

Pathogenic Reflection as a Factor in the Commission of a Crime (Based on the Analysis of Rodion Raskolnikov's Thoughts and Behavior From F. M. Dostoevsky's Novel *Crime and Punishment*)

Morozyuk Svetlana Nikolaevna, Morozyuk Yuri Vitalievich

Moscow Pedagogical State University, Moscow, Russia

Kuznetsova Elena Sergeevna

Moscow Psychologic-social University, Moscow, Russia

The article presents the features of the inner world of the main character in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*. The cognitive-emotional test was used as a method for studying the reflective profile of a literary character. Based on mathematical data processing and qualitative analysis, it was possible to create a reflective portrait of Raskolnikov, revealing his defensive reflective strategies and tactics that contributed to the character's crime.

Keywords: reflection, reflective personality profile, reflective personality portrait, reflective strategies and tactics, crime

In the article "Pathogenic Reflection as a Factor of Suicidal Behavior" (using the example of an analysis of the reflections and behavior of Katerina from A. N. Ostrovsky's play *The Storm* and Anna from L. N. Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*), the features of the inner world of the main characters of these works were presented (S. N. Morozyuk, Y. V. Morozyuk, & Kuznetsova, 2024a, pp. 165-171). For the first time, the Cognitive-Emotive test was used as a method of studying the reflexive profiles of literary characters. A comparative analysis of the data obtained, their quantitative and qualitative processing allowed us to see the defensive reflexive strategies and tactics underlying the behavior of suicidal individuals, both real-life personalities and literary characters. The similarity of their reflexive profiles allowed us to assume the possibility of using the Cognitive-Emotive test as a psychological tool to identify and describe the psychological causes of behavior and actions of literary characters, determined not so much by external conditions as by the peculiarities of their reflection.

This article presents the results of a study of the content, nature of reflection, and the train of thought of a person prone to commit a crime. We have identified the hero of F. M. Dostoevsky's work *Crime and Punishment*

Morozyuk Svetlana Nikolaevna, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychology of Education, Moscow Pedagogical State University, Moscow, Russia.

Morozyuk Yuri Vitalievich, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychology of Education, Moscow Pedagogical State University, Moscow, Russia.

Kuznetsova Elena Sergeevna, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of General and Pedagogical Psychology, Moscow Psychologic-social University, Moscow, Russia.

by Rodion Raskolnikov as the object of research.

In our study, we were interested in the psychological process in which the everyday philosophy of the criminal was formed. In this regard, we have identified the content and quality of the reflection of the hero crossing the “fatal line” as the subject.

Hypothesis

We assumed that a person who is ready for a crime has a qualitatively peculiar profile of defensive reflection, which has all the signs of pathogenicity. At the same time, by pathogenic reflection we mean mental automatisms aimed at reducing suffering from negative experiences, giving a local-temporary effect. Pathogenic reflection is a triad of signs: a focus on protection from negative experiences, a local-temporary positive effect from reflexive tactics, and not a solution to the problem; “introspection” that has nothing to do with the actual life situation.

Method

To test our hypothesis, we used the cognitive-emotive test by Y. M. Orlov and S. N. Morozuk, which reveals the content and orientation of a person’s protective reflection (Orlov, 2006; 1999).

Results

A comparative analysis of the data obtained, their quantitative and qualitative processing allowed us to see the defensive reflexive strategies and tactics of behavior of people prone to crime.

It should be noted right away that the hero Rodion Raskolnikov was a very sensitive person, with a delicate mental organization, gifted by nature, an intelligent and honest young man. Living in a cramped coffin-like room on the fifth floor of a multi-storey St. Petersburg house near Sennaya, constantly observing the life of the poor and petty-bourgeois population of St. Petersburg, Raskolnikov is painfully aware that not only himself, but also thousands of other people are inevitably doomed to an early death, poverty, and lack of rights under the existing order. All this generates in him a constant, deep work of thought, striving to find a way out of the current, unfair state of things. He suffers deeply from hunger and poverty, from the humiliating condition of his mother and sister, whom he would like to help.

However, let us note that his own hardships and the grief of his loved ones are not the main reason for his torment and his crimes, and he did not build his theory in order to justify in his own eyes the idea of quick and easy profit, as D. I. Pisarev noted at the time in his article “The Struggle for Life” (Pisarev, 1868). Raskolnikov realizes the depth of his moral decline: “Not to help my mother, I killed—nonsense! I did not kill in order to gain the means and power to become a benefactor of mankind. Nonsense! I just killed; I killed him for myself, for myself alone”, he says after fulfilling his terrible plan. In Raskolnikov, two people seem to get along—one allows himself to commit an act: “I had to find out something else, the other pushed me under the arms: I had to find out then, and quickly find out if I was a louse like everyone else, or a human being? Will I be able to step over or will I not be able to! Do I dare to bend down and take it or not? Am I a trembling creature or do I have the right...” Another one judges him, makes him suffer, and looks for excuses: “By the way, Sonya, when I was lying in the dark and imagining everything, wasn’t it the devil who embarrassed me? Eh? I know myself that the devil dragged me”. Raskolnikov builds a personal philosophy based on his own painful reflections, with the help of painful reflection (we will call it pathogenic), according to which there are “higher” people who do not doubt the rightness and necessity of their actions, even those who contradict accepted norms and those whom Raskolnikov

classifies as “inferior”. “I only believe in my main idea. It consists precisely in the fact that people, according to the law of nature, are generally divided into two categories: the lowest (ordinary), that is, so to speak, into material that serves solely for the generation of their own kind, and actually into people, that is, who have the gift or talent to say a new word in their midst.

Raskolnikov is a hero who is extremely sensitive to the pain of others, living as if his skin has been torn off and everything that happens around him hurts his soul and heart.

But at the same time, Raskolnikov is painfully proud, uncommunicative, and full of consciousness of his exclusivity. He is not used to the company of other people, avoids and shuns it. Having left everyone, “like a turtle in its shell”, the hero of the novel builds his life philosophy on the foundation of his ideas about social injustice, experiences of his personal inadequacy, and tries to find answers on his own to the questions that torment him: “Do I have the right to have power? That means I have no right to have power”. Or what if I ask the question: Is a man a louse? “so you’re no longer a louse to me, but a louse to someone who doesn’t even think of it and who goes straight without question”. ... If I’ve been tormented for so many days: Would Napoleon have gone or not? “I felt so clearly that I was not Napoleon...”

The hero of *Crime and Punishment* does not act under the influence of a direct, unaccountable impulse of profit; he is a man of thought, a man accustomed to reflect and analyze his impressions and actions: “I went like a smartass, and that’s what ruined me!” (Tikhomirov, 2016, p. 6).

F. M. Dostoevsky wrote that there was no crime in the original plan: The focus was not on the hero stepping over, but on the hero stepping over, not on the “fatal line”, but on the “psychological process” taking place in the criminal’s soul beyond the “line” (Tikhomirov, 2016). That is, the focus of the writer’s attention is not crime as such, but punishment as the realization that he has crossed the “fatal line”, the collapse of his theory, which justified the crime and gave hope of classifying himself as “superior”. However, the hero’s reflection only increases the suffering: “Did I kill the old lady? I killed myself, not the old lady! Then, all at once, he killed himself forever!... (Raskolnikov in conversation with Sonya Marmeladova, Part 5, Chapter IV). “Crime for him was not a religious-ethical or philosophical-historical problem; it is an existential experiment or a way to overcome his human nature” (Dostoevsky, 2023, p. 7). Dostoevsky initially focused not on analyzing the circumstances, motives, or goals of the crime, but on affirming the inevitability of retribution, which comes from the depths of human nature, on revealing the mental anguish experienced by every murderer, which “gives rise to a moral need for punishment” at the moment when “you reach the fatal line”. But not everyone reaches the “fatal line”, even in difficult life circumstances, but only those who, thanks to their philosophy of life, have given themselves the right to cross the line: “... But if they need to step over a corpse, through blood, for their idea, then they are inside themselves, according to their conscience maybe, in my opinion, give yourself permission to step over the blood...” (Raskolnikov, Part 3, Chapter V).

Raskolnikov’s willingness to commit a crime slowly matured in the process of experiencing and agonizing thoughts about himself and his place in this world.: “Do I have the right to have power...” ... “am I a louse like everyone else, or a human?” In our opinion, it was not the difficult circumstances of life that led to the crime, but the ordinary philosophy that corroded the soul like rust from day to day, undermining its moral and spiritual bonds.

Discussion

In the process of mathematical and qualitative processing of the literary text representing the reflection of

the hero, we were able to determine the reflective profile of the person who committed the crime.

The data presented in Figure 1 allow us to see several trigger points that trigger the destructive psychological process of moving towards crime.

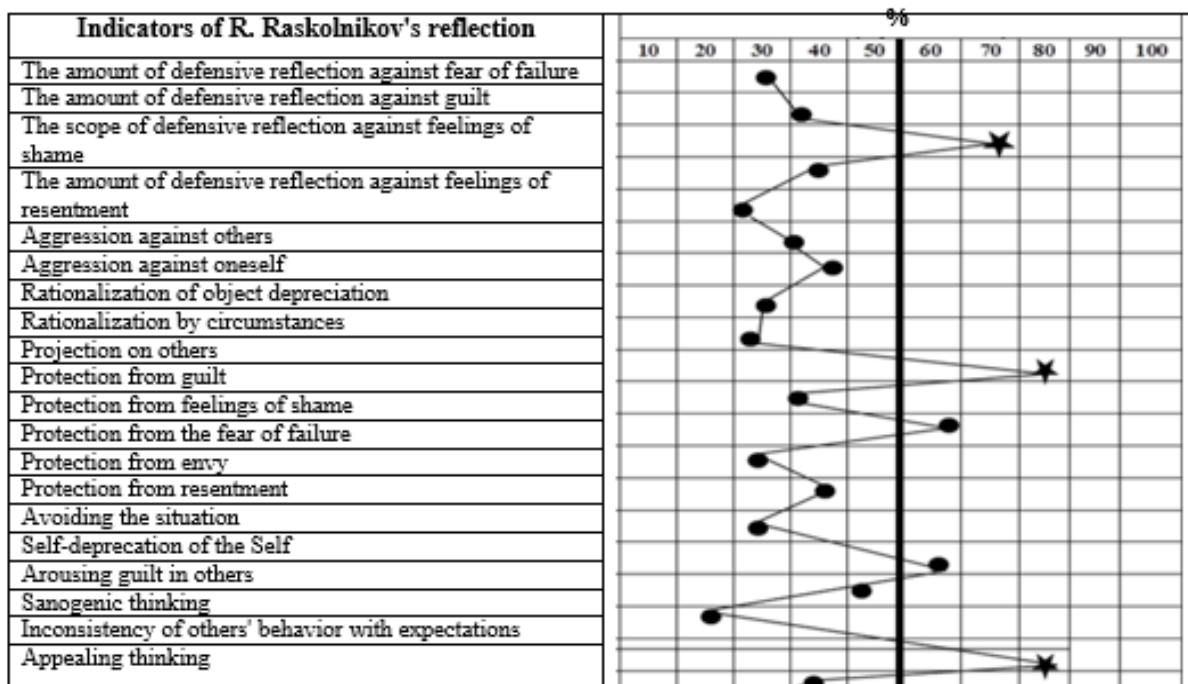


Figure 1. Rodion Raskolnikov's reflexive profile (%).

We found a large amount of defensive reflection when experiencing emotions of shame, guilt and resentment, and resentment of an existential nature, against the world as a whole and its unfair structure. Reflecting on the causes of existing inequality and injustice, Raskolnikov comes to the conclusion that there has always been a difference between the two categories of people. While the vast majority of people have always and everywhere silently and submissively obeyed the established order of things, without having the strength to rebel against it, a few “extraordinary” people have appeared from time to time in the history of mankind—Lycurgus, Mohammed, Napoleon, who were its true engines. Designed by nature itself to play the role of “masters of fate”, they boldly rebelled against the existing order and at the same time boldly violated universally recognized moral norms, not stopping at violence and crime in order to impose their will on humanity. Cursed by their contemporaries, such “extraordinary people” were later justified by posterity, who recognized them as heroes of history and benefactors of mankind.

Trying to find a way out of the unbearable conditions for a vulnerable soul, he does not find it, but only confirms himself even more in his “rightness”.

Initially, even before the fact of the crime, Raskolnikov felt himself in the category of “inferior”, and his proud nature did not want to accept this. Confirmation of the presence of a feeling of shame that tears the hero's soul and protects him from this feeling is, as F. M. Dostoevsky noted, “demonic pride”. Moreover, this pride leads him to substitute goals: Now the victory over his nature, overcoming his power over the spirit becomes the “super task” that the hero solves in his crime (Morozuk et al., 2024a, pp. 18-19). The tragedy of what is happening lies in the fact that Raskolnikov, having allowed himself to commit a crime, could not classify himself

as “superior”, and remained on the side of the “inferior”.

Oh, if I were alone and no one loved me, and I would never love anyone myself! “All this would not have happened!” says Raskolnikov. The criminal, and almost everyone, at the moment of the crime is subjected to some kind of decline of will and reason, replaced by childish phenomenal frivolity... The old woman was just a disease... I didn’t kill a man, I killed a principle! I killed the principle, but I didn’t cross it, I stayed on this side. (Morozyuk et al., 2024a, pp. 12-13)

The hero’s inescapable love for people is actually experienced as a burden, as a cross, from which he inevitably tries to free himself.

... I wanted to become Napoleon, that’s why I killed him!—Tormented by guilt, he says in the confession scene to Sonya.—“Napoleons” are those who are “not made like him”, who are “not made of a body, but of bronze”. The “Napoleons” step through obstacles without thinking, without knowing, without feeling the resistance of human nature. (Morozyuk et al., 2024a,)

The “idea of Napoleonism” captures the soul of Raskolnikov, who has not yet crossed, but is already crossing. Shame for one’s lowly position and guilt in front of loved ones for one’s inadequacy, helplessness act as a source of creating a philosophy of murder, a philosophy that allows one to step “through obstacles without hesitation, without knowing, without feeling the resistance of human nature”.

We find confirmation of the guilt of the hero of terror in Raskolnikov’s reaction to the contents of his mother’s letter to him.:

And what is this she writes to me: “Love Dunya, Rodya, and she loves you more than herself; is it not remorse that secretly torments her for having agreed to sacrifice her daughter to her son?” “You are our hope, you are our everything.” Oh, Mother...!—Raskolnikov read, and anger boiled up in him stronger and stronger... (Morozyuk et al., 2024a, p. 75)

The psychological mechanism that triggers suffering from shame, guilt, and resentment is the automatism of thinking “the discrepancy between the behavior of others and expectations” (in the reflexive profile, this indicator is significantly pronounced—89%), i.e. the mental habit of building unrealistic, inflated expectations for others, for the world (resentment), for oneself (shame, guilt).

“Of course, in this case, even many benefactors of humanity who did not inherit power, but seized it”, Raskolnikov reflects, “should have been executed at their very first steps. But those people endured their steps, and therefore they are right, but I did not endure it, and therefore I had no right to allow myself this step”.

It seemed to Raskolnikov before committing the murder that he had thought ahead and accurately calculated all the circumstances of the crime. But real life turns out to be much more complicated than the abstract, “bookish” dreams of the hero. Instead of one old pawnbroker, Raskolnikov found himself forced to kill her younger sister, the meek, downtrodden and wordless Lizaveta, who unexpectedly returned home and found him at the scene of the crime. He was not only deceived into believing that all the circumstances of the crime could be accurately weighed and determined by reason ahead, but he was even more mistaken in himself, thinking that the crime would in no way affect his attitude to the outside world and the people around him. Raskolnikov believed that he was morally responsible for his actions only to himself and that the judgment of others was indifferent to him. However, as the author of *Crime and Punishment* irrefutably shows, an individual is by no means a “loner”, as rationalist thinkers in the XVIII century considered him. A person not only lives in society, is inextricably linked by every act of his activity with other people, but also carries society in himself, in his heart; he is woven with his whole being into a network of seemingly imperceptible, but in reality inextricably connecting him with others, constantly active connections and relationships. Forcibly severing these ties is tantamount to spiritual and

physical suicide for a person. Therefore, after the murder, Raskolnikov felt with ever-increasing force a heavy and painful feeling of “disconnection and disconnection from humanity”. His closest people, his mother and sister, turn out to be infinitely distant, almost strangers to him. By his crime, Raskolnikov, as he gradually painfully realizes, has placed himself outside the elementary, but at the same time indestructible laws of human society. He thought to kill the loathsome, disgusting, and useless old woman, a moneylender who sucks the blood of the poor, as the hero of the novel himself formulates his position in a conversation with Sonya, but he killed himself.

How does our hero defend himself from the terror of guilt and shame?

He rationalizes, devalues the object of the crime with the help of defensive reflection, and nullifies its value. The result of this process fits well into his philosophy of murder, justifies, and allows him to transcend the human in man.

“On the one hand, a stupid, senseless, insignificant, evil, sick old lady, unnecessary to anyone and, on the contrary, harmful to everyone, who does not know what she lives for, and who will die of her own accord tomorrow...” says Raskolnikov in a dialogue with Razumikhin.—On the other hand, there are a hundred, a thousand good deeds and undertakings that can be arranged and improved with the old woman’s money, doomed to a monastery! Hundreds, thousands, maybe, of existences aimed at the road; dozens of families saved from poverty, death, debauchery, and disease—and all with her money... In one lifetime, thousands of lives saved from decay and decay. One life and a hundred lives in return—but there’s arithmetic here!” »(Morozyuk et al., 2024a, pp. 102-103).

At the same time, our hero self-deprecates himself. To the great annoyance of those who defended his honor, the criminal himself did not try to defend himself, to the final questions: What exactly could have inclined him to murder, he answered very clearly, with the most brutal precision... he decided on murder because of his frivolous and cowardly character, irritated by the hardships of failures (Morozyuk et al., 2024a, p. 621).

The verdict turned out to be more merciful than could have been expected, but the criminal not only did not want to justify himself, but expressed a desire to accuse himself even more...oh, how happy he would be if he could accuse himself! He would have endured everything then, even the shame and disgrace. But he judged himself severely, and his hardened conscience found no particularly terrible guilt in his past, except perhaps for a simple blunder that could happen to anyone...

He was ashamed precisely of the fact that he, Raskolnikov, had died so blindly, hopelessly, dully, and stupidly, according to some verdict of blind fate, and he had to humble himself and submit to the “nonsense” of some verdict if he wanted to somehow calm himself.

There was only one thing he admitted to his crime: that he had not endured it and had turned himself in.

Both F. M. Dostoevsky himself and his hero belong to those natures for whom the outside world is a source of constant inquisitive thought, a source of observation and anxiety. It is no coincidence that almost half of the pages of *Crime and Punishment* are devoted by the author to describing the lonely wanderings of the protagonist around the city, during which the pictures of the desperately difficult life of the capital’s poor are widely revealed to him. Dostoevsky warmly sympathizes with his hero’s indignation against the existing society. And at the same time, the image of a deep discrepancy between Raskolnikov’s righteous indignation at the pain and suffering of people and the injustice of his individualistic rebellion (based on contrasting himself with other people and exalting himself above them) (Morozyuk et al., 2024b).

We cannot disagree with Adler, who argued in his writings that any achievement (in this case, a crime) that

does not benefit society reduces one's sense of self-importance and leads to contradiction with social tasks and the interrelationships of life. "...these people took this path because they lacked the courage to do useful things" (2023).

So, our hero's reflexive strategies are a reflection aimed at protecting himself from experiencing, first of all, feelings of shame, to some extent guilt and existential resentment towards the whole world, which does not meet his expectations.

Reflexive tactics are self—deprecation of the "I" and rationalization—devaluation of the object. Our hero, suffering from negative experiences, creates a philosophy of life, his theory, which protects him from the fear of failure and gives him the right to "step over".

The starting point for the formation of criminal behavior is the idea of the imperfection and injustice of the world in relation to oneself and others "offended and offended". Reflecting on the experience that traumatizes his delicate nature forms a pathogenic philosophy of everyday life, and creates pathogenic worldviews such as readiness for criminal behavior.

Rodion Raskolnikov's protective (pathogenic in nature) reflection, thirst for illusory happiness, invented by him, initially set an unhealthy relationship context, triggering a tragic process. By sacrificing another, he could neither overcome his "retrograde" nature nor become Napoleon.

The challenge that our hero dares to make to the foundations of society by committing murders and destroying morality ends with the collapse of his theory, the painful realization of the insignificance of his personality, the depth of his moral decline: "I killed myself, not an old lady! I just killed myself all at once, forever", he admits with despair.

Conclusion

The study of the psychological characteristics of literary characters using a psychological tool (Cognitive-Emotive test) defines a new vector of research into the inner world of a person.

We see the prospect of further research in this direction in the study of the reflection of real personalities who have committed a violent crime against a person. Based on a representative sample, it is possible to create a reflective portrait of a person prone to such crimes. Timely assistance in the practice of psychological counseling will make it possible to prevent tragic personality choices.

References

- Adler, A. (2023). *Essays on individual psychology*. Moscow: AST.
- Dostoevsky, F. M. (2023). *Crime and punishment*. St. Petersburg: ABC, ABC-Atticus.
- Morozyuk, S. N. (2013). *Psychology of character: Phenomenology, theory and practice*. Moscow: Vldos Publ.
- Morozyuk, S. N., Morozyuk, Y. V., & Kuznetsova, E. S. (2024a). Pathogenic reflection as a factor of suicidal behavior (on the example of the analysis of reflections and behavior of Katerina from the play by A. N. Ostrovsky "Thunderstorm" and Anna from the novel by L. N. Tolstoy "Anna Karenina"). *J. The World of Psychology*, 118(3), 165-171.
- Morozyuk, S. N., Morozyuk, Y. V., & Kuznetsova, E. S. (May 2024b). Features of reflection of persons with paranoid personality disorder. *American-Chinese Educational Review A*, 14(5), 299-306.
- Orlov, Y. M. (1999). *Cognitive-emotive test*. Moscow: IP Child.
- Orlov, Y. M. (2006). *Sanogenic (healing) thinking*. Moscow: Sliding.
- Pisarev, D. I. (1868). *Pisarev the complete collection, in 6 volumes, with a portrait of the author and a critical and biographical article about D.I. Pisarev [Evgeny Solovyov] at the last volume*. T. 6. — 1894. — [2], LII, 548 pages, [1] L. front. (portr.).
- Tikhomirov, B. N. (2016). *Lazarus! Come out. F. M. Dostoevsky's novel Crime and punishment in a modern interpretation: A book commentary* (2nd ed.). St. Petersburg: Silver Age.