, in which Raskolnikov ostensibly experiences a spiritual regeneration through illness, enabled by giving voice to his trauma.

The epilogue has provided scholars with ample material to bolster interpretations of how *Crime and Punishment* incorporates the redemptive and teleological nature of suffering into its narrative structure. Raskolnikov’s “salvation” at the very end, and allusions to the parable of the raising of Lazarus (which Sonya earlier reads to Raskolnikov), suggest that Raskolnikov has achieved a moral and spiritual regeneration. This is not a misdirected interpretation, and Dostoevsky quite explicitly constructs a parallel between his protagonist and Lazarus: “[b]ut he was risen and he knew it, he felt it fully with the whole of his renewed being...”<sup>53</sup> The episode in which Sonya reads the Gospels to Raskolnikov is understood by some critics as a foreshadowing of the epilogue; Eric Ziolkowski believes that Dostoevsky hints at Raskolnikov’s “putatively impending regeneration” in this scene, which “marks a crucial initial stage in the spiritual resurrection of Raskolnikov.”<sup>54</sup> Yet a reading of the novel that assumes the epilogue is the teleological endpoint of Raskolnikov’s spiritual journey elides the difficult and paradoxical material so prevalent through the rest of the novel, which does not fit neatly into a framework of Christian spiritual redemption.

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<sup>52</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 531; «[он] хотел что-то сказать, но не мог; слышались лишь какие-то бессвязные звуки»; «*Это я убил тогда старуху-чиновницу и сестру ее Лизавету топором, и ограбил.*»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:409-10.

<sup>53</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 550; «Но он воскрес, и он знал это, чувствовал вполне всем обновившимся существом своим»; Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 6:421.

<sup>54</sup> Eric Ziolkowski, “Reading and Incarnation in Dostoevsky,” in *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 165.

This approach, in short, does not work gracefully for an analysis of the narrative as a whole. The salvific conception of pain and suffering provides a scant moral framework by which to justify and understand the overwhelming influence of pain on consciousness throughout the novel, its capacity to structure characters' lives, and its effects on language. Pain, in *Crime and Punishment*, does far more than offer an obstacle to allow for religious salvation: it interacts with the phenomenological tradition of conscious experience, providing a sensory framework for understanding lived experience within the novel. To feel emotion, Dostoevsky suggests, is to feel pain. Raskolnikov's inability to disassociate pain from consciousness indicates the melding of interior and exterior states of being into a more fluid ontological condition, wherein the experience of Being-in-the-World has painful physical qualities. By reading the experience of pain in *Crime and Punishment* as formative in the process of self-development, we can redirect our attention to the novel's investment in the problematics of representation and consciousness, issues with high epistemological stakes. Reading Dostoevsky within the context of phenomenology, then, reveals the potential of pain to provide insight into how the novel as a medium approaches the representation of conscious experience.



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