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## Empty Souls: Confession and Forgiveness in Hegel and Dostoevsky

Ryan Johnson

“Spirit is *this movement* of the Self which empties itself of itself...”  
—Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

### **The Haymarket**

“Towards the end of a sultry afternoon early in July a young man came out of his little room in Stolyarny Lane and turned and in the direction of Kameny Bridge in central St. Petersburg.”<sup>1</sup> Right then, this young man, a former law student named Rodion Raskolnikov, is caught in an agonizing conversation with himself over whether or not to commit the ultimate crime: to murder an innocent person. Exasperated, wondering what to do with such a weighty decision, he cried aloud, “that’s why I don’t act, because I am always talking. Or perhaps I talk so much just because I can’t act.”<sup>2</sup> On this occasion, he decided not to actualize his thoughts, and so kept on pondering. A little later, as he wandered through the dusty streets of the lively St. Petersburg public market, the young man again relapses into contemplation of the character of his existence, its worth, and its meaning. If he ever did decide to commit such evil, the act would determine what kind of man he is. It is a question of the movement from thought to action.

In order to sort out these competing thoughts and the possible meanings of Raskolnikov’s character, I turn to the Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>3</sup> On a Hegelian reading, the contemplative young man is caught dithering amongst three types of “self”: (1) self as “legal person,” (2) self as “moral consciousness,” and (3) self as “conscience.” Each type of self is identified by means of a problematic relation between the *individual* and the *universal*. The first two types fail to properly make such a relation harmonize, and the third form is the culmination of the failures of the first two. Without reducing him with any one of these types of self, situating Raskolnikov’s contemplation in Hegel’s Dialectic of Conscience illuminates the psychological and philosophical complexities of Dostoevsky’s character. Let’s look at the three selves and how they negotiate the individual-universal relationship.

(1) *Legal Person*. Until a few months prior, Raskolnikov had been attending law classes at the University, hoping to become what Hegel calls a “legal person” (*Selbst der Person*).<sup>4</sup> Such a self is legal in the sense that law, legality as a system of explicitly defined laws, exists beyond, yet applies to, every individual citizen. Just as a law (an abstract universal) is applied to a concrete deed (a particular), a legal person is an abstract universal category that is applied to concrete individuals. To be a legal person, then, an individual must be identified as a general type of person, a student, a policeman, a pawnbroker, etc. This is the case when say, other people recognize Raskolnikov as *only* a law student, nothing more than that.<sup>5</sup> Everything else that he may be – e.g., a violinist, a brother, a cook, etc. – is overlooked, thereby rendering him “devoid of substance...an abstract reality.”<sup>6</sup> There is nothing more to being a legal person than merely *counting* as a *particular* example of *general* kind of person. Who is he? Oh, he is just a law student, nothing more than that. There is thus a schism between the individuality of Raskolnikov and the universal category that is supposed to define him.

(2) *Moral Consciousness*. Before long, Raskolnikov finds himself in the antechamber of the apartment of Alena Ivanova, an elderly pawnbroker. He first identifies himself by proclaiming his legal personhood: “I am Raskolnikov, a student, I was here a month ago.”<sup>7</sup> The old woman remembers him, but not merely as a law student. To her, he is more than that; he is obliged to fulfill a promise: to pay his debt. Since she was always suspicious of him, she now sees through that empty shell, beyond being merely law student. Hegel would say that she sees him as a “self of moral consciousness.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike the self *qua* law student, the self *qua* moral consciousness prevents reducing someone to a general kind of person. Moral consciousness brings with it a new form of relation between individual and universal: the individual takes as “object and content of the self” the universal law beyond.<sup>9</sup> Rather than being simply defined as “law student,” Raskolnikov, as a moral consciousness, aims to fulfill the imperative of the moral law. In sum, there are two different and inverted relationships between universal and individual in these two forms of self: a *legal person* moves from universal to individual, while a *moral consciousness* moves from individual to universal. Put differently, a moral consciousness is defined by the duty to fulfill the law, and this is more a “striving to fulfill” than a “being defined by.”

Now that his debt was two days overdue, it was time Raskolnikov paid it back and thus held up his side of the contract on which he and the pawnbroker had previously agreed. And yet, even this duty is too abstract. For although Raskolnikov had

committed himself to repay his debt, he does not do so. Instead, he remains caught in “an insincere play of alternating between these two determinations”—whether to repay the debt or to escape it through a violent crime.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the contract that they had both agreed to fulfill does not recognize who each of them is beyond their respective duties to fulfill it: to the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov is just a debtor; to him, she is merely his creditor. Thus, in moral consciousness, there is a schism between individual (Raskolnikov and the pawnbroker) and universal (the contract).

(3) *Conscience*. Conscience (*Gewissen*), the third form of self, is the reconciliation of the schism between individual and universal that legal personhood and moral consciousness fail to overcome. In conscience, individual and universal coincide. Being neither an empty legal person nor a duty-bound moral self, the conscience emerges through *concrete action*. Unlike the legal person, wherein the general type “law student” fails to account for the specificity of Raskolnikov’s individuality, conscience indicates a type of person who acts.<sup>11</sup> Conscience determines what it means to be a law student not merely through words but through real action. Unlike the moral self, wherein Raskolnikov’s duty to repay his debt is fulfilled, conscience is the actual carrying out of duty. In short, the problem of the two previous forms of self (legal person and moral consciousness) is that they are not able to overcome the schism between universality and individuality, abstraction and concretion, possibility and actuality. In conscience, by contrast, the members of a real community all recognize each other’s actual individuality through what I will later call “conscientious forgiveness.” This diagram may help clarify the different forms of relationship between individuality and universality in the three types of self:

Legal Person: Universal (law student) → individual (Raskolnikov)

Moral Consciousness: Universal (contract) ← individual (Raskolnikov & pawnbroker)

Conscience: Universal ↔ individual = Concrete action

As we will soon see, conscience is not the end of the story. In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov’s gratuitous act provokes a twisted tale of hatred, evil, confession, and forgiveness that gathers together other acting individuals so as to form a community. Starting from the various ways of addressing the schism between individual and universal that we see embodied by the three forms of self in Hegel’s Dialectic of Conscience, we can now begin to situate the way in which the schism is not actually overcome by Raskolnikov’s act but is instead perpetuated by it.

### The Hatred and the Act

While drinking tea at a tired old tavern, Raskolnikov stumbled upon an idea, “a strange idea [that] seemed to be pecking away in his head, like a chicken emerging from the shell.”<sup>12</sup> While the idea was still in its embryonic stage, he overheard a conversation between a student and a young officer about Alena Ivanovna, the pawnbroker he had just visited. Although the coincidence occurred at the merest of chances, the effect was quite extraordinary. Raskolnikov listened intently. As expected, the two had nothing good to say about the wary old widow. In fact, the students’ spiteful words betrayed the coldest and most utilitarian of probing questions: “don’t you think that thousands of good deeds will wipe out one little, insignificant transgression...why, it’s simple arithmetic! What is the life of that stupid, spiteful, consumptive old woman weighed against the common good?”<sup>13</sup> After lingering over these moral queries for a bit, the student makes a most pressing observation, one that particularly piques Raskolnikov’s interest. “I swear I could kill that damned old woman and rob her, without a single twinge of *conscience*.”<sup>14</sup> This leads Raskolnikov to pose such a question to himself: “Can I,” he thinks, “really be capable of *that*? Am I really serious?”<sup>15</sup>

At just this moment we see, in the mind of Raskolnikov, the coincidence of the first two selves, mere inversions of each other. On the one hand, the first self as legal person, wherein the individual is defined abstractly through its membership in a community, is sacrificed to the greater good. On the other hand, the second self of moral conscience, defined by the individual’s duty to fulfill the moral law, sacrifices the moral law because it can never be enacted. Later we will see that it might not have been a mere coincidence that Raskolnikov was listening “at this particular moment to that particular talk and those particular ideas when there had just been born in his own brain *exactly the same ideas*?”<sup>16</sup> Such thoughts continue to haunt him long after that fateful night at the tavern.

After sleeping for almost an entire day, Raskolnikov awoke to the shudder of the same dialectical machinery whirring away in his mind. Amidst the height of the “feverish bustle” of this depraved economy, all other duties—duties to family, to the pawnbroker, to the university, to the law, etc.—were silenced by an emergent conviction.<sup>17</sup> At first unbeknownst to him, it “had somehow come about that the whole project had been analyzed and finally decided down to the last detail, and no further doubts remained...*he had convinced himself*.”<sup>18</sup> This is the emergence of the self as conscience, that is, “simple action ...which fulfills not this or that duty, but knows and

does what is concretely right.”<sup>19</sup> Now convinced, Raskolnikov begins to enact the plan. First, he sews the loop in his tattered jacket so he can conceal the murder weapon, an axe he stole from his landlady; then he concocts a fake “pledge” of money; finally, at seven-thirty that night, only an hour-and-a-half after his conviction has crystallized, he finds himself grasping the pull-string of the door-bell of the rotten pawnbroker. Raskolnikov knows his purpose, and he has the absolute conviction that he must act according to his duty.

Let’s pause here and ask a question: How did Raskolnikov come to decide and act with such conviction? As Hegel puts it, “just this knowing as *its own* knowing, as conviction [*Überzeugung*], is *duty* [*Pflicht*].”<sup>20</sup> While the second self, the abstract and empty moral consciousness, could not reach that point of conviction, and thus could not act but remains caught between the purity of acting and talking, Raskolnikov acts. Acting conscientiously, he conforms to his own individual duty in order to be himself. Here we see Hegel’s definition of conscience—the inner conviction by which duty defines the self—operating in *Crime and Punishment*.<sup>21</sup> Raskolnikov’s duty to kill the old woman derives from his conviction that he should do so. Acting according to his conscience, Raskolnikov identifies himself immediately with what he takes to be his duty. In this way, acting is a process of self-making. What it means to be a *self-prior-to-acting* and the actual existence of the *self-having-acted* are perfectly united, which also means that the particular and the universal are equally united. “It is now that the law exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of action...The action is thus only the translation of [Raskolnikov’s] *individual* content into the object[ive] element.”<sup>22</sup> By killing the old woman, Raskolnikov’s conviction, his duty, and his subjectivity attain “standing and real existence.”<sup>23</sup> The abstractness of duty (of moral consciousness) is lost, or perhaps it is made concrete through the actualization of one man’s conviction that he is doing the right thing, exactly as he should.

Although Raskolnikov knows he is acting rightly, he is aware that “reality is a plurality of circumstances which breaks up and spreads out endlessly in all directions, backwards into their conditions, sideways into their connections, forwards in their consequences.”<sup>24</sup> This is an inherent feature of conscience: admitting that moral knowledge is incomplete and fallible means that action, since it is based only on *its* knowledge, is also fallible. Despite such contingency, “this *incomplete* knowledge is held by the conscientious mind to be sufficient and complete, because it is *its own* knowledge.”<sup>25</sup> Unlike Kantian morality, in which the moral act can never be conclusively decided, acting conscientiously exhausts duty.<sup>26</sup> There is no danger of

disjunction between duty and act. Although he is only one man, although his knowledge is incomplete, Raskolnikov knows with complete self-certainty that he has performed his duty.

When Raskolnikov was eavesdropping at the tavern, we might have assumed that he acted because the “general good is to be preferred to action for the good of the individual.”<sup>27</sup> Yet such reasoning derives from a purely formal law, and is thus abstract and empty. To act from conscience, by contrast, as Raskolnikov did, is to act according to a law “from which conscience knows itself to be absolutely free, and [to] give [himself] authority to add to and take from, to neglect as well as fulfill it.”<sup>28</sup> This seeming tension between universal and individual, however, is premised upon the reciprocal interplay between individual and community. “The truth is rather that what the individual does for himself also contributes to the general good.”<sup>29</sup> That is, the individual lives and acts in direct contact with others. This is why trying to act according to a pure duty or formal law, by “calculating and weighing duties,” actually delays or even prevents action.<sup>30</sup> Acting as a conscientious individual, Raskolnikov makes his own decision without recourse to any universal law. This means that nothing can count as a reason for action unless one takes it as one’s own, as one’s reason and purpose. Raskolnikov is thus the epitome of what Hegel calls “the self-assured Spirit.”<sup>31</sup> The source of his action is self-imposed. He acts with “the validity of law.”<sup>32</sup> In terms of conscience, then, a law acquires legislative force only if it is self-legislative. This is the right of subjectivity. As Hegel puts it, “in the strength of [his] own self-assurance [he] possesses the majesty of absolute autarchy [*absoluten Autarkie*].”<sup>33</sup> That Raskolnikov took the murder of the pawnbroker *as his duty* is thus what *makes it his duty*.<sup>34</sup>

### **From Evil to Language**

This does not, however, mean that just because Raskolnikov acted according to self-legislation, he is beyond reproach. The idea that the moral worth of an act is based on its intention reveals one of the greatest dangers with purely formal and intention-based moralities. In Kantian morality, for example, to say that an act is morally praiseworthy if it is based on a good intention, if it corresponds to the moral law, is to disregard its actual consequences.<sup>35</sup> Such a morality, Hegel reveals, misses something important about duty and action. In *Crime and Punishment*, even if Raskolnikov *intends* to do good, at a certain point the *consequences matter*. If his killing of the pawnbroker sets him on an endless killing spree, and even if always he “intends” to do good, we would still reproach him for his actions. This reveals one of the advantages of

conscience over moral consciousness: conscience evaluates *both* the intention *and* the consequences of actions. While others might recognize that Raskolnikov acted conscientiously, the consequences of his action are still susceptible to judgment. Although Raskolnikov is absolutely certain of his self-imposed duty, once that duty is fulfilled or actualized, his action exceeds his identity. Why? Because the action, like all action, has unforeseeable consequences that retroactively determine the action in some way or other. That is, the action is held up for others to freely evaluate the action in terms of the ways in which it affects the community. “Both sides, the conscience that acts and the universal consciousness that acknowledges this action as duty, are equally free from the specificity of this action.”<sup>36</sup> Despite his clear conviction, which is based on certain though incomplete knowledge, his hands are not perfectly clean. This reveals the failure of conscience: firm conviction or intention does not entail the rightness of an act. And this is why conscience requires a further set of categories, i.e., evil, remorse, guilt, and regret, as well as categories of crime, confession, punishment, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Thus, despite his conviction, his action, like all human action, is instable.

“Others, therefore, do not know whether this conscience is morally good or evil [*böse*].”<sup>37</sup> Other people must be free to consider the action in order to judge it. Equally so, Raskolnikov must freely consider the action, albeit from the opposite perspective: not in order to judge, but in order to *justify* his action. He must stand forth, before the community, and claim the action as his own. The essence of the action is thus both *for-oneself* and *for-another*, *in-itself* and *for-us*. This is why it is possible for others to simultaneously agree that Raskolnikov acted conscientiously, and yet disagree about the best interpretation of the content. In short, although he is the *author* of his action, and others recognize him as the author, he does not have *authority* over the meanings of his deed.

What is needed, then, is a “common medium [*allgemeine Medium*] of their connection,” something that brings the individuals into a moral community: *language*.<sup>38</sup> “Language [*Sprache*],” Hegel claims, “is self-consciousness existing *for others*” and for itself.<sup>39</sup> Through language, Raskolnikov becomes directly present to others and to himself. Although language is operative in any form of self, language acquires a new dimension in conscience that distinguishes it from the two other forms of self: legal person and moral consciousness. While the legal person can only speak in abstract “law and simple command,” and moral consciousness, lacking any concrete language at all, remains mute and dumb, in conscience, “[l]anguage, however, emerges

as the middle term.”<sup>40</sup> Through language, conscience is able to explain publicly its account of why it acted. That is, the language at play in the legal and moral selves lacks performative articulation that could “fit” Raskolnikov’s individual, concrete deed. Or, legal or moral language fails to reconcile universal and normative demands with a particular deed. In conscience, though, the individual actor articulates what he takes to be the meaning of his deed to an actual community that can accept or reject said meaning. The resolute conviction that Raskolnikov took as his self-legislated duty thus becomes meaningful through linguistic pronouncement [*Aussprachen*]. In language, the “distinction between the universal consciousness and the individual self is just what has been superseded, and the supersession of it is conscience.”<sup>41</sup> Raskolnikov, and everyone else who stands witness to this declaration, thus mutually acknowledge each other as conscientious selves.

### **The Schism that is Raskolnikov**

In *Crime and Punishment*, however, this is not exactly how things unfold. While the first part of the text depicts the events leading up to the crime and the crime itself, the remaining parts detail the punishment that follow the criminal act. After killing the pawnbroker and her hapless sister, Raskolnikov is caught in the throes of near delirium. He acted, thereby fulfilling what he understood as his duty, and thus defined himself as a murderer. Yet the action is not recognized as *his* action, which is why he is not yet identified with the act. Once the mortal act is finished, although the wretched widows are dead, the deed lives on insofar as it becomes possible to interpret the deed a variety of ways. The deed thus has life beyond the supposed *fait accompli*. In this way, Raskolnikov loses the moral certainty and moral identity that he was previously convinced he possessed. The rest of the text then occurs in this space between: on the one hand, fulfillment of the fatal fact in the vile act, and on the other hand, the declaration of his conviction, through the form of a confession, to the public. Like his namesake, Raskolnikov is split.<sup>42</sup> The axe with which he killed the deplorable sisters cleaves apart his own soul, creating a schism that continues to split until, finally, he confesses and his deed is recognized. This schism opens just a day after Raskolnikov commits the deed. He is at the police station for an unrelated summons. Sitting in the station, he overhears a recounting of his own crime, and two contradictory desires unfurl in Raskolnikov’s soul: the desire to confess and be forgiven and the desire to maintain his freedom. Caught in this tension, Raskolnikov loses consciousness and collapses onto the floor.

Both of these competing desires correspond to moments in Hegel's story. On the one hand, there is the desire to remain out of jail. In this case, Raskolnikov, "in the majesty of [his] elevation above specific law and every content of duty, puts whatever content [he] pleases into [his] knowing and willing. [He] is the moral genius."<sup>43</sup> This is the first sign of his punishment. Since he can define himself in whatever way he chooses, without corroborative recognition from the community, he begins to feel more and more estranged from the rest of humanity. Since the community does not confirm or deny what he takes himself to be, any definition of himself is ephemeral. He loses his connection to other people, and so retracts into his own head, where he hears a single voice that repeats the same words over and over, as if he was the only one to whom god spoke. He does not respond to the call of others, but only to the divine imperative within. Calling this a moment of "solitary divine worship," Hegel claims this "moral genius knows the inner voice of what [he] immediately knows to be a divine voice."<sup>44</sup> To the unsuspecting outside world, Raskolnikov seems like a pitiable victim of bad health and unfortunate circumstances. Yet this very misrecognition, this failure to identify the person with his act, drives the wedge further into Raskolnikov's soul, and increases the burning desire to confess and to declare himself in front of his ingenuous friends and family. Failure to reconcile the person and the act means that, while the act may still be considered criminal, the person who acted lacks such definition, and so lacks meaningful existence. What it means for Raskolnikov to be an *actual* person requires that others recognize his actions as *his* actions. On the other hand, Raskolnikov also wants to confess, so much so that his desire becomes a gnawing obsession, and so starts to affect his physical demeanor. Although others do not recognize his true self, they notice that he is consumed by an inner struggle. As Hegel says of conscience, Raskolnikov "is divided into the antithesis of [him]self and [his] object which is, for [him], essence; but it is just this object that is perfectly transparent, is [his] own *self*, and [his] consciousness is only this knowledge of [him]self."<sup>45</sup> Razumikhin, Raskolnikov's university friend, notices this schism within Raskolnikov when he says, "it is as if he had two separate personalities, each dominating him alternately."<sup>46</sup>

Raskolnikov withdraws both into and away from himself in that he chooses to follow the first of these desires, the desire to escape incarceration. In order to maintain his freedom, he must eradicate the heart-wrenching gap. Only by erasing his guilt will he prevent himself from unwittingly confessing. The first attempt to remove evidence of his guilt is to hide the stolen goods. Raskolnikov finds an inconspicuous stone resting in an empty courtyard and does his best to conceal the lucre. Unlike the stolen

goods, however, the desire to confess is not so easily secreted underneath the little stone, as the competing desires become “extreme abstractions, none of which endures but each of which loses itself in the other and produces it.”<sup>47</sup> At one point in the story, Raskolnikov returns to the scene of the crime and angrily asks two workers why they removed all the blood. At another point, while talking to the police inspector Zamyotov, he basically confesses, albeit under a sardonic guise. Slowly but surely, he lets enough hints of his guilt slip out in seemingly innocuous conversation that the alert and perceptive Porfiry Petrovich, the acting magistrate, begins to suspect him. Despite these semi-camouflaged acts of self-destruction, despite trying to redeem himself through altruistic acts, such as giving the family of the dead drunkard Marmeladov twenty rubles, the madness of his repressed guilt eventually returns.

### **A Complex Web of Duties, Deeds, and Declarations**

Amidst this increasingly forceful Dialectic of Conscience, language comes on the scene in a most interesting way. After agreeing to go to the funeral of the drunken Marmeladov, Raskolnikov and Razumikhin visit the home of Porfiry Petrovich, who, along with sweet Sonya, later convinces Raskolnikov to confess his crime. After some conversation, the progressively apprehensive Raskolnikov suspects that Porfiry already recognizes him as the true perpetrator of the two murders. At the height of Raskolnikov’s suspicion on this visit, just before he is about to confess the crime, Porfiry mentions an article that Raskolnikov had written, which, without Raskolnikov’s knowing, had been published two months prior. The article, entitled “Concerning Crime,” surveyed “the psychological condition of a crime throughout the commission of the crime.”<sup>48</sup> The main topic of their discussion of the article is a justification for the deed that Raskolnikov would later commit.

The article details two types of men: ordinary men and extraordinary men.<sup>49</sup> While ordinary men must follow the moral codes governing a particular culture, extraordinary men, such as Napoleon or Newton, are not subject to such standard. Because of this difference, “[o]rdinary ones must live in submission and have no right to transgress the laws, because, you see, they are ordinary. And the extraordinary have the right to commit any crime and break every kind of law just because they are extraordinary.”<sup>50</sup> This is not to say that the extraordinary man has a “formal, official, right, but he has the right in himself, to permit his *conscience* to overstep...certain obstacles, but only in the event that his ideas...require it for their fulfillment.”<sup>51</sup> Raskolnikov, like Hegel, even claims that all the “law-givers and regulators of human society...were without

exception transgressors.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, Raskolnikov, through the uncontrollable force of language, confesses his crime without actually confessing, a confession in excess of itself.

This point in the text is especially interesting because Porphyry, Razumikhin, and Zamyotov form the beginnings of a community of mutually acknowledging selves simultaneously caught in what might be called a closed linguistic feedback loop. Consider the structure of the scene. In the presence of the very detective who will eventually elicit his confession, Raskolnikov announces the justification for his crimes. He pronounces the confession without confessing, the justification without the crime, the understanding but not the act. Moreover, Raskolnikov commits the murder after his own article has publicly announced (granted, unbeknownst to him) the justification for the act. To put it in Hegelese, the article/confession was written *for himself*, sent out for publication *for others*, yet it was published *in itself* (or without the author’s knowledge) *for us*, and was eventually received, by the author, as existing *in and for itself*. It is at this point that language, the “common medium of their connection,” seems thickest. The article assumes a life of its own. At the time of its publication, however, it referred to a future act that was only later actualized. In the end, the community of moral judges is caught amidst competing interpretations of this complex web of duties, deeds, and declarations.

It should now be clear that morality is quite insecure. No moral deed is done. No moral certainty is grounded. Something uncontrollable always lingers on. For example, after returning to his apartment Raskolnikov learns that a stranger had come to his room and asked for him while he was at the detective’s house. Catching up to the stranger on the street, the man mysteriously calls Raskolnikov a “‘murderer!’...in a low but distinct voice.”<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, Raskolnikov does not deny the deed. The tiny community of moral judges, although not yet determinate, is quickly growing. Later that same night, he dreams of killing the pawnbroker for a second time. This time, however, she does not die but simply laughs at him as he wildly swings his axe, mocking his own deed. Through this laughter, Raskolnikov is stripped bare, left helpless, unable to define himself independently of the recognition of others. Thus, his “activity is a yearning which merely loses [him]self as consciousness, becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above this loss, and falling back on [him]self, finds [him]self only as a lost soul.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The Unavoidability of Evil**

After securing care and protection for his distraught mother, Pulkheria Alexandrovna, and her unfortunate sister, Dunya, Raskolnikov, although not explicitly, decides to confess. While he still acts as if he wishes to remain free and conceal his guilt a while longer, he continues to set up what will become the members of his moral community. This is the membership of the community thus far:

- 1) *Razumikhin*, his friend with whom “some idea, something like a hint, something terrible and monstrous, was suddenly understood on both sides.”
- 2) Sonya, the prostitute and daughter of the dead drunkard Marmeladov and the girl he eventually comes to love, the first one to receive his confession.
- 3) *Svidrigailov*, the widower and spurned admirer of Raskolnikov’s sister Dunya, who surreptitiously learns of the crime while listening in on Raskolnikov’s confession from the room adjacent to Sonya’s.
- 4) *Porfiry*, the clever investigating magistrate, who knows the author of the crime early on and slowly deploys psychological tricks in order to elicit Raskolnikov’s confession.

With the community established, Raskolnikov is nearly ready to confess. And yet, his confession is delayed. Just when Raskolnikov is closest to conceding his crime to Porfiry, Nikolai, the painter who was held under suspicion of the murder of the two forsaken sisters, bursts into the room and claims responsibility. Porfiry, however, does not really believe Nikolai’s confession and eventually determines the true culprit before he even confesses.

What we see here is that conscience not only needs a particular type of language, it also needs a particular type of community. It needs a complex moral community that allows for acknowledgement, approval, judgment, forgiveness, etc. The need for external expression of Raskolnikov’s conviction means that conscience is not wholly withdrawn, not solely in the head. Conscience is not simply a little voice that only Raskolnikov can hear. *Conscience is a voice that desires to be voiced, a claim that pushes to be declaimed, a call that strives to be publically recalled.* This is not to say that each self does not have a nagging voice in the head, but merely to say that those little voices do not legitimately count in the greater community.

Such a community must not, however, be merely a self-congratulatory society in which all actions are approved simply because they are conscientious. The shortcoming of such a complacent community is a failure of recognition: since every act in such a nonjudgmental community is pre-approved, this community cannot recognize significant action; it cannot recognize transgression. In *Crime and Punishment*, by contrast, the community slowly forming around the figure of Raskolnikov is what we might call a “recognitive” community.<sup>55</sup> This is a community that, for example, recognizes that Napoleon transgressed treaties and that Caesar committed atrocious deeds. And despite that, or even for that very reason, a recognitive community acknowledges such transgressions as actions taken for the sake of justice. The unjust acts of these extraordinary men oppose *present justice* in the name of *new justice*—a justice-to-come. Yet in order for such acts to count as significant acts, there must be a community to recognize them as significant. This is why Raskolnikov’s need for the kind of community to which he can confess grows stronger throughout the story. As he wrote in his article and then defended against Porfiry, he needs to know whether or not he is an ordinary or an extraordinary man, and the only way to do that, he is convinced, is to act and be recognized by others as the actor. As he says, “I wanted to make myself a Napoleon, and that is why I killed her.”<sup>56</sup> Hegel agrees with this assessment, although he radicalizes it even further. For Hegel, every significant act is a transgression. Consider, for example, the figures he most often mentions—Antigone, Caesar, Napoleon, etc. They are all transgressive individuals, whose transgressions announce a justice-to-come.

The necessity of confessing to a recognitive community is both an affirmation of immanently produced universals *and* a denial of transcendent universal norms. In this way, universals are no longer ahistorical and atemporal, as they were with legal persons and moral consciousness, but arise only through individual action. This is why laws and norms are distinctly historical, temporally and spatially particular. With confession, the will (*Willkür*) that Raskolnikov asserts through his act is not a denial of the deed, not a claim to goodness, but a particular confession of a particular evil. Even more so, this confession means that both the observers forming the community and the community itself are equally particular. No one is above the utter particularity of the community. Each simply asserts his own respective will, conviction, or duty against another. In sum, Raskolnikov “admits, in fact, to being evil by asserting that [he] acts, in opposition to the acknowledged universal, according to [his] *own* inner law and conscience.”<sup>57</sup> *To be evil, then, is what it means to be a subject, be a finite self acting*

*according to one's own law as opposed to another's law.* The self and the other, then, are equally evil and opposed. Hegel says as much: “in speaking of the conscientiousness of [his] action, [he] may well be aware of [his] pure self, but in the *purpose* of [his] action, a purpose with an actual content, [he] is aware of [him]self as this particular individual, and is conscious of the antithesis between what [he] is for [him]self and what [he] is for others.”<sup>58</sup>

As Raskolnikov asserts his finite subjectivity, his evil, Porfiry et al. assert their own subjectivities in opposition to the guilty party. Both judge and actor, as finite subjects, are evil. In fact, any significant action is now considered evil because the expression of any subject's will is always opposed to another's will. Finitude, transgression, subjectivity, negation, evil—these are all basically synonymous. Evil, thus, cannot be avoided anymore than subjectivity can be avoided. Raskolnikov's confession of evil did not exclude him from the community but was instead an affirmation of the actuality of human subjectivity. To be a member of a community is then to share in a moment of being evil. This, in short, is the meaning of conscience.

Unfortunately for Raskolnikov, although he confessed his crime (and in doing so demonstrated not only the evil that constitutes his self but also the evil in the judges who constitute his community), the judges did not simply forgive and forget.<sup>59</sup> The status of the community is again rendered unstable.

### **An Unforgiveable Act**

The instability of confession leads to the instability of forgiveness. Once Raskolnikov confesses, we might expect forgiveness to follow immediately, almost like the determinate effect of a specific cause. Raskolnikov, in Hegel's words, “confesses to this other, and equally expects that the other, having in fact put himself on the same level, will also respond in words in which he will give utterance to this identity with him, and expects that this mutual recognition will now exist in fact.”<sup>60</sup> Yet things are not so easy. “[T]he confession of the one who is wicked, ‘I am so,’ is not followed by a reciprocal similar confession.”<sup>61</sup>

Although Raskolnikov admits his guilt, Porfiry does not really want the confession, for he was already certain of Raskolnikov's guilt. In fact, Porfiry is the one who told Raskolnikov he was guilty in the first place. While visiting Raskolnikov one day, Porfiry, after twice confidently accusing him of murder, expresses his lack of interest in Raskolnikov's confession. Porfiry comments, “Confess, or don't confess – its all the same to me now. I am convinced in my own mind, without that.”<sup>62</sup> Porfiry, the judging

consciousness, has no intention of identifying with the criminal. As his judge, Porfiry embodies the “hard heart [*da harte Herz*]” of the “beautiful soul” who “rejects any continuity with the other.”<sup>63</sup> He stands firm in his opposition and difference from the criminal, refusing identification and reconciliation. As we will see, the confession is actually the emptying of subjectivity, for the confessor and the judger. While such a response might initially seem severe, Porfiry’s hardness of heart is not necessarily morally wrong.

Consider the expectations contained in confession. When Raskolnikov confesses, he, in a way, attempts to cleanse himself by submitting to the power of the dialectic of the two antithetical desires—the desire for freedom and the desire to confess. This might seem to imply that the logic of confession contains a certain natural calculus: confession entails forgiveness. The assumption of such a natural law explains why a confessor feels he deserves forgiveness. Raskolnikov openly recognizes his act as evil, and he might expect others to do the same and allow him to start over with a clean slate, so to speak. The confessor might think, “I am evil, but so are you. Thus, we are all guilty.” The narrator describes how Raskolnikov’s subsequent reaction to the guilty verdict shows that he does not view himself as more guilty than anyone else. “Although he judged himself severely,” the narrator comments, “his lively conscience could find no particularly terrible guilt in his past except a simple *blunder* that might have happened to anybody.”<sup>64</sup> Raskolnikov did not consider himself guilty of anything worse than a simple gaffe. Thus some questions remain: is confession equivalent to exculpation? Whence the demand to truly forgive and forget? Even if he confesses, can the community justifiably forgive Raskolnikov? Or are some things truly unforgiveable?

Raskolnikov thinks that his “confession is not an abasement, a humiliation, a throwing-away of himself in relation to the other.”<sup>65</sup> To him, the confession is not supposed to be completely self-effacing. He still holds out the hope that he might be placed in the league of extraordinary men. Thus, despite confessing, Raskolnikov retains the belief in his independence until the very last scene of the book, when he is finally emptied of his subjectivity and recognizes his utter dependence on recognition from the others. Contrary to his expectations, however, that is exactly what a confession is: a *confession is an act of self-effacement, a throwing away of the self*. To confess is to strip away the last remaining tatters of autonomy, to tear apart every shred of selfdom, to reveal one’s impotence in front of others. Once he is stripped bare, Raskolnikov reveals his complete dependence on others for his own subjectivity. No law, no universal, no norm can ground his demand that others recognize him as the self

he wants to become. While he tried to make himself into an extraordinary man, one of those rare individuals raised above the rabble, he can only be such a self if others recognize him as that self. Thus, the crime that he commits is merely a way of testing himself, an unjustified demand that others give him the recognition he needs in order to become an extraordinary man. Since others do not recognize him as extraordinary, he discovers that he is nothing more than an ordinary man, a petty criminal. In this way, his confession reveals his hopelessness and impotence. Confession empties one's subjectivity so as to reveal only lack—a lack of power, a lack of selfhood, empty negativity. By confessing, Raskolnikov sets the sullen emptiness that is his subjectivity at the feet of the other, pleading for recognition. In a strange way, requesting forgiveness might prevent it.

### **The Impossibility of Forgiveness**

Although the chapter on conscience in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* ostensibly ends with forgiveness and reconciliation, the story of Raskolnikov puts the very possibility of such an ending in question. We may still ask some questions. Is forgiveness truly possible? Is anything truly unforgiveable? Thinking in terms of *Crime and Punishment*, is it possible to forgive, say, a murder? While Porfiry, Sonya, and the rest of his moral community of judging consciousnesses do seem to forgive Raskolnikov, a return to equilibrium and reconciliation seems, at least initially, impossible. In order to answer these questions, consider the importance of recognition in the structure of reconciliation.

In reconciliation, the victim in a crime must receive the culprit's confession. In *Crime and Punishment*, this would mean that the late pawnbroker and her sister would have to witness Raskolnikov's admission of guilt. "The reconciling *Yea*," Hegel says, "in which the two 'I's' let go their antithetical *existence*, is the *existence* of the 'I' which has expanded into a duality, and therein remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself."<sup>66</sup> Yet the two victims are dead and thus unable to receive the confession.<sup>67</sup> This would mean that the hope of reconciliation through forgiveness is stilted, reduced to a necessary yet impossible act. The two parties cannot reconcile because one party no longer exists. The living cannot identify with the dead. Since this "reciprocal recognition" is itself "*absolute Spirit*," the coming community seems lost before it is formed.<sup>68</sup> Since the departed women do not take the stand when called by the act of confession, they are not able to return to the community. To forgive seems to imply a gift and a giving, a giving of pardon, a

complete bestowment of mercy; but if the giver is not there to give, the gift cannot be sent or received.<sup>69</sup> Through this irremediable and irrecoverable loss, forgiveness would be held in abeyance. Reconciliation would be indefinitely deferred.

That being said, the impossibility of receiving forgiveness might not actually prevent its actualization. Since forgiveness is not an economy at equilibrium, guilt and forgiveness are not simply goods that can be exchanged depending on the agreement of contributing parties. To put it paradoxically, the impossibility of forgiveness makes forgiveness possible.<sup>70</sup> Once Raskolnikov is emptied of the remaining tatters of meaningful subjectivity, the gift of forgiveness must come unexpectedly, impossibly; it must come from a lack and depletion not from fullness and overflowing of life. This is why death, in this case, is almost necessary for the act of forgiveness. Let us turn to the ends of both texts to work through the sordid scaffolding of this dark logic.

### **Renewal: Forgiveness without Judgment**

In the final scene of *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov throws himself at Sonya's feet just outside the Siberian prison camp. With this act, forgiveness seems to suspend the history of his misdeed, thereby allowing Sonya to recognize the motivations for his crimes. This, in turn, allows Raskolnikov to be reborn as a new person. When the crime is murder, the victim is no longer able to forgive. This then makes forgiveness questionable, if not impossible. Yet even then, it is possible that a new self could be forged and formed from the remaining tatters of the murderer's cloak. Even if forgiveness is not, re-birth is possible. At the same time, such re-birth is not the complete erasure of the past. Instead, it is a working through the past so that the past is fully inscribed in the present and the future. The past is never lost, but actually comes to function as the material for the formation of the new self. Forgiveness, like confession, cannot purify actions, but instead raises the motivations and convictions undergirding actions so as to reformulate laws and forms of relations with others. This renewal not only allows Dostoevsky to depict the unfolding of Raskolnikov's viciousness and despair but also allows Hegel to reveal the same about Spirit. Reading Hegel's categories into *Crime and Punishment* shows that the nature of forgiveness is the same as the nature of aesthetic experience. Like an aesthetic experience, forgiveness is amoral, ahistorical, and uneconomical in that it does not judge its object in any determinate sense. Forgiveness does not judge what is and what is not the correct criterion; it does not judge what is good and what is bad; it is not really a determinative judgment at all. This is the condition of inscription and renewal. In the

*Phenomenology of Spirit*, forgiveness, as the movement of conscience into absolute Spirit, absorbs and transforms the suffering and evil of individual selves without moral judgment.

This is why the movement of spirit, in Hegel, requires the patience and labor of the negative, and we can now give this kind of patient labor another name: forgiveness. Forgiveness, since it is not the routine reaction to a conscious or unconscious confession, requires the working over of a loss or crime. This leads to what might be a contestable claim: forgiveness is essential to the entirety of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For the history that appears in that text is a history of loss, crime, transgression, and sacrifice. In short, it is the long history of suffering loss. The same could be said about *Crime and Punishment*. It is story of suffering and loss: the loss of a wager (Raskolnikov asks, "am I an extraordinary or ordinary man?"), the loss of life (the pawnbroker, her sister, Marmeladov, etc.), the loss of hope (Svidrigailov kills himself), the loss of freedom (Raskolonikov's penal punishment), etc. It is a story of patience and labor over loss and negativity. Even the structure of the novel reflects this. After a short pre-story, the narrative opens with a distinct act of negation, the negation of the pawnbroker. It is only after this that the action truly begins. While the first chapter depicts the crime, the remaining sections detail the long history of how the moral community handles that first negation. Given all that we have said, it should be clear that the remaining sections are about forgiveness. Both texts, then, are fundamentally works of mourning and the creation of the community of those who have lost. And what is the fundamental perspective of mourning? Contemplation, the very perspective of absolute knowing.<sup>71</sup>

We now have a tentative definition of forgiveness: *to forgive is not to forget but to forge and form, to become conscious of the losses, crimes, and punishments that constitute Spirit*. Or as Hegel puts it, forgiveness "knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to know one's limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself."<sup>72</sup> Despite the loss of the murder victims, the movement from morality-to-conscience-to-absolute Spirit is the movement from a moral community to the re-birth of a new historical community of the living and the dead through the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of forgiveness. It is not until the final scene of the novel that Raskolnikov truly confesses and recognizes his utter dependence on the other, that he truly empties himself on to the lap of the angelic Sonya. The necessity of a final act of emptying of the self might be one of the reasons why Dostoevsky adds the epilogue. Raskolnikov "did not know that the new life would not be his for nothing, that it must be dearly

bought, and paid for with the great and heroic struggles yet to come...But that is the beginning of a new story, the story of the gradual renewal of man, of his gradual regeneration, of his slow progress from one world to another, of how he learned to know hitherto undreamed-of-reality. All that might be the subject of a new tale, but our present one is ended.”<sup>73</sup>

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Jessie Coulson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> More specifically, I will focus on the Dialectic of Conscience in the chapter on “Spirit.”

<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>6</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>7</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 633.

<sup>11</sup> One of the reasons for the failure of the legal self is that the modal status as an abstract category is *possibility*. As Solomon Maimon argues in his critique of Kant’s transcendental idealism, possibility does not entail actuality. That is, there is no reason why any possibility is able to generate actuality. The same cross-modal movement arises in the moral self’s attempt to fulfill a duty. See Solomon Maimon *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, trans. Nick Midgley, Henry Somers-Hall, Allistair Welchman, and Merten Reglitz (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 186-7.

<sup>12</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p.p 62-3.

<sup>14</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 63; emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 2; emphasis in the original.

<sup>16</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 63; emphasis in the original.

<sup>17</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 67; emphasis in the original.

<sup>19</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 635.

<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 639; emphasis in the original.

<sup>21</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 638-9.

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<sup>22</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 639-40; emphasis in the original.

<sup>23</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 640.

<sup>24</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 642.

<sup>25</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 642; emphasis in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Since this is not a paper on Kant, I do not want to digress into an explication of Hegel's critiques of Kantian Morality, which are many and varied in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For now, I simply say that the critiques of the self as "moral consciousness," where duty remains inexhaustible and unfulfillable in concrete action of a particular individual, I already mentioned apply to Kantian deontological morality.

<sup>27</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 645.

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 645.

<sup>29</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 645.

<sup>30</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 645; emphasis in the original.

<sup>31</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 646.

<sup>32</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 646.

<sup>33</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 646.

<sup>34</sup> Scholars often attribute views to Hegel that he does not actually hold, a common practice in Hegel studies. The reason for this mis-attribution is that Hegel spends a great deal of time demonstrating how one position or moment in the movement of spirit *resolves* problems that had arisen in a previous moment. Yet we must always remember that this later moment entails more problems, which will be resolved by an even later moment. The point is that it is inaccurate to attribute a position, assumed along the continuous movement of spirit, to Hegel. In this passage, Hegel is here talking about conscience as a way of resolving problems arising in the previous moment (moral consciousness and Kantian morality), but it would be wrong to consider this Hegel's official position for the very fact that it itself raises more problems, which in turn give rise to further moments. At this point, we are far from having arrived a fixed Hegelian position (something that I would be leery about attributing to Hegel).

<sup>35</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 7-19.

<sup>36</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 648.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 649.

<sup>38</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 648.

<sup>39</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 652; emphasis in the original.

<sup>40</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 653.

<sup>41</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 654; emphasis in the original.

<sup>42</sup> *Raskol* (раскол) means a "cleaving-apart," a "splitting" or a "schism"; "raskolnik" means "one who splits" or "dissenter"; the verb "raskalyvat" means "to cleave," "to chop," "to crack," "to split," or "to break." This is also a term used to describe the mid-17th century splitting of the Russian Orthodox Church into an official church and the Old Believers movement. (See Michels, George B., *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 106-120.

<sup>43</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 655.

<sup>44</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 656, 655.

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<sup>45</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 658; emphasis in the original.

<sup>46</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 206. Julia Kristeva calls life in the schism of this dialectic “suffering.”

<sup>47</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 658.

<sup>48</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 248.

<sup>49</sup> Philip Rahv, for example, compares Raskolnikov’s theory of extraordinary men with Hegel’s notion of “great men,” and claims to have found a much neglected source in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*. In support of this claim, Rahv points to Dostoevsky’s February 22, 1854 letter in which he requests a number of books, including, he writes, “be sure to send Hegel, particularly Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*.” Joseph Frank, however, argues that by looking at the original letter, one can see that Dostoevsky asked for Hegel’s *History of Philosophy* and not his *Philosophy of History*. (Philip Rahv, “Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*,” (this article has been widely reprinted and read since its original appearance in *Partisan Review* in 1960); Joseph Frank, “The World of Raskolnikov,” *Encounter*, vol. 26, no. 6 (June, 1966), p. 34.)

<sup>50</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 248.

<sup>51</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 249; emphasis is mine.

<sup>52</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 249.

<sup>53</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 261.

<sup>54</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 558.

<sup>55</sup> I borrow the term from Gary K. Browning, “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal,” (Berlin: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 3, 143.

<sup>56</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 397.

<sup>57</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 662.

<sup>58</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 659; emphasis in the original.

<sup>59</sup> When Raskolnikov confessed his guilt to Sonya, for example, Svidrigailov was secretly listening to the revelatory conversation in the adjacent room. As soon as Svidrigailov has the information, he becomes the judging consciousness. He then feels justified in imposing his deep-seated desire for Dunya, Raskolnikov’s agonizing sister, with or without her consent. He even threatens to blackmail and rape her. For a moment, he thinks he is an arrogant moral expert and so feels the right to threaten evil without becoming culpable for it. It is not until Dunya completely rebuffs his advances that he realizes his hypocrisy and thus his own evil character, too.

<sup>60</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 666.

<sup>61</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 667.

<sup>62</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 438.

<sup>63</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 667, 668, 667.

<sup>64</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 520.

<sup>65</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 666.

<sup>66</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 671.

<sup>67</sup> At this point, Derrida might intervene with a distinction: does one forgive *something*? Or does one forgive *someone*? Hegel, however, already has a response. Recall that the self is defined by its act. Conscience is defined by its deed. Thus, there is no distinction between the *someone* and the *something*, between a *whom* and a *what*.

<sup>68</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 670; emphasis in the original.

<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, this would seem to imply that god, since he is not present, since he cannot act, also cannot forgive.

<sup>70</sup> “Forgiveness,” writes Jacques Derrida, “only becomes possible from the moment that it appears impossible.” Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism*, p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 804.

<sup>72</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 808.

<sup>73</sup> Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 527.

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