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Theme of Suicide in Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky's
The Dream of a Ridiculous Man

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Dedication

To my lovely family

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Abstract

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky's fiction has been described differently by Sigmund Freud, Albert Camus, Jean -Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and others. Indeed, Dostoevsky frequently employed different psychological cases and themes in his works to give a clear depiction of each issue through his multi-layered characters. This dissertation tackles precisely the theme of suicide and it is substantiated in psychoanalysis of Dostoevsky's short story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" (1877). The study is divided into two chapters. The first one is dedicated to reviewing historical and psychological theories on the theme of suicide. It also presents the author's interest in such a theme. The second chapter is devoted to analyzing psychological aspects in suicide as a major theme in the narrative through the application of Freud's interpretation of dreams model.

Keywords: Dostoevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, Suicide.

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General Introduction

In the 19th century, several writers and psychologists emerged and had interests in the human spirit and mind. Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, a Russian writer, was among the pioneers of fiction who did not only produce decent works of fiction, but also added to the field of psychology by creating characters with human traits that would later help in fathoming the ambiguity of the human mind. The decision of taking one's own life "suicide" has always left psychologists perplexed; therefore, attempting to decipher the question of why anyone would put an end to his own life.

In this respect, the readers of Dostoevsky's *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877) can notice how the author rendered the theme of suicide which is the central aim of this dissertation. In this dissertation, the researcher attempts to explore the theme of suicide in Dostoevsky's fiction novel by analyzing psychological excerpts through the application of Freud's interpretation of dreams model.

This dissertation will attempt to answer the following question: How does Dostoevsky portray suicide in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*? As a hypothesis, Dostoevsky succeeded in portraying a thorough picture of the theme of suicide generated by sufferance in the novel through providing psychological instances of suicide.

In order to explore the theme of suicide in Dostoevsky's fiction and show how the characters represented psychological entities, the researcher uses the psychoanalytical approach. This study will provide a detailed analysis of the characters to correct the stereotype that claims

that the author's fiction is pessimistic. Hence, it will show how Dostoevsky's philosophy suggested a facet of hope and indicated a bright change where suicide was not an escape option.

The study consists of two chapters. The first chapter introduces a theoretical background of the theme of suicide. It also highlights the psychoanalytical theory in literary criticism. The chapter aims to show the philosophy of suicide and a perception of Psychological Suffering in Dostoevsky's characters. The second chapter attempts to analyze *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* and explore the theme of suicide in the story from a psychoanalytical standpoint using Freud's Interpretation of dreams theory.

Chapter One:

A Historical Overview of Suicide

Introduction

The first chapter of this dissertation is a brief account of the theme of suicide and its origin. It discusses the philosophy of the absurd and the way a meaningless life could end up in committing suicide. It also explains how Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky embedded part of his personality in the fictional characters he created. The theme of sufferance, as a serious motive for suicide, is discussed with reference to psychoanalysis. Eventually, this chapter ends with explaining the psychoanalysis and the psychoanalytical theory of literary criticism that will be detailed in this research work.

1. Historical Views on Suicide

Since the dawn of humanity, philosophers and thinkers have been interested in the theme of suicide which dated back to ancient Greece. In the era of Plato, philosophers attributed the notion of chaos to abruption to suicide. In his book "On the Soul", Plato examined and thoroughly discussed the motives behind committing suicide. Plato also considered it from the eyes of the law as a shameful and disgraceful crime; therefore, those who killed themselves should have been buried without any tombstones. (Miles 251)

As Pythagoras saw it, suicide was a work of evil as it destroyed the essence of life which was the soul.¹ However, Pythagoras considered four cases where suicide can be justified:

¹ Suicide. Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/suicide/> Accessed on June 9, 2020

1. In case of a moral corruption of one's mind hence one's character shall have no salvation.
2. If death-off was determined by a court order.
3. If the person committed suicide because of having preordained calamities.
4. If the person is too ashamed to carry on living for taking part in committing unjust behaviours or actions. (Garrison 5-7)

On the one hand, Plato believed that those who attempted suicide were unintelligent because they could not have understood that life was unstable and that sufferance constituted a huge part of it. However, he saw that the four exceptions were important reasons for committing suicide. On the other hand, Aristotle viewed suicide from the perspective of being just or unjust. He saw that the act of killing yourself could have been a just behaviour, but at the same time damaging society and community. Yet, he had not explained the degree to which suicide or individuals with suicidal thoughts can harm others. (Garrison 9)

Thus, one should learn that committing suicide is not necessarily driven by involvements or duties to others and the one's good is such a relevantly vital factor as well. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a Roman philosopher, boldly explained that since “mere living is not a good, but living well”; a wise person “lives as long as he ought, not as long as he can.” (57–73) According to Seneca, it is not the life quantity that matters but the quality.

2. Albert Camus and the Philosophy of the Absurd

What is the meaning of life? This question is considered to be one of the most fundamental philosophical questions. Though, it may sound shallow and simplistic, many philosophers took it rather seriously. Indeed, before the rise of secular modernity, this question was answered by religion, but by the mid- twentieth century, philosophers like Albert Camus concluded that life had no meaning, it was aimless and absurd and nothing

existed that could have ever been a source of meaning. This philosophical view is known as Absurdism. Camus opened “An Absurd Reasoning,” the first essay in his collection *The Myth of Sisyphus*, with these words:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer. (6)

Camus demonstrated that suicide had been dealt with only as a social phenomenon and that he was instead concerned with the connection between individual thought and suicide. The issue he placed was the general meaninglessness of existence. However, Camus believed that absurd was bearable. Just because life had no ultimate meaning, it did not necessarily mean that it was not worth living. He also sketched three features of the absurd life: First, rebellion is that one should not accept any answer or reconciliation in his struggle. Second, freedom is that one was totally free to think and behave as one chose. Third, freedom is that one ought to pursue a rich path of varied experience. (Camus 10-11)

Camus’s philosophy proposed that the absurd did not require suicide, but on the contrary allowed a person to live and embrace life to its fullest. He wrote: “We should accept that our desires do not match up with the world as we know it, and yet love the unanswerable strangeness of it all.” (12)

Eventually, Camus’s philosophy was not very different from Dostoevsky’s in the sense that Dostoevsky’s *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* was also viewed as a story of the realization of the inner self, a story where the protagonists embarked on a path to understanding life. Hence, both philosophies suggested that to live fully, one should have wrestled with the puzzle of absurdity and the certainty of death.

3. Psychological Suffering in Dostoevsky's Fiction

It is necessary to note that Dostoevsky's ability to depict the human conscience revealed rich portrayals of psychiatric cases. His psychological insights are remarkable achievements in literature, and his description of unconscious psychological motivation coined terms later described by the psychoanalytic movement. The latter is believed to be found in Dostoevsky's fiction. The life of the author witnessed epilepsy, neuroticism and gambling addiction. Characterization could always reflect the author's life and personality. The author's life and fiction are twisted in the process of literary self-exploration. In other words, his writings were influenced by his personal experiences and that is why they are quite successful in emphasizing the inexplicable nature of the human condition.

Moreover, in his work, Dostoevsky's characters argued that suffering of the mind is the most pitiful type of pain. As a matter of fact, the word "suffer" is found repeatedly and often associated with life in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* in which he stated that:

On our earth we can only love sincerely with suffering and through suffering. We do not know how to love any other way and know no other love. I want to suffer so that I can love. I desire, I thirst in this moment to kiss, weeping tears, that very earth which I left and I do not desire or accept life on any other!
(Dostoevsky 651)

The protagonist in this story is struggling between his head and his heart in seeing no point of his own existence. He suffered from the absurdity of life that somehow made him indifferent to everything. Also, the protagonist suggested that in order to reach the point in which one could have embraced life, one had to go through pain. We can clearly notice the despair and agony in the protagonist's words, yet his certainty and admission that there was no possibility of a life without pain.

The protagonist in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* introduced himself as a person who was perceived by his friends and surrounding, a madman who was considered to be

completely ridiculous. However, he declared that he did not mind being laughed at, conversely, he felt sorry for them because only him knew the truth:

I am a ridiculous person. Now they call me a madman. That would be a promotion if it were not that I remain as ridiculous in their eyes as before. But now I do not resent it, they are all dear to me now, even when they laugh at me — and, indeed, it is just then that they are particularly dear to me. I could join in their laughter — not exactly at myself, but through affection for them, if I did not feel so sad as I look at them. Sad because they do not know the truth and I do know it. Oh, how hard it is to be the only one who knows the truth! But they won't understand that. No, they won't understand it. (Dostoevsky 643)

As the protagonist in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* showed a kind of thinking offered a model of how egoism led to suffering, he claimed to be the only one who possessed the truth. The protagonist adopted the convenience that he was an extraordinary man aware of life's biggest mystery, the purpose of life, or what he referred to as "the truth". This feeling of superiority is what made him believe that nothing mattered, life was meaningless. The latter made him psychologically suffer from the heavy burden, and the solution to his pain was to end his life, "I was so utterly indifferent to everything that I was anxious to wait for the moment when I would not be so indifferent and then kill myself. Why I don't know." (Dostoevsky 644)

From a philosophical perspective, Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, defined suffering as finding no way or creating no meanings for surviving. To him, sufferance can be a strong source of character creation. However, coping with or adapting the situation of sufferance can be a way either to build personality or finish it.

4. Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism

Sigmund Freud was the first psychoanalyst who recognized the significance of the unconscious mental activity. In 1896, he coined the term "psychoanalysis," and had many

writings concerning his thoughts on mental life such as dreams interpretation, the technique of psychoanalysis, Narcissism, and childhood sexuality.

Psychoanalysis was never just a process of treatment, but rather a mirror of the human condition. It attempted to explain how the unconscious factors influenced behaviour styles, relationships, and overall mental health. Over time, it has been revised and developed in different directions and continued to grow over the course of many years to help individuals overcome life's obstacles.

Psychoanalysis is more than a therapy. Cognitive functions can be analyzed and explained by such a method. Psychoanalysts focus on mental and behavioural experiences of individuals. For that, they can also explain some body-mind relations. Moreover, psychoanalysis can be a way of understanding emotions. As it is used in an interdisciplinary field, this method, as Farrell puts "formed the basis for other treatment programs in child psychiatry, family therapy, and general psychiatric practice." (202)

In an Outline of Psychoanalysis, Freud demonstrated the major principles on which psychoanalytic theory is based. He first began to explain the three forces of the psychical apparatus: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is one of the three components of the psyche that is responsible for instinctual urges and is completely unconscious. The ego is the part of the psyche that deals with reality. Finally, the super-ego represents incorporated social rules. It is rather conscious, and it compels rules and imposes guilt.

Freud was also interested in dreams and their interpretation. He regarded the state of sleep as a period of noise and chaos during which the unconscious thoughts of the id tried to force their way into consciousness. He believed that dreams were caused by conflict to bring up memories that the dreamer had neglected. According to Freud, dreams were fulfilments of wishes and could have raised impressions that did not necessarily originated from the

dreamer's life. As a science, psychoanalysis can be considered imperfect, but it is impossible to deny that it has an important role in psychotherapy and particularly in unravelling the secrets of the human mind.

In fact, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), written by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, the theory of the unconscious was introduced in relation to dreaming and interpreting what the human minds imagine. Freud introduced also the theory of the Oedipus complex and re-edited the book several times. He later added a full section introducing treatments of dreams through precise and explicit symbolizing. Freud's theory of dream interpretation attracted the admiration of researchers and specialists. (Farrell 45)

Freud described dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious" and explained that one small vision or symbol that occurred in the dream may have had different meanings. As it has been previously stated in this chapter, Freud was criticized mainly because he overemphasized the role of sexual instincts in his theory. For instance, he stated that if someone observed a hollow object in his dream, like a box or a cave, this symbolized a womb. However, an elongated object is a symbol for a phallus.

Freud pigeonholed dreams into three types: (1) instant prophecies manifested in the dream, (2) a vision or foretelling of an event that did not occurred yet and (3) a dream that showed symbols. It is important to note that most of Freud's analyses were derived from works of literature, personal dreams and patient's experiences. (Farrell 47-49)

Psychoanalysts were also interested in arts, mainly literature and how authors reflected and embedded their thoughts in their own works. This led to the emergence of Psychoanalytic Criticism that attempted at linking both the psychological and the literary worlds together and validated the significance of literature as it made a strong structure for decrypting the unconscious desires of the author; thus, it helped the reader understand which concepts were

exercised in the text. In addition, this domain embraced the use of Freud's and later theorists' theories to interpret a literary text especially when related to psychological struggles. It explained how the characters were mere portrayals of the author's psyche.

There have been several schools that addressed this theory and each had its own critic orientation. Lacan Jacques, for instance, a follower of Freud, was influenced by Freud's stand on dreams. He confirmed that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Dor 244) that is, dreams portrayed the human's unconscious and affected language use. The Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung, on the other hand, rejected Freud's dreams theory and argued that dreams reflected examples that went in "collective unconsciousness" of all human beings.

One point, however, should be clarified, while psychoanalysis is about minds, psychoanalytic Criticism is about books and the minds associated within "characters" that the author weaves from his own imagination but based on his personality. Therefore, the distinction is recognizable. In other words, the aim of Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism is to psychoanalyze a certain author or character, considering both the level of writing and the level of the character's action within the text. Psychoanalysis is of colossal significance in understanding clues, ambiguous symbols, or actions in a piece of writing.

Conclusion

Suicide is indeed a mysterious act of self-killing that urged many thinkers and authors to look for a reasonable explanation as for why a person would end his/her own existence. Indeed, with the emergence of psychoanalytical theories, literary words became a primary source of psychoanalysis and a key to understanding the psyche of the author and the suicidal behaviour injected in the minds of the characters. The second chapter explores the different motives of suicide through the analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*.

Chapter Two:

Analysis of *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877)

Introduction

This chapter is a general summary of the plot of the narrative, which provides a brief account of how Dostoevsky portrays the theme of suicide in the narrative. Moreover, Freud's Interpretation of dreams is applied to the narrative to highlight some parts of the hero's life. Then, the theme of corruption, as a motive for suicide, is discussed. Finally, this chapter sheds light on how the characters' lives change and what leads them to become different.

1. Plot of the Narrative

The Dream of a Ridiculous Man is a short story by Fyodor Dostoyevsky that was first published in *A Writer's Diary*, written in 1877. Briefly, the story tells that a man decided that everything in life was worthless, thus, he decided to end his life. The narrator opened the story walking the streets of St. Petersburg. He reflected on how he had always been a ridiculous person, and how recently, nothing seemed to matter to him anymore. His absurd thoughts drove him to the idea of suicide with a revolver that he bought a gun to shoot himself.

Although the narrator was anguish, he contemplated the sky and saw a solitary star. A little while after seeing the star, a little girl ran towards him asking for help, but he ignored the little girl and went back to his apartment. Once home, the narrator hesitated to shoot himself because of a guilt feeling that had invaded his thoughts ever since he rejected the girl. He fought with inner questions until he fell asleep on the chair, and for the first time, in a long time, he fell into a very vivid dream.

In his dream, the narrator saw that he shot himself in the heart. He died but he was still aware of everything happening around him like his funeral and being in grave while water dripping down onto his eyelids. The narrator prayed then for forgiveness. After flying through space for a long time, he found himself on a new planet, one much like Earth, but not the Earth that he departed from. The narrator was then placed on what appeared to be a heavenly Greek island. The people of the island found him as they are delightful, blessed, sinless people.

Soon, the narrator started teaching the inhabitants how to lie and do bad things. Little by little, he started corrupting the utopia. The lies caused pride, and pride engendered other sins and in no time, murders and wars had been waged. Science replaced emotion, and the inhabitants of the former utopia seemed to be unable to remember their previous grace. The narrator begged them to return to what they had been, or kill him for messing up their ideal society, but they refused to grant his wish.

The narrator awakened from his dream as a changed man, he promised himself to change his life, and decided to build his own beautiful utopia. At the end of the story, the narrator informed the readers that he tried to find the little girl, and that he would go on and on, in order to make amends for his past lack of empathy and kindness.

2. Theme of Suicide in the Narrative

The narrator was hungry for life despite his fascination with suicide. Indeed, when he dedicated his time to uncover how suicides are anomalies, he sought to understand the underlying reasons and motives behind them. The author opted for fiction to examine his psychological achievements, through narrative characters. Moreover, as a background to understand the role in his fiction, one has to bear in mind that his genius is accurate in the

literary context, plot and characterization. His contribution was not extended for literary recognition, but to provide a deep understanding to the human condition.

The Dream of a Ridiculous Man is one of the most remarkable short stories that Dostoevsky wrote in its portrayal of the theme of suicide. Not only it is rich and authentic in exemplifying the phenomena of suicide, but also in clarifying one of the most ambiguous acts in life within only twenty pages, with a thrilling plot, style and a bright moral.

Suicide in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* occurs in a dream, it is due to the protagonist's loss of social participation and a disfiguration of identity and above all Absurdism. His suicide falls into the category of "Suicide of hopelessness" As The protagonist declares, "Killing myself was a matter of such indifference to me that I felt like waiting for a moment when it would make some difference." (650)

The narrator's indifference in the narrative shows how afraid and uncourageous since he decided to end his life then hesitated and could not proceed. Also, the little girl that he meets outside is an important element to the story as well, and though her appearance is momentary, the role she plays in the protagonist's psyche is quite significant. Although he did not help her, she, involuntarily, did.

She awoken in dithyrambic emotions of empathy that were unknown to him before, the feeling of guilt took over him for not helping her. She made him reconsider his conception of life, and eventually through a fantastic dream, he wakes up as a new man, willing to live. Besides, the little girl's character is a successful attempt from the author to make his readers sympathize with the protagonist, and teaches them how to value their lives, and most importantly, to experience growth and find spirituality.

Dostoevsky's writings are guides to the brilliant interrelations between his fictional and psychological. His understanding of the individual, family and group dynamics is

influential and his intellectual search for the roots of ideology. “It is the thorough and creative integration of all these factors that make Dostoevsky’s suicidology such a total human achievement.” (Foy 14)

3. Utopianism in the Narrative

Dostoevsky’s *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* is a perfect example that indicates the place of literature in the debate about Russian Utopianism to a wide extent. The story itself is quite rich in content, purpose and focus. Thus, it can be regarded as both utopian and dystopian.

In the past, Czarist Russia, the Russian people have suffered immensely, and this idea explains why Russian thinkers, precisely Dostoevsky, dreamed and had “faith” in a better Russia where there is no room for suffering; a fantasy to return to the original paradise that happened to exist before the Fall. In Dostoevsky’s utopia, the reader dreams with the Ridiculous Man of a perfect Saint Petersburg that Dostoevsky introduces in many of his works, where he describes an ideal world similar to paradise where freedom, happiness and conformity gather people. Then, the plot swerves direction to a dystopian world where greed, hatred and dementia took place instead and where the social order was wrecked.

This very shift from an ideal world to a flawed one reveals itself in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* where the ideal is destroyed by man’s imperfections. Dostoevsky in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* illustrates the best and worst of what can occur if anyone tries to mix the complex societies in which he lives into his own fantasy of a perfect state.

It is true that the end of the story is a bit mysterious and cannot simply be classified as utopian or dystopian, but Dostoevsky’s mere message for his readers is clear: He invites his readers to look beyond utopianism, because the only way to attain true satisfaction and happiness is to love one another. More importantly, he affirms that man’s imperfections are

completely innate traits that take part of the human nature. Furthermore, Dostoevsky expresses that a possible harmonious utopia may be established in the future yet only through the harmony of the mankind, sacrifice, and love. He discredits the idea of suicide and uses the Ridiculous man's new realization as a way to preach life and the significance of human's compassion.

4. Corruption in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*

The narrative's context proposed a theme of corruption that was tackled to express the author's views in an attractive way. Dostoevsky, through a biblical tale of the Fall, narrated in slightly different terms, clarifies a delicate point in the Christian philosophy simply through a dream. Indeed, the way that the new earth in the dream was described reflects how the real world was corrupted. The man corrupted the new world; he destroyed the perfect Earth with rationality, divisions between men, concepts of injustice and wars.

A theme of corruption was brought as a motive for suicide in some instances. The dream was likely to be an allusion to the Devil, one that spreads hatred maliciously between the inhabitants through lies. To reflect on this, Dostoevsky had been raised as a Christian, that is why he gave a Christian message in the dream as a guide for the protagonist to rebuild his understanding of existence. The author was seemingly against logical reasoning; he focused more on the metaphysical aspect based on the psychology of love and humanity. Despite the nature of existence, corruption mirrored humanity as not fundamentally evil but had only fallen from grace.

5. Interpretation of Dreams

In order to know whether dreams have meanings or not, Freud was interested in the dream psychology. His curiosity came up with useful explanations of many examples in his

course of communicating with people. Freud also focused on mechanisms of dreams and made an attempt to interpret them through a detailed analysis.

The interpretations of dreams by Freud was reviewed and described differently by many researchers. For instance, Anthony Sorr provided a short introduction to Freud's ideas by stating that:

Dreams, in Freud's view, are all forms of "wish fulfilment" — attempts by the unconscious to resolve a conflict of some sort, whether something recent or something from the recesses of the past. Because the information in the unconscious is in an unruly and often disturbing form, a "censor" in the preconscious will not allow it to pass unaltered into the conscious. Freud introduced the term 'manifest content' to describe what the dream recalled. (45)

As for the narrative, the prominence of the dream is highlighted by the author as it is clearly depicted in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. For instance, the feeling of guilt that the ridiculous man felt is considered to be one of the most complex traits of his personality. His guilt triggered him until it got fixated in his head “shooting himself, hence, when he sleeps, he dreams about it, in order to fulfil his wish. This kind of trait in psychology is called “*idée fixe*”. Dostoevsky uses “the dream” to reveal the nature of this fixation.

The dream in the narrative indicated the force of the “*idée fixe*’ that reveals latent truths about the characters through symbols that mirrored the quarrel going in their unconscious. Therefore, the ridiculous man's dream falls into the category of the symbolic dream. It is safe to say that the dream in psychology has the same job as a catharsis in literature; it indicates the power of the fixations and helps the mind distinguish between the imaginations of the dream from the reality of irresistible ideas.

6. Psychoanalysis of the Narrative

The protagonist in Dostoevsky's story was an instance of a man with the “*idée fixe*” as a psychological treatment. In this respect, we attempt here to show more details about the

protagonist's psyche and how it took part in explaining his subtle character. A major feature of the protagonist was isolation. His absurd existence surrounded him with no one. His solipsism and self-loathing attitude made him determined to commit suicide. In respect to this, the ridiculous man states,

I'm a ridiculous man. Now they call me a madman. That would be a promotion if I weren't as ridiculous as before in their eyes. But it no longer makes me angry. I find them all nice now, even when they laugh at me—indeed, if they do, they're somehow particularly dear to me. I'd even laugh with them—not really at myself but out of sheer love for them—if looking at them didn't make me so sad. Sad, because they don't know the truth, while I do. Ah, it's hard to be the only one who know the truth! But they don't understand it. No, they won't. (643)

As the protagonist showed himself as superior and smarter, his reluctance and loathing behaviours made him frequently feel inferior and humiliated by certain thoughts. This ambivalence in his character made him paralyzed. For that, he was often hesitant in taking any action or decision, and even his words contradicted themselves. Furthermore, he required answers to his dark questions:

And yet, looking ridiculous used to upset me very much. In fact, I didn't just look ridiculous—I was ridiculous. I've always been ridiculous, and I think I've known it from the day of my birth. Perhaps I became fully aware of it at the age of seven. I studied at school, then at the university, and the more I studied, the more I realized that I was ridiculous. For me, in the final analysis, higher learning amounted to explaining and proving my ridiculousness. And in life it was the same as in my studies: every year I became more conscious that I looked ridiculous in every respect. (643)

The reader here can touch the contradiction with the passage that precedes it for that the claim of being the only one who knows the truth became a feeling of humiliation instead, he admitted his ridiculousness. In addition, the despair in the protagonist's voice was flagrant. Thus, the “fixation” on his life absurdity was directly the stimulus to suicide.

Obsession in Dostoevsky's characters does not have to be singular in nature. That is, more than one idea can struggle for dominance of the consciousness. When this is the case, the ideas may be conflicting and even polar. (Miller 73)

Indeed, as noted above, the character's inability to understand the meaning of life triggers myriad suggestions to find answers, and when none of them seemed to satisfy his reasoning, take example for that the fact that he bought the gun, but he could never press the button. However, death was his only conclusion.

7. A Change in the Hero's Spirit

There is a sequential occurrence of different various elements in the plot of *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. The transformative process of the ridiculous man, for instance, indicates how he discovered himself and how he understood the meaning of life through a dream. When he awoke, despite his chaotic dream, he figured out that there is hope in the real world. For that, he thought hopefully of helping humans.

In addition, the protagonist goes through a journey of a transformation. That was a spiritual change as he turned from a cynical, solipsist nihilist who is full of despair and on the verge to commit suicide to a new man who would live life passionately and long for helping others. The ridiculous man's words on this idea were:

Oh, how I longed for life, life! I lifted up my hands and called upon eternal Truth! No, not called upon it, but wept. Rapture, infinite and boundless rapture intoxicated me. Yes, life and preaching! I made up my mind to preach from that very moment and, of course, to go on preaching all my life. I am going to preach, I want to preach. What? Why, truth. For I have beheld truth, I have beheld it with mine own eyes, I have beheld it in all its glory! (658)

After waking up, the ridiculous man conceptualized the dream as a lesson that he would learn from. He thought then of his main role in life. He thought of preaching what he had discovered, preaching about love and the meaning of life. Then he went on claiming,

The consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness — that is what one must contend against. And I shall. If only everyone wants it, it can be arranged at once. (658)

At this point, Dostoevsky alludes that one should embrace the world by endeavouring to make themselves righteous and by stopping the corruption of God's perfect creation. In brief, the character that thought of suicide in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* was someone like many others in real life. Yet, the ridiculous man, particularly, provided the readers at the end with all the advice they need in order to accept life and redeem from their suffering.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, this chapter provided an exhaustive study of Dostoevsky's work *The Dreams of a Ridiculous Man*. The author, despite the fact that he portrayed his hero as a person suffering and seeking to end his life, he also managed to give his readers good reasons for life. It also attempted a psychoanalytical of the narrative based on Freud's dream interpretation, then put a special focus on how man's greed and unfairness to one another results in the corruption of the human soul therefore leading to suicide. The concept of "L'idée Fixe" has been demonstrated in the protagonist's mindset, then the chapter concluded on providing an optimistic change and a positive open ending in the narrative.

General Conclusion

Although he accepted suffering as an abstract fact, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky could not ignore it. He sought answers in the teachings of life, and in the philosophies of suffering. The psychoanalytical approach has proved that Dostoevsky's characters were thoroughly faithful to the notion of highest hope, and unlimited love for man's fellow here on earth.

In the first chapter, we have seen different views on suicide, both classical and modern, and we have learnt about different philosophies such as the philosophy of the absurd and the philosophy of suffering that are quite prominent in Dostoevsky's characters. The chapter concluded with a brief presentation of the Psychoanalytical Theory and how it influenced literature and developed to be known as The Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism.

In the second chapter, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877) was tackled in terms of themes and psychological aspects of characters. The readers might travel to the realm of dreams inside the protagonist's mind which was analyzed based on Freud's interpretation of Dreams theory. Psychoanalysis of the protagonist was granted in addition to the theme of corruption and suicide that were centralized in this research.

To conclude, we have seen how the protagonist's spiritual transformation was done through his dream and how that helped him shape his life and change his mind about committing suicide. The results of the study show that the story is not pessimistic and it has been confirmed that, on the contrary, Dostoevsky's philosophy praises life based on Freud's psychoanalytical theories. Also, Dostoevsky's narrative seemed not as pessimistic as some stereotypes indicate.

As an overall conclusion, despite the fact that Dostoevsky's stories might often be seen as depressing, they can as well be inspiring. His representation of the theme of suicide in the mid-19th century Russia, as voiced through the characters of his stories, was rather helpful to grasp the phenomena more firmly, as he offers an indirect picture to demonstrate how suicide is frequently linked with social triggers and associated with mental disorders.

On the light of this research, the researcher recommends further research tackling Dostoevsky being considered a Gothic writer since his stories contain different elements of Gothicism. Moreover, the theme of salvation in Dostoevsky's fiction can also be investigated.

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