

The Problems of Guilt Conference
Parallel Paper Panels Session 1
Abstracts

Panel One: Crime and Punishment

Donald Campbell (British Psychoanalytical Society, UK) and Oliver Ready (University of Oxford, UK)

Chair: Katya Golyunkina (British Psychoanalytical Society, UK)

Abstract:

Crime & Punishment is one of the great works of Russian Nineteenth Century literature, and indeed of the World. This Panel asks if the remarkable insights it contains apply to actual cases of crime, to the punishment that is meted out, and to the possibility that there is an interplay with either seeking, or avoiding, some experience of the difficult feeling of guilt. The Panel will also consider whether Dostoevsky's descriptions of these processes might throw light upon Putin's going to war; and still further to what seems to be an increasing global readiness to engage in war.

Freud considered Dostoevsky's psychological insights¹ to match those of Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex*, and those of Shakespeare in *Hamlet*²: each gives a gripping account of 'the two great criminal intentions' of mankind - 'killing the father and having sexual relations with the mother'³. Following Freud's own father's death, a neurosis-filled mourning led him to form the unshakable conviction that there is a universal sense of guilt; and that it is attributable to those twin desires. It led Freud as well to the seductive idea that intending - and then committing - a crime may relieve an inwardly sense of guilt that is persecuting precisely because it has no known name or cause: it gives external form to this.

This Panel will describe these possibilities, found in both Dostoevsky and psychoanalysis. It will discuss how – or even if - they apply when set against the bewildering complexity of what actually takes place.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*¹

The continuities of form- and the developments in the content – the murder of a father and the sexuality of mother- are utterly remarkable.

Freud ...Refs....Some Character Types...., Dostoevsky and Parricide³

Panel Two: Childhood Guilt

Christine English (British Psychoanalytical Society, UK) and Liana Giorgi (Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Austria)

Chair: Margaret Rustin (British Psychoanalytical Society, UK)

The growth of a capacity to experience guilt and face responsibility is part of a child's ordinary development. Sometimes it emerges too early in life to be borne. A particular sensitivity to the possibility of causing harm and to the state of those the child depends on can undoubtedly be present from early infancy.

Thus our aim today is the study of the early roots of childhood morality, through a focus on the painful predicaments of nascent conscience in particular cases.

No single Panel can offer a complete understanding of the enormously complex interaction between the moral nature of individuals and what might be transmitted within families, across generations, and from the wider culture. Nevertheless what is established in infancy, childhood and adolescence determines much of the later workings of conscience, and the conduct that then arises from it.