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Introduction

The Earth died screaming (while I lay dreaming)

- Tom Waits

Our scientists say the last hour is soon upon us. They warn of a moment, fast approaching, when Mother Earth will no longer sustain human life. Meanwhile, world leaders preach the need for yet another war, and while the planet is becoming increasingly militarised, transnational legions of professional politicians and financial elites steer the trajectories of humanities creative and intellectual powers towards the single task of transporting deadlier explosives over longer distances in shorter times to kill more people.¹ Having reduced virtually every feature of human existence to leisure, entertainment or commodity, we have normalised, regulated and idolised this madness to the extent that it seems easier for us to imagine the total annihilation of the planet than to even dream of making the slightest change in the way we lead our lives. And faced with the enormity of our predicament, many of us feel small, insignificant, and helpless.

I believe that our material problems are ultimately our spiritual problems, because our understanding of ourselves, and our relationship with the planet, must determine our behaviour profoundly. We might therefore be in urgent need of an understanding of human existence—a self-understanding—that accords with the physical reality of the problems we are faced with. Somehow we must rid ourselves of the hostility, fear and resentment that seem to fuel and perpetuate this tragic carousel of destruction. Perhaps the paramount task humanity is faced with today, therefore, is confronting the question of forgiveness. Can we rid ourselves of this hatred? Can we forgive ourselves the all too human horrors we unremittingly cause and suffer?

These are but few of the very general thoughts and curiosities, which ultimately begot the specific question I address in this thesis: *Can Nietzsche's Philosophy, combined with the insights of Dostoevsky, provide an existential foundation of forgiveness?* Both authors describe a cultural crisis, originating in the deterioration of the human spirit and its withdrawal into a mental structure of an

¹ Fuller, Richard Buckminster. 1992. *Cosmography: a Posthumous Scenario for the Future of Humanity*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. p. 28

alienated, isolated and lonely individual. “They were moving, from different directions”, says Ivan Evlampiev, “towards the same world view which gave, compared with the traditional conception of man, a completely new idea of his place in the world and role in history and the destiny of the universe.”² They were filled with a vision of something better to come, and went to extraordinary lengths to keep that vision alive, espousing a spiritual message that concerns the future of humanity on the Planet Earth. Their work previsioned modern man’s tragedy; lost in a culture short of spiritual and metaphysical bearing, Dostoevsky’s tortured characters are representatives of particular philosophical problems, each encapsulating specific aspects of the multiplicity of psychological drives, motives and existential presuppositions that constitute human agency. They rush about, searching for answers—ideas, ideologies and ultimate truths—that might provide conclusive remedies to their cosmic nausea, but as in Nietzsche’s world, those answers cannot be located outside of their own spirit: we are offered an existential compass which points only in the direction of the all too human heart.

From the earliest hours of his career, Nietzsche advocated a view of truth and knowledge, which holds that we have no access to reality independent of the categories we impose on the world in order to make our experience of it comprehensible and predictable;³ and since each human being abstracts reality from a different perspective, employing utterly unique ‘interpretive forces’ which are developed throughout the duration of its lifespan, Nietzsche’s philosophy is aimed not at coming up with new ‘truths’, ideals or ideologies, to which his readers can unbendingly subscribe; it is aimed at the errors—lies, fictions, misunderstandings—and absolute beliefs that have led man astray, and at the psychological motives which preserve and fuel those errors and absolute beliefs.

Nietzsche and Dostoevsky advocate a philosophy of embodied life, of *living fully in this world*, issuing uncompromising warnings against submitting to abstract ideals and ideologies at the cost of life itself, and erecting theoretical crystal palaces in which the human being in its natural carnal state is but an unpolished intruder. They separately pursue the common goal of advocating the existential man, who

² Evlampiev, Igor Ivanovich. 2002. “Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche: Toward a New Metaphysics of Man” in *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (Trans. Stephen D. Shenfield). p. 10

³ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 2002. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 15

through a continuous process of self-transformation, harnesses the *creative force* that is fundamental to their chorus which relentlessly calls for extreme breaks with the ideals that furnish and fuel many of the travesties of human existence: “*Revaluation of all values*”, says Nietzsche, “that is my formula for an act of humanity’s highest self-examination, an act that has become flesh and genius in me. My lot would have it that I am the first *decent* human being, that I know myself to be opposing the hypocrisy of millennia.”⁴

Because of strong parallels between the themes addressed in their major works, mainly concerning the ‘revaluation of values’, Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky have been ranked among the major predecessors to existentialism.⁵ Though there is no evidence suggesting that Dostoevsky read Nietzsche, we know that Nietzsche greatly admired Dostoevsky’s writing—in particular *Notes from the Underground*—and it has been argued, in length and detail, that Dostoevsky influenced Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity and his analysis of European nihilism.⁶ “On February 23, 1887, not quite nine months before the publication of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche wrote Overbeck about his accidental discovery of Dostoyevsky in a bookstore.”⁷ He had chanced upon the *Notes From the Underground* and states that his joy of discovering this ‘profound human being’ was extraordinary.⁸ In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche writes: “Dostoyevsky [is], by the way, the only psychologist who had anything to teach me: he is one of the best strokes of fortune in my life, even better than discovering Stendhal.”⁹ *The Notes from the Underground* predicted the themes Dostoevsky advanced in his later fiction. “What is said in this work, is repeated and developed in [...] *The Karamazov Brothers*.”¹⁰

⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. *The Anti Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*. (Trans. Judith Norman). New York: Cambridge University Press p. 144

⁵ See, e.g. Marino, Gordon. 2004. *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. New York: The Modern Library, and, Kaufmann, Walter. 1975. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York: Penguin Books.

⁶ See e.g. Gerhardt, Volker and Reschke, Renate. 2007. *Nietzsche in Europa*. Berlin: Akademie

⁷ Kaufmann, Walter. 2000. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. (Trans. Walter Kaufman). New York: The Modern Library. Footnote, p. 564

⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1976. *The Portable Nietzsche*. (Ed. and Trans. Walter Kaufmann). New York: Penguin Books. p. 454

⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 219

¹⁰ Briggs A. D. B.. 2007. “Introduction” in *The Karamazov Brothers*. (Trans. Constance Garnette). London: Wordsworth. p. xiii

“Nowhere has [Dostoevsky] more profoundly probed the mystery of man and being than in his “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor”,¹¹ a sinister prose, recited by Ivan, the eldest of the three Karamazov brothers, in which Dostoevsky foretells of the mass ‘over-throw of conscience’ fundamental to the totalitarian tragedies that plague human history to this day—tragedies that are consistently driven with absolute and blind collective submission to authority. “[The] author seems to be suggesting”, Gordon Marino remarks, “that for all our slogans, freedom is not necessarily something that we desire to obtain.”¹²

This thesis is centred on “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.” I begin by outlining the problems of freedom, ideology and responsibility as the Grand Inquisitor portrays them, and analyse these problems in accordance with interconnected themes addressed in Nietzsche’s writings, drawing mainly from *Human all too Human*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, *Ecce Homo*, and *Twilight of the Idols*. I employ Nietzsche’s perspectivism for the purpose of unveiling the psychological drives and motives that lurk behind the Inquisitor’s elitist argument, and examine the existential meaning of these drives and motives in light of Nietzsche’s ‘Error of Imaginary Causes’, the ‘Error of Free Will’ and his concept of ‘Resentment’, drawing a comparison between the Inquisitor and Nietzsche’s ‘ascetic priest’.

In conclusion I outline the psychological and existential meaning of Nietzsche’s ‘Eternal Return’ and ‘Amor fati’, and apply that meaning to the exhortations of the Inquisitor’s antitype, the elder Zozima, and thereby describe a mode of consciousness that is free from resentment and revenge—a perspective of forgiveness.

¹¹ Sandoz, Ellis. 1964. “Philosophical Anthropology and Dostoevsky’s “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor”” in *The review of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 3. p. 355

¹² Marino, Gordon. 2004. p. 192

Miracle, Mystery and Authority

*A heretic is a man who sees with his own eyes.*¹³

- Anonymous

I - Ideology and Freedom of Consciousness

How do ideas amass such immense force that they pervade the entire spectrum of human consciousness and sweepingly alter the foundations of entire societies? With “The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor” Dostoyevsky joins the brethren of existential philosophers, psychologists and artists who have taken upon themselves the task of addressing this meta-political question of freedom.¹⁴ Rather than dismembering the theoretical cog work of a specific political ideology on legitimacy and social structure, he questions how ideologies function existentially by examining the bilateral relationship between man and authority. This chapter, therefore, addresses the following question: *How, according to Dostoyevsky’s “Legend of The Grand Inquisitor”, does ideology override human freedom?*

Both Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche refute the ‘superlative metaphysical’ conception of freedom which presupposes an atomised, ‘neutral subject with free choice’, on the basis of which human beings are held *individually* accountable for their actions and non-actions, perceived as ‘isolated acts’. For Dostoyevsky, an understanding of the human being derived from this ideal, produces a ‘false existence’; an error of “egoism that ultimately [pits] each “I” against all the others”,¹⁵ and for Nietzsche the very same ideal trades on a nonsensical and false belief—an impossible notion of freedom that gives birth to a complete *cognitive absurdity*, a

¹³ On various internet sites this statement is attributed to the German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, but none reveal the origin of the quote. Despite rigorous efforts I have been unable to locate the original source.

¹⁴ The distinction I make between political philosophy and meta-politics is that while political philosophy refers to *what politics is*, including ideologies and theories of governance, meta-politics refers to the study of *how* these theories and ideologies gain life within the individual and collective human psyche.

¹⁵ Lantz, K. A.. 2004. *The Dostoyevsky Encyclopedia*. Westport: Greenwood Press. p. 148.

tragic human *misunderstanding*. “We have no right to *isolated* acts of any kind”, says Nietzsche in the very preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*, “we may not make isolated errors or hit upon isolated truths.”¹⁶ This means that if we fail to harbour an understanding of our being, which recognizes the human animal as thoroughly interconnected with the universe, we will remain forever enslaved by our cognitive errors. “Rather do our ideas”, he continues, “our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which the tree bears fruit—related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of *one* will, *one* health, *one* soil, *one* sun.”¹⁷

Nietzsche analyses the concept of free will through a synthesis of psychology and philosophy, calling the idea a ‘boorish simplicity’, emanating from the extravagant pride of weak and self-proclaimed *good* men who strive to defend their sense of entitlement while seeking an external target to blame for all that is supposedly *evil*. He aims his attack on the idea of free will on the premise on which it stands: the understanding of man as separate from the universe and *outside* of life itself.

The desire for “freedom of will” in the superlative, metaphysical sense, such as still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated, the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one’s actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society therefrom, involves nothing less than to be precisely [...] *causa sui*, and, with more than Munchhausen’s audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.¹⁸

So what then are the conceptions of *freedom* and *ideology* that will here be held to scrutiny? The answer is encapsulated in the following account of Primo Levi’s imprisonment in Auschwitz: “One day [Levi] eyed a fine icicle outside [his] window, within hand’s reach.” Driven by thirst, he opened the window and broke off the icicle, but at once a large, heavy man, acting out the role of a Nazi prison guard prowling outside, snatched it away from him. When the astonished Levi asked “warum?”—why should such an act, which hurts no one, and contradicts no rules, be forbidden—the

¹⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. (Trans. Walter Kaufmann). New York: The Modern Library. p. 452

¹⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 452

¹⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 218

guard automatically screamed: Hier ist kein warum!—here there is no “why!”¹⁹ The material reality of the concentration camp is a reflection of the guard’s ideological construct, both imposed and self-induced, in which the possibility of allowing a Jew to satisfy his thirst with an icicle is utterly unimaginable. The absence of “why?”—signifying a thoroughly *closed*, or *convinced* mind succeeding a complete ‘overthrow of conscience’—is the absence of *freedom of consciousness* par excellence, and consequently neither Levi nor the prison guard is free. The guard’s *ideological* limitations have become Levi’s *physical* limitations; the guard is *consciously* as un-free as his prisoner is *physically* un-free, and provided that the Nazi remains a prisoner of his belief system, Levi will be held prisoner in Auschwitz.

The guard has submitted to a description of the universe, then subscribed to a prescribed code of conduct, and thus doing abdicated his unique station in the sea of space and time—his exclusive perspective—in exchange for the all-encompassing perspective of an ideology: a *received consciousness* governed by a system of abstract thoughts, of ideas and ideals, that form an *obstacle* to the guard’s reason, and constitute his objectives and actions. “Unfamiliar things” says Nietzsche “[have become] dangerous, anxiety-provoking, upsetting, – the primary instinct is to get rid of these painful states”:²⁰ Hier ist kein warum! The result? “[A] certain type of causal attribution becomes increasingly prevalent, gets concentrated into a system, and finally emerges as *dominant*.”²¹ The ideology of National Socialism—the sublime and mystical creation of *another*—has come to constitute the greater part of the *camera obscura*²² through which the prison guard perceives the universe. He has surrendered his authenticity, his sovereignty, his *ability to see with his own eyes*, and thus, using Nietzsche’s terminology: the man who believes himself to be a Nazi prison guard is as ‘un-free’ as he is ‘inauthentic’; he has not ‘preserved the distance which separates him from other men’, and he is, therefore, ‘not himself’ but a ‘pseudo-man’, dominated by another. He has abdicated his *freedom of consciousness*.

¹⁹ Levi, Primo. 1995. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Crane Books. p. 28.

²⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 179

²¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 180

²² “In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels, describe ideology as making ‘men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura’.” See, Mautner, Thomas. 2005. *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. London: Penguin Books. p. 294

Just as *physical freedom* is determined by the capacity of a human being to *voyage* through existence without material confinement, *freedom of consciousness* is determined by the capacity of a human being to *experience* existence without the mental confinements of idealism. Freedom of consciousness is a *mode of being* corresponding to our ability to honestly embrace and understand ourselves as both physical and social beings. It is determined by the ability to understand the *necessities* of man's physical reality and a capability to withstand a gauntlet of social programming by the employment of a rigorous will to perpetual psychological rebirth; a continual 'revaluation of all values'. And this is not an easy task: "A free human being is a *warrior*", says Nietzsche. "How is freedom measured in individuals and in peoples? It is measured in the resistance that needs to be overcome."²³ William James puts it more pleasantly: "We have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood."²⁴

Freedom of consciousness is *the art of seeing* with one's own eyes; it means to will the heretic path of the warrior, to honour one's *perspective*, and to *become what one is*. And that, according to Nietzsche, is our ultimate responsibility: "The man who does not want to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily and follow his conscience, which calls to him: 'Be yourself! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself!'"²⁵ But how does one lose oneself and why do both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky address the matter so heartily? Self-losing is a twofold act of dishonesty. Firstly, it is the absolute denial of man's animal nature, the denial of man's physical reality as a carnal being of an 'undesignated world', and secondly, it is the failure to recognise man's 'second nature' as a being "whose character and circumstances are significantly constituted by culture."²⁶ And this failure is particularly dangerous, according to Nietzsche, because it ultimately results in the human being acting and thinking like a member of a herd. "Nietzsche is particularly interested in *misunderstandings* of this latter kind", explains Aaron

²³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 213

²⁴ James, William. 1948. "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" in *Essays in Pragmatism*. New York: Hafner Press. p. 170

²⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2010. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Untimely Meditations*. (Trans. R.J. Hollingdale). New York: Cambridge University Press. p 127

²⁶ Ridley, Aaron. 2006. "Introduction" in *Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*. (Trans. Judith Norman). New York: Cambridge University Press. p. xii

Ridley, “in habits of thought that have the effect of making whole dimensions of ourselves and of our worldly circumstances obscure to us.”²⁷ The consequences of this two-fold denial—this *misunderstanding*—are perfectly captured in the following example of ‘pseudo-men’ dominated by an ideology and unconsciously marching towards the ultimate human tragedy. When the Russian philosopher Ouspensky studied with Gurdjieff, he found hard to comprehend Gurdjieff’s account of the human capacity of ‘forgetting’: “to forget where one is, what one is doing, and what is going on around one.”²⁸

Then, one day, after World War I had begun, Ouspensky saw a truck loaded with artificial legs, headed toward the front. Educated as a mathematician and trained in statistics, Ouspensky remembered that—just as it is possible to calculate how many persons will die of heart attacks in a given year, by probability theory—it is possible to calculate how many legs will be blown off in a battle. But the very calculation is based on the historical fact that most people most of the time will do what they are told by superiors. (Or, as some cynic once said, most people would rather die, even by slow torture, than to think for themselves). In a flash, Ouspensky understood how ordinary men become killers, and victims of killers. He realized that “normal” consciousness is much like hypnosis indeed. People in a trance will do what they are told—even if they are told to march into battle against total strangers who have never harmed them, and attempt to murder those strangers while the strangers are attempting to murder them. Orders from above are tuned-in; the possibility of choice is not-tuned-in.²⁹

In the case of most human beings who have ever thought themselves to be Nazi prison guards, and most of the hundreds of millions of humans who have either become horrific voluptuaries of systematic cruelty or marched towards certain death under the barking of sinister old men in curious uniforms, an ideology has served to vindicate any conceivable form of insanity inflicted upon the earth in general and the species in particular, whether it is in the name of a King or a Country, a God or a Reich, Freedom or Democracy. When we have behaved like cattle led to slaughter, or Ouspensky’s soldiers braving to have their legs blown off—when we have not stopped to remember who we are, where we are, and what is going on around us—*ideology* has been the cloud before our eyes: an opium in exchange for freedom of consciousness.

²⁷ Ridley, Aaron. 2006. xii. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ Wilson, Robert Anton. 2000. “Creative Agnosticism” in *The Journal of Cognitive Liberties*, Vol. 2, No 1. p. 76

²⁹ Wilson, Robert Anton. 2000. p. 76

II - An Over-Throw of Conscience

Dostoyevsky believed human warfare to be a tragic and irrefutable disproof of the belief that humanity is guided by reason. Thus, he contests the idea, as does Nietzsche, that human rationality is history's fundamental driving force.³⁰ Dostoevsky was convinced that 'the future kingdom of socialism', in which every aspect of human life was to be subjected to rationality, would ultimately bring mankind to the level of a 'herd of cattle', led by 'sincerely convinced men'—the kindle bearers of 'truth' who know what is best for everyone, everywhere, every time—who had retreated from the abysmal infinity of existential reality into their very own ideological constructs which they then mistook for life itself, consequently becoming the measurers of all, on behalf of everyone. Ronald Hingley articulates the social message of *The Karamazov Brothers* as follows:

Here is an eloquent defence of humanity at large against those dull, self admiring, uncreative, mischief-making, self-seeking philanthropists called politicians or statesmen, who so disastrously devote their lives to imposing on others what they know to be best for them – that host of inquisitors, petty rather than grand, who have so lamentably proliferated since Dostoevsky's death in the government of his own and other countries.³¹

Indeed. This observation, however, fails to capture the meta-political essence of Dostoevsky's prose: the bilateral nature of the relationship between man and authority; the people's affirmative response to a demand of submission, actualised in the mass 'over-throw of conscience' fundamental to the empowerment of every tyrant of modern history. With reference to book five of *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky writes:

Its idea is the presentation of extreme blasphemy and of the seeds of the idea of destruction at present in Russia among the young generation that has torn itself *away from reality*. [In this Book, Ivan expresses] his basic convictions. These convictions form what I consider as the synthesis of contemporary Russian anarchism. The denial not of God, but of the meaning of his creation. The whole of socialism sprang up and started with the denial of the meaning of historical actuality, it arrived at the program of destruction and anarchism. The principal anarchists were, in many cases, sincerely

³⁰ Golosovker, Jakov. 2010. *Dostoévskaí og Kant: Íhugun lesanda um skáldsöguna Karamazov-bræður og rit Kants Gagnrýn hreinnar skynsemi*. (Icelandic trans. Arnór Hannibalsson). Reykjavík: Arnór Hannibalsson. p. 94

³¹ As cited by Briggs, A. D. B.. 2010. p. xxii. Original source unidentified.

convinced men. My hero takes a theme, in my view, an unassailable one: the senselessness of the suffering of children, and from it deduces the absurdity of the whole historical actuality.³²

Speaking particularly of “The Grand Inquisitor” Dostoevsky writes:

The day before yesterday I sent to the editorial office of the *Russky Vestnik* the continuation of *The Brothers Karamazov* for the June number (the end of the chapter “Pro and Contra”). In it is finished what the lips speak proudly and blasphemously. The modern *denier*, the most vehement one, straightway supports the advise of the devil and asserts that that is a surer way of bringing happiness to mankind than Christ is. For our Russian socialism, stupid, but terrible (for the young are with it)—there is a *warning*, and I think a forcible one. Bread, the Tower of Babel (i.e. the future kingdom of socialism), and the completest over-throw of conscience—that is what the desperate denier and atheist arrives at. The difference only being that our socialists (and they are not only the underground nihilists—you are aware of that) are conscious Jesuits and liars, who will not confess that their idea is the idea of violation of man’s conscience and of the reduction of [...] mankind to the level of a herd of cattle. But my socialist (Ivan Karamazov) is a sincere man who frankly confesses that he agrees with the “Grand Inquisitor’s” view of mankind, and that Christ’s religion (as it were) has raised man much higher than man actually stands. The question is forced home: “Do you despise or respect mankind, you, its coming saviours?”³³

“The Grand Inquisitor” is a parable through which Dostoevsky conveys Ivan Karamazov’s vision of authority, and the problem of human freedom. Ivan is torn by the extremes of the existential idea Dostoevsky has him deliver: The world has no divine purpose, and thus, everything is permitted. “The Legend belongs to a genre that presents the greatest difficulties in interpretation”, explains Joseph Alulis, “it is ironic. What Dostoevsky means is the opposite of what the Grand Inquisitor says.”³⁴ Bearing this in mind, let us turn to Dostoevsky’s narrative and begin by examining the existential outlook of Ivan Karamazov, which is the very outlook of the Grand Inquisitor himself.

³² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1926. “Dostoevsky on ‘The Brothers Karamazov’” in *New Criterion*, IV. (Trans. S. S. Koteliensky). p. 552. As cited by Sandoz, Ellis. 1964. pp. 355-356. Emphasis and omission mine.

³³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1926. p. 29. As cited by Sandoz, Ellis. 1964. p. 356. Omission mine.

³⁴ Alulis, Joseph. 2009. “Dostoevsky and the Metaphysical Foundation of the Liberal Regime “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor”” in *Perspectives on Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 4. p. 210

III - Ivan Karamazov

Ivan Karamazov, who has made a name for himself in Moscow as a brilliant young writer and scholar, has summoned his younger brother Alyosha, who has spent the past year in the local orthodox monastery, to a long overdue reunion in an old tavern. “The latter is one of Dostoevsky’s “whole” men, an accomplished human being who, unlike his brother Ivan [...] and Dostoevsky’s other “doubles” [perhaps most notably the Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment*], has overcome his own “division.””³⁵ Alyosha’s distinctive quality, *communion*—the external manifestation of his inner reality—is contrasted in Ivan’s rationalist-nihilists philosophy, which has alienated him as an ‘isolated act’, detached from the rest of world, and thereby rendered him incapable of converting the abstract into a communal physical experience. To illustrate the existential gap, separating the two brothers, Dostoevsky has them discussing the ‘eternal questions’; Ivan is eager to prove to his young brother that, despite being an atheist, he is indeed a philanthropist and a lover of life itself, a passionate devotee of the world and all its splendours:

The centripetal force on our planet is still fearfully strong, Alyosha. I have a longing for life, and I go on living in spite of logic. Though I may not believe in the order of the universe, yet I love the sticky little leaves as they open in spring. I love the blue sky, I love some people, whom one loves, you know, sometimes without knowing why. I love some great deeds done by men, though I’ve long since ceased perhaps to have faith in them, yet from old habit, one’s heart prizes them.³⁶

“Half your work is done Ivan”, says Alyosha, “you love life, now you’ve only to try to do the second half and you are saved.” And the meaning of this ‘second half’? “Why, one has to raise up your dead, who perhaps have not died after all.”³⁷ In a word: Ivan has to love men in particular as much as he claims to love men in general. But this is precisely what Ivan is incapable of, and this inability, ultimately, marks the existential point where the two brothers part ways. Ivan cannot ‘raise the dead’, he is incapable of loving, let alone living in communion with what he calls the ‘hopeless lot’ which makes up most of mankind: “I could never understand how one can love one’s neighbour. It’s just one’s neighbours, to my mind, that one can’t love, though one

³⁵ Sandoz, Ellis. 1964. pp. 358-359

³⁶ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 251

³⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 252

might love those at a distance.”³⁸ Ivan thus ‘rebels’ against the teachings of Zosima, Alyosha’s elder and the head of his monastery, who teaches that love can only be materialised through active engagement. “For anyone to love man”, Ivan maintains, “he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone.” Ivan can only love man in the ‘abstract’, in the ideal, ‘at a distance’, which is to say: he cannot love at all. “The neighbour’s objective and objectionable otherness”, Ralph Wood remarks, “his bad breath, his foolish face, his ill manners—threaten Ivan’s sovereign selfhood. Of such a neighbour, Ivan complains like an early Jean-Paul Sartre, that “he is another and not me.””³⁹

To thoroughly secure the essential difference between himself and the *other*, Ivan illustrates the problem of evil through devastating force by attacking the classic free-will defence of divine goodness, which proposes that *evil* is the tragic result of human beings mishandling their freedom—a mishandling the *good* and *self-made* Ivan could never be *guilty* of. As Wood remarks, Dostoevsky does not present Ivan Karamazov as a straw man atheist; he is not vexed with any of the natural catastrophes of God’s world—draughts, sweeping floods or devastating earthquakes—that might seem to exclude a blundering creator.⁴⁰ “Ivan knows”, says Wood, “that such cosmic horrors might be attributed to a natural process that is divinely ordered. Like Job, he might discover that, while the natural order seems inimical to human happiness, its operations might have their own purposes, not revealing any divine hostility to humans.”⁴¹ Thus, to force his point home, Ivan focuses only on the evils performed by men themselves: so great are the horrors of human reality, that they eliminate any idea of heavenly authority and meaning. The general theodicy might, at best, rationalise the suffering of adults who can be held accountable for the evils they cause and suffer⁴²—“besides being unworthy of love, they have a compensation – they’ve eaten the apple and know good and evil, and

³⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 258

³⁹ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. “Ivan Karamazov's mistake” in *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*, Vol. 128, No. 11. p. 30

⁴⁰ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p.30

⁴¹ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p.30

⁴² Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p.30

they've become "like gods"”⁴³—but what it fails to explain, Ivan maintains, is the suffering of children:

The children haven't eaten anything, and are so far innocent. [...] If they, too, suffer horribly on earth, they must suffer for their fathers sins, they must be punished for their fathers, who have eaten the apple; but that reasoning is of the other world and is incomprehensible for the heart of man here on earth. The innocent must not suffer for another's sin, and especially such innocents!⁴⁴

To secure his argument, Ivan recounts piercing stories of venomous and senseless horrors, which he has collected from various newspapers, crafting a horrendous portrait of humanity: he tells of a girl of five, hated by her parents—‘most worthy and respectable people, of good education and breeding’—and subjected to every possible kind of torture. After having wet her bed one night, her own mother smears her face and fills her mouth with excrement, and locks her in a freezing outhouse all night. The ‘enlightened’ parents sleep soundly through their daughter’s cries. He recounts the story of a Russian girl of seven, beaten senseless with a birch wood rod by her ‘well-cultured’ parents until she collapses screaming “Father, father, father!” He tells of Turks who burn whole villages, taking pleasure in torturing children, and cutting unborn babies from the wombs of their mothers, tossing them into the air and impaling them on their bayonets. He recounts the story of Richard, a French shepherd boy who was raised as a beast, far below the standards of the herd he was to keep, deliberately starved and beaten every day for coveting the mash given to the pigs. These *evils*, Ivan maintains, can neither be justified by any theodicy, which looks to history’s beginning, nor by any doctrine which looks to a harmonious result of history which will validate its course; human freedom is not worth ‘a single tear’ of a girl of five, trembling in a freezing outhouse, crying out from her excrement-filled mouth to ‘dear, kind God’.⁴⁵

What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows effect simply and directly, and that I know it? – I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. [...] Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me please?

⁴³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 259

⁴⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 259-260

⁴⁵ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 261-265

It's beyond my comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. [...] I renounce the higher harmony all together.⁴⁶

Ivan regards himself as governed by reason in an unreasonable universe; and since God's world is unreasonable, Ivan refuses to accept it. He respectfully 'gives back his entrance ticket', denying not God, but the *meaning* of His creation: since human beings are a 'hopeless', 'violent' lot, so he concludes, incapable of exercising freedom responsibly, and since the world is short of a God willing to keep them at bay, they must be kept in submission by the strong hands of an elite race of self-proclaimed master men who are capable of burdening the responsibility of freedom on behalf of the rest of humanity.

Ivan has climbed a high and lonely mountain where he has raised a sinister banner to the glory of his own rationality, and thus doing alienated himself from the majority of the species; he is 'causa sui', a self-made man, who, in his own image has erected the *ideal* man, by the shadow of which all *other* men shall be measured; his lofty outlook rendering him utterly incapable of embracing anything but this *ideal*, while harbouring toxic *resentment* towards all who are eclipsed by the ideal's perfect shadow. Thus, Ivan has once and for all, established and targeted the all too human *other* whom he forever shuns as a centre of pestilence, eternally blaming the *other* for all *evils*. Despite his so-called passionate embrace of the universe, Ivan assumes the position of a lonely and unmatched authority over the whole world and humanity in its entirety. "Those who love men in general", Dostoevsky said, "hate men in particular."⁴⁷

This is the existential perspective through which Ivan Karamazov produces the great idealist, the Grand Inquisitor, the 'thoroughly convinced' man of which Dostoevsky warns—the man who dominates humankind for its own good.

IV - The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor

Ivan's story takes place in sixteenth century Seville, 'in the most terrible time of the inquisition'. An old and grey, but ever-diligent Cardinal Grand Inquisitor has an

⁴⁶ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. pp. 266-267

⁴⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1971. *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*. (Ed. and Trans. Edward Wasiolek). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. p. 100

abundance of pyres lit every night on which a growing number of heretics are carefully burnt ‘*ad maiorem gloriam Dei*’, for daring to see with their own eyes and question the authority of God’s self-appointed ministers. But the morning after the Inquisitor’s most magnificent ‘*auto da fé*’, where the bodies of over a hundred heretics illuminated the night sky, Christ himself returns to earth and begins to perform miracles on the still hot pavements. The people recognise Him, they are ‘irresistibly drawn to him’, and they ‘flock about him’ as he holds out his hands and blesses them. And there are cries, sobs, and confusion among the people who fall at His feet singing ‘hosanna!’

When the Inquisitor witnesses the glorious return of the risen Christ he immediately has Him arrested as a menace to the church—Christ is after all the greatest of heretics—and locked away in a dungeon where the Inquisitor visits Him in the evening and delivers his monologue: “[Tomorrow] I shall condemn Thee and burn Thee. [...] And the very people who have today kissed Thy feet, tomorrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of Thy fire.”⁴⁸ At the raising of a finger, the people will choose the church over Christ himself, a prescribed doctrine—a sweeping and all encompassing ideology—over freedom of consciousness. Christ will not again be permitted to summon men to shoulder the heavy cross of freedom by preaching the redeeming verse: “O man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you? [...] Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?”⁴⁹

The Inquisitor insists that Christ has too high a vision of humanity, and that He has only increased human suffering and needlessly burdened men by teaching them to lead their lives in accordance to their own unique position in space and time, heartlessly disregarding the fact that the great majority of men—capable only of living for security and carnal contentment—are *essentially* but ‘worthless’ and ‘rebellious’ creatures. And given this vision of humanity, Christ’s gate to freedom is utterly impassable and the path of the bleeding heart will remain forever untrodden. After fifteen dark centuries of advocating Christ’s preposterous gospel, his professed servants have realised their fundamental mistake: human history has shown, beyond a shadow of doubt, that men cannot be entrusted with freedom. Therefore, the church

⁴⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. pp. 273-274

⁴⁹ Luke 14:12 and Luke 12:57

has at last responded to the horrors of human nature, by deliberately perverting Christ's original teachings.

Behold what Thou didst further. All and all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can ease their conscience can take over their freedom. [...] For the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living [...] But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause for suffering. And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest for ever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague, and enigmatic; Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond their strength, acting as though Thou didst not love them at all. [...] In place of the rigid ancient law, man must here after with a free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide.⁵⁰

Christ remains silent. The Inquisitor is restless and unsettled and bitterly reproaches Him for having rejected the Tempter's offerings of bread, power and authority in the wilderness, for these, he maintains, are the alternatives to freedom that human beings desire; alternatives which would have provided Christ with absolute universal dominion over the 'weak', 'ever-sinful' and 'ignoble' race of men who never even cared for the dreadful freedom He had preached. Had Christ accepted the Tempter's offerings, He could have forever ensnared the faith of men, and so doing, invalidated their freedom to follow His example of living in accordance with one's own perspective. By rejecting the Tempter's offerings, and leaving men with nothing but themselves to judge what is right, Christ has, so the Inquisitor maintains, excluded a great majority of men from redemption in oblivious happiness, and condemned them to a life of misery.

And "what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly?"⁵¹ It is the inquisitor himself, having claimed the sword of Caesar and assumed the role of an omniscient redeemer, who has once and for all ensnared the

⁵⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. pp. 278-279

⁵¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 277

faith of men, and taken upon himself the task of securing human happiness. Considering himself to be *essentially* different from the masses, one among the rank of the few and strong, he can burden that horrible ‘gift of freedom’ on behalf of the rest of humanity, which must, consequently, be kept in submission for the sake of the greater good. A few strong men will provide men with a stable and all-enveloping ideology in accordance with which they can peacefully live and fade into nothingness, and all in Christ’s name: “They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them – so awful it will seem to be free. But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name.”⁵² And this, the Inquisitor maintains, is the mission of the church.

For only we, who guard the mystery, shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expire in thy name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall allure them with the reward of heaven and eternity. Though if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they.⁵³

Knowing their authoritarian paternalism to be an absolute inversion of the gospel, the elite few redeemers will fodder the susceptible thousands of millions with a myth in which the universe is governed by God’s divinity and that all will one day, at some distant point in history, make absolute sense. “That Dostoevsky gave [the inquisitor] this position”, Joseph Alulis explains, “reflects his view that though socialism appealed to many as an expression of some thing good, compassion, it really served something evil, the loss of liberty and thus a diminishment of human dignity.”⁵⁴ The falseness of Catholicism was the falseness of socialism; the ‘compulsory organisation of human happiness’ exposed in both ideologies were two aspects of the same drive toward the eradication of human dignity and freedom of conscience.⁵⁵

The Inquisitor now reveals the trinity which constitutes his strategy of domination: “There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold

⁵² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. pp. 277-278

⁵³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 284

⁵⁴ Alulis, Joseph. 2009. p. 211

⁵⁵ Rahv, Philip. 1966. “*The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*” *The Myth and the Powerhouse*. New York: Noonday Press. p. 157

captive for ever the conscience of those impotent rebels for their happiness – those forces are miracle, mystery and authority.”⁵⁶ And the relationship between these forces? By challenging the normalised, logical order of reality, *miracle*—an event or a phenomenon too great or subtle for the human mind to fathom—induces belief in the very power that performed it, in this case, Christ himself. And *Mystery* is the enchanted sphere where belief begets faith, where arbitrary doctrines metamorphose into an absolute ideological structure. The *miracle* the inquisitor holds captive, both literally and metaphorically, is Christ himself—the greatest of heretics and Dostoevsky’s very embodiment of freedom of consciousness. And the Inquisitor’s *mystery*, his *secret*? His mystery is a blinding intoxicant from a weaponry of fraudulence, “a political anesthetising of the masses with the morphine of heaven”,⁵⁷ and as long as he remains the medium through which the miracle—freedom—is perceived, this *noble lie*, provides him with *authority* over the gullible hundreds of millions. His authority is thus of a special nature: “It is not the authority that truth commands by the nobility of its own manifest virtue”, Robert M. Price remarks, “but rather that commandeered by the bribery, the cajoling, the compulsion of miracle. It is the kind of authority that rests upon mysteries, which are but mystifications, the cheat authority of the man behind the curtain.”⁵⁸

We can picture a man like Stalin waving the miraculous complexities of a five year plan, in the very same way that the Inquisitor wields a Bible; the Inquisitor’s perceiving himself as an elite minister of a greater good—in light of which he regards

⁵⁶ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 279

⁵⁷ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p. 33. In *The Diary of a Writer* Dostoevsky presents the following argument: “The present-day French socialism itself—seemingly an ardent and fatal protest against the Catholic idea on the part of all men and nations tortured and strangled with it, who desire to live, and without its gods—this protest itself [...] is nothing but the truest and most direct continuation of the Catholic idea, its fullest most final realization, its fatal consequence which has been evolved through centuries. French socialism is nothing else but a compulsory communion of mankind—an idea which dates back to ancient Rome, and which was fully conserved in Catholicism. Thus the idea of the liberation of the human spirit from Catholicism became vested there precisely in the narrowest Catholic forms borrowed from the very heart of its spirit, from its letter, from its materialism, from its despotism, from its morality.” See, Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1949. *The Diary of a Writer*. (Trans. Boris Brasol). New York: Cribners. p. 563.

⁵⁸ Price, Robert. 2009. “Miracle, Mystery and Authority”. Mindvendor. 11 Aug. 2009. Web. 28 Oct. 2013.

himself as permitted everything from deceit to torture and murder—and the masses perceiving him as the *mysterious* instrument through which the *miracle* is manifested, subsequently submitting and so doing delivering unrestricted *authority*, result in a disappearance of existential and moral considerations within both ranks. In a reality completely cloaked in the veil of ideology, ‘truth’ is imposed by a higher proactive authority and the subject’s ultimate purpose is to reactively endorse that truth: ideology has become an operating system and Dostoevsky’s portrayal of the correlative cog-work of a fundamentalist community appears unveiled.

“What I say to Thee shall come to pass, and our dominion will be built up.” Christ remains silent. “I repeat, tomorrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. Tomorrow I shall burn Thee. *Dixi*.”⁵⁹ Thus the Inquisitor ends his monologue, longing for the prisoner to answer him. But Christ only looks up at the bitter old man, silently approaches him and kisses him on his ‘bloodless aged lips’. The Inquisitor trembles, goes to the door, opens it and says: “Go, and come no more... come not at all, never, never!”⁶⁰ And the risen Christ vanishes into the dark alleys of the town.

So the parable ends. Ivan is agitated, unsure of himself, and asks if Alyosha ‘renounces’ him for his vision. Alyosha says nothing, but kisses his brother softly on the lips, to which Ivan replies: “That’s plagiarism... Thank you though.”⁶¹ And so the brothers part ways. The mirrored image of the last soft kiss is Dostoevsky’s elegant emphasising of the existential difference between the two brothers; the chapter ends by addressing the very problem from which the story arose: despite their fundamental philosophical and religious difference, Alyosha will neither ‘renounce’ his brother, nor will he forsake him as a hopeless ‘other’ who is *essentially* different by *nature*. Alyosha returns him the ticket to the dualistic tragedy of good and evil. He will raise the dead.

Through Ivan’s parable Dostoevsky reveals that the meta-political problem of the relationship between freedom and ideology can only be addressed by examining the bilateral nature of freedom. Dostoevsky leaves us to wonder whether the

⁵⁹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 285

⁶⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 285

⁶¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 289

professional liars of modern history, truly *seized* their authority or whether it was handed to them by peoples who could not dispose of the burden of freedom fast enough. This question is addressed in Reimer's comparative analysis of the Grand Inquisitor and the role of the German populace in creating and sustaining the Nazi dictatorship. "Too many Germans", he concludes, "overwhelmed by the burden of individual freedom and responsibility in an unsettled world, were willing to abandon their freedom to Der Fuehrer to obtain a sense of security, unity and status. To obtain these they willingly surrendered their God-given rights in exchange for duties established by the state."⁶²

Ultimately, "The Grand Inquisitor" is a call for conscious freedom against the restraints of imposed and self-induced ideological limitations; a freedom which demands both a rigorous self-government and a heroic honesty in confronting human physical necessities, as each man builds for himself the bridge over which he must cross the stream of life. "[Dostoevsky's] Christ serves not as the saviour who redeems corporate humanity from sin", Wood remarks, "but as a moral example to guide solitary and heroic individuals—having himself trod the same lonely path of self-determination."⁶³

The Grand Inquisitor is the epitome of "the great, uncanny problem" Nietzsche claims to spend the longest time pursuing: "the psychology of the 'improvers' of humanity."⁶⁴ Hence, only an analysis, which utilises the concepts of human psychological drives and motives, can penetrate the rationalisations we are confronted with in the old priest. Though we have, for the time being, no reason to doubt that he sincerely believes himself to be working in the best interest of humanity, we should not share his convictions.⁶⁵ With his perspectivism Nietzsche delivers the theoretical tools for such an analysis.

⁶² Reimer, Niel. 1957. "Some reflections on the Grand Inquisitor and Modern Democratic Theory" in *Ethics*, Vol. 67, No. 4. p. 250

⁶³ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p.33

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. pp. 185-186

⁶⁵ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. "'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor': The Utopian as Sadist" in *Humanitas*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1 and 2. p. 148

A Cycle of Revenge

*This great evil. Where's it come from? How'd it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doing this? Who's killing us? Robbing us of life and light. Mocking us with the sight of what we might have known. Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the grass to grow or the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed through this night?*⁶⁶

- Private Witt

I - Perspectivism

From very early on in his career, Nietzsche develops and advances the view that the ascetic hunger for immaculate objective reflection, untainted by both the artistry of the human mind and the carnal nature of the human body, has led man astray in his pursuit of truth and knowledge. His perspectivism—a distinctive feature of both his style and existential approach—ridicules the wishful philosophical striving for an all-encompassing eye, an all-inclusive perspective, unperturbed by human ‘interpreting forces’, standing outside and above life from where it sweepingly registers every conceivable aspect of a thing-in-itself, without being perspectival itself. Rather, there exist innumerable physical and intellectual constellations through which ‘truth’ can and *must* be attained. “What then is truth?” asks Nietzsche in a playful essay from his early days. “A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people”;⁶⁷ no man exists in a vacuum from which he can pull himself up into existence by the hair, and consequently no evaluation or idealisation can surpass subjective *interpretations*; ‘truths’ are the approximations humans adopt by way of their perspectives by default—consciously or subconsciously—and thus, the cultural and environmental networks with which the human being is unified define its understanding of existence.

⁶⁶ *The Thin Red Line*. 1998. Dir. Terrence Malick. Perf. Jim Caviezel, Sean Penn and Nick Nolte. Fox 2000 Pictures.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1988. *The Portable Nietzsche*. (Ed. and Trans. Walter Kaufmann). New York: Penguin Books. pp. 46-47

Henceforth my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject”; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason”, “absolute spirituality”, “knowledge in itself”: these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity” be.⁶⁸

The conclusion of this passage does not allow us to infer that perspectivism is synonymous with relativism and that every perspective contributes an equal bestowment to knowledge. “The idea of an absolute map that excluded nothing that anyone might want to know about the terrain is absurd”, explains Christopher Janaway; like any ideation, a map is always a selective abstraction of the terrain it represents—“showing roads but not altitudes, altitudes but not populations, populations but not mean daytime temperatures”—but that does not mean that “no map is more accurate than another, or that no map can be out and out false or fictional.”⁶⁹ Behind each ‘different eye’ is an abysmal ocean of experience, a unique admixture of beliefs, refutations, failures, victories, horrors and loves that dictate the ‘active’ and ‘interpreting forces’ through which each human perspective is abstracted; and these admixtures are not hindrances to knowledge and perception but *necessities* that must be delivered into the light of day where they can be tested, challenged, sharpened, fought over, advanced or left for dead. The philosophical notions of a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless, knowing subject’, ‘pure reason’, ‘absolute spirituality’ and ‘knowledge in itself’, equate, according to James Conant “the attainment of objectivity with a form of “purity” or “absoluteness” that requires the pruning away of every admixture of subjectivity.”⁷⁰ This ‘intellectual cleanliness’ is a manifestation the *ascetic ideal* that devalues human sensuality and, thus doing, renounces the ‘world of appearances’—life itself—as secondary to a supposedly ‘true

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 555

⁶⁹ Janaway, Christopher. 2009. *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 204

⁷⁰ Conant, James. 2006. “The Dialectic of Perspectivism, II” in *Sats - Nordic Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 7, No. 1. p. 50

world’ of ideals—the over-worldly realm of transcendental truths. Perspectivism, however, recognises that the human mind—the point of view from which the human being abstracts reality and the emotions, passions, preconceptions, drives and wills it employs in this abstraction—cannot be parted from what it describes, and that any deliberate overlooking of this fact amounts to a ‘castration of the intellect’ for it discards and depreciates the very things that allow us to think and feel in the first place: “what is really “dangerous” about the contradictory conceptual fictions of the philosophers”, Conant explains, “[is] the identification of objectivity with the elimination of every admixture of subject-dependence.” This identification is *dangerous* precisely because it “blocks the possibility of the sort of interplay between the moments of subjectivity and objectivity in our experience that any coherent employment (literal or metaphorical) of the concept of perspective presupposes.”⁷¹

At the peak of its maturity, in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche’s perspectivism becomes a testimony to the extensions and limitations of the human mind, rather than a metaphysical statement about the existence of truth,⁷² and aims at re-establishing the human being, and life itself—the ever becoming ‘world of appearances’—as a variable in the equation of truth; *becoming* is invited back into philosophy, and through this reunion perspectivism becomes a potent analytical instrument for it consequentially concerns itself with the *value* of truth. “[Nietzsche] asks what truth means as a concept, what forces and what will, qualified in that way, this concept presupposes *by right*.”⁷³ His perspectivism, therefore, leads us not to question whether or not ‘truth’ exists in itself as much as it leads us to question truth as an *instrument of power*. “The will to truth requires a critique”, says Nietzsche, “let us thus define our own task—the value of truth must for once be experimentally called into question.”⁷⁴ Perspectivism thus asks how truth *serves* the truth-seeker. Of what *value* is it to him? How does it empower him? What interests, motives and drives lurk behind his conviction? “It is at this point that Kant is the last of the

⁷¹ Conant, James. 2006. p. 51

⁷² “It is true”, says Nietzsche, “there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed. We [however] behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head.” See, Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. *Human, all too Human: a Book for Free Spirits*. (Trans. R. J. Hollingdale). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 15

⁷³ Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. London: Continuum. p. 89

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. pp. 588-589

classical philosophers”, says Deleuze, “he never questions the value of truth or the reasons for our subjection to it. In this respect he is as dogmatic as anyone else.”⁷⁵

This understanding delivers the central question addressed in this chapter: *How does Nietzsche’s perspectivism present a challenge to the Grand Inquisitor’s argument?* I begin by unfolding the personal motives the perspectival approach unveils behind the fundamental premise the Inquisitor has subscribed to (his dark judgment of human nature), and then proceed to an analysis of the existential and psychological meaning of these motives in light of Nietzsche’s ‘Error of Imaginary Causes’, drawing a comparison between the Inquisitor and Nietzsche’s ascetic priest. I conclude by subjecting that comparison to an analysis of the concept of resentment and the ‘Error of Free Will’.

II - Possessed men

While in exile, Dostoevsky began suspecting that the human idolisation of science and materialism, at the expense of all other ways of accounting for the universe, was a turn towards catastrophe; human reason had been placed on too high a throne.⁷⁶ “atheism, positivism, socialism”, says Briggs “these forces would [according to Dostoevsky] lead away from freedom into a totalitarian society where the rules of human behaviour were worked out according to scientific formulae and imposed upon the population for their own good.”⁷⁷

But the belief systems to which men subscribe do not become sinister political instruments of power by themselves. What makes some men more dangerous creatures than others are their convictions, that is, the degree to which they subscribe to their beliefs. “Conviction”, says Nietzsche, “is the belief that at some point of knowledge one possesses absolute truth.” Such a belief presupposes firstly, that “absolute truths exist”; secondly, “that the perfect methods for arriving at them have been found”; and finally, “that every man who has convictions makes use of these perfect methods.”⁷⁸ Thus, the mind of the convinced man describes not only a

⁷⁵ Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. p. 88

⁷⁶ Briggs, A. D. P.. 2007. pp. xiii-xiv

⁷⁷ Briggs, A. D. P.. 2007. p. xiv

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p. 199

‘truthful world’, but also a ‘truthful man at its centre’;⁷⁹ and when the convinced man has become so thoroughly devoted to a truth or an ideology that he is utterly unwilling to reevaluate his conviction, and is prepared to either defend or enforce that conviction through the blind force and violence epitomised by Levi’s prison guard, Gurdjieff’s ‘hypnotised men’, and the Inquisitor’s very own auto-da-fé, he has become worthy of a specific rank: such a man is *possessed*.

It is not the struggle of opinions that has made history so violent, but rather the struggle of belief in opinions, that is, the struggle of convictions. If only all those people who thought so highly of their conviction, who sacrificed all sorts of things to it and spared neither their honour, body nor life in its service, had devoted only half of their strength to investigating by what right they clung to this or that conviction, how they had arrived at it, then how peaceable the history of mankind would appear! How much more would be known! All the cruel scenes during the persecution of every kind of heretic would have been spared [...] because the inquisitors would above all have inquired within themselves, and got beyond the arrogant idea that they were defending the absolute truth.⁸⁰

The Grand Inquisitor is a *possessed man*, the epitome of the ascetic who has “eaten roots in the desert and made frenzied efforts to subdue his flesh to make himself free and perfect”,⁸¹ and has consequently become a fanatical believer in the power of his own reason and its capacity to throw pure and unlimited light on all existence. We observe in him the strange psychological arrangement of a man who believes himself to be in possession of absolute truth and absolute knowledge, his position begetting, strangely, a brutal and repressive *love* for mankind. Of what value is ‘truth’ to such a man? How does ‘truth’ serve him? What truly drives his will to power?

Let us reevaluate his argument from a perspective delivered by Dostoevsky through the character of Shigalov, a ridiculed figure of *The Possessed*, the story of a group of mediocrities in a Russian one-horse province, that gradually transforms into a deadly activist cell, inflated by the hot air of revolutionary drivel. “The ideas thrust forward in *The Possessed*”, says George Steiner, “and the mythology of the total state, are expounded and detailed in the ardent prophecy of the old priest.”⁸² Through the crude character of Shigalov, Dostoevsky mercilessly degrades the very hieratic

⁷⁹Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. p. 89

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. pp. 199-200

⁸¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 286

⁸² Steiner, George. 2010. *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism*. New York: Faber and Faber. p. 255

system he raises to overwhelming heights through the awesome and polemic figure of the Grand Inquisitor. In Shigalov's account of a despotic socialist utopia we can follow clearly the articulations of thought that are veiled in the lyricism of Ivan's poem.⁸³ Addressing a small audience of radicals, Shigalov delivers his account of an earthly paradise:

Dedicating my energies to the study of social organization which is in the future to replace the present condition of things, I've come to the conviction that all makers of social systems from ancient times up to the present year, 187-, have all been dreamers . . . who understood nothing of natural science and the strange animal called man . . . But, now that we are at last preparing to act, a new form of social organization is essential. In order to avoid further uncertainty, I propose my own system of world organization . . . [But] I must add . . . that my system is not yet complete. I am perplexed by my own data and my conclusion is in direct contradiction of the original idea with which I start. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrive at unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no solution to the social problem but mine.

When Shigalov is silenced by the shouting audience, a comrade comes to his aid and elucidates the utopian vision:

He suggests as a final solution of the question the division of mankind into two unequal parts. One-tenth enjoys absolute liberty and unbounded power over the other nine-tenths. The others have to give up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd, and, through boundless submission, will by a series of regenerations attain primeval innocence, something like the Garden of Eden. They'll have to work, however. The measures proposed by the author for depriving the nine-tenths of mankind their freedom and transforming them into a herd through the education of whole generations are very remarkable, founded on the facts of nature and highly logical.

[...]

It's paradise, an earthly paradise, and there can be no other on earth, Shigalov pronounced authoritatively.⁸⁴

The Inquisitor's monologue can be analysed correspondingly: his argument is furnished by a selective historical study of human nature, which he judges in accordance to the superlative metaphysical conception of *free-will* which Dostoevsky deplores and Nietzsche describes as "the shadiest trick theologians have up their sleeves for making humanity 'responsible' in their sense of the term."⁸⁵ This arbitrary

⁸³ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 133

⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1936. *The Possessed*. (Trans. Constance Garnett). New York: Modern Library. pp. 409-411. As cited by Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 133

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 181

historical evaluation delivers the Inquisitor the pretext of *social necessity* that ultimately forms the basis for the *elitism* he promotes; by presupposing an ideal class of *good* and strong men, who by the deliberate perfecting of their psychological and biological traits have made themselves qualitatively distinct from ordinary men and their self-brought *evils*, the Inquisitor has provided the ultimate contrast by which the rest of humanity is defined and consequently condemned to submissive servitude. For the *greater good* of society and humanity in general, the elite men should enjoy political supremacy insured by the institutionalisation and implementation of a sweeping ideology. And the all-encompassing nature of this ideology necessarily demands that the individual uniqueness, which is fundamental to the proactive engagements that constitute social diversity and the psychological development of the human species, are either wholeheartedly abdicated in exchange for the official ‘truth’, which is provided by the *great other* (elite, social contract, norms, a leader, political party, a state, a religion, morality etc.), or met with the swift and ruthless ‘justice’ of the hierarchical authority or the society in general.

Before we evaluate the Inquisitor’s professed objective (mandatory ‘peace’ and ‘happiness’), and the means by which he proposes to achieve this objective (brute force and deception), let us examine the fundamental premise he has committed to: how accurate is his assessment of human nature? To accept his universal verdict undisputedly, even considering the abundant historical evidence that seemingly advances its credibility, Gorman Beauchamp argues, is “to ignore the fact that most social theorists define human nature in ways to validate their particular theories.”⁸⁶ As Machiavelli advocates the exercise of *Realpolitik*, as a response to the ‘deceitfulness’, ‘cowardice’ and ‘greed’ he holds to be the principal motives of human agency, so the Inquisitor selectively *interprets* a human nature that validates his personal claim to power.⁸⁷ “Let us remember”, says Beauchamp, “that this interpretation does not, in fact, describe how men behave—always and everywhere—as much as how they must behave if the Inquisitor’s political philosophy is to appear valid”; as the anarchist idealises the goodness of man in order to deliver theoretical validation, so the authoritarian theorist amplifies man’s maliciousness, evils and limitations.⁸⁸ “[There]

⁸⁶ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 142

⁸⁷ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 142

⁸⁸ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 143

is no such thing as science without presuppositions”, says Nietzsche, “this thought [...] is paralogical: a philosophy, a “faith”, must always be there first of all, so that science can acquire from it a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist.”⁸⁹ There is no model of reality that is not also a demonstration of the linguistic context, beliefs, ideals, or interests of the theorist who conjured it—no statement about experience that is not also an interpretation—and any supposedly ‘objective’ description of the universe is inaccurate to the extent in which it fails to describe the observer who made the description; the models we create and subscribe to, do not describe the universe in itself, as much as they describe what our belief systems—our ‘presuppositions’—allow us to measure and communicate at a given moment. And if the Inquisitor is, as Nietzsche would state, “the psychological representative of the system he uses in dealing with people and things”,⁹⁰ his evaluation of man speaks volumes about his drives and motives and the ideological construct through which he abstracts experience, but communicates next to nothing about a ‘true’, ‘objective’ nature of man. If such a nature, such a ‘truth’, exists at all, its abysmal depth cannot be registered, let alone fully communicated, for the map is not the territory. An immeasurable multitude of actions and occurrences is deliberately excluded from the Inquisitor’s monologue, making it appeal to a specific mentality in its reduction of all human experience to simplistic dualisms: good or evil, ruler or ruled, anarchy or despotism.⁹¹ “In truth”, says Nietzsche “we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces. [...] There is an infinite number of processes which elude us.”⁹² The inquisitor does not *interpret* humans as interminably complex, multidimensional beings who are one with the universe in an unlimited flux of evolving and becoming, but as fixed abstractions, atomised *individuals*, fully fathomable things-in-themselves; in his all encompassing eye man is a constant, not a variable; man is something which has already *become*, and must forever stay that way in order to provide a continuing theoretical justification, not something which is ever *becoming*.

⁸⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. pp. 587-588

⁹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 177

⁹¹ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 143

⁹² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2008. *The Gay Science*. (Trans. Josfine Nauckhoff). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 113

III - Fear of the unknown

According to Nietzsche's "Error of Imaginary Causes", a man possessed by a conviction registers experience—adapts phenomena to ideology—by way of an ancient emotion, 'found in both the oldest and newest habits of humanity': 'fear of the unknown'. This fear perpetually drives the possessed man to 'interpret' all he encounters as something 'familiar', which can be adjusted to the ideological construct by which he already operates. When challenged with an event that has an unknown cause—unknown for it can neither be justified nor rationalised by the ideological construct he has already subscribed to—a memory of a previous cause is recollected and applied to the present situation. "The memory that unconsciously becomes activated in such cases is what leads back to earlier states of the same type and the associated causal interpretation, – not their causality."⁹³ Nietzsche identifies this tendency as a manifestation of a 'psychological need' to remove or discard the unknown before it gains sufficient force and momentum to challenge the possessed man's mind-set, constantly keeping him from envisaging experience from unfamiliar perspectives. The unknown—the world as something else than his firm conviction deems acceptable—is not experienced, but imagined into a familiarity which has become a dominant system of beliefs, an ideology; freedom of consciousness is interpreted as rebellious sacrilege, objection becomes blasphemy, non-conformity becomes a revolutionary act, and the exemplar becomes a heretic: *Hier ist kein warum*. The possessed man is not looking for just any type of explanation, he seeks a "*chosen, preferred type* of explanation, one that will most quickly and reliably get rid of the feeling of unfamiliarity and novelty, the feeling that [he is] dealing with something [he] has never encountered before, – the *most common* explanation."⁹⁴

The possessed man's fear of the unknown is understandable when we remember that fundamentally, the ideological construct he takes to be the 'true world', and the self-image he takes to be himself are equiprimordial: his understanding of himself is dependent on his understanding of his environment. "We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live", says Nietzsche, "by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of

⁹³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 179

⁹⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 180

faith no one could endure living.”⁹⁵ The Inquisitor’s refusal to honestly address experiences and phenomena that threaten his ideals and prepositions—the sinister things that could strike at the very foundations of his reality construct, his ‘true world’, his ideology—is as much a defence of the ‘true world’ *out there*, as it is a defence of his existential station, the *idea* he takes to be *himself*. As a consequence he “is well defended against himself, against being reconnoitred and besieged by himself, he is usually able to perceive of himself only his outer walls. The actual fortress is inaccessible, even invisible to him.”⁹⁶ His compulsive reluctance to reevaluate his view of the world is therefore also a compulsive reluctance to self-knowledge, a compulsion actualised in his torture, murder and violence; and this arrogance in the face of the *unknown* is the pacemaker at the heart of every dogmatism: the more thoroughly a man secures himself within a stronghold of idealism the more violently he reacts when his vision of reality—his ‘true world’—is questioned; after all, what he takes to be himself, is under attack.

The inquisitor’s defence of his conviction is thus a desperate act of self-defence—of self-preservation—as much as it is a promotion of the ideal he takes for immaculate truth. From this perspective, the Inquisitor’s fear of the unknown is, ultimately, fear of knowing himself; fear of bringing to light the disregarded but ever-labouring fabrications he takes to be truths; and this fear is the fundamental motive that perpetually drives him to run into the arms of his convictions, rather than testing the very foundations of the ‘true world’ he has constructed. Through this ‘ancient fear’, therefore, reality, or ‘truth’, is “confused with the effects of *believing* that something is true”;⁹⁷ the Inquisitor’s ‘truths’ are bread by his presuppositions and received by his cowardice. Beyond the soothing embrace of idealism lies the abyss of infinity and nothingness, in the face of which any man is overcome with uncertainty and metaphysical torment—an anguish perfectly encapsulated in the Inquisitor’s own account of the human soul, grasping for reality, as the certainty of existence is ripped from under its feet: “Without a stable conception of the object of life, man will not accept life and will rather destroy himself than remain on earth.”⁹⁸ Who dares to ask whether or not their life has any meaning, purpose or value? “How much truth can a

⁹⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2008. p. 117

⁹⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. pp. 179-180

⁹⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 181

⁹⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. pp. 278-279

spirit *tolerate*, how much truth is it willing to risk?” asks Nietzsche. “This increasingly became the measure of real value for me. Error (– the belief in the ideal –) is not blindness, error is *cowardice* . . . Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge comes from courage, from harshness toward yourself.”⁹⁹

The inquisitor’s evaluation of man can now be seen not merely as a necessary premise to his dystopian objective and will to power, but as the fundamental premise of his own existence; it is both the existential foundation on which he has placed himself and the very source of his elitism and sense of entitlement: if humans were not pathetic, brutal creatures, there would be no need for Inquisitors; and in order for the Inquisitor to be who he takes himself to be, humanity *must be* that which the Inquisitor condemns it to be. In the words of Nietzsche: “[The Inquisitor’s] decision to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad”,¹⁰⁰ and his so called over all goal of ‘peace’ and ‘happiness’—his divine objective—is but a pretext to a desperate protection of an existential station.

Throughout his writings Nietzsche continuously employs the metaphor in which he describes existence as *abysmal*, meaning that every single aspect of reality, every single aspect of experience, is *infinite*: the deeper the human eye stares, the more it sees. The mental construct the possessed man has come to experience as the ‘real world’ is however *finite*, since it is fabricated by excluding and depreciating the menacing branches of existence that threaten his station in the ideological network to which he has submitted.¹⁰¹ “Nietzsche’s objection to ‘idealism’ is not merely that it falsifies the world” says Aaron Ridley, “it is also that ‘idealism’ devalues the world, by according the highest value of its own inventions, at the world’s expense and out of resentment against it – out of a ‘deadly hostility to life’.”¹⁰²

You rob reality of its meaning, value and truthfulness to the extent that you *make up* a an ideal world . . . The ‘true world’ and the ‘world of appearances’ – in plain language, the made-up world and reality . . . So far, the lie of the ideal has been a curse on reality, it has made humanity false and hypocritical down to its deepest instincts – to the point of worshipping values that are the reverse of those that might begin to guarantee it prosperity, future, a high *right* to a future.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 72

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2008. p. 123

¹⁰¹ Wilson, Robert Anton. 2000. p. 62

¹⁰² Ridley, Aaron. 2006. p. XX

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 71

IV - Resentment

The Inquisitor is described by Ivan Karamazov as “a martyr oppressed by great sorrow and loving humanity”,¹⁰⁴ a loving subject, paradoxically, resenting its loved object, and ever suffering for the sake of it—his whole being pervaded by the very deep-rooted resentment Nietzsche analyses in his later writings. In the world in general and humanity in particular, the Inquisitor has sought, found and identified the soul cause of his misery, an external target of blame; “more exactly” says Nietzsche, “an agent; still more specifically, a guilty agent who is susceptible to suffering—in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy.”¹⁰⁵ Driven with resentment the Inquisitor blindly pursues his target in frantic action, twisting and overturning what he sees as interfering with his objective—his chosen path—turning over every stone, and the whole world upside down if he must, “for the venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt [...] to win relief, *anesthesia*—the narcotic he can not help desiring to deaden pain of any kind.”¹⁰⁶ The resentment and vengefulness exposed in his shameless display of violence, reflect a craving to deaden pain by means of “more violent emotions of any kind, a tormenting, secret pain that is becoming unendurable, and to drive it out of consciousness at least for the moment [under any] pretext at all.”¹⁰⁷ And a possessed man of resentment makes judgments he will not raise to doubt; the mind is closed—thoroughly convinced—and his target will not be released; he is a perpetual accuser who protects his projection as a matter of life and death—as the very foundation of his being—only tightening his grip, so that distortions become veiled, obscure, inaccessible to doubt, and kept far from examination: “[his] soul squints, his spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, [...] a race of such men of resentment is bound to become eventually cleverer than any noble race; it will also harness cleverness to a far greater degree.”¹⁰⁸ And the Inquisitor is a clever man indeed: his resentment serves as a creative and destructive force, fuelling an entire rejecting and justifying value-system, a hopeless *cycle of revenge*. By erecting a ‘true

¹⁰⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 286

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 563

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 563

¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 563

¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 474

world’—“an adaptation through which any previous “meaning” and “purpose” are necessarily obscured or obliterated”¹⁰⁹—he draws distinct lines between himself and his target; and having thoroughly isolated himself from the rest of the species he sets about in furious attempts to smash the ‘world of appearances’, mercilessly destroying the reality that constantly contradicts his single vision.

Nietzsche asks us to “[picture] ‘the enemy’ as the man of *resentment* conceives him.” He *desires* his enemy—he needs the enemy—because in the enemy he sees a ‘mark of distinction’; the enemy is an inverted mirror in which the man of resentment reflects himself as the opposite: “and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived ‘the evil enemy’, ‘*the Evil One*’, and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a ‘good one’—himself!”¹¹⁰ The Inquisitor can only define himself as ‘good’ by first negating others as ‘evil’; he is parasitic for his negation constitutes his existence, and to this end he invents the idea of a human being who is free to act—who is ‘*causa sui*’—and an entire language (of good and evil, sin and guilt), in order to attribute ‘blame’ and glorify himself for ‘freely’ choosing to be good.¹¹¹ This is the ocean from which his ‘true world’ arises; he *needs* the idea of an atomised sovereign individual, the atomised owner of a conscience and a free will, who can be bound to social contracts and held responsible for his actions: “Wherever responsibilities are assigned”, says Nietzsche, “an instinct to *punish and judge* is generally at work.”¹¹² Out of the pits of his pain and misery, the Inquisitor, like Nietzsche’s ascetic priest, “establishes [his] *right* to inflict punishment”,¹¹³ and his failure to recognise the depths of his own creativity has culminated to the point where that very failure aims to hinder the psychological evolution of the species by keeping it in a constant state of fear and helplessness: “he does not”, says Beauchamp, “find man slavish, servile, childish by nature, but attempts to make him so. [His] ideology demands such a man, so [his] practices produce such a man—insofar as they can.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 513

¹¹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 475

¹¹¹ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 2002. p. 130

¹¹² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 181

¹¹³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 181

¹¹⁴ Beauchamp, Gorman. 2007. p. 146

As he thoroughly secures himself in the ‘true world’ of his own making the possessed man of resentment must always be right for being wrong means not being at all; the suffering and pain fundamental to his objective is only in the ‘world of appearances’ and is easily ignored as it stands in way of the edited and improved ‘true world’ of his own making.¹¹⁵ And when the refusal to conform to this madness is commonly considered a heretic act, punishable by death, imprisonment, stigmatisation or banishment, culture has become a strange instrument, appealing to the lowest common denominator, fostering, taming and domesticating a strange type of human being.

Supposing that what is at any rate believed to be the ‘truth’ really is true, and the *meaning of all culture* is the reduction of the beast of prey ‘man’ to a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic animal*, then one would undoubtedly have to regard all those instincts of reaction and *ressentiment* through whose aid the noble races and their ideals were finally confounded and overthrown as the actual *instruments of culture*; which is not to say that the *bearers* of these instincts themselves represent culture. Rather is the reverse not merely probable—no! today it is *palpable*! These bearers of the oppressive instincts that thirst for reprisal [...] represent the *regression* of mankind! These ‘instruments of culture’ are a disgrace to man and rather an accusation and counterargument against ‘culture’ in general!¹¹⁶

V – “Improving” Humanity

“We shall have an answer for all”, the Inquisitor proclaims, “and [men] will be glad to believe our answer, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves.”¹¹⁷ Like the ascetic priest, the Inquisitor considers himself to be the “predestined saviour, shepherd, and advocate of the sick herd.”¹¹⁸ He is what Nietzsche calls “a man on a tremendous historical mission” and “dominion over the suffering is his kingdom, that is where his instincts direct him, here he possesses his distinctive art, his mastery, his kind of happiness.”¹¹⁹ His goal of mandatory ‘peace’ and ‘happiness’ is grounded not on man becoming wise and strong, but weak and submissive, and “his holy pretext of

¹¹⁵ Wilson, Robert Anton. 2000. p. 62

¹¹⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. pp. 478-479

¹¹⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 284

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 561

¹¹⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 561

‘improving’ humanity is [now] recognized as the ruse to suck the blood out of life itself, to make it anaemic”;¹²⁰ he *needs* man’s subservience, weaknesses, his worship; he needs man to need him; he *loves* as long as he dominates, and to that end he must be a strong, master of himself “even more than of others”, says Nietzsche, “with his will to power intact, so as to be both trusted and feared by the sick, so as to be their support, resistance, prop, compulsion, taskmaster, tyrant, and god”;¹²¹ he defends the herd against heretic perversions to maintain but one aim: to preserve his self-deception. He is nothing by himself.

Oh, we shall allow them even sin, they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin. We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves. And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviours who have taken on themselves the sins before God. [...] We shall allow or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient – and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. [...] They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish songs.¹²²

The Inquisitor’s herd animal is *saved* from the metaphysical anguish of determining the meaning of life and its identity, and the moral responsibility of determining its own fate; these questions are addressed and solved by the power to which it submits.¹²³ This means that the psychological arrangements of both the Inquisitor and the men he seeks to dominate are the outcome of the same need to self-affirmation. Eric Fromm calls this socio-pathology ‘symbiosis’. “Symbiosis, in this psychological sense, means the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of his own

¹²⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 150

¹²¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 562

¹²² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 284

¹²³ Fromm, Eric. 2002. *The Fear of Freedom*. London and New York: Routledge 2002. p. 136

self and to make them completely dependent on each other.”¹²⁴ Both parties spiral around the same black hole of nothingness, and what the Inquisitor’s takes to be an expression of his strength—his domination—is but a reflection of the very weakness he holds to be the essential nature of man: the inability to stand alone and live. Before us is a picture of an accursed old man, hopelessly bound to a carousel of revenge, endlessly turning around a desolate idea of a human being, conceived as a self-reflective ego, alienated from the ‘world of appearances’, nature, and reality. And as long as the error of individuality reigns, the cycle of revenge will remain unbroken; possessed men will obsessively protect their ‘true worlds’ of good and evil, and nurse their pretext to hate, despise, avenge and punish.

A great share of Nietzsche’s philosophy is aimed at promoting great human beings who value their unique individual identity without subscribing to a self-conception based on the idea of *causa sui* or resorting to symbiotic social affirmation. The man Nietzsche summons “is the type that conceives of reality *as it is*: his type has the strength to do this –, it is not alienated, removed from reality, it is reality itself, it contains in itself everything terrible and questionable about reality, *this is the only way someone can achieve greatness*.”¹²⁵

From his earliest writings, Nietzsche concedes that if the aim of politics is to make life as endurable for as many people as possible “then people should be allowed the freedom to determine what they understand to be an endurable life. [...] This means that society must provide space for the rare, the unique and the noble; that is, a space for unpolitical sentiments and strivings so as to ensure that not everything in life becomes politicised and, as a result, vulgarised”;¹²⁶ man’s ultimate responsibility is to find and cultivate his uniqueness which must blossom independent of ‘the dark workshop where ideals are made on earth’.

One thing above all is certain: these new duties are not the duties of a solitary; on the contrary, they set one in the midst of a mighty community held together, *not by external forms and regulations*, but by a fundamental idea. It is the fundamental idea of *culture*, insofar as it sets for each one of us but one task: *to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and*

¹²⁴ Fromm, Eric. 2002. p. 136

¹²⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006 pp. 147-148

¹²⁶ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 2002. p. 90

*the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature.*¹²⁷

Nietzsche's thinking challenges the deepest sentiments and convictions of the Inquisitor: "individuals can only attain 'value' by placing themselves in the service of culture (which for [Nietzsche] means the cultivations of great or true human beings), and by representing, in some sense, the ascending forces of life."¹²⁸ In his thought, culture is not the operating system of each individual, but "the child of each individual's self-knowledge and dissatisfaction with himself. Anyone who believes in culture is thereby saying: 'I see above me something higher and more human than I am; let everyone help me to attain it, as I will help everyone who knows and suffers as I do'."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2010. *Untimely Meditations*. (Trans. R.J. Hollingdale). New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 160. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁸ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 2002. p. 11

¹²⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2010. p. 162

The Innocence of Becoming

Inconceivable as it seems to ordinary reason, you—and all other conscious beings as such—are all in all. Hence this life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but is in a certain sense the whole . . . Thus you can throw yourself flat on the ground, stretched out upon Mother Earth, with the certain conviction that you are one with her and she with you. You are as firmly established, as invulnerable as she, a thousand times firmer and more invulnerable. As surely as she will engulf you tomorrow, so surely will she bring you forth anew to new striving and suffering. And not “merely someday”: Now, today, every day she is bringing you forth, not once but thousands upon thousands of times, just as every day she engulfs you a thousand times over.

Erwin Schrödinger¹³⁰

I - Forgiveness

Although we have now rejected the Inquisitor's scheme as a product of a mind deluded with error, the problem by which our enquiry was conceived still remains: in what light shall we view the obvious suffering and horrors of human existence? “The spirit of revenge”, says Nietzsche, “has up to now been mankind's chief concern; and wherever there was suffering, there was always supposed to be punishment. ‘Punishment’ is what revenge calls itself.”¹³¹ Pain and suffering—and perhaps even cruelty—are inescapable features of human reality. What matters, therefore, is not how we *eradicate* suffering, but how we *comprehend* it. How are we to interpret the blind cruelty that so painstakingly characterises our past and present without arriving at a need to punish one another? How are we to comprehend the violence of man—how are we to *interpret* ourselves? Is it possible to bestow any value and significance upon the brutality of our history? Can we *forgive* ourselves without seeking the comfort of an all-encompassing ideology or a teleological perspective that bestows upon us a final goal and a purpose?

The aim of this chapter is to provide an alternative way of accounting for our existence to that of Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor by addressing the following question: *Can Nietzsche's account of the concepts of the Eternal Return*

¹³⁰ Schrödinger, Erwin. 1964. *My View of the World*. London: Cambridge University Press. p. 21

¹³¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1972. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. (Trans. R. J. Hollingdale). London: Penguin Books. p. 162

and *Amor fati*, combined with the teachings of the elder Zosima, provide a perspective of forgiveness? I begin by outlining the psychological and existential meaning of the Eternal Return and *Amor fati* by accounting for two distinct moments of extreme crisis in the lives of the brothers Ivan and Alyosha, respectfully. I conclude by applying that meaning to the exhortations of the elder Zosima, and thereby describe a mode of consciousness that has become *free* from resentment and the accompanying need for revenge—a perspective of forgiveness.

“For *that man may be freed from the bonds of revenge*”, says Nietzsche, “that is the bridge to my highest hope and a rainbow after protracted storms.”¹³² Accordingly, I define forgiveness as *the emancipation of consciousness from the spirit of resentment and revenge*. But to arrive at that state of consciousness we must acquire an understanding by which the *innocence* of existence, *the innocence of becoming*, is restored. That understanding is the subject of this chapter.

II - The Eternal Return

In his meditations, “On forgiveness”, Derrida reveals a vital tension between two modes of forgiveness that elucidate the task at hand: *unconditional* forgiveness and *conditional* forgiveness. The first mode, ‘gracious’ and ‘infinite’, is granted to the wrongdoer “without counterpart, even to those who do not ask forgiveness.”¹³³ Conditional forgiveness, on the contrary, *depends* on the acknowledgment of both guilt and shame. What undermines conditional forgiveness as a mechanism of freedom from revenge and resentment, therefore, is that firstly, it is unable to forgive those who no longer exist—dead people neither repent nor beg forgiveness—and secondly, that it forgives neither the wrongdoer nor the fault as such, for both have to be *reinvented* to establish the prescribed conditions of forgiveness. In other words, conditional forgiveness *demand*s the transformation of the wrongdoer who must repent and explicitly ask to be forgiven, “and who from that point is no longer guilty through and through, but already another, and better than the guilty one.”¹³⁴

¹³² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1972. p. 123

¹³³ Derrida, Jacques. 2001. “On Forgiveness” in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. (Trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes). London and New York: Routledge. p. 34

¹³⁴ Derrida, Jacques. 2001. p. 35

Conditional forgiveness, therefore, addresses not the world *as it is*, but as it *should* be, and if existence does not perform in accordance with the conditions imposed upon it, we whirl again on the very carousel of revenge and resentment that any act of forgiveness, ‘worthy of its name’, is meant to resolve.

Must one not maintain that an act of forgiveness, [...] if there ever was such a thing, must forgive the unforgiveable, and without condition? And that such unconditionality is also inscribed [...] in ‘our’ heritage? Even if this radical purity can seem excessive, hyperbolic, mad? Because if I say, as I think, that forgiveness is mad, and that it must remain madness of the impossible, this is certainly not to exclude or disqualify it. It is even, perhaps, the only thing that arrives, that surprises, like a revolution, the ordinary course of history, politics and law.¹³⁵

In a word: if forgiveness is to become a true instrument of psychological freedom, it must be placed above and beyond the horizon of ‘redemption’ and ‘reconciliation’;¹³⁶ and not a single human act, not a single event in existence, how violent and horrific, may be excluded from its realm. This demand constitutes the ‘madness’ of unconditional forgiveness.

The ancient idea of the Eternal Return, expresses perfectly the hyperbolic ‘unconditionality’ and ‘madness’ we are confronted with. The Eternal Return suggests that although every vibration in the song of existence is impermanent, and will indeed fade into nothingness, each and every note that constitutes the ‘chorus of natural beings’ has both a determinate frequency, and a determinate place in the composition of existence—and time being limitless, its ever flowing river provides boundless space in which all compositions that have ever been performed, will be performed again, and again, endlessly on the ‘wheel of cosmic processes’.¹³⁷ Nietzsche, however, transforms the eternal return from a cosmological statement,¹³⁸ into a hypothetical question, and through this question the idea takes the shape of a double-edged sword, wielded as both “the supreme exaltation of the moment, [the] most extreme

¹³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. 2001. p. 39

¹³⁶ Derrida, Jacques. 2001. p. 38

¹³⁷ Kaufmann, Walter. 1974. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. p. 318

¹³⁸ “In his books, of course”, says Kaufmann, “Nietzsche never offered any proof of his doctrine: it is only in the notes that we encounter these attempts; and his reasons for not publishing a proof presumably included his own sense that his efforts were inadequate.” See, Kaufmann, Walter. 1974. p. 327

repudiation of any deprecation of the moment, the finite and the individual”,¹³⁹ and a rigorous instrument of will: “*whatever you will, will it in such a way that you will also will its eternal return.*”¹⁴⁰

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakable small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine’. If this thought gained power over you as you are, it would probably crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?¹⁴¹

From Nietzsche’s perspective, the wish for the eternal return of all events marks the ultimate *affirmation* of life—the place and time called *here* and *now*—and thus the question the demon presents is painstakingly uncompromising: do you *love* or *resent* your life? Do you *unconditionally* embrace this very moment, and thereby every single aspect of existence, beautiful and ugly, that was needed to compose this moment, or do you wish for life to be, and to have been, different? The answer unveils a fundamental psychological disposition of either *rejecting resentment* or *loving affirmation*. A perfect expression of the former appears when Ivan Karamazov—the great idealist and perpetual nay-sayer—falls ill with the cerebral fever that ultimately signals his descent into madness. Struggling desperately with a nightmare, a devil appears before him in the guise of an elderly Russian gentleman, sitting amiably on Ivan’s sofa from where he ridicules Ivan’s convictions, his understanding of himself and of existence.

Why, you keep thinking of our present earth! But our present earth may have been repeated a billion times. Why, it’s become extinct, been frozen; cracked, broken to bits, disintegrated into its elements, again ‘the water

¹³⁹ Kaufmann, Walter. 1974. p. 321

¹⁴⁰ Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. p. 62

¹⁴¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2008. pp. 194-195

above the firmament', then again a comet, again a sun, again from the sun it becomes earth—and the same sequence may have been repeated endlessly and exactly the same to every detail, most unseemly and insufferably tedious'.¹⁴²

The Devil offers Ivan the possibility of a realisation, a lesson Ivan can either embrace or reject, but he is not ready to accept it. Rather, he desperately seeks to further justify *himself* and his ideology—his idea on how the world *should* be if he is to embrace it—and clings to his convictions through spouts of furious anger. But his desperate justifications are ridiculed and shattered by the uncompromising devil, until the helpless and isolated Ivan screams out from the pits of his bitterness: “You are a lie, you are my illness, you’re a phantom!”¹⁴³ But the devil only persists, effortlessly mocking the great idealist, ‘the young author of the Grand Inquisitor’, until the helpless Ivan moans before his apparition: “Leave me alone, you are beating my brain like a haunting nightmare. I would give anything to be able to shake you off.”¹⁴⁴ The Eternal Return becomes Ivan’s ‘heaviest weight’, a horrifying and paralysing offering, and its awesome force overwhelms and crushes his whole being. The devil’s presence exposes in him the very resentment and vengefulness that enchains and sickens the human spirit when it has hardened into the form of idealism: the great ‘should’ Ivan has imposed upon existence. It has brought to light Ivan’s failure to value the present moment—life itself in all its awesome glory—his dissatisfaction with the order of the world, and eventually his hatred of himself. It has stripped bare his cosmic nausea and its symptoms of resentfully yearning for a different, *better* world—a yearning which, in its *conditionality*, deprecates and de-values *this* existence, *this* life, *this* moment.

¹⁴² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010. p. 724. This passage, from a chapter called “The Devil, Ivan’s Nightmare”, first appeared in print in 1880, only two years prior to the publication of *The Gay Science*. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Nietzsche read *The Karamazov Brothers*, let alone that he did so before he wrote the parable, the similarity between metaphores is quite remarkable. Nietzsche claims to have discovered an unpolished form of the Eternal Return in pre-platonic thinkers, and Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche became familiar with a sophisticated deployment of the concept through earlier thinkers, most notably the works of Heinrich Heine (See, Kaufmann, Walter. 1974. p. 317-318). Perhaps Dostoevsky himself encountered the concept through the same source, as his Devil mentions Heine in passing during Ivan’s Nightmare: “There is no pleasing you! And I thought I should fascinate you by my literary style. That hosannah in the skies really wasn’t bad, was it? And the ironical tone a la Heine.” See, Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 725

¹⁴³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 725

¹⁴⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 727

‘The world of appearances’ has become secondary to the made up ‘true world’ of idealism.

If we however affirm the moment, says Nietzsche, “we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence. For nothing is self-sufficient, neither in us ourselves nor in things; [...] all eternity was needed to produce this one event – and in this single moment of affirmation all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified, and affirmed.”¹⁴⁵ If Ivan is to be freed from resentment, if he is to *affirm* existence, he must, therefore, develop both a self-conception that reflects himself as an integral part of the *whole*—an understanding of himself as fixed in a social and biological network—and a readiness to accept the whole of existence in every single part of its tragic form. For whether Ivan likes it or not, the eternity of past time has already composed the present moment—the past is the *necessity* of the present—and we cannot change the past.

Amor fati is the joyful acceptance of one’s fate, and consequently the fate of the whole; it is the wedding of the past and the future in the eternal moment of the affirmative now: “My formula for human greatness is *Amor fati*”, says Nietzsche, “that one wants to have nothing different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear the necessary, still less to conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness before the necessary—but to *love* it.” Amor fati does not include an imperative that existence must be *reinvented* into something *other* than it already is. “Put differently”, say Ulfers and Cohen,

Amor Fati is the embrace of a world that is an implicate order of freedom and necessity: of freedom in that it is free from any “should” that would judge it to be deficient, and from any goal that “should” be attained, and of necessity because the lack of a goal to be achieved allows the world its “must”, its having to be what it is, not what it is made by an authority beyond the perimeters of the world.¹⁴⁶

Being a man who is “accustomed to rely upon himself alone and to cut himself off from the whole”,¹⁴⁷ Ivan Karamazov is incapable of grasping this unity of existence; he thanks himself for *his* brilliance, himself for *his* goodness, himself for *his*

¹⁴⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1968. *The Will to Power*. (Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale). New York: Random House. pp. 532-533

¹⁴⁶ Cohen, Daniel and Ulfers, Friedrich. *Nietzsche's Amor Fati - The Embracing of an Undecided Fate*. The Nietzsche Circle. July 2007. p. 5. Web. 1 April 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 335

righteousness, himself for *his* diligence—these are faculties he fancies himself to have acquired *despite* the world, not *because* of it. In the words of Goethe: “None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”¹⁴⁸ It is because Ivan *regards* himself to be free, *not because he is* free, that he suffers.¹⁴⁹ He is thoroughly imprisoned by the terms in which he thinks, and the idea of freedom to which he has subscribed is the very illusion that constitutes his imprisonment; it is the error that supposedly puts him outside and above the world from where he can judge all of existence and crown himself an authority on how it *should* be if he is to accept it. “All mankind in our age have split into units”, says Zosima, “they all keep apart, each in his own groove; each one holds aloof, hides himself and hides what he has from the rest, and he ends up being repelled by others and repelling them. [...] To transform the world, to recreate it afresh, men must turn onto another path psychologically.”¹⁵⁰

III - Amor Fati

It is through the death of the elder Zosima that Dostoevsky unfolds the path of psychological transformation that leads Alyosha to an unconditional acceptance of existence, embracing thereby the essential meaning of Amor fati. Despite being loving, sincere, and wise far beyond his years, Alyosha, like his brother Ivan, nurses a seed of self-destruction. Alyosha hopes for a future where existence is forever redeemed from its ugliness, a day when someone—some ‘great other’—will finally bestow upon the universe and Alyosha himself an ultimate truth, a meaning, a final goal and a purpose: “it will come one day to us, too, and rule over all the earth according to the promise.”¹⁵¹ And in the mind of Alyosha, that ‘someone’ is the elder Zosima: “that the elder Zosima was this saint and custodian of God’s truth – of that he had no more doubt than the weeping peasants and the sick women who held out their children to the elder.”¹⁵² In the image of Zosima, Alyosha has established the *ideal*

¹⁴⁸ Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. 2008. *Elective Affinities*. (Trans. John Calder). London: Oneworld Classics. p. 166

¹⁴⁹ In *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche writes: “Thus: it is because man regards himself to be free, not because he is free, that he feel remorse and pangs of conscience.” See, Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005 p. 35

¹⁵⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 334

¹⁵¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 29

¹⁵² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 29

man, by the standards of which he measures both himself and humanity. Thus, he depends not on himself—his unmatched perspectival uniqueness—but on the elder Zosima to give value to existence. Alyosha was convinced that in his death, Zosima would be triumphant over his many fundamentalist critics and orthodox opponents, and being his chosen student, Alyosha would share the ‘extraordinary glory’. In the monastery it was believed that the body of a true saint would not decompose after death, for the physical reality of corruption contradicted the ethereal reality of saintly life. In death the sweet aroma of heaven would reveal inner goodness. Unknowingly, Alyosha awaited a day of atonement, a future in which Zosima would ‘at last establish truth on the earth’, and Alyosha himself would thereby be *affirmed*. That was the *dream* of his heart.

The conviction that after his death the elder would bring extraordinary glory to the monastery was even stronger in Alyosha than anyone there, and, of late, a kind of deep flame of inner ecstasy burnt more and more strongly in his heart. He was not at all troubled at this elder’s standing as a solitary example before him. ‘No matter. He is holy. He carries in his heart the secret of renewal for all: that power which will, at last, establish truth on the earth, and all men will be holy and love one another, and there will be no more rich nor poor, no exalted nor humbled, but all will be as the children of God, and the true Kingdom of Christ will come’. That was the dream in Alyosha’s heart.¹⁵³

But ‘life’s school of war’ had prepared for Alyosha a nightmare. When Zosima’s corps started to decompose and reek prematurely, it suggested earthly venality, and his opponents immediately took ‘the smell of corruption’ for a sure ‘sign from the heavens’: the ‘finger of Providence’ did not point in Zosima’s favour. The windows of the monastery were thrown open to let out the sinful stench of rotting flesh, people heaped together, mocking the great pretender, and the man who Alyosha “loved above everything on earth was put to shame and humiliated”,¹⁵⁴ the man who should have been “exalted above everyone in the whole world, that man, instead of receiving the glory that was his due, was suddenly degraded and dishonoured.”¹⁵⁵ Why this humiliation? “Why did Providence hide its face at the most critical moment, as to voluntarily submitting to the blind, dumb, pitiless laws of nature?”¹⁵⁶ What was the

¹⁵³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 29

¹⁵⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 378

¹⁵⁵ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 pp. 377-378

¹⁵⁶ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 378

reason for this mockery? “Why this premature decay, ‘in excess of nature’, as the spiteful monks said?”¹⁵⁷ Alyosha’s hopes of the eradication of human cruelty—his *ideal* vision of how the world *should* be—lay rotting before his eyes; his faith, his source of identity, his hopes for ‘extraordinary glory’ and atonement were ripped from under his feet and his senses filled with the disgust of everything he had held to be true, sacred and meaningful.

Humiliated, lost and overcome with grief, Alyosha abandoned the foul-smelling monastery, and an anger he did not recognise took hold of him, ‘wringing his bleeding virginal heart’: “he could not endure without mortification, without resentment even, that the holiest of men should have been exposed to the jeering and spiteful mockery of the frivolous crowd so inferior to him.”¹⁵⁸ He wandered in the dark of night, murmuring against the very universe he had always claimed to love so dearly and “a vague but tormenting and evil impression left by his conversation with Ivan the day before [was] suddenly revived again now in his soul and seemed forcing its way to the surface of his consciousness.”¹⁵⁹ Within moments, Rakitin—a cynical and sarcastic university student who seems threatened by Alyosha’s purity—appears with a devious smile on his face: “So now you are in a temper with your God, you are rebelling against him.”¹⁶⁰ Alyosha looks at Rakitin with gleam in his eyes, and deliberately quotes his brother Ivan: “I am not rebelling against my God; I simply “don’t accept his world””,¹⁶¹ and thus his seed of destruction—his inability to accept the world for what it is—is brought to light. He sternly orders Rakitin to give him both vodka and meat, and to Rakitin’s sheer delight, the young monk deliberately breaks his vows. Eying an opportunity of thorough corruption, Rakitin invites Alyosha to the house of Grushenka—a manipulative and conniving woman, infamous for her talents of seduction—who he hopes will plunge him towards ultimate doom. Fully aware of Grushenka’s reputation, Alyosha accepts the invitation.

But to Rakitin’s dismay, Alyosha is deeply moved by Grushenka’s compassion, her empathetic response to Zosima’s death, and her ability to forgive. “I came here *seeking my ruin*”, says Alyosha, “and said to myself: “What does it matter?”

¹⁵⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 377

¹⁵⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 378

¹⁵⁹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 378

¹⁶⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 379

¹⁶¹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 379

in my cowardliness, but she, after five years in torment, as soon as anyone says a word from the heart to her – it makes her forget everything, forgive everything, in her tears!”¹⁶² Who was he to have passed *judgment* over her? Who was he to *judge* who is righteous and who is wicked? Who was he to *judge* existence? And the delight is mutual: filled with joy that at last someone embraces her for who she *is* as opposed to how she *should be*, Grushenka throws herself to his feet, crying in gratitude.

As they are walking away from Grushenka’s house, Rakitin cannot hide his disappointment and disappears into the dark alleys shouting: “Go alone, there’s your road!”¹⁶³ And again, Alyosha was alone in the dark, on a path that was his own. He headed towards the monastery, and returned late at night. Something new, something unrecognised, a still undeciphered understanding was stirring inside him. By the white coffin, Fr. Paissy—a loyal friend to the elder Zosima—was reading the gospel of John over the body. “Again [Alyosha] saw that coffin before him [...] but the weeping and poignant grief of the morning was no longer aching in his soul. As soon as he came in, he fell down before the coffin as before a holy shrine, but joy, joy was glowing in his mind and in his heart.”¹⁶⁴ Listening to Fr. Paissy’s reading, Alyosha slowly drifts into a vision of the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee: “‘Marriage? What’s that . . . A marriage!’ floated whirling through Alyosha’s mind.”¹⁶⁵ All of existence was there in union and none was excluded from the whole; in this realm there is room for everything and everyone: “Why is the room growing wider? [...] Again the walls are receding.”¹⁶⁶ Christ himself is there, “expecting new guests, He is calling new one’s unceasingly forever and ever”,¹⁶⁷ turning water into wine in celebration of life; everything is affirmed and everyone is invited.

Alyosha gazed for half a minute at the coffin [...] suddenly he turned sharply and went out of the sell. He did not stop on the steps either, but went quickly down; his soul, overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space, openness. The vault of heaven, full of soft, shining stars, stretched out vast and fathomless above him. The Milky Way ran in two pale streams from the zenith to the horizon. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth. [...] The silence of the earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens.

¹⁶² Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 395 Emphasis mine.

¹⁶³ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 400

¹⁶⁴ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 400

¹⁶⁵ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 401

¹⁶⁶ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 402

¹⁶⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 403

The mystery of the earth was one with the mystery of the stars. Alyosha stood, gazed and suddenly threw himself down on the earth. He did not know why he embraced it. He could not have told why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it. But he kissed it weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and vowed passionately to love it, to love it for ever and ever. ‘Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears’, echoed in his soul. Oh! in his rapture he was weeping even over those stars, which were shining to him from the abyss of space, and ‘he was not ashamed of that ecstasy’. There seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds [...] linking his soul to them, and it was trembling all over, [...] he longed to forgive everyone and for everything, and to beg for forgiveness. Oh not for himself, but for all men, for all and for everything.¹⁶⁸

Dostoevsky has portrayed Alyosha’s moment of *double affirmation*, the affirmation of both himself and the entirety of existence in the infinite moment of now—his *moment of Amor fati*. The disastrous annihilation of his beliefs and presuppositions has forced him to reevaluate his existential disposition and led him to a moment of transformation that has penetrated and revealed the depths of his being and summoned his personhood. He knows that he did not *choose* this path—none of us select the chaotic realm into which we are born—but it is his path nevertheless, and it has led him to an awareness by which his psychological falseness and existential illusions can no longer be overlooked. And that awareness presents him with an opportunity: the moment has presented itself, the challenge lies at his feet—and Alyosha accepts it. “He had fallen on the earth a weak boy, but he arose up a resolute champion, and he knew and felt it suddenly at the very moment of his ecstasy. *And never, never, all his life long could Alyosha forget that minute.*”¹⁶⁹ Alyosha has affirmed the lesson of his divine moment of truth; he has accepted the responsibility of *becoming what he is*, and within three days he has left the monastery in accordance with the advise of his elder, “who had bidden him to ‘sojourn’ the world.”¹⁷⁰

Amor fati is not the creed of inaction or apathy, but the emblem of passionate *involvement* succeeding the realisation that in the same way that a wave is an expression of the whole ocean, the ‘I’ is the expression of the whole of existence at the place and time called here and now—“all eternity was needed to produce this one event.”¹⁷¹ Amor fati envelops the understanding that ‘you’ and ‘I’ are but different

¹⁶⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 404

¹⁶⁹ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 pp. 404-405. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2010 p. 405

¹⁷¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1968. pp. 532-533

expressions through which the universe experiences itself subjectively. The “I”, therefore, is not a helpless leaf whirling in the winds of determinism; the ‘I’ is existence itself. Life is an ocean and there is but a single drop; and the declaration ‘I am life’ is the most powerful and sacred affirmation any man, knowing it to be true, can proclaim, because for such a man, honouring the sacredness of life is not a reaction to a fear of future damnation, nor is it a response to the guilt of the past, but a manifestation of *self-respect*. Without contradiction, the champion of Amor fati celebrates both the individual and the communion of all things; he honours his matchless position in the sea of space and time, his uniqueness, his path, and his perspective by merging with the chaos of existence without allowing himself to be engulfed by it. Such a man is a warrior for his “freedom is measured by the resistance that needs to be overcome”;¹⁷² and knowing himself to be an impermanent subject of perpetual transformation—knowing that he is *becoming* unto death—he makes every act count; existence is his ceremony and the prize for living is the *art of living* it self; the art of consciously *giving meaning* to chaos, darkness, pain and defeat, and so doing disclosing boundless sources of wisdom, power and strength; the warrior says ‘yes’ to the challenges life presents him with, good or bad, for understanding that one cannot be without the other, he thinks not of pain and joy as opposites.

Pain is also a joy, a curse is also a blessing [...] Did you ever say yes to one joy? [...] then you said Yes to all woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if you ever wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: ‘You please me, happiness, instant, moment! then you wanted everything to return! You wanted everything anew, everything eternal, everything chained, entwined together, everything in love, O that is how you loved the world, you ever lasting men, loved it eternally and for all time: and you say even to woe: ‘Go, but return!’ For all joy wants—*eternity!*¹⁷³

In possession of this alchemy, Alyosha denies nothing—the loss of his father, the humiliating death of his elder, Ivan’s madness, the destruction of his beliefs, his wounds, pain and chaos, are the building material needed to become what he is, his *necessity*: “The man [...] who has organised the chaos of his passions and integrated every feature of his character”, says Nietzsche, “redeeming even the ugly by giving it meaning in a beautiful totality—this man would also realise how inextricably his own

¹⁷² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 213

¹⁷³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1972. pp. 331-332

being was involved in the totality of the cosmos: and in affirming his own being, he would also affirm all that is, has been or will be.”¹⁷⁴

Encapsulated in Alyosha’s story and Nietzsche’s declaration of *Amor fati* is the ancient understanding that our lives are the results of infinite causes, most of which are hidden from our perspective, and that “the fatality of human existence cannot be extricated from the fatality of everything that was and will be.”¹⁷⁵ The interdependence of all things expressed in this thought, recognises that a perspective *on* life “is always also a perspective *of* life.”¹⁷⁶ *Amor fati*, therefore entails a *freedom from* all conditions imposed upon existence from outside and above the world, and the beneficiary of that freedom is *life itself*, and with it the *human animal*.¹⁷⁷ This is the philosophy of Zarathustra who spoke thus: “I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go!”¹⁷⁸

Alyosha has set aside his hopes of finding perfection in a humanity that is always bound to fall short of the ideal. His ‘true world’—his ‘dream’ of an ideal universe—is a dangerous creation for it can hypnotise in such a way that what demands our immediate attention—*this* moment and *this* world—is surrendered and overlooked. “Unlike Ivan, Alyosha does not clip newspaper accounts of suffering children and then offer anti-theological arguments *about* them; instead he actually seeks out the insulted and the injured, identifying himself *with* them.”¹⁷⁹ This is how he *gives meaning* to his life and *value* to the ordeals it has presented him with. He *redeems* the ugly, not by way of contemplating action, but by way of embodied life.

IV - Nietzsche and Zosima

The purpose of the Eternal Return and *Amor fati* is to teach us that we must assume responsibility for being *here*, in *this moment*, in *this time*, in this strange, awesome,

¹⁷⁴ Kaufmann, Walter. 1974. p. 337

¹⁷⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 182

¹⁷⁶ Lemm, Vanessa. 2009. *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*. New York: Fordham University Press. p. 201

¹⁷⁷ Lemm, Vanessa. 2009. p. 201

¹⁷⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1972. p. 42

¹⁷⁹ Wood, Ralph C.. 2002. p. 32

mysterious world. And this responsibility presents us with a continual and unbending challenge that is firmly articulated in the teachings and exhortations of the elder Zosima.

There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible for all men's sins, that is the truth, you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things. But throwing your own indolence and impotence on others, you will end by sharing the pride of Satan and murmuring against God.¹⁸⁰

Zosima's proposal of assuming responsibility for all that happens, is a proposal to allow an understanding of interconnection to awaken within our psyche and thereby make ourselves more susceptible to the love our planetary system so urgently needs. In this way, it is through the personal contribution of the individual that the whole of humanity achieves greatness: "I am sick because my fellow beings are sick."¹⁸¹ Zosima's teachings, however, entail another dimension of meaning—a complimentary rather than a contradictory one—which makes his proposal liberating in a more terrifying sense and ultra problematic for the 'self-made man' who regards himself to be 'causa sui'. If the human being is firstly taken to be a multidimensional variable rather than a one dimensional constant—a becoming possibility rather than a factual 'truth' or self-upholding thing-in-itself—and secondly, an infinitely interconnected subject rather than an atomised object of agency, then, given the right circumstances any one of us is capable of committing any horrendous atrocity of which we can conceive. Do we all then, have a weakness present that could make the Marquis De Sade glower in disgust? Are we but possibilities? And is there, consequently no responsibility? Nietzsche identifies this problem as 'the unfreedom of the will'. Like Ivan Karamazov, "some will not give up their "responsibility", their belief in *themselves*, the personal right to *their* merits at any price. [...] Others, on the contrary, do not wish to be answerable for anything, or blamed for anything, and owing to an inward self-contempt, *seek to lay the blame for themselves somewhere else*."¹⁸² The first is so full of himself that he fails to realize that he is the outcome of an environment and the second so void of himself that he fails to see that he creates

¹⁸⁰ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2007. p. 354

¹⁸¹ Massao, Abe. 1989. *Abe: Zen and Western Thought*. London: The Macmillan Press. p. 79

¹⁸² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 219

and constitutes an environment; to accept one without the other is to deny both—we are all in this *together*. *I am* because *we are*. By assuming responsibility for ourselves we assume responsibility for our environment; and we cannot assume responsibility for our environment without assuming responsibility for ourselves. The conception of ‘free-will’, which so many of us have subscribed to, is an infinitely simple way of interpreting an infinitely complex being called the human animal and its relationship to an infinitely complex environment called the universe. And on the basis of this idea, many of us have developed an infinitely simple way of processing reality.

If we however refrain from crawling back into the sweet womb of ‘*causa sui*’—if we affirm and accept the interconnectedness of all things—we are faced with a very complex and dynamic structure, that refuses, in its very nature as human to sit still, obscuring and transcending the lines and borders we have hitherto placed between ourselves and the rest of the species. In an instant all the Pol Pots, Stalins and Hitlers of human history move from being ‘one of them’—the pack of rotten ‘monsters’ who are ‘essentially’ different from us in all psychological shapes and forms—to ‘one of us’. They can neither be regarded as anomalies or accidents, nor are they strange and alien guests in our world, but the tragic and all too-human outcomes of our collective efforts: it took hundreds of millions of us to actualise their madness and an infinity of time to produce the right circumstances. No organism exists by itself, and neither does it act by itself. “More precisely”, says Alan Watts,

the organism, including its behaviour, is a process which is to be understood only in relation to the larger and longer process of its environment. For what we mean by “understanding” or “comprehension” is seeing how parts fit into a whole, and then realizing that they don’t *compose* the whole [...] but that the whole is a pattern [...] which has no separate parts. Parts are fictions of language, of the calculus of looking at the world through a net which seems to chop it up into bits. Parts exist only for purposes of figuring and describing, and as we figure the world out we become confused if we don’t remember this all the time.¹⁸³

By including the ‘monsters’ of past and present, in the set called *humanity*, and declaring ourselves responsible for everything and everyone, Zosima’s ‘blame’ for all there is can be seen as synonymous with the interconnectedness of all there is. This thought recognises that what the wrongdoer did was an expression of circumstances

¹⁸³ Watts, Alan. 1989. *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. London, Random House. p. 73

that were not his *alone*. “A person belongs to the whole”, says Nietzsche, “a person only is in the context of the whole, – there is nothing that can judge measure, compare or condemn our being, because that would mean judging, measuring, comparing and condemning the whole . . . *But there is nothing outside the whole!*”¹⁸⁴ To pass judgment and impose responsibility unto the individual alone and punish him accordingly, therefore, requires both the adopting of an all-encompassing perspective, and the removal of the conditions of human agency from the actual world, and placing them in the transcendental ‘beyond’¹⁸⁵—a void in which “becoming is stripped of its innocence”¹⁸⁶ and the human animal is atomised, isolated, scrutinised and judged accordingly. The moment we realise that this we cannot do—the moment we cease impersonating God—the *innocence of becoming* is restored. That is perhaps the very essence of Nietzsche’s teachings, the ultimate motive for any revaluation of values, and the ‘bitterest draught’ the proud, sovereign, ‘self-made’ individual has to swallow. And in his ears this proposal will indeed be both ‘hyperbolic’ and ‘mad’. “All his evaluations”, says Nietzsche,

all his feelings of respect and antipathy have [...] become disvalued and false: his profoundest sentiment, which he accorded to the sufferer, the hero rested upon an error; he may no longer praise no longer censure, for it is absurd to praise and censure nature and necessity. As he loves a fine work of art but does not praise it since it can do nothing for itself, as he stands before the plants, so must he stand before the actions of men and before his own. He can admire strength, beauty, fullness, but he may not find any merit in them.¹⁸⁷

“To perceive all this can be very painful”, says Nietzsche, “but then comes a consolation: such pains are birth pangs.”¹⁸⁸ When we are confronted with this possibility we are terrified by what we see; and it is not our darkness that terrifies us but our innocence, for in darkness we feel the comfort of familiarity upon us. “The butterfly wants to break through his cocoon”, says Nietzsche, “he tears at it, he rends it: then he is blinded and confused by the unknown light, the realm of freedom.”¹⁸⁹ We are all too accustomed to the dark image we believe reflects humanity; that we are

¹⁸⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 182

¹⁸⁵ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. 2002. p. 133

¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 181

¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. pp. 57-58

¹⁸⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p. 58

¹⁸⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p. 58

but the very weak, small, insignificant, pitiful, little creatures our Inquisitors have maintained we are. In the light of innocence we feel unworthy, undeserving, unwanted, strange and alien. We have worked very hard to convince ourselves of our sinful nature—but the word ‘sin’ may take many forms, and it is clear that in the mind of Zosima, it means to ‘be led astray’, ‘to fall into error’.¹⁹⁰ He who is “sinful”, therefore, is not “guilty” of falling short with the glory of god, neither is he “evil” for having by his own accord chosen to cause harm: he has made an all too human mistake; he has ventured into an all too human error in a very human context—and he can therefore teach us a great deal about ourselves. “Let us do away with the concept of sin”, says Nietzsche, “and let us quickly send after it the concept of punishment! May these banished monsters henceforth live somewhere other than among men, if they want to go on living at all and do not perish of disgust with themselves. [...] Can we not yet say: every ‘guilty person’ is a sick person?”¹⁹¹ Registering reality without the lens of ‘*causa sui*’ transforms our perception of the other as ‘evil’ or ‘sinful’ to sick, foolish, lost or disturbed, removing all projections of guilt from him—“foolishness, *not* sin! do you grasp that?”¹⁹² Thus we move beyond the realm of good and evil, and in this state of awareness we can perhaps forgive ourselves and move *onwards* ‘along the path of wisdom’ having left behind our disgust with ourselves, having forgiven ourselves for ‘our own self’, for our errors and illusions. By affirming our history—our “great and sorrowful passage through the desert of the past”¹⁹³—without spite, hate and resentment we may perhaps finally learn to know intimately the very places “where all later humanity cannot or may not go again”;¹⁹⁴ for the ‘monsters’ and Inquisitors of our past have perhaps become our greatest and most valuable teachers.

¹⁹⁰ “Of the pride of Satan what I think is this: it is hard for us on earth to comprehend it, and therefore it is so easy to *fall into error* and to share it, even imagining that we are doing something grand and fine. [...] On earth, indeed, we are, as it were, *astray*.” See, Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 2007. p. 354. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2004. *Daybreak*. (Trans. R. J. Hollingdale). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 122

¹⁹² Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. p. 530

¹⁹³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p.p. 135

¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p.p. 135

Conclusions

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the law, love under will.*¹⁹⁵

Aleister Crowley

Amor fati becomes an absurd proposal if it is understood to be an all-embracing and omnipotent regulative doctrine that should permanently govern the conscious efforts of all individuals who strive for human greatness. Amor fati is not an ideology; we would have ventured very far into the realm of the ridiculous if we were to tell each other to love and embrace the gradual transformation of Mother Earth into an orbicular gutter in outer space; or if we were to order the passengers of a sinking ship to ‘embrace’ the moment; and we would have journeyed even further into absurdity if we were to call for a mother of a dying child to ‘joyfully’ embrace and love ‘fate’. Perhaps the most preposterous thought of all is the idea of *choosing to love* anything at all, let alone choosing to love the mass-murderers and psychopaths of past and present. Love is not the result of our intellectual efforts: we do not choose to love our children any more than our children choose to love us, and we do not choose with whom we *fall* in love.

Amor fati describes the realisation of the interconnectivity of all things, and the consequential possibility of individually embodying that realisation by the way we lead our lives. We cannot escape the fact that the eternity of past time is already included in the place and time called here and now: it was *necessary* to produce this very moment, and whether we are aware of it or not, it is the individual responsibility of every single one of us to collectively determine the outcome of that very necessity by way of our personal efforts. We can either choose to continue on our path of destruction, or we can choose to lead our lives in such a way that the darkness of our history, and the painful moments of our strange and sorrowful journey will have amounted to something. If we choose live, here and now, as strong and wise beings, as opposed to the petrified little cowards so many of us pretend to be, we bestow both value and significance upon the brutality of our history; and then we have truly succeeded in *forgiving* ourselves without seeking the comfort of an all-encompassing ideology or a teleological perspective that presents us with a final goal and a purpose;

¹⁹⁵ Crowley, Aleister. 1976. *The Book of the Law*. Boston MA: Weiser Books. p. 9

the challenge lies at our feet, here and now, for “if error and confusion of imagination were the only means by which mankind could raise itself gradually to this degree of self-illumination and self-redemption—who could scorn those means?”¹⁹⁶

Ultimately Nietzsche’s philosophy proposes that his reader thinks for himself—that he becomes who he is. For what is freedom? “Having the will to be responsible for yourself.”¹⁹⁷ Such a proposal, however, overwhelms most cowards with feelings of anxiety and general discomfort, because cowards do not want to be responsible for anything, least of all themselves. They want to be told how to live and why they live, and have therefore secured for themselves power hungry sociopaths in governments around the globe who take pleasure in telling other people what to do; Ivan Karamazov’s Inquisitor is right: men are not equal. Some men are foolish cowards and some men are wise and brave. But we are, however, *equally becoming*; under the universal law of impermanence the human being is the subject of perpetual change; and it is our responsibility to consciously determine the outcome of that change and to help others to do the same. We are what has happened, and what we choose to become. Are we brave and wise men? Or are we frightened little cowards?

¹⁹⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2005. p. 107

¹⁹⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2006. p. 213

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