



University
of Glasgow

Koppel, Kirsten (2012) *The Grand Inquisitor and the problem of evil in modern literature and theology*. PhD thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3680/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

The Grand Inquisitor and the Problem of Evil in Modern Literature and Theology

Kirsten Koppel MA Phil.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Glasgow

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Faculty of Arts

April 2012

The Grand Inquisitor and the Problem of Evil in Modern Literature and Theology

Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with the parabolic relationship between evil and salvation. In this thesis I argue that only through recognising evil as inescapably woven into the fabric of our lives, can we construct a theology of hope. I further argue that this identification of evil in the individual is always necessarily something that is achieved through the workings of the apophatic, and can therefore only be realised through the address that reaches exclusively the individual through the unsayable in language. This study centres upon the Parable of the Grand Inquisitor in an inter-textual, literary context and the apophatic tradition.

The context in which my discussion of this parabolic relationship operates is the literary environment that allows for the parabolic and the paradoxical. My primary concern is therefore not with the question of theodicy, but with what happens when, through the intellectual struggle, we encounter the boundaries of our understanding in the beginnings of learned ignorance.

In the first chapter I have set out to establish the narrative of the thesis, starting with Ivan Karamazov's articulation of the problem. In this conversation with Alyosha he problematizes the fact that when we accept God's world, we ought, at the same time to acknowledge the suffering in that world. In this way he exposes the paradox that is inherent in reconciliation itself. However, in the middle of this exchange with Alyosha, Ivan tells the story of the Grand Inquisitor, where the question of reconciliation is addressed in the kiss; suddenly possible in the literary space of the parable.

In the chapter that follows I explore our relationship with evil within the space of a literary context. Starting with the fall as the moment at which the human being has put on self-awareness; separating the inner from outer part of the person. With Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot* as my main conversational partners, I offer a reading of the story of the fall in Genesis as a narrative about our alienation from the divine. I argue that this alienation has also become an estrangement from ourselves where the spirit can no longer get to know itself through the body and the body can no longer know itself through the spirit. I argue that this inability to recognise what is other closes off the possibility of a hermeneutical encounter with the Other.

The third chapter examines the relationship between the inability to recognise what is Other and responsibility; in conversation with Kafka in *The Trial* and Kierkegaard's discussion of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*. I argue that Joseph K's inability to engage hermeneutically with the world is the reason why he cannot recognise his own guilt. Abraham is in that respect his opposite; he embodies the parabolic and the asymmetrical, and so becomes a fully responsible individual.

In the last chapter I discuss the relationship between the unsayable in language and the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Here my main conversational partners are Meister Eckhart, Thomas Altizer in *The Descent into Hell*, and Nicolas of Cusa. I argue that the language of the unsayable is what addresses us in the detached self, as Christ addresses the Grand Inquisitor in his detached self.

The kiss, as the climax, is the instant of initiation when the inner and the outer self again become one. At the same time this is the moment of betrayal when all command of our identity seems lost. This disintegration of the self is the descent into hell, and simultaneously the moment of salvation. It is also fundamentally apolitical and through its unsayability can address only the individual.

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>1</u>
A. Evil and salvation: Betrayal	1
B. Methodology, literature and the role of 'The Grand Inquisitor'	5
<u>Chapter 1: The Problem of Reconciliation</u>	<u>10</u>
1.1 Introduction: The Brothers Karamazov	10
1.2 Ivan Karamazov and the problem of reconciliation	11
1.3 The reconciliation that leads to two forms of the demonic	15
1.4 Fallen humanity and the gift of self-awareness	18
1.5 The subverting power of silence as the silent call of conscience	21
1.6 Abraham's nakedness	23
1.7 The ethical paradigm as contempt for humanity	25
1.8 Romans 7: The law as a two-edged sword	28
1.9 The law opposed to the individual	30
1.10 The kiss	34
1.11 The Grand Inquisitor and Eckhart's anthropology	37
1.12 The apophatic and the coming together of opposites	40
1.13 Deification, the ethical and the apophatic	43
<u>Chapter 2: The Paradox of Evil</u>	<u>45</u>
2.1 Introduction: Evil and dualism	45
2.2 Genesis 3 and the birth of otherness	46
2.3 The Inquisitorial devil	52
2.4. Satan and his logic	55
2.5 Smerdyakov and Prince Myshkin	58
2.6 The paradox of evil	63
2.7 Evil and the human conscience	65

2.8 Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes: The absence of Christian guilt	66
2.9 To throw away the double	72
2.10 Imprisonment	72
2.11 Assuming our guilt	73
2.12 Silence and the human conscience	77
2.13 From the fall to silence	80
Chapter three: Guilt and Responsibility	82
3.1 Introduction: Conscience and the other-worldly	82
3.2 The silent appeal	83
3.3 Kafka's Joseph K and the admission of guilt	85
3.4 Who is the doorkeeper?	89
3.5 Recognizing the Other and the call of conscience	93
3.6 The paradox of dissymmetry	99
3.7 Ethics and the Other	103
3.8 Derrida on the undecidable	105
3.9 Abraham and aporia	108
3.10 Abraham must remain silent	111
3.11 The Grand Inquisitor and the absolute	114
3.12 Abraham and Saint Paul: To be dead to the law	116
Chapter four: The Hyper-Ethical	118
4.1 Introduction: The personal address	118
4.2 Secret of the kingdom	119
4.3 Silence and the Secret	120
4.4 'Gelassenheit' and the unsayable	122
4.5 Meister Eckhart's anthropology and the Grand Inquisitor	126
4.6 The Grand Inquisitor and the unknowing of Nicolas of Cusa	131
4.7 Betrayal of the self	136
4.8 The descent into hell	139
4.9 Ivan Karamazov and the descent into hell	142

4.10 The Saintly	145
4.11 Everything is permitted	150
Chapter 5 Conclusion	154
Bibliography	168

Acknowledgements

Thanks to:

Professor David Jasper for your great supervision;

My friends at the department of Theology and Religious Studies for your friendship and inspiration;

Dr Heather Walton for your supervision and encouragement;

My dad, for your encouragement and financial support;

Mijn moeder, voor je financiële en morele ondersteuning;

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Glasgow for your financial support;

Mijn vriend Mike, voor je financiële steun en je vaste overtuiging dat ik het af moest maken;

Dr. John van Schaik, voor je hulp en betrokkenheid.

Introduction

Evil and salvation: Betrayal

In this thesis I will undertake to express the parabolic relationship between Christian salvation and evil. The element of betrayal is of central importance to the argument, as without the moment of being forsaken by God, a return to God can only be illusory. The thesis consists of a narrative that starts with the literary motif of the fall and finishes with the ambiguous moment of salvation where the ascent into heaven cannot be without the descent into hell. The story is played out through a series of conversations with an eclectic company of writers; ranging from the literary to the theological and the mediaeval mystical tradition to post-modern philosophers and theologians. The most prominent of the principal texts in this thesis is Dostoevsky's 'Legend of the Grand Inquisitor'.¹ My reflections and meditations on this text have provided a large part of the dramatic narrative for this thesis.

I will speak of evil in terms of the deviation from the divine and the consequent alienation from the self, found in the book of Genesis in its purest and most unsullied form in the Adamic myth.² Here we find the story in which humanity passes from a state of innocent oneness with God to self-awareness. Evil after the fall however appears in two contrasting guises. Firstly the kind we find in Genesis, in which the Serpent emphasises the divinity of the human being; inspiring haughtiness and egoism and, as a consequence encouraging alienation from the body and the world we live in. Secondly there is evil in its opposite appearance. Here the human being is stripped of her divine origins and reduced to the physical and the worldly. This I have named as the inquisitorial evil; after Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor who embodies evil in this guise. I attempt to make evident that, as a result of our identity having become so interlaced with the influence of evil, the moment of salvation is necessarily a moment of betrayal; equally demonic and divine.

¹ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by David Magarshack, London and New York, Penguin Classics, 1982. pp. 288-311. All future references to *The Brothers Karamazov* are made under the abbreviation Dostoevsky, BK, unless I make use of a different translation.

² *The Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Genesis 3. All references made to The Bible will be to The New Revised Standard Version.

To a certain extent this is a self-evident truth within the context of the Christian narrative. The Christian is familiar with the story of Judas, without whom there would have been no crucifixion and consequently no resurrection. However, theologically, this is problematic; creating a paradox in which that which is evil and damned is absolutely indispensable in the process of salvation and hence calling into question the justice of condemning Judas to the deepest depths of hell.³ The desire to be logically consistent bites its own tail in the salvation narrative, where the theologian should accept Judas' betrayal as only real betrayal on the surface, and therefore inspiring a theological apologetic, as in fact what he has done is the greatest service any human being could ever render mankind. Or, alternatively, we have to live with the inconsistency that the person who enabled Christ to die on the cross and rise again is the most unpardonable traitor ever to be alive.

The account of the figure of Judas that glorifies him as an initiate and confidant of Christ can be found in the gnostic Gospel of Judas, where Christ personally tells him that he is the one to assist in Christ's necessary death.⁴ On the other hand there is the Judas of Nikos Kazantzakis in *The Last Temptation of Christ*,⁵ a man so blinded by worldly and political ambition⁶ that he is completely incapable of being responsive to Jesus and his mission, and plans to kill him out of hatred.

However, systematic theology, in its desire to be consistent, is forced into a position that is inconsistent with its premises of an omnipotent and benevolent God. This is a variation on the problem of theodicy, which in its classic form, is concerned with the question of how an omnipotent and benevolent God could allow evil and suffering to be present in the world; either arguing for their compatibility⁷ or modifying the idea of God or the idea of evil. The matter of Christ being betrayed by Judas however begs the question of how we can understand that the divine could avail itself of what is purportedly evil, in order to bring about the desired result.

³ According to the Catholic Church and in the *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*.

⁴ *Het Evangelie van Judas*, translated by J. van Oort, Kampen, Ten Have, 2006. p.45.

⁵ Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, translated by P.A. Bien, New York, Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1988.

⁶ *Ibid.*, for instance p.115.

⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.

Nonetheless, within the interdisciplinary context of theology and literature, the theological disposition and desire towards an internally consistent – and consequently closed – system, is suspended in the face of the ability of literature to bear paradox and ambiguity comfortably. In literature; the *coincidentia oppositorum* is, in a sense, already a reality; presented as a matter of course, but clothed in the darkness of the absurd; sometimes to the degree that the absurdity can barely be recognised. So neither the classic problem of theodicy, nor systematic issues brought up by the necessity of betrayal in salvation are the direct subject matter of this thesis. At least not in the philosophical or systematic theological form sketched above. In the first and the fourth chapter I discuss these issues in the literary context of *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Ivan Karamazov raises both these issues in his conversation with Alyosha, in the middle of which he tells Alyosha his ‘poem’; ‘The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor’. Ivan Karamazov has, throughout the thesis, been made to be the personification of the spiritual starvation of western humanity at large. Ivan is a character who embodies the ethical tension between the necessity of evil in salvation⁸ and the suffering of the innocent. Ivan Karamazov is spiritually wrenched apart between these intellectual and philosophical matters, and the great love that he none the less feels for the world; seemingly unaffected by – and independent of – the enormous suffering that this world contains. For Ivan, these riddles are not mere intellectual puzzles that perhaps await a rational resolution, but these matters are felt like a deep spiritual pain.⁹ Hence he embodies not only the suffering and alienation of the contradictions that the pure intellect generates in its enlightenment hunger for intellectual closure and finality, but also makes these manifest. For this reason, Ivan is used throughout the thesis as character in which we can recognise the alienation from himself and the estrangement from God characteristic of humanity that has eaten the apple. Yet Ivan, in being capable of suffering so profoundly at the hand of this estranged state of being, is perhaps also on the threshold of a transfiguration that would mean the end of alienation. Since his conscience allows him no peace, he is more acutely capable of suffering at the hand of his alienation than others are. Despite being no morally worse than other ordinary people around him, he perceives himself as utterly guilty.

⁸ In his conversation with Alyosha in the inn Ivan says: ‘Besides, too high a price has been placed on harmony. We cannot afford to pay so much for admission.’ Dostoevsky, BK, p.287.

⁹ Ibid., pp.266-311.

Ivan tells the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. He suspends the conversation with Alyosha to tell this poem. This constitutes a break in the exchange with Alyosha where he ceases to speak directly about the injustices he sees in the world and the ethical obligation he feels to 'return his entry ticket.'¹⁰ Early on in the 'The Grand Inquisitor', when the Grand Inquisitor has just come face to face with Christ, he wonders aloud whether it is Him or just someone who looks like him.¹¹ At this point Alyosha interrupts him because he does not understand; is Ivan 'just making this up' or is this a case of mistaken identity? Ivan then makes a remark referring to the fact that what he is about to tell constitutes a shift in paradigm; leaving the enlightenment, linear paradigm to enter the literary in which he can say the unsayable. This is what passes between the two brothers:

I'm afraid I don't quite understand it, Ivan,' said Alyosha, who had been listening in silence all the time, with a smile. 'Is it just a wild fantasy, or has the old man made some mistake, some impossible *qui pro quo*?'
 'You can assume the latter,' laughed Ivan, 'if our modern realism has spoilt you so much that you can't bear anything fantastic.'¹²

Hence the text contains a quite deliberate allusion to this shift in worlds. Up till that point, Ivan had been speaking with Alyosha about what troubled him; culminating in the often quoted line where he speaks of returning his entry-ticket; feeling the ethical obligation to turn away from a God who allows the suffering of the innocent. From this deeply ethical and reasonable argument it is not possible to construct an equally reasonable escape. It is utterly reasonable as it is. But Ivan, in telling 'The Grand Inquisitor' resorts to a form of deconstruction, where in the end he is neither right nor wrong.

Within the literary context of this parable there is the Grand Inquisitor; himself deeply alienated from God, and deliberately so,¹³ and the silent Christ-figure who in the end kisses the Grand Inquisitor,¹⁴ after the Grand Inquisitor has just held a lengthy monologue on human weakness in the face of freedom. Here Ivan himself provides a context in which the absurdity that he himself embodies is transfigured into a whole new and infinite perspective

¹⁰ Ibid., p.320.

¹¹ Ibid., p.293.

¹² Ibid., p.293.

¹³ Ibid., p.305.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.308.

in which what was impossible for the intellect that requires logical consistency and finality is opened up in the *coincidentia oppositorum*. The kiss that the Inquisitor receives from Christ is both the Judas kiss and the kiss of salvation. In the space of literature, these separate realities coexist in a moment of seething unity. The moment of betrayal is deeply ambiguous and cannot be understood within an exclusively theological context. The parabolic creates an opening in which dualism is overcome. It leads theology to the apophatic; the eventual silence in the face of God, when all intellectual constructs have ceased to claim the absolute and become silent. And therefore this text has moved me to study the writings of a number of authors belonging to the mediaeval mystical tradition. The most significant of these is Meister Eckhart, whose anthropology of the inner and the outer man greatly enriched my understanding of the dynamic of speech and silence between the Inquisitor and Christ.

Methodology, literature and the role of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’

This thesis deals with the subject matter in an interdisciplinary way; using many conversational partners, with Dostoevsky in ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ being the most prominent; providing the principal pegs for the dramatic narrative. And so I rely greatly on the literary dynamics in ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ as an instance of the coming together of opposites¹⁵ that we can experience in literature, yet poses a great deal of theological, philosophical and ethical questions. I have not set out to write an exhaustive interpretation of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor, or to excavate Dostoevsky’s intentions in writing the legend of the Grand Inquisitor or *The Brothers Karamazov*. My handling of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ takes the form of a meditation on this text in its English translation. I do occasionally make use of the thoughts of Dostoevsky scholars¹⁶ when my own thoughts might raise issues or questions with the reader that other thinkers have presented their answers to. There are also a few points at which I have made use of a specific translation of the original Russian word when this contributes to the fabric of the argument. I also make use of the thoughts of literary critics when these contrast with my own in such a way that

¹⁵ See: Nicolas of Cusa, *Of Learned Ignorance* and *On the Vision of God*, In *Nicolas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, pp.91-92, pp. 252-56.

¹⁶ Primarily from the English speaking world, with exception of the occasional texts that have been translated from Russian.

presenting them clarifies the nature of my own thoughts. In my reading of the text I try to respect the text's autonomy by regarding it as a work of art in experiencing the unsayable nature of its secret when I read it. This approach does of course produce plenty of ideas, many of which I have used to construct the narrative of this thesis. However, the question of whether Dostoevsky somehow put these thoughts in his work becomes irrelevant, as that would reduce it to a vehicle for a series of philosophical or theological statements and ideas which might be more at home in an essay on atheism and theism or the nature of the church. I am not a Dostoevsky scholar or a scholar of Russian literature, and have not tried to treat the text as such.

Because of this interdisciplinary nature of my methodology, I have felt free to evoke many speakers at any point in the narrative. This thesis therefore takes the form of a literary symposium in which I have conversed with many writers, literary, theological and philosophical, at various stages of the dramatic narrative that leads from the fall and its alienation from the divine, to Christian salvation. An elaborate account of this narrative can be found in the first chapter.

Rowan Williams's book *Dostoevsky: Language Faith and Fiction* (2008) also constitutes an interdisciplinary meditation on Dostoevsky's work. This book, focusing primarily on four of Dostoevsky's major novels (*The Brothers Karamazov*, *Devils*, *The Idiot* and *Crime and Punishment*), forms a study of a number of theological issues, including the demonic. In this book, Williams presents the various worlds and characters autonomously, that is to say, he juxtaposes the literary against religious fundamentalism. Williams is 'suspicious of closure' to use Terry Eagleton's words.¹⁷ Williams' discussion is always centred round the characters in those four novels, the interconnectedness of which divulges the Christocentric concept of humanity and the world behind Dostoevsky's fiction. In this respect his is a study of Dostoevsky's fiction, where my thesis is not. For me the narrative has not been exclusively inspired by Dostoevsky's fiction, but also by other authors whose fiction and thought have contributed to the narrative. By approaching the subject of the demonic from within the context of the literary, Williams is freed of the restrictions of dualistic

¹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly*, www.thetablet.co.uk/review418, accessed February 2012.

thinking that belong to systematic theology. This enables him to observe the phenomena that characterise the demonic without the boundaries set by a purely theological metaphysic.

In this thesis, my discussion surrounding evil takes place in the literary context of *The Brothers Karamazov*, and also in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Kafka's *The Trial*, Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood* and The Bible. However, a significant amount of the theoretical conversations about evil are with current secular writers such as Alain Badiou and Derrida. And so the discussion has been taken out of the purely theological and into the literary and the secular, permitting for a contextual reading of evil that is not burdened with the weight of dualism that the systematic theologian must get involved in. Without the desire to attain a consistency that satisfies the rational drive for closure by demarcating 'evil' by opposing it to 'good', we are able to recognise the phenomena that belong to evil. Especially Alain Badiou, in his book *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* demonstrates that without the baggage of systematic theology or analytic philosophy, we can step outside the circle of logic. Here we can observe how it is precisely this demand for closure that causes us to participate in the cycle of evil, without being able to recognise our participation in it, unless we allow for the free play that the literary and the secular allow. As a result, through breaking the vicious cycle of logic, it becomes possible to again be receptive to what is utterly Other, as we ourselves have taken a step back to perceive our own otherness from Satan. And so, by allowing ourselves to join the devil's side in abandoning the paradigm in which good and evil must be conceived of as absolutely separate, we can short-circuit the obsession with theodicy.

Another writer who has been a great source of inspiration in writing this thesis is the American philosopher and theologian Robert P. Scharlemann with his book *The Reason of Following: Christology and the Ecstatic I*.¹⁸ Scharlemann argues that in addition to what we are accustomed to call reason in the scientific and the ethical realm, there is another form of reason that runs counter to the established understanding of the word. He says in the introduction to *The Reason of Following*:

¹⁸ Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

The christological relation, constituted by the self's "following" of another, is distinct from science, morality, and art; it is a relational form of its own. As such, it is the configuration of a self-to-other relation, whose characteristics prevent it from being reduced to knowledge, moral action, artistic creation, or sensuous appreciation.¹⁹

Scharlemann uncovers reasons for why we are capable of following Christ that are profoundly connected with our being human. He describes the ability of the 'I' to be both at the centre of our existence, and, at the same time to be the ecstatic 'I' that dwells also in our periphery, in other words, in that what comes towards us from the world. Through this 'ecstatic I' we are then able to dwell not only in our concerns as our everyday self, which he calls 'this one here', but also in the appeal of what is Other and 'outside'. This coming together of opposites of inner and outer, centre and periphery, is what enables us 'to be dead to the world'. By 'dead to the world' Scharlemann means the opposite of being indifferent to the world, rather, it means 'accepting one's own existence in its totality, appropriating, as he says, as one's own free choice the possibility of one's own coming to an end.'²⁰ Being dead to the world is then a freeing of the bondage of being in the world,²¹ and consequently enables us to exist in the promise of the resurrection, as, in some sense, we have already come to an end.²²

Scharlemann's thought in *The Reason of Following* can be placed alongside the work of apophatic, medieval writers like Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross who also make use of – and dwell in – the counter-current that we suspect exists between and around the surface of the cataphatic, and becomes perceptible because of that surface.

The moment of betrayal, as the unspeakable moment of salvation is a moment that is neither good nor evil. It is the moment when we are asked to bear absolute responsibility for who we are. In 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor' this is the moment of the kiss. Here we can speak of a kiss that is both the kiss of betrayal and the kiss of initiation. It is the final

¹⁹ Robert P. Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following: Christianity and the Ecstatic I*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1991. p.viii.

²⁰ Ibid., p.163.

²¹ Ibid., p.163.

²² Ibid., p.163.

fulfilment of the fall, where the Grand Inquisitor's status as outsider is both affirmed and terminated.

Chapter 1: The Problem of Reconciliation

1.1 The Brothers Karamazov

Dostoevsky completed *The Brothers Karamazov* just three months before he died in October of 1880.²³ The book was meant to contain almost all the themes and ideas that had occupied him for a large part of his life.²⁴ The plot of the novel centres on the theme of patricide, unfolding as the reader finds out who is guilty of the murder of the old father; Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov. The old Karamazov has three sons, the eldest being Dimitri who is the only child from his first marriage. The second son is twenty-four year old Ivan, the first child from his second marriage. The youngest is twenty year old Alyosha, also from his second marriage. Then finally there is Pavel Smerdyakov, the illegitimate son who serves as a lackey in the Karamazov home, whom Fyodor Pavlovich is supposed to have fathered when he had an affair with 'Stinking Lizaveta', a homeless woman and holy fool who died in giving birth to Smerdyakov.

Shaping the plot are the various forces that drive the characters, sensual, rational and most importantly, religious.²⁵ Of these characters Ivan is the most poignant, because he personifies the struggle between the heart that loves unconditionally and in which oppositions are already overcome, and the rational mind that, under the influence of logic and reductionism, seems irreconcilably alienated from the heart. It is also from Ivan's mouth that we hear the 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor', in which this polarisation is personified in Christ and the Grand Inquisitor and finally overcome when Christ kisses the Inquisitor.

In these figures that are each other's complete opposite it is the concept of man that emerges as the central issue; is the human being a being with divine roots and a divine

²³ William Leatherbarrow, *Fedor Dostoevsky*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1981, p.143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.143.

²⁵ Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, London, SCM press, 1973. Gibson says: 'The Brother Karamazov, more than any other world of Dostoevsky's, was consciously dominated by a religious concern. By the time he wrote it he was publicly committed to the faith – not merely to a growing personal conviction – but to the outward observances.' p.169.

horizon, or a simply a species among other species? Dostoevsky recognised that the way we regard humanity is the most fundamental expression of our faith, and in turn has deep-seated consequences for the way we treat the other and the political systems we implement.²⁶ The present chapter introduces the line of argument which is further developed in the subsequent chapters.

1.2 Ivan Karamazov and the problem of reconciliation

When the two Karamazov brothers, Alyosha and Ivan are having their tête-à-tête, just before Ivan tells Alyosha his ‘poem’ about the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan makes his famous and much discussed statement²⁷ in which he renounces the Christian demand for forgiveness as a way to restore what he calls harmony. In his dialogue with Alyosha he comes up with an example about a landowner, whose dogs tear a child to pieces because the child has thrown a stone at one of his hounds. The child’s mother has to witness this, about which he says:

‘Let her not dare to forgive him! If she wants, she may forgive him on her own account. She may forgive the torturer her limitless maternal suffering; but as for the suffering of her dismembered child, those she has no right to forgive, she dare not forgive his torturer, even if her child himself forgave him! And if that is the case, if they dare not forgive, where is the harmony? Is there in all the world a being that could forgive and have the right to forgive? I do not want harmony, out of a love for mankind I do not want it. I want rather to be left with sufferings that are unavenged. Let me rather remain with my unavenged sufferings and unassuaged indignation, *even though I am not right*. And in any case, harmony has been overestimated in value, we really don’t have the money to pay so much to get in. And so I hasten to return my entry ticket.’²⁸

For Ivan, the ethical price tag is too high: because even if there is forgiveness, the suffering itself remains unchanged; reconciliation means cancelling a debt. An adult with extraordinary spiritual strength might forgive ‘limitless suffering’, but never on behalf of someone else, and in this example that is an innocent child who cannot do the forgiving

²⁶ David Magarshack, in ‘Translators Introduction’ to *The Brothers Karamazov*, London, Penguin Classics, 1982 pp. xix-xx.

²⁷ Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky, Language Faith and Fiction*, London, Continuum, 2007, p.38. See also: Robin Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1992. p.70.

²⁸ Dostoevsky, BK, p.320.

himself. The debt could never be cancelled unless through an act of forgiveness that would deny the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the child. Cancelling such an incurred debt means denying the subjectivity of the individual human being. Consequently the world must remain wounded; we have, according to Ivan, an ethical obligation to endure this 'disharmony'. In other words, we are to endure the abyss and no matter how hard we try to build a new foundation, the abyss' infinite depth will always swallow it up.²⁹

Although Ivan is an atheist, there are deeply Christian echoes to his words. He is a Christian spirit in that he too desires reconciliation, and feels the vacuum between humanity and God widen when no reconciliation is possible, when belief in the ultimate goodness of the world becomes impossible. It has been said by commentators that Ivan is 'universal man'.³⁰ Perhaps, but one who is mainly characterised by the suffering that this entails, a suffering that discloses the conflict that he must live with in order to be that 'universal man'. Ivan divulges the unavoidable paradox inherent in trying to avoid paradox through reconciliation³¹ by showing the inner contradiction that a human being gets caught up in when we adopt a concept of humanity that is ultimately in harmony with evil. So perhaps Ivan is powerless when it comes to matters of the heart, as he cannot subject it to his understanding, because he knows this to be contradictory. As Sergius Bulgagov put Ivan's position into words:

Theoretical reason is here in conflict with practical reason: that which logic denies speaks in the heart; in spite of all denials it exists as a fact of direct moral consciousness, as the voice of conscience. A highly moral nature is compelled to deny morality: such is the essence of this terrible conflict.³²

²⁹ Colin Wilson, in his book *The Outsider* noted that the argument Ivan puts forward is essentially an existentialist one: 'It is an existentialist argument. To build on the abyss, you must have a foundation. For Ivan, the sufferings of one tortured child are enough to blast any foundation apart.' New York, Tarcher Penguin, 1982, p.182.

³⁰ Sergius Bulgagov, pp. 39-40 (further reference lost).

³¹ Travis P. Kroeker and Bruce K Ward, in *Remembering the End: Dostoevsky as Prophet to Modernity*, have read Ivan's position to be a prophesy about what will happen if the materialistic paradigm remains as it is; we will end up with a post-modernism in which 'everything is permitted', Ivan's ultimate denial of morality as a result of his atheism. London, SMC-Canterbury Press, 2002. p.20. However, a more thoughtful take on Ivan's 'everything is permitted' was given by Colin Wilson who suggested that it can also be read as reference to a future in which the gap between 'ought' and 'is' is closed. He suggests that the way of being in the world of the elder Zossima provides an antidote to Ivan's position. *The Outsider*, p.187.

³² Sergius Bulgagov, p.37.

Ivan Karamazov in many ways personifies for us what it means to be ruled by the intellect. He mirrors parts of our own suffering back to us as his alienation is one that we can recognise. He embodies the consequences of the fall; of no longer really being able to experience ourselves as being part of the divine order, and waking up to a sense of loss. He is the result of the fall, but not only that, he has taken it to the point where the tragedy is visible to others. Where humanity has become so sustainedly alienated from God, she perhaps unwittingly, has forgotten who she herself is. He suffers because he is trapped; suspended between his head and his heart. We get a good sense of the void that he carries around with him. He wears his affect on the outside, and like Alyosha, we too can see that his being hungers for reconciliation; to regain a sense of wholeness. Yet he feels to be under a powerful obligation to not even consider reconciliation, because some evil is unforgivable. No matter how we frantically go through our options: reconciliation equals betrayal of the ethical, of loyalty to others. And anyone who is honest cannot deny the truth of ethics.³³

Ivan's position is the end of the road; he is ethically incapable of becoming religious in the way that his younger brother Alyosha is, while that same ethical paradigm prevents him from becoming a sensualist like his older brother Dimitri. This position of being trapped by his love between sensualism and atheism has a major flaw; what the American writer and novelist Flannery O'Connor said relating to Ivan Karamazov is right; we rule by tenderness while being cut off from the source of that tenderness. This she calls a lopsided spirituality.³⁴ We have incorporated tenderness into practical reason while forgetting that it does not fit into any logical line of reasoning, unless we attempt to solve this issue by making happiness a first principle in an ethical *system*, such as utilitarianism.

Ivan's deeply moral position causes him to abandon the ethical and the rational altogether; as he loses his mind after he keeps blaming himself for his father's murder. The

³³ Rowan Williams notes to this effect that Ivan and Alyosha's love for the new leaves in spring is powerless to restore harmony: "The leaves are what they are, not simply manifestations of rational harmony. And this is why the atrocities detailed by Ivan are likewise not to be resolved in a rational harmony at the end of time." *Dostoevsky, Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.38. See also: Albert D. Menut, *Dostoevsky and Existentialism*, Lawrence, Kansas, Coronado Press, 1972. p.45

³⁴ Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald. New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970. p.27

'hell in his head and his heart'³⁵ that Alyosha diagnosed him is the abyss between the knowledge of the heart that has the potential of seeing everything as sacred, and the mind that is abhorred at the consequences of what looks like a form of false mysticism. And rightly so, but what can we do with this sense of righteousness? The figure of the Grand Inquisitor provides one answer; he builds the structures necessary to soften the pain of the having to bridge the abyss on our own. From a philosophical perspective we can therefore call him a utilitarian. Theologically speaking he is an atheist; not in the first place because of what he confesses to be his beliefs, but because of his lack of faith in the moral strength of human beings.

In the dynamic between Ivan's 'head and heart' and, equally between the Christ-figure and the Inquisitor, we recognise something of the dynamic between Ivan and Alyosha. Not in the least because the latter kisses Ivan on the lips when he has finished, in an ambiguous *imitatio Christi*, which can equally be seen as a Judas kiss. In the legend of the Grand Inquisitor we see this dynamic in a very clear way; here it is also a revelation, the nature of which has gone beyond language, yet manages to alter the reality we live in dramatically. Other commentators have read a message into the kiss that could be put into words³⁶ in which aspects of what we experience as readers are captured. However, in finding, if not forcing a way into the story, other possibilities are closed off. Although this is inevitable in the process of interpretation, it is in 'The Grand Inquisitor' precisely the either/or nature of interpretation that is suspended in the kiss.

The legend of the Grand Inquisitor that is the creation of Ivan's mind³⁷ allows us a look into the mind infected with the 'modern decease' presenting us with an answer, namely the kiss, that is not a real answer at all, and yet alters the logic of the entire story.³⁸ In Ivan's story, the old man has just, on the previous day, burned a hundred heretics at the stake.³⁹ He might be hallucinating as Ivan said. His 'fixed idea' has driven him to carry out these

³⁵ Dostoevsky, BK, pp.308-309.

³⁶ Colin Wilson, in *The Outsider* put it as follows: 'This is his reply: Your reasoning is powerful but my love is stronger.' p.183.

³⁷ Kroecker and Ward, *Remembering the End*, p.69.

³⁸ As has been pointed out by A. N Gorbunov in his paper, 'Christ's temptation in the Wilderness: Milton and Dostoevsky'. Unpublished paper read at a conference.

³⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.292.

atrocities, but at a great cost to himself; the extent of which he does not seem to grasp as yet. The Grand Inquisitor does not recognise Christ; he does not see his absolute Other, but rather a historical figure⁴⁰ that bears no essential relation to himself. If we follow Ivan's off the cuff suggestion, namely that the old man is seeing a mirage, a fantasy produced by his own fatigued mind,⁴¹ we can presume that what he sees is what he has suppressed and ignored all his life, his dormant self that he had buried because it was a burden. Perhaps the acts of cruelty he committed that day were the final straw for this estrangement to be completed.

The figure he is faced with is now beyond his recognition, even though he is looking at himself as much as he is looking at Christ. Viewed in this way, we here have a reversed form of self-emptying, in which a human being is purged of God so that God has become the complete Other, and appears at that point as an external reality.

1.3 The reconciliation that leads to two forms of the demonic.

Before the moment of the kiss that radically alters and destabilises what has preceded it, without changing or denying anything that has gone before, the Grand Inquisitor on one side and Christ on the other embody Ivan's suspended being, and they are completely incommensurable, they share nothing. Yet, for a human being to have an inclination to one or the other ultimately leads to the demonic. The either/or of the story, in which commentators wonder whether Ivan, or even Dostoevsky have succeeded in proving

⁴⁰ In his paper 'The Brother Karamazov as a Trinitarian Theology' David S Cunningham argues against the work of George S. Panichas on *The Brothers Karamazov*, who has argued that it is the memory of a historical Jesus that the inquisitor is trying to erase and that the Inquisitor's concern is not with what Panichas has called the spiritual or essential Christ. *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, edited by George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp.134-155. Cunningham is right to argue against Panichas' view, as the Grand Inquisitor recognises that through the human conscience Christ's presence and appeal is felt by humanity, in a way regardless of the historical Jesus. The Inquisitor himself confesses to be an atheist who does speak of Christ as a historical figure. Consequently this issue touches on what appears to be a deliberate inconsistency within the figure of the Inquisitor, who tries to protect the people under his care against a spiritual or essential Christ that he himself no longer believes in.

⁴¹ Ivan says to Alyosha: "It is true', he laughed again, 'the old man was ninety and he might have long ago gone mad about his fixed idea. He might, too, have been struck by the prisoner's appearance. It might, finally, have been simple delirium.'" Dostoevsky, BK, p.293.

or disproving anything, is symptomatic of a one-sidedness, that, when taken in isolation, is what the inquisitor's paradigm is all about.

The hell in Ivan's head and heart is equally a dynamic of estrangement between these two faculties; where the individual who sees the either/or of the situation sees siding with one or the other as his only escape. One of these is a form of premature reconciliation or restoration of harmony. It entails a form of what we can call elusive mysticism, in which there is a flight from responsibility. In his discussion of Jan Patočka's work in *The Gift of Death*, Derrida names this as something Patočka warns against, he calls it a the 'demonic' or, using Patočka term, the 'orgiastic sacred'.⁴² We could characterise this as a desire to be united with the divine, but prematurely, as a way to avoid having to endure the impossibility of following Christ. Here we wouldn't feel responsibility, or at least in a diminished form. It is what the Inquisitor accuses Christ of; the elusive and haughty, and we would be largely incapable of feeling responsible for a world to which we do not feel we belong. This could entail a thinning of our consciousness through the impossibility of being responsible for who we are.

To be responsible we need to be 'of this world' as Ivan clearly is and consequently he suffers. The Christ-figure in Ivan's legend is not. He enters the scene, but he does not enter the narrative because he does not speak. When he walks among the people of Seville he raises a little girl from the dead by speaking the words *Talitha cumi*,⁴³ Here he does enter the narrative. In the part of the Legend that is called the interview, he remains 'disembodied' as such. In the company of the Inquisitor he remains silent, echoing the silence of the Christ of the Gospels with Pontius Pilate.⁴⁴ He is perfectly detached and radiant, but therefore has no outward effect where the Inquisitor is concerned, up till the moment of the kiss.

We can characterise the above demonic strand as the illusory that fills the voids in our being in such a way that it prevents us from having to face our short-comings. And, in

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, In *The gift of Death and Literature in Secret*, 2nd edition, translated by David Wills, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999. p.2.

⁴³ Dostoevsky, BK., p.292, echoing the words of Mark 5:40-42.

⁴⁴ When, in Mark 15:2, Pilate asks Jesus again if he is the king of the Jews Pilate says: 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.'

doing so, prevents us from being confronted with those lacks. It is the kind of demonism that the true mystic has to overcome, for it entails a pretence of disembodiment. To overcome this blindness means to open our eyes once, as Eve's eyes were opened when she ate of the apple and to open them again in our fallen state, 'to see in the darkness,'⁴⁵ as the American theologian John S. Dunne said.

This elusive form of the demonic, as a denial of the body, inevitably leads to the opposite form of the demonic, because the spirit, in forgetting its embodiment, can no longer recognise itself, and proceeds to deny itself, producing a denial of the spirit. This form of demonism that denies the spirit is what we meet in the Inquisitor and is more easily recognised by us in the West;⁴⁶ this option is offered by the Inquisitor as an alternative to reconciliation. Ivan, in saying '*Even though I am not right*'⁴⁷ here acknowledges the disharmony; he does not pretend it is not there, and neither does the Inquisitor. The Inquisitor however has another answer to the anguish; we regulate human life such that disharmony is masked, so that humanity can no longer feel it. This is not a movement towards spirit where responsibility is dissolved, but a denial of the spirit.

This is what the Inquisitor proposes to do for humanity in order to relieve suffering, so that only its linguistic shell is left to be used for his ends. Ivan, as an example of modern humanity, is caught in both traps; he lives in his mind as a flight from reality; and alienation from himself, and simultaneously experiences alienation from the spirit that he has fled to. Colin Wilson says it as follow: 'Ivan has entered the no-man's-land between hell and heaven'⁴⁸ as someone who has stepped outside the human order to see it in all its brokenness, but he hasn't been able to step outside himself yet. As a result it is not only the

⁴⁵ John S. Dunne, *The Reasons of the Heart: A journey into Solitude and back again into the Human Circle*, London, SCM Press LDT, 1978. p.59. Dunne's book is inspired by the thought of Blaise Pascal, in the *Pensées*, in particular his famous saying 'The heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing: we know this in countless ways', Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, translated by A.J. Kraisheimer, Middlesex, Penguin books, 1966, p.154.

⁴⁶ David S Cunningham notes that it is primarily a western paradigm that the inquisitor espouses. 'The Brother Karamazov as a Trinitarian Theology' In *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian tradition*, pp. 134-155. Rowan Williams recognises the paradigm of the inquisitor as a clearly recognisable current political force: 'One of the things that makes Ivan's Inquisitor such a perennially haunting figure is that his voice is so clearly audible on both sides of the global conflict. He is both the manager of a universal market in guaranteed security and comfort for diminished human souls and the violent enforcer of a system beyond dialogue and change.' *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*. p.237.

⁴⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, p.287.

⁴⁸ Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*, p.187.

broken world that he can see about him, but also the projection of his own broken state. Therefore we can see in Ivan how one evil always evokes the other as a simulacrum of balance, or a balance in which there is no place for the soul. Ivan discloses how we are at the brink of a second fall, the first fall being a fall into knowledge, the second into relativism on the one hand or dogmatism on the other, both being expressions of knowledge dissolving into nothingness.

The Translation of the *Brothers Karamazov* by David McDuff has the Grand Inquisitor call human beings ‘mutineers⁴⁹’; they have mutinied and denied their divine roots. This translation suits what we can observe in what the Inquisitor does, namely to indulge humanity in its mutiny, by taking the burden of its conscience off its shoulders and replacing it with an ethical system; in this way living well can simply become a matter of obedience, of following instructions. In this way his work is the continuation of the work done by the Serpent in Genesis, where we can also recognise evil as two opposing, yet symbiotic forces.

1.4 Fallen humanity and the gift of self-awareness

When we look at the figure of Eve in Genesis who goes against the instructions of the Lord God and in listening to the crafty serpent takes a first step away from her origins we see that on the physical/factual plane, what she does is of little consequence. All she does is eat of the fruit that she was told to not to eat, a minor offence; but an offence none the less, the very first one. Milton’s Satan in *Paradise Lost* skilfully points this out to the human being;⁵⁰ what can really happen? A piece of fruit surely is not sufficient to kill someone. He reduces the death that Eve fears to a literal, merely physical death. The spirit is not mentioned, and Eve of course is not equipped to argue, because she cannot know about such things yet, as

⁴⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by David McDuff, London, Penguin Books, 2003, p.328. The David Magarshack translation uses the word ‘rebel’. Dostoevsky, BK, p.295. According to Victor Terras the word ‘mutineer’ is to be preferred over the word ‘rebel’: “Man was created a rebel” – a mistranslation of *Chelovek byl ustroen buntovshchikom*, “Man was made a rebel” where *ustroen*, Moreover, has a connotation of “arrangement” or “mechanical construction”; “created” is *sozdan*. In Russian *buntovshchik* is more negative than “rebel,” since it implies unsuccessful, senseless, and chaotic resistance to authority; perhaps “mutineer” would be closer. Viktor Terras, *A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language and Style of Dostoevsky’s Novel*, Madison Wisc. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002, p.231.

⁵⁰ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, London and New York: Longman, 1998. Book ix, lines 679-732.

she, being innocent has no concept of the separation from the divine.⁵¹ A person has to have mutinied, must have become an outsider in order for it even to be *possible* to see through such rhetoric. Only then do we enter history, because, for the first time, we incurred a debt that now sets us apart from our divine origins.

And so the ability to differentiate is completely wanting in Eve, for there is no such thing as the human perspective yet. The eating of the forbidden fruit changes that, and, contrary to Satan's crafty argumentation, the consequences are vast and irreversible, in a way neither Eve nor Adam could have been aware of. Once the human being has experienced him/herself as an 'I' separate from the creator, there is no going back, there is now and inside verses an outside where previously there was no such thing. Therefore the man and the woman suddenly feel the urge to cover up their nakedness, for they have come to experience the outside world as something other than themselves. This is what we might call the start of the human narrative; for without imperfection there can be no development. The theologian and archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams in his book on Dostoevsky characterises the diabolical as that which stops the narrative,⁵² however, it was the diabolical that started it in the first place. Through flattery the human ego has been woken up; through the half-truth that came from the snake, emphasising her divinity. Another half-truth is told by the Inquisitor; this time underlining not potential divinity but humanity's weakness and her inability to ever live up to that divine possibility.

The Inquisitor has in common with the serpent in Genesis and to a greater extent Milton's Satan that he, through crafty language, anchors and establishes a perspective that is human and solely human, cut lose from the divine roots. However, they both do so using tactics that are each other's opposite. The Inquisitor, as a character has of course entered the human scene in the Christian era, so his concern is not with leading humanity away from God, but rather with his self-imposed task of preventing a return to God, and of this return, it seems, he might after all, himself be part when Christ kisses him and breaks the cycle of evil that he created. This then creates Ivan's void. The modern condition, as Ivan illustrates, is suspended by his firmly established sense of self, so much so that he can no longer feel

⁵¹ David Daiches, *God and the Poets: The Gifford lectures*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984. p.42.

⁵² Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.93.

that his inner world has anything to do with the outside world. Then it becomes unbearable to be exposed to that outer world directly, without some kind of filter in the form of dishonesty. Direct exposure, as in Ivan's case, means a deep existential suffering.

It is the fall into knowledge that turns us into outsiders. However, previously, we were unaware of being insiders, as being an insider in this situation means living in a world where the dividing line between inside and outside was still absent. Awareness of being an insider requires having knowledge of what it means to be an outsider, and in the perfect equilibrium of paradise such knowledge in itself is enough to make you an outsider. Ivan's problem, as the problem of fallen humanity is a catch 22 in which we tend not to know what we lost until we have firmly landed on the other side. For instance, we can experience the beginnings of certain knowledge, for example, we might be familiar with a certain person and their behaviour and mannerisms. We might never have had a desire to find a word for the way this person behaves, but at some point that can change. It is not until we actually name this quality that we can be said to *know* that this individual is, for instance, 'timid'. And as we acquire knowledge to get further in the world, Ivan's 'disharmony' comes closer as the knowledge of the heart is moved to the background. This does not entail however that we now understand this timid person better. Before we knew they were 'timid' we might have understood them more intuitively. Through naming something we place ourselves outside, but we are then in a position to know that we are outside. By naming we become outsiders and by forgetting that we are outsiders we must remain outsiders.

The Inquisitor understands that the prisoner looks at him in a certain way, because he tells us: 'You look meekly at me and do not deign even to be indignant with me?'⁵³ He puts Christ's look into words, and in naming it he subjugates it to his understanding, as he seems to have done with all the human concerns that he speaks of, so in asserting his own paradigm, the dissymmetry of the scene emerges. Yet by doing so, the world behind Christ's meek gaze remains closed to him.

⁵³ Dostoevsky, BK, p.294.

1.5 The subverting power of silence as the silent call of conscience

In reading Ivan's 'poem', we can become aware that with every word the Inquisitor speaks, he is deepening the gulf between himself and the Christ-figure. The latter, as he continues to listen, looking gently and penetratingly at the Grand Inquisitor, becomes more and more Other, because the more reasonable words come from the Inquisitor, the more there has been spoken that he has not responded to. As this gulf between the two characters deepens, we see the effect of knowledge as the Inquisitor possesses it; it takes the place of wordless knowing, the wordless knowing before we knew how to name things. The 'state of knowing' as opposed to the possessing of knowledge that we see in the Inquisitor becomes a vague memory as its former fluidity starts to set. The problem however is that we do not recognise it as such. Language makes us forget where language came from, as the Inquisitor has forgotten what it was to believe. The image of Christ that reminds us of our fallen state is what the Inquisitor aims to eradicate; in his world humanity will be able to forget its inability to overcome its loss. But we as readers feel the gaze of the Christ-figure burning into the Inquisitor's words, wordlessly subverting their meaning. There is an appeal in the gaze that the Inquisitor does not respond to. As the silent voice of conscience, the gaze is a call to 'become guilty' in the words of American theologian Robert P. Scharlemann. Scharlemann, in *The Reason of Following* rightly points out that this kind of 'becoming guilty', or listening to the voice of conscience is not to release a verdict upon our actions,⁵⁴ but rather to wake up to our guilt. Accepting our guilt means fully waking up to our fallen state, waking up to the fact that we are indeed outsiders and that we owe our present state of being to the devil as well as to God. In feeling this 'guilt' through a sense of loss, we feel the dizzyingly asymmetrical relationship we have with God.

In *The Trial*, Franz Kafka sets up an account in which Joseph K persists in denying the deeply asymmetrical situation he has been cast into, with dreadful consequences. This is what makes Kafka's story of Joseph K so haunting; Joseph K insists on his innocence in his feverish search for the law, and increasingly we feel that he *is* guilty. Not because he is a bad man, but for the simple reason that he is called to admit his guilt and he refuses to

⁵⁴ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*.

understand; he fails to expend his ego. He fails to step outside himself, for if he were to step outside himself he would see himself as an outsider and recognise his guilt in his fallenness. To become guilty then means having to accept our ego, to neither claim our innocence, nor to lose ourselves in feelings of guilt, as Ivan does over the things he has said to his illegitimate half-brother Smerdyakov. The difference between Joseph K and Ivan is therefore that the former is locked within himself and the latter is, as it were locked out and is consequently consumed by his guilt.

The lackey and half-brother, Smerdyakov, presents yet a different picture; he is immune to what we have been calling the voice of conscience. Through this character, Dostoevsky shows us what is left of a person when they experience no disharmony; Smerdyakov cannot understand art, and his thought processes are purely mechanical and calculating.⁵⁵ This gives him a curiously unsoiled and simultaneously demonic quality; as he is incapable of feeling guilt. Through Smerdyakov's perceptible lack, we realise that what makes Ivan suffer is the fact that the voice of conscience is just there for him, even when not (fully) recognised. Its presence can vary from being only perceptible as a semi-conscious inconvenience, or even as an actual inconvenience, that demands our attention when we want to direct it elsewhere, as in the case of Joseph K who is focused on clearing his name. Or, we might feel the presence of the voice of conscience and be fully aware of it, as in the case of Ivan.

The voice of conscience is what the gaze of the silent Christ is to the inquisitor, it is not an actual voice⁵⁶, but it rather speaks between the words, making them heavier and heavier as the tension builds up, until it collapses under its own weight.⁵⁷ The call to be responsible, the appeal to be present, in other words, not to withdraw into either our internality so as to elude seeing ourselves reflected in the world, or to cling to our

⁵⁵ Vladimir Kantor uses the suitable term 'monosemantic' to describe the language of Smerdyakov in his paper 'Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation' In *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian tradition*, edited by George Pattison, and Diane Oenning Thompson, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp.189-225.

⁵⁶ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.16.

⁵⁷ Denys Turner, 'Apophaticism, Idolatry, and the Claims of Reason', In *Silence and the Word*, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. p.18.

externality in order to avoid what we might find in our internality. As the American radical theologian Thomas Altizer says so well:

Sin is a false and illusory inwardness or outwardness, isolating the interior from the exterior and wholly divorcing the immediacy of the inner world from the actuality of the outer world.⁵⁸

However, this means risking being exposed ourselves, to have our externality melted by exposing it to our internality and to have illusions exposed. This is the implicit exposure that Kierkegaard⁵⁹ was the first to read into read in Genesis 22, followed by Derrida.⁶⁰ Robert Scharlemann calls Abraham's position when asked to sacrifice Isaac 'unprotected.'⁶¹ Abraham is naked because he does nothing to veil the fact that at that moment there can be no reconciliation between him and the world, there is no false inwardness or outwardness at a moment when the circumstances make this practically impossible.

1.6 Abraham's nakedness

Dostoevsky's inquisitor, by taking hold of the human conscience, takes hold of that which is capable of connecting human beings to the divine insofar as it is that which enables self-reflection, and play a reconciliatory role in the inner and the outer world of a person. The Inquisitor, through re-rooting faith in miracle, mystery, and authority,⁶² acts to permanently sever humanity from her conscience, thereby avoiding the extreme and cruel exposure that Abraham had to endure on mount Moriah.⁶³

The tension created by extreme and unbridgeable disharmony is something that is beautifully explored in Genesis 22, where God orders Abraham to take Isaac to mount Moriah to sacrifice him. In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard exposes the tension in this story

⁵⁸ Thomas Altizer, *The Descent into Hell: a Study of Radical Reversal of the Christian Consciousness*, Philadelphia and New York, J.B. Lippincott Company, p.169.

⁵⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, In *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, Translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1954.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, pp.59-89.

⁶¹ Scharlemann, *The Reason of following*, p.11.

⁶² Dostoevsky, BK, p.299

⁶³ Genesis 22:1-19.

between ethical reality on the one hand, in which Abraham's obedience makes him nothing short of a murderer, and the religious act of sacrifice on the other.

Because of Abraham's unconditional preparedness to carry out what he has been asked to do, Kierkegaard calls him 'a knight of faith'. He is not a tragic hero, because a tragic hero becomes a tragic hero as a result of his heroic and self-sacrificial deeds in the ethical realm, in this sense we can call the Inquisitor a tragic hero, as all his achievements are fuelled by his utilitarian, ethical convictions. These convictions stem from an impoverished concept of humanity, drained of any trace of divinity, in which there is nothing higher than happiness. The Inquisitor is a self-professed, self-made-man. As Kierkegaard says: 'A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers – but not a knight of faith.'⁶⁴ Abraham is a knight of faith because it is no longer out of his own strength that he acts, for if he were acting out of his own power, he would act as a father and protect his son.

The completely subjective quality of the deed Abraham is willing to carry out, out of pure faith, is unutterable. All that we can articulate is either the ethical; making Abraham a murderer, or the religious, in which case he is carrying out a sacrifice. An attempt at synthesising these two can only result in the demonic forms that we have identified above. The first would be the ethical, the inquisitorial; in which Abraham is a murderer. When we look at it in this way the story becomes a tale devoid the spirit or glory. We could admire Abraham for his blind faith, but this turns God's demand into something monstrous and divorced from human concerns. There is no real mediation conceivable. What Derrida and Kierkegaard's readings do show us is the story of a man who looked the negative in the eye and did not turn back. In other words, Abraham's glory stems only from the fact that he lived the paradox and the dissymmetry between God and man without surrendering to the temptation to ask the questions that would instantly terminate this glory. Abraham's superhuman strength consists therefore of the courage to be utterly exposed; to look at the vacuum created by the paradox between the religious and the ethical and to endure this tension.

⁶⁴ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness unto Death*, translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968. p.77.

This is what Scharlemann calls the 'answering for the 'not'. Scharlemann, in *The Reason of Following*, calls the call of conscience 'discourse of the self with the self', and in that sense it is not a voice that comes to us from the outside and is therefore not a 'real voice', as Scharlemann says. Rather, it is the voice of silence.⁶⁵ The Inquisitor sees it as his task to silence the voice of silence, altering everything by surrendering it to ethical. This he does by removing what Ivan experiences as the 'disharmony'; the incommensurability of the religious and the ethical, which is also the paradox experienced by Abraham. The Grand Inquisitor removes this tension; he takes away what Hegel called the spirit's consciousness of its loss.⁶⁶

1.7 The ethical paradigm as contempt for humanity

Because the Grand Inquisitor addresses Christ as though he were a peer, as though their difference resides in the realm of opinion, the inquisitor can operate on an ethical level. For in order to do so he must occupy a position, the ethical requires that we first establish a place from where to start building up what is right and wrong. He has chosen his position as Christ's opponent. However, in order to be this opponent he has had to project a position onto the Other, who himself is not in fact positional in this way, and paradoxically *cannot* be positional if he is to be the Inquisitor's true opponent.

The Grand Inquisitor is the ultimate ethical figure; old, respectable, consistent, and deeply logical, a philosopher, organising society to protect it against its potential lawlessness. He knows his system cannot trace its steps back to metaphysical truths, he no longer believes in those, but to him that is not the point. The end of his ethics is to protect humanity from anarchy, so he acts out of a calculated concern.

⁶⁵ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.16.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Translated by G.W.F. Miller, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977, p.5.

Unlike the post-modern American theologian Don Caputo in *Against Ethics*, who seems to think that if we lose ‘all communication from On High,⁶⁷’ we lose our belief in ethics, the inquisitor is an ethical figure especially *because* he has lost all communication from ‘On High.⁶⁸’ Nonetheless, in his contempt for humanity he seeks to protect human beings from themselves, which motivates the Inquisitor to organise society in the way that he does. His concern for humanity is therefore equally an expression of a deep contempt. It is even the violence of a self-fulfilling prophesy, that works by declaring the spirit to be weak and worthless. By then starving the spirit, the spirit will eventually die. What would there then be left to strive for? Strictly speaking there is nothing. The reality of our potential and possibility is annihilated; we would only have to accommodate what is already obviously present as a desire not to suffer more than practically necessary. That then could be a happiness-principle, albeit happiness of a depleted, impoverished nature, as it only amounts to the fulfilment of the human being’s needs in so far as they make life easier and in that more pleasurable. It would be strictly utilitarian, divorced from the sources of happiness and in that necessitating that we pretend that the pursuit of happiness itself is always the ground of our motivation.

For accordingly, if the Grand Inquisitor were to get his way we could say that humanity now does live by bread alone. The part of the human being that is capable of finding motivation outside rewards of a worldly nature such as food, sex, and shelter, but also praise, appreciation, recognition and power, in other words; the Eckhartian inner self,⁶⁹ the part of us that is potentially free of worldly motivations, is disqualified.

In order to take position, as we do in ethics, we need a definition of a man, even if we suspend this act, it lurks in the background. The French philosopher, Alain Badiou, goes as far as to say that, in a certain way, every definition of man is nihilist.⁷⁰ Ethics, and its dependence on the happiness principle, can only come into existence when the human

⁶⁷ John Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993, p.5.

⁶⁸ This is not to suggest that Caputo has got it wrong, but rather that both are true. It does mean Caputo has not paid enough attention human beings and their relationship with-and indebtedness to evil.

⁶⁹ Meister Eckhart, ‘Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works’ in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, translated by Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, London, SPCK, p.291.

⁷⁰ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, translated by Peter Hallward, London, Verso, 2002, p.37.

being's identity has been placed only in the world, and her unworldly roots and potential are forgotten. Then there no longer is such a thing as the fault-line between the created and the uncreated self⁷¹ to create a tension that pulls us forward and leaves us free to create our unique narratives.

As a consequence, the inquisitor's job is never finished if he wants to maintain happiness among his flock, for in confiscating the human conscience he has also barred the possibility of expending one's ego; of becoming guilty. As a result, the other will always remain an object to the human being; defined by his needs that infringe on my needs. And so the Inquisitor will always need fear to rule over his flock. The ethical imperative, in making a claim about good and evil must treat language like a medium when it cannot, as it has to make reference to a higher principle, whose ultimate truth it must deny. As Caputo puts it:

Ethics harbours within itself that which it cannot maintain, what it must expel, expectorate, exclude. Ethics, one might say, cannot contain what it contains.⁷²

Like Flannery O'Connor's remark about modern man ruling with tenderness while being cut off from the source of that tenderness,⁷³ ethics must have a good as its end that is completely alien to the system of ethics itself, and therefore can never become part of that system. So in ethics well-being and happiness must become its end, instead of reminder of happiness being a reminder of something greater. The ethical then, like St. Paul's discourse on the law in Romans 7 has two faces; it can serve as a teacher, reminding us of where we fall short, to then step aside and sacrifice its own role when it has served its purpose. Or, in keeping with its own nature as a system it can refuse to give itself up.

Ethics therefore only expresses Badiou's contempt for humanity insofar as it refuses to sacrifice itself; to be nothing but a servant. If, in keeping with Romans 7, the ethical does give itself up, it is the tool of transformation. On its own, the ethical belongs to that which is

⁷¹ See: Meister Eckhart, in The Bull 'In agro dominico' In *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, treatises, and Defense*, p.80.

⁷² John Caputo, *Against Ethics*, p.5.

⁷³ Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.227.

created and perishable, constructed to prevent suffering and to dull the voice of conscience. In reality it is capable of providing us with the boundaries we need to get to know ourselves. So, just as Derrida noted that in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* there is an implicit reference to St. Paul,⁷⁴ in 'the legend of the Grand Inquisitor' there is also an implicit reference to St. Paul in the contrast between the Inquisitor and Christ.

1.8 Romans 7: The law as a two-edged sword

St. Paul addresses his audience in saying that they 'have died to the law through the body of Christ.'⁷⁵ But St. Paul carries on to say that it is also the law, which in being embodied, has made him aware of his sins. In verse 7 he says 'Yet, if it had not been for the law I would not have known sin.'⁷⁶ The meaning that we can draw from this ambiguous statement can almost be said to abide in that ambiguity itself. We can either take it to mean that the law caused him to sin, and we can take it to mean that the law made him aware of the fact that he was sinning. We should not reject either of these, because they describe the same event from a different perspective; this has to do with the self-awareness that he gained through the law, as in paradise it is impossible to sin, because the potential sinner is innocent. So in order to know that we have committed a sin we need self-awareness, but without this self-awareness we could not have sinned.

The law is inextricably bound up with humanity in its fallen capacity. We could be said to 'know' that we are not to steal apples from someone else's garden, because someone has told us that is not allowed. However, it is perhaps only fear of punishment that, provided we know what it means to be punished, that keeps us from taking the apples. Here we can say that it is the external world that 'knocks us into shape'. In this way, the law teaches us, as an external force, what sin is. Now there is also the causal relationship between the law and sin that we can draw from the remark; in which the law provides us with capacity to sin.

⁷⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p.57.

⁷⁵ Romans 7:4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:7.

The law separates, draws a line where previously there was no separation between good and evil, it demarcates the difference between those who are insiders, part of society, law abiding citizens, and those outside society who don't abide by the law. Such otherness was previously not there, in the same way that Adam and Eve are now outside Eden, and are naked rather than simply unclothed. In our reading of St. Paul, he exposes the nature of the law to us as a force that seems to underpin, or even produce self-awareness, demarcating the in-and-outside. Therefore, parallel to the inherent force in the law; there is the curious phenomenon that by suppressing our divinity it reminds us that we have one.

As we noted earlier, Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, plays out for us the paradox of self-awareness as something that seems to have to precede itself to bring itself into existence.⁷⁷ Satan first tries to arouse a degree of self-awareness in the woman by flattering her, just enough for her to disobey God. It appears that it was necessary that she should have a sense of her own separateness so that disobedience would even be possible, otherwise she would know no distinction between her will and God's will. However, it is only after the man and the woman have disobeyed that we are told that their eyes were opened, that they became truly self-aware. In the story of the fall we see a pattern that is the same as the one circumscribed by Paul in Romans 7; that which was a necessary condition for self-awareness then becomes the instrument of its transformation. The law then reveals itself as possessing a quality that acts as a double-edged sword; it appears to us as something constructed, but it appeals to humanity to be deconstructed in order that there might be real responsibility. Only once we become responsible can we be capable of making a decision that is just. Responsibility requires both the 'silent voice of conscience'⁷⁸ and the actual voice of the law. In allowing ourselves to feel the impossible weight of responsibility we can proceed to be just.

Derrida, in his essay 'Force of law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority'⁷⁹ explores this motif, using the possibility of justice as something that comes into being exactly on the

⁷⁷ David Daiches, *God and the Poets*, p.42.

⁷⁸ Scharlemann, in *The Reason of Following* says: 'The voice of conscience is not an actual voice, as are the voices of the people around us. In that sense it is the voice of silence.' p.16.

⁷⁹ In *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, edited by Cornell, D., Rosenfeld, M. and Gray Carlson, D, London and New York, Routledge, 1992 pp. 3-67.

fault-line between that which is constructed; the law, and the human being, possibly a judge, who is charged with the responsibility of casting a decision, having to bear the weight of the responsibility by having an experience of the incommensurability of law on the one hand, which Derrida calls 'the element of calculation', and their own purely subjective responsibility on the other. Justice then is not law, and law is not justice⁸⁰, but justice needs to find an incarnation in a decision that accords with the law, *and* requires an experience of what Derrida calls the undecidable. He implies that we have to look down into the abyss, contain our nausea, walk through the rough path full of aporias, to *then* possibly reach a decision that is just. Moreover, the word 'mystical' in the title of Derrida's essay, serves as a reminder that this process can never be reduced to a mechanism. It has to be recreated each time as a momentary union of law and conscience in a single decision. Here responsibility is culpability,⁸¹ for in experiencing our freedom in the moment of decision, we also accept our guilt towards that which we did not decide. No system of ethics can remove that responsibility at this point.

1.9 The law opposed to the individual

The difference between the gift of 'infinite love'⁸², as Derrida calls it, with which the divine regards me, and the way I have learned to regard myself as a person in and part of the world, is one that cannot be 'levelled out' by any change in what I do or do not do. We can scarcely describe it as asymmetrical, for even such a description might suggest that both sides have their being in a similar way. Here however, the way I regard myself and the way the world regards me is accessible to me, but the way God regards me cannot be accessible to me, it can only be experienced as the negative; as me experiencing everything that I am not. Derrida then refers us back to the way in which Christ, after his death on the cross, related to the disciples; 'without either seeing or knowing, without hearing the law or the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Derrida, *Gift of Death*, p57.

⁸² Ibid., p.56.

reasons for the law.⁸³ Leaving them only themselves to respond to whatever approached them from the world, with no external authority to fall back on.

Caputo speaks of obligation as something that is just there, as something that we respond to regardless of authorities that are absent or that we might have rejected. Even when we think we have renounced ethics,⁸⁴ the experience of obligation is such that it has taken possession of us before we have allowed it to do so; as he says:

I do not know the origin of an obligation more than I know the origin of a work of art. Obligation happens before I reach the scene. *Il arrive*: it happens before I get there, it has always already happened, without my even being there at all.⁸⁵

Here Caputo's point is that, the Greek origins of obligation cannot be traced; that these are there, that obligation happens before the thought of constructing a metaphysics in its support can even enter our thoughts. The obligation comes from the event of what he calls a 'disaster'; something terrible and undeserved happening to another human being; it is intrinsic to the event. And, as he says, it 'happens before he reaches the scene'. Following from his claim, it is the moral philosopher who arrives late. There is a responsibility towards the other who needs his help, but it is not the self-aware 'I' that accepts the responsibility when the moral philosopher arrives late at the scene. In the *Reason of Following*, Robert Scharlemann said something that can serve to throw some light on Caputo's problem:

To be human is to find oneself as the unity of the "I" and this-one-here, a unity of what can never exist with what does always already exist. Whether this unity of opposites involves a conflict (as it does in some existentialist conceptions of human being) or only a polarity is a question that can be left open here.⁸⁶

For Caputo this does contain conflict. Who could it be then that finds himself obligated? It could not be the 'I' on his/her own? Presumably not, because if so, there would be a memory of arriving on the scene, for I-saying can only be done by a self-aware being, so by someone who has experienced the *unity* of the 'I' and 'this-one-here,' at least to some

⁸³ Ibid., p.57.

⁸⁴ Which Caputo claims to have done.

⁸⁵ Caputo, *Against Ethics*, p.7.

⁸⁶ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.49.

degree. So, 'this-one-here' arrives to the scene to find himself already present, and is shocked at his own lack of authority. Perhaps the lack of perceived unity is precisely the issue, where, through estrangement from the spirit, the outer-self, in the shape of the moral philosopher can no longer identify himself as the one present at the scene, that, after all is the 'I' that went before him.

In the same way, Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, at the moment of the kiss, found himself to be already present in an unanticipated location, as he is initiated in what he perhaps knew all along; his ethical location is then for a moment utterly negated. Without his own consent, the Inquisitor is part of a much wider plan. In order to understand Scharlemann, and his own presence at the scene, Caputo would have to do what he finds so repugnant; and that is to think religiously. For Caputo, thinking religiously is making an illegitimate leap to save ethics from the claws of deconstruction. Such a move he mockingly names as hearing 'the call of Being.'⁸⁷ To make this 'saving Heideggerian leap'⁸⁸ is, according to him, something done out of fear for the abyss or a misplaced romanticism, and actually constitutes a lopsided, barely concealed return to the safety net of metaphysics. Caputo's concept of religious thinking is paradigmatically the opposite of what religious thinking is. In the way in which the American theologian Robert Detweiler,⁸⁹ espouses religious thinking, it can be the accepting and undergoing of the unknowing that is the result of deconstruction, which does however require a form of faith. Perhaps this faith that requires the practice of *Gelassenheit*⁹⁰ is what can teach us to wake up to a new found unity between 'I' and 'this one here'. To be human, says Scharlemann, is to *find* oneself as the unity of both, that does not mean then that we are always necessarily aware of such a unity. The one that arrives late feels possibly betrayed, because his or her autonomy has been compromised. It sounds as if the one arriving late on the scene would have liked to have been consulted, would have liked to have had a choice, as the Grand Inquisitor thought he had a choice. But only the unity of the 'I' and 'this-one-here' is capable of giving us the experience of freedom back.

⁸⁷ Caputo, *Against Ethics*, p.2.

⁸⁸ Caputo here alludes to Heidegger's term *Seinsverlassenheit*; a sense of forlornness through having been deserted by being. He says: 'I have in short been abandoned, become a part and party of the very *Seinsverlassenheit* against which Heidegger has at length warned us all.' *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸⁹ In his book *Breaking the Fall: Religious Readings of Contemporary Fiction*, London, The Macmillan Press, 1989.

⁹⁰ Detweiler makes extensive use of the term *Gelassenheit* in *Breaking the Fall*. The term was originally used by Heidegger, primarily in his essay 'Gelassenheit', Neske, Tübingen, 1959.

Caputo talks about the choice between the two ways of understanding difference; one that is the response to the other that welcomes what is other, creating a space for the other and is not afraid to have the other leave an imprint on him. Presumably this mode of response would not be so disturbed by a 'disaster'. The other way to respond to the other is that less fond of losing its own shape, and sees the other as another force, which can either be a cause for the celebration of difference or a challenge to a power struggle.⁹¹ Naturally the person more inclined towards former way of responding is in danger absorbing the other at his own expense, where the latter is in danger of always being at war. Could it be possible then to respond without it becoming necessary that a human being would be trapped in either of the above forms of one-sidedness in which we either surrender 'this one here' in order to be assimilated with the other, or, alternatively, cling to 'this one here' and dance or fight with the other without ever actually changing ourselves?

Is it possible to find ourselves 'on the scene', without feeling that we suddenly find ourselves bound by a law that seems to bypass all structure that we thought we adhered to? With the help Bernard of Clairvaux, I will offer what Caputo must consider a very pious⁹² reading of this situation of obligation. To read religiously is paradoxically what enables us to stay faithful to our own nature as bodily creatures; nor to lose our shape in forgetting our embodiment, or to hold on to it in forgetting the spirit.

In one of his letters to the Brothers of *la Chartreuse*,⁹³ Bernard of Clairvaux describes, albeit in a different and very pious context, the passage from being ruled by the law that comes from the external to the point at which the internal and the external merge, at which we can no longer speak of either internal or external force. This point where the internal and the external merge is non-other than the unity of the 'I' and 'this-one-here'. Bernard of Clairvaux speaks of the law which first binds the slave, who is bound by his fear. Then there is the mercenary, who will abide by the law if he himself has anything to gain by it. Then

⁹¹ In *Against Ethics* he makes a distinction between two ways of understanding *difference*: the first he calls the *heteromorphic*, this is the difference of Nietzsche and Deleuze, it is the 'macho' kind, it is directed outward in its abundance, a spilling of its abundance (he admits to the orgiastic and phallic nature of his language). In essence; it is the force that desires to leave its imprint on the world. This he calls Dionysian. The other force he calls the *heteronomic* interpretation of *difference* makes a gesture opposites the *heteromorphic*, it aims to welcome the impact of the world on its own being. pp.53-62.

⁹² A word that Caputo uses a lot in relation to Levinas. pp. 42-85.

⁹³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*, New York and Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1987, pp.200-205.

there are the sons, who abide by the law out of love.⁹⁴ He finishes by saying: 'It does not seem absurd for me to say that even God lives by the law, for I have said that the law is nothing else but love.'⁹⁵

The slave the mercenary and the son needless to say, are not real people, but the opposite is true, or even the singular; the slave the mercenary and the son make up a real person. The experience of obligation itself tells us something that is important; is it not the clash between the son and something 'less'? If it was only the 'son', the experience of obligation would not occur, for would perfect love not negate the clash between the internal and the external that does so inherently belong to the experience of obligation? The 'son' cannot feel obligated, or for that matter be said to be under any obligation, for when love is perfect 'this one here' and 'I' are no longer divided.

The figure of Dostoevsky's Christ can add a further dimension to what we've been saying about the overcoming of the dichotomy within a human being. As I suggested earlier, the Christ-figure is in a wider sense part of the human being that is the Grand Inquisitor, and it is clearly Christ who is undivided. It is then Christ who is the 'son' in the Grand Inquisitor, so then it is Bernard of Clairvaux's 'son' who has already overcome the divisions before the rest of the person joins him. The experience of 'being two'; and of being separated into inner and outer as a result of having eaten from the apple might mean that we become morally paralysed; pulled in different directions, not knowing whether 'I' and 'this one here' could ever be re-united.

1.10 The kiss

Therefore, the experience of obligation, and the surprise at feeling obligated at the moment when our belief system might be crumbling and is becoming increasingly meaningless⁹⁶ is, in a certain way, nothing but our alienation from a God whose immanence

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.201.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.201.

⁹⁶ The British Theologian and Philosopher Don Cupitt has worded it aptly: 'Many or most people will have known a moment when they paused in wonderment, suddenly aware that they can no longer *understand* a belief, a form of words, that once seemed to them both perfectly clear and very precious. What's happening to

becomes absolute transcendence us. Likewise, the Inquisitor, whose charge against Christ centres on the fact that the latter's greatness resides in his transcendence; which the people cannot be expected to emulate. At that point however, the Grand Inquisitor is overcome by this very immanence when Christ kisses him. Ivan tells Alyosha the end of his poem:

I intended it to end as follows: when the Inquisitor finished speaking, he waited for some time for the Prisoner's reply. His silence distressed him. He saw that the Prisoner had been listening intently to him all the time, looking gently into his face and evidently not wishing to say anything in reply. The old man would have liked him to say something, however bitter and terrible. But he suddenly approached the old man and kissed him gently on the bloodless, aged lips. That was all his answer. The old man gave a start. There was an imperceptible movement at the corners of his mouth; he went to the door, opened it and said to him: "Go, and come no more – don't come at all – never, never!" And he let him go out into "the dark streets and lanes of the city". The Prisoner went away.⁹⁷

We can say then, that the kiss destabilises, for it does not permit us to read into it any disapproval of the inquisitor and his project, nor would it be apt to say that it is a kiss of approval. Moreover, either a condoning or a condemning would have been better done in words. Instead, in our attempt to capture the meaning we are left oscillating between what it contains of betrayal on the one hand and compassionate love on the other.⁹⁸

The motif of betrayal enters the scene in the element of surprise in the kiss. Namely simply because the surprise stems from the fact that the Inquisitor, in having separated himself from the divine grace in order to replace it with a purely earthly justice, is now the recipient of grace of the most sublime kind; being kissed on the lips by Christ. The Grand Inquisitor is graciously given that which he had fully consciously turned his back on and rejected, and so his abandonment of the divine might have been an illusion, as he is simply a

us?' *Mysticism after Modernity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, p.25. Caputo describes a similar sensation: 'It is a little more like confessing that the ground on which I stand tends to shift, that something that hitherto seem to me firm and fixed is given to drift.' *Against Ethics*, p.3.

⁹⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

⁹⁸ The debate about whether one or the other is victorious is not relevant here. According to Menut, Dostoevsky himself, in a note to Luibimov, promises to 'triumphantly refute' Ivan's position, *Dostoevsky and Existentialism*, p.44. Kroeker and Ward put it in the following way in *Remembering the End*: 'We know that a number of readers (including thoughtful ones) during the century since *The Brothers Karamazov* was published remain unconvinced by this refutation. Indeed, the apparent discrepancy between Dostoevsky's intention and his art is sometimes taken to be a classic demonstration (together with Milton's *Paradise Lost*) of what has now become a truism of contemporary literary criticism: "Trust the tale, not the teller.'" p.141.

pawn in a much larger perspective. Exactly that which he believed to have dealt with for good; the illusion of an immanent God who is there regardless of the moral strength the human being, he himself has now been subjected to. However, this cannot be all, because the act of the kiss is equally majestic and graceful in its unconditional love as it is demonic in its betrayal from the Inquisitor's adopted point of view.

Hence the love of Christ in the legend is the greatest blessing as well as being a curse. We are left with two perspectives that both have the kiss at their centre, yet are each other's polar opposite in paradigm, for this love exists simultaneously in these two perspectives. From the inquisitor's side of the fence it is earth-shatteringly, terrible, for a moment robbing the Grand Inquisitor of his externality which is his identity, yet locking him into his identity as if sentencing him to himself, with himself as this-one-here and Christ as the 'I' in one seething moment of unity.

In Ivan's poem we have the stark contrast between the Christ-figure and the Inquisitor, in which the Christ-figure kisses the Inquisitor, in that way loving his opponent. At the same time, the kiss restores the Inquisitor to the divine that he had purposely abandoned, and so destroys everything that he invested in, including his own identity. The two-sided nature of this kiss results in the relationship between the Inquisitor and Christ becoming just as ambiguous, for we, as readers, do not know whether the Inquisitor is Christ's faithful servant or his arch-enemy, but either way the love of Christ resides in the kiss. The transforming power of the kiss is unmistakably present; the kiss only being a revelation of the unsayable where love and betrayal is one and the same thing. Through this ambiguity in the kiss, the opposition between these two figures is undermined or even negated; calling into question whether Christ loves the Inquisitor as his opponent or, as an element of himself only, namely only from there where the dichotomy no longer exists. To the Inquisitor, the kiss necessarily contains that element of betrayal, as he receives that which he had rejected, yet he is defenceless when it is given to him nonetheless. The Christ-figure is not 'trapped' by this transient union in the way that Inquisitor is. The former knows that the inquisitor too 'belongs to him', but whether the old man is aware of this or not leaves him necessarily unaffected, as for him nothing changes. It is equally right to say that it leaves him detached; that, to speak in Eckhartian language, he does not leave his perfect

detachment⁹⁹. However, to the old man, and to the part of the self that is attached, there is no difference, betrayal is pending.

1.11 The Grand Inquisitor and Meister Eckhart's anthropology

What takes place between these two figures is a form of deconstruction, that, when approached logically ends in paradox. It is at the edge of our understanding that the question of the triumph of theism over atheism crumbles, for that is where the kiss continually leads us; to the moment where dichotomy dissolves, the *coincidentia oppositorum*.

For either side to lay claim to victory they have to remain in opposition, so although we do in some sense end up with an answer to the question of who is victorious, it can no longer be a victory when the opposition is no longer there. The silence of the Christ-figure, followed by the kiss, is deeply apophatic in nature; it is a revelation, yet we are not sure what we have been exposed to. Through not speaking, Christ's presence remains of an unworldly kind. This inevitably serves as reference to the mystics of the middle ages like Pseudo Dionysius, and especially Eckhart. This allusion to the apophatic is present explicitly in the reproachful language used by the Grand Inquisitor who speaks of the necessity of the absent God, and articulates his knowledge of 'the point' of this silence and absence as the necessary condition that gives humanity the possibility of freedom.¹⁰⁰ What the Grand Inquisitor cannot perceive fully is that what he knows intellectually is also 'visible' to the reader as the body-language of the text itself. The truth of the inquisitor's words is enacted as the Eckhartian 'oneness in distinction'; these two figures are, on a logical level, mutual enablers, as are Eckhart's created and uncreated part of the soul. The central force that

⁹⁹ Meister Eckhart speaks in this way about the detachment of Christ when he says: Now it was loving humility that brought God to abase himself in human nature; yet when he became man, detachment remained immovable in itself as it was when he created the kingdoms of heaven and earth, as afterward I intend to say to you.' Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. 'Of interior and exterior works' In *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, treatises, and Defense*, p.287.

¹⁰⁰ Right after the Inquisitor has taken Christ prisoner, he realises that the latter is not replying to the things he says. The Inquisitor then says: "Do not answer, be silent. And, indeed, what can you say? I know too well what you would say. Besides, you have no right to add anything to what you have said already in the days of old." Dostoevsky, BK, p. 293. At a later point in 'The Legend' he speaks to Christ about depriving humanity of the earthly bread in order to preserve its freedom. Dostoevsky, BK, pp.296-301.

powers this dynamic and ultimately its climax is the detachment of the Christ-figure. This non-force is what makes these two figures each other's complete Other. Dostoevsky's Christ takes this non-quality to its full and ultimate conclusion, exhibiting only complete mastery of himself, as if he were not imprisoned. There is no sign of anger or fear, nor do the things the Inquisitor says seem to move him in a way that that could tempt him to leave his detachment.¹⁰¹

The anthropology that underpins the notion of detachment in the form that we come across it in Eckhart is on the surface dualistic; splitting a person into two incommensurable 'parts' as the Grand Inquisitor and Christ are incommensurably asymmetrical presences. Eckhart speaks about the created and the uncreated part of the soul.¹⁰² The created part is the part that belongs to the world, that part of the soul is usually attached to the world with all the countless little ties that make up our identity in the world. In the case of the Inquisitor these are numerous, as he has clad himself in worldly power. He has cut himself off from Eckhart's uncreated self to the degree that it could no longer hinder him in his activities as Inquisitor. The uncreated part of the soul is the part that does not belong to the world, and is therefore detached by its very nature. We could be left with two incommensurable realities that cannot be reasoned together. As though Eckhart could not avoid telling us that we are 'two'.¹⁰³ This is not so, and, more importantly, the reason(s) for why this is not the case are at the heart of what we can call Eckhart's anthropology. At the same time this union is real and concrete, but it is also continually becoming and can never be fully realised.

With Eckhart we meet the Godhead not by retreating to one or the other, but on the fault line between the two.¹⁰⁴ The image of the Inquisitor and the Christ-figure personified the 'created' and the 'uncreated' for us, and, accordingly, the text of Dostoevsky's 'Grand Inquisitor' gains its sacred quality at the fault line between the worlds that these two

¹⁰¹ The term 'passionlessness', as we find it in the *Philokalia* serves equally well to describe what this character exhibits; meaning that there is no possible circumstance that could break the perfect equilibrium of his being. *Philokalia: the Eastern Christian Spiritual Texts*, translated by G.E.H Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Bishop Kallistos Ware, Woodstock VT, Sky Light Paths, 2006.

¹⁰² In The Bull 'In agro dominico' In *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, treatises, and Defense*, p.80.

¹⁰³ A good discussion of this apparent paradox can be found in Denys Turner's *Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 137-167, especially p.146.

¹⁰⁴ Rico Sneller, *Het Woord is Schrift Geworden*, Kampen, The Netherlands, Agora, 1998, p.77.

characters embody. The contradictions that Eckhart seems to get himself involved in occur inevitably, and only on the surface, as the subject matter of his writings is precisely that which is beyond language¹⁰⁵, perhaps making use of paradox and contradiction to wean his listeners and readers off the mode of thinking that is addicted to dualism; and so to assist his audience towards and experience of the apophatic. The British theologian and philosopher Denys Turner says the following on this issue:

Paradox and contradiction are used as a means to silence. But not just for effect, also because what he speaks of is to us genuinely paradoxical, or is most fittingly captured in language that contradicts itself.¹⁰⁶

Our mind is slowly manoeuvred to the point where we realise we cannot think of the uncreated in terms of the created, in other words in *any* terms, for the former does not want to be 'this and that' as Eckhart says,¹⁰⁷ and, is in that sense, identical to 'nothing'.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, we cannot *think* the uncreated,¹⁰⁹ for as soon as we think we have been successful in capturing it in our thoughts, we have necessarily failed. When we return to the Christ-figure and the Grand Inquisitor together, they present us with an image of powerful opposition; one is completely what the other is not. The Inquisitor is all createdness in the Eckhartian sense, as someone who has chosen worldly power and, in that sense, is atheism incarnate. On the other side we have the detached Christ-figure, as 'uncreated' in the Eckhartian sense as can be conceived of. For, even though he is in the legend *Other* to the Inquisitor, his presence is the presence that negates dualism. This is literally the case the in kiss, where the charged silence finally finds its fulfilment. At that moment, the Grand Inquisitor, who presented himself as Christ's other, and as someone who has joined the

¹⁰⁵ The language used by Eckhart is, in accordance with the apophatic tradition, is also a means towards silence, for a discussion see Denys Turner's *Darkness of God* p.151, or Don Cupitt's discussion in *Mysticism after Modernity*, in which he holds that Eckhart's language is a rhetorical tool to challenge the finality of language itself, and as a tool to bring about change in himself and the listener. *Mysticism after Modernity*, p.61.

¹⁰⁶ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God* p.149.

¹⁰⁷ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.287 and p.291.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.292.

¹⁰⁹ This in accordance with Eckhart, who also aligns the *outer self*, or the *created self* with what he calls the *intellect*.

devil's side,¹¹⁰ re-enters the divine order he had rejected. The same reality can be expressed in Eckhartian terms when we say that the inner and the outer self reunite in an instant of *coincidentia oppositorum*.

To go back to Eckhartian language; we can only speak about detachment in attached terms;¹¹¹ we cannot employ language to describe that which is without qualities. And so the 'quality' that we, with our 'Euclidean, earthbound minds', as Ivan says¹¹² experience in the Christ-figure, is not a quality at all, but the negation of all qualities as features out of which the existence of creatures and things in the world are made up. In the kiss their union is affirmed with consequences that are both disturbing and reassuring.

1.12 The apophatic and the coming together of opposites

Christ, in his great detachment, from which he kisses the Grand Inquisitor, brings about a moment of negativity, a moment necessarily devoid of any content other than what we have already been given in the kiss. No new theology can be constructed,¹¹³ almost as a testimony to the impossibility of constructing an apophatic theology. The apophatic, or the experience of the impossible, cannot lead to any more knowledge of God in the ordinary sense in which we have knowledge of things. If that was the case we would have had an experience that was informative and hence perfectly possible, for the earthbound mind would know how to process it. What the apophatic steers us towards is the ignorance of God of the *via negativa*. An *acquired* ignorance as Turner calls it.¹¹⁴ This is the same acquired ignorance as the acquired ignorance we have after the kiss. It leaves us and the Inquisitor none the wiser. At least theologically and intellectually nothing new has come about. Yet we feel as though something important has been revealed to us. The inquisitor has been let in on a terrible secret and we know that he knows, for us it is an acquired ignorance, but for the old man the knowledge that he has been lead into is equal to a descent into his own hell.

¹¹⁰ Dostoevsky, BK, p.302.

¹¹¹ Or the apophatic depends entirely on the cataphatic for its existence.

¹¹² Dostoevsky, BK, p.107.

¹¹³ As we are also told by Dostoevsky: 'The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man sticks to his fixed idea.' BK, p.308.

¹¹⁴ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p.19.

The kiss of Christ, that we might have felt to be imminent in some subconscious corner of our mind, reveals something we perhaps also knew already, namely that ultimately, we cannot be outsiders, just like the Inquisitor in the end has his divinity reaffirmed, and in that he is no longer outside the divine order. We are, in a certain way, already insiders, it is the gaze of God upon us, as the gaze of the Christ-figure rests upon the Inquisitor, that brings us only back to ourselves. It is we ourselves that continually turn the loaves into stones,¹¹⁵ and the old man is right, without doing so life would be unbearable for most of us. It is a good thing that what Eckhart calls 'the created self' protects us against the continual exposure to the divine gaze upon us. We would be likely to suffer like Ivan, all potential saints with a heavy burden of formless guilt resting on our shoulders. The continual awareness of the divine regard would unsettle everything, and would strip us of everything we regard as belonging to our identity. In this way we all resemble the Inquisitor; we see Christ everywhere without wanting to recognise him. As in the words of Nicolas of Cusa:

You are visible by all creatures and you see all. In that you see all you are seen by all. For otherwise creatures cannot exist since they exist by your vision. If they did not see you who see, they would not receive being from you. The being of a creature is equally your seeing and your being seen.¹¹⁶

Ivan, who lives with this exposure, then strangely enough shows us the demise of what we thought was his own paradigm, or the inquisitor's paradigm. The ethical paradigm of the Inquisitor has lost all its power to make claims to the absolute, without having lost any of its value. In other words, the Christ-figure negates the ethical in its positional guise and is simultaneously the embodiment of the hyper-ethical. He does not pass judgement on our deeds, but addresses the individual in their subjectivity; making her bear the weight of all her shortcomings.

This too changes the way we should view the phrase 'everything is permitted' in the conversation between Alyosha and Ivan. This is traditionally interpreted as 'lawlessness'; doing whatever satisfies our desires at any moment in time as a demonic alternative to the

¹¹⁵ Here the Inquisitor speaks of the future era, in which he and the church will be the rulers of mankind. He says: 'For they will remember only too well that before, without us, the bread they made turned to stones in their hands, but that when they came back to us, the very stones turned to bread in their hands.' Dostoevsky, BK, p.303.

¹¹⁶ Nicolas of Cusa, *On the Vision of God*, In *Selected Spiritual Writings*, p.253.

ethical.¹¹⁷ However, the passage in *The Brother Karamazov* where Ivan speaks of ‘everything is permitted’ as a solution to his suffering, can also be read differently from the usual, admittedly compelling interpretation. The traditional reading does however require that we pay no attention to the puzzling words Ivan speaks when he mentions ‘escaping’:

‘There is a force which can endure all!’ said Ivan, this time with a cold smile.
 ‘what force?’
 ‘A Karamazov one—the force of Karamazov baseness.’
 ‘You don’t mean to wallow in vice, to stifle your soul in corruption, do you?’
 ‘I daresay, only till I’m thirty I’ll perhaps escape it, and then—’
 ‘Escape it? How will you escape it? It’s impossible with your ideas’
 ‘That, too, *à la* Karamazov.’
 ‘You mean, “everything is permitted”? Everything is allowed. That’s it, isn’t it?’
 Ivan frowned and suddenly turned strangely pale.’¹¹⁸

The puzzling element resides in the ‘escaping’ Ivan speaks of; an escape *from* ‘Karamazov baseness’. The escape that is the ‘everything is permitted’, is a reference to a conversation that took place on the previous day, in which Ivan mentioned it, and to which their brother Dimitri reacted with great enthusiasm;¹¹⁹ probably taking it more literally than Ivan had intended it. This phrase can easily be read not as a genuine alternative to the womanizing and drunken buffooning that is characteristic of some of the Karamazovs, but rather an extension of it, for it clearly entails a negation of the ethical. This could mean lawlessness as in the absence of the law; the kind of anarchy the Inquisitor protects us against. However, on that reading it becomes difficult to understand why Ivan would mention it as an *escape* from Karamazov baseness.

The alternative way to read this escape is to read it as another reference to St. Paul’s discourse on the law in Romans 7. Here dying to the law means being born in Christ. An

¹¹⁷ For example Sven Linnér, in *Starets Zosima in The Brother Karamazov: A study in the mimesis of virtue*, puts forward the view that the chapter in the novel devoted to the Starets presents a break in the narrative which Dostoevsky found necessary to put in in order to present an alternative to the Karamazovian position, as he says: ‘Book six, entitled “A Russian Monk”, is allotted a decisive function in the structure of the work as a whole. The Starets, such as we come to know him in this book, is to represent an answer—or alternative—to the demonism or denial The Brothers Karamazov is otherwise about.’ Stockholm, Sweden, Almquist and Wiksell International, 1975, p.9.

¹¹⁸ Dostoevsky, BK p.309.

¹¹⁹ Dimitri Karamazov is the most traditionally Karamazovian of the three, taking after their father in his womanizing and “buffooning”.

escape from Karamazov baseness also means an escape from the ethical and in that sense an escape from the law. Everything is permitted then means the end of the contract, the end of the Grand Inquisitor's paradigm, to be supplanted by an all-encompassing love in which there is no longer any inside or outside of the law, but the law consuming itself. This makes Ivan's peculiar assertion an assertion of an apophatic nature. To Alyosha, Ivan speaks as if Alyosha will interpret him as meaning 'lawlessness' although we never find out if he is justified in this assumption. Alyosha then gets up and kisses Ivan as the Christ-figure in Ivan's poem had kissed the old man.

1.13 Deification, the ethical and the apophatic

Ivan's assertion can be read as an allusion to something quite different from the meaning on the surface of the text. Moreover, because of the apophatic connotation of what he says, he could scarcely say it in a different way. For as we saw with Meister Eckhart, the apophatic can only be glimpsed; the systematic element in theology, in which we use language to say something about the general, can only make its absence perceptible. Ethics, as essentially 'positional', as necessitated by the fall, is momentarily denied any validity by the apophatic moment of the kiss, and later on explicitly in Ivan's words. For the Grand Inquisitor this means seeing himself for a split second in his own divinity, and is then sentenced to be his former self again, after having felt the dizzying asymmetry of the situation.

The appeal in Christ's gaze is an appeal to the individual, to bear responsibility, without exception of anything. Therein lies his power; that at no point does he take a position as would be the requirement to participate in ethics. Paradoxically, by holding everything back he is in command of the situation. This is the power of Eckhartian detachment; an ascetic movement capable of working an actual reversal of power. Where, in the outward reality the old man is in command; he suddenly knows himself to be powerless. He is suddenly stripped of all he possessed, like Abraham and like Job. For the Inquisitor it is an initiation into his own ignorance. He is turned back towards himself; as Scharlemann says: 'The most 'sacred moment' comes when "the master" finally turns the

disciple back to himself.¹²⁰ For the Grand Inquisitor, this moment not only means an initiation into his own divinity, but by default it is equally an initiation into his own humanity. After having felt the dissymmetry the Inquisitor can from that moment on only be a human being among human beings, it would seem impossible that he could keep on being the substitute God that his ideas lead him to strive for. Nonetheless, Ivan tells us that ‘the kiss burns in his heart, but the old man sticks to his idea.’¹²¹

For Ivan the future presents two possibilities. In one way he has reached a dead end in which the mind holds the heart hostage by preventing him from surrendering to the unconditional love he feels for the world and for life itself. Yet it is also the case that his heart’s love for mankind holds his mind hostage by not allowing him to believe in the all-encompassing harmony of God’s world. Moreover, if he were to overcome this spiritual captivity by siding with either one or the other, he would most likely be unable to resist falling into the kind of demonism that we already discussed. Alternatively, Ivan has provided the answer to his own predicament in the form of the parable. This possibility is perhaps given in the kiss of reconciliation between Christ and the Inquisitor. The figure of Dostoevsky’s Christ has, by his very presence, already overcome the dichotomy in which he simultaneously also takes part. Nevertheless, he is still a deeply ethical being, appealing directly to the other’s conscience without the mediation of language or law.

¹²⁰ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.32.

¹²¹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

Chapter 2: The Paradox of Evil

2.1 Introduction: Evil and dualism

The legend of the Grand Inquisitor is a story about deviation from the divine order, and in that it parallels the story of the fall.¹²² Both narratives feature agents that are intent on thwarting the divine plan, and it could even be suggested that both do so in the conviction that humanity will be better off that way.

Paradigmatically however, these stories are opposed. The serpent in the Adamic myth breaks up the divine order in which humanity was embedded by means of flattery and seduction; by fanning the flames of aspiration and ambition. The Inquisitor's objective is the opposite, namely erasure of the primordial divine image from the human mind in order that humanity should no longer be reminded of its infinite short-comings. In other words, the spirit's freedom needs to be obstructed. This means dousing the spirit's potentiality, making humanity less than it is, albeit for its own sake.

These two paradigms complement each other in the mechanism that emerges as a pattern of alienation that is, as we will see, self-continuing. The serpent in Genesis awakens self-awareness in Eve when he invites her to eat of the apple that will make her wise like God;¹²³ he draws her attention to her infinite potentiality. However, as soon as the deed is done, Eve and Adam become aware of their bodily nature and they feel shame.¹²⁴ Undeniably, only once such a dichotomy between the inner and the outer experience of the self is established, is there any work for the Grand Inquisitor. The Serpent has driven a wedge in the unity of the human being, by pointing out the autonomy of the spirit. The inquisitor is now charged with the task of stifling that spirit. Accordingly he is not only

¹²² Paul Ricoeur, in *The Symbolism of Evil* calls the Adamic myth a myth of deviation, he says: 'When we have traced the roots of the symbolism of the Adamic myth back to the more fundamental symbolism of sin, we shall see that the Adamic myth is a myth of "deviation," or "going astray" rather than a myth of the fall.' New York, Harper and Row publishers, 1969, p.231.

¹²³ Genesis 3:4-6.

¹²⁴ Genesis 2:25 even emphasises that before the eating of the apple the man and the woman were naked and *did not* feel ashamed.

correcting Christ's work,¹²⁵ he is also correcting Satan's work. In broad strokes we can say then that the serpent alienates us from the body where the Grand Inquisitor alienates us from the spirit.

Milton's Satan,¹²⁶ merges both elements; the Satan of *Paradise Lost* is charming and greatly enthuses Eve's vanity, but, at the same time conflates 'death' with physical death, thereby inspiring a kind of materialism that is more at home in western, 'inquisitorial' form of evil. This systematically sets up a trap in which the soul¹²⁷ is lost, or adrift, as it cannot dwell in the either/or that has emerged. When the Serpent is followed to the spirit, the spirit meets no resistance in the body and forgets itself, when it then carries on to deny itself, it only recognises the reality of the body. This is the 'spiritual starvation' that Colin Wilson recognises in Ivan when he says:

And belief? It is not that Ivan does not want to believe. Spiritual starvation has made him sick and afraid of his own existence.¹²⁸

Ivan's spiritual starvation is the either/or that has come about through both kinds of deviation, for all that is left for Ivan to perceive are two evils; one where we clothe ourselves in ignorance and illusion, like a hovering spirit that recoils from the ugliness of the world and resides in a form of pseudo-harmony, or, we see as the inquisitor sees things, ugly and broken, requiring strict rules and regulations to control the damage and potential future damage that human nature is capable of.

2.2 Genesis 3 and the birth of otherness.

The story of the fall in Genesis 3, eloquently tells us the story of what is the devil's attack on the divine order on the one hand, yet at the same time a waking up for the woman

¹²⁵ As the Inquisitor says: 'We have corrected your great work, and have based it on *Miracle, Mystery, and Authority.*', Dostoevsky, BK, p.301.

¹²⁶ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

¹²⁷ Here we understand the soul as needing both body and spirit, as a coincidence of opposites. It is here not understood as the opposite of the body or a synonym for the spirit.

¹²⁸ Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*, p.194.

and the man. In receiving the fruit they taste the earthly bread for the first time, and now, after they have put on self-awareness, they are no longer immune to the snares of the world. However, with this sudden exposure resulting in self-awareness, it is also a story of emancipation from God, as the Satan in Genesis hands the human being everything that might prompt her to adopt a perspective that is uniquely human. He does this by fanning the flames of self-flattery. The Grand Inquisitor uses language to the opposite end; he bends humanity away from God not by inspiring self-glorification but by denying all potential for divination. In his words to Christ it is almost as if he is not addressing Christ but the Serpent from Genesis who acquainted humanity with the divinity of her spirit.¹²⁹ The Serpent, in addressing Eve in her pride and her ego thereby alienates her from the body in which the man and the woman were, till that moment, still at home.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.¹³⁰

The effect of the eating of the fruit, which is the result of the crafty rhetorical skills of the serpent, is dramatic; for suddenly these human beings become aware of being other than their surroundings. This self-awareness seems yet a further separation in creation: the separation of inside and outside, and with that we have what we now call the birth of otherness. Adam and Eve now feel the need to cover their bodies, the capacity for feeling such a need must stem from perceiving the world as outside, as something other than themselves. This is not something they could possibly have anticipated, for God had told them that if they ate of the fruit they would die. The serpent in his turn had told them that they would not die, which is something rather closer to the truth as it manifests itself to us as (already) fallen creatures. Instead, something completely different has happened. The Serpent tells Eve the notoriously ambiguous but semantically true statement:

¹²⁹ Dostoevsky, BK. He says: 'Was it not you who said often in those days, 'I shall make you free'? But now you have seen those 'free men,' the old man adds suddenly with a pensive smile. "Yes, this business has cost us a great deal," he goes on looking sternly at him, "But we've completed it at last in your name." p.294.

¹³⁰ Genesis 3:7-8.

You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.¹³¹

This seems to come nearer to the truth, the Serpent points out the fact that eating this fruit will give her the power of differentiation. However, Eve, before she had eaten of the forbidden fruit, had no capacity for understanding the full meaning of these words coming from a being who clearly is in command of these powers himself and is using them with great sophistication. This necessarily escapes pre-lapsarian Eve. Milton puts the spotlight on this motif of deception *Paradise Lost*:

O sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving plant,
 680 Mother of science, now I feel thy power
 Within me clear, not only to discern
 Things in their causes, but to trace the ways
 Of highest agents, deemd however wise.
 Queen of this universe, do not believe
 685 Those rigid threats of death; ye shall not die:
 How should ye? By the fruit? It gives you life
 To knowledge. By the threatener? Look on me,
 Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live,
 And life more perfect have attained than fate
 690 Meant me, by venturing higher than my lot.¹³²

Milton has his shrewd Satan using rhetorical skills that Eve cannot understand, more so than the Serpent in Genesis. And Satan, being a fallen being itself, knows what he is doing, without uttering an untruth. As David Daiches, in reference to Genesis 3, points out in one of his Gifford lectures; Eve could have had no knowledge of what she was faced with:

Eve of course does not know that this is not a genuine snake. Not having yet eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she is unaware of the nature of

¹³¹ Genesis 3:4.

¹³² Milton, *Paradise lost*, book IX, lines 679-690.

evil. This is a beautiful and courteous snake that she has met, and she innocently admires him.¹³³

However, she is on the verge of having her world altered forever, not knowing that she is about to go through a door that only lets you through in one direction, as David Daiches continues:

Innocent Eve, credulous because innocent, is about to be subjected to the most artful oratory known in history. As I have noted, she cannot be held guilty for not having been able to penetrate Satan's disguise.¹³⁴

Milton's Satan, in drawing attention to the fact that God has told her that eating the fruit will result in her dying, addresses Eve's faculty of reason by asking her what could possibly have the power to bring about death on this occasion, the fruit? When we move along in spirit with Milton's Satan and the way he chooses his words,¹³⁵ we can see that what God has told Eve is misleading; how can a piece of fruit kill, unless it is dangerously poisonous? But there is no mention of the fruit doing damage to the body. Of course these words, as Milton's Satan uses them have reduced the meaning of the word 'death' to a merely physical death and of course that must be so, for it is the physical that that we know to be capable of dying. However, is that also what Eve understood by the word 'death'? Presumably not, because Eve had had no experience of death in the physical sense. She cannot have known any distinction between life and death, for only after eating the forbidden fruit did death become real to her. For, in order to feel the presence and the possibility of death we need our uniqueness and subjectivity. We need the individual narrative that constitutes the interaction between the public and the private, of which the

¹³³ David Daiches, *God and the Poets, The Gifford lectures*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p.41.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.42.

¹³⁵ It has been suggested that the challenge Milton poses in *Paradise Lost* is to resist moving along with Satan, as Paul Piehler says '[...], the reader has to resist the plausible rhetoric of the debates in Hell, which tends to lure him into a measure of agreement, if he fails to resist participation and preserve a cool detachment from the proceedings' 'Milton's Iconoclasm' In *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity 2nd edition*, edited by Shirley Sugerman, San Rafael, CA, The Barfield Press, 2008, p.129. However, there is no need to 'resist' buying into this logic unless we are worried that we might never escape. The point is clear though; it underscores that language 'after the fall' can never be innocent, as Thomas Altizer noted in *The Self-embodiment of God*, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco and London, Harper and Row Publishers, 1977, p.12. Milton's Satan presents a clear example of language that has lost its innocence; however, we can only recognise it as such if we *do* allow ourselves to buy into it.

Jewish philosopher Hanna Arendt says that it can be told as a story; as an unrepeatable individual story.¹³⁶ So only a fallen human being can die.

Eve nevertheless uses the word as though it is anything but meaningless to her, for it inspired enough reverence to avoid the fruit up till that day. So although 'death' had not attached itself to any particular event, making her *know* death, for her it is nonetheless filled with significance. Her understanding of the word however, must work in a completely different way; perhaps it functioned in the same way as in the fullness with which a small child can savour the significance of a word without necessarily knowing its literal meaning or yet feeling the need to know. This is something Milton's Satan is aware of, lest he would not understand how to go about swaying her perception such that his words make sense to her. In this way Milton's Eve was truly fooled, for the word 'death', although the same word in both her mouth and in Satan's, carries with it a different world of meaning depending on the agent who utters it. Therefore David Daiches rightly points out that:

This raises the whole question of the relation between innocence and ignorance. Eve fell because of her innocence and credulity. She was fooled. But in order not to have been fooled she would have to have lost her innocence.¹³⁷

The problem with this paradisiacal perfection is that it cannot know itself, and as we have seen, as soon as it does, it instantly ceases to be perfect. The way from ignorance to knowledge, and especially self-knowledge can only occur through something radical; an alien element entering the prior unity. In other words, the passage from possibility into actuality would require an act of freedom;¹³⁸ it could not be part of the order as it existed already, for

¹³⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p.97.

¹³⁷ David Daiches, *God and Poets*, p.42. See also Walter Kaufman in *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York and Scarborough, New American Library, 1975. He articulates the same argument as Daiches does, namely that the antecedent is dependent on the precedent already being in place: 'So when it is related in Genesis that God said to Adam, "Only of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat," It is a matter of course that Adam did not understand this word. For how could he have understood the difference between good and evil, seeing that this distinction was in fact consequent upon the enjoyment of the fruit' p.103-4.

¹³⁸ Or, in Scharlemann's view, it *is* the instance of freedom. Freedom according to Scharlemann is a boundary concept and only occurs when we pass from one side of the boundary to the other. *The Reason of Following*, p.23.

then it would be powerless to produce the revolutionary consequences that make up its very character. The eating of forbidden fruit is such a revolutionary act; an irreversible deviation from the original divine course. In his famous work *The Symbolism of Evil*, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur says:

When we have traced the roots of the symbolism of the Adamic myth back to the more fundamental symbolism of sin, we shall see that the Adamic myth is a myth of “deviation,” or “going astray” rather than a myth of the fall.¹³⁹

This going astray then, in the Adamic myth is a going astray in which Eve is encouraged by the serpent to see things from her very own human perspective; would it not be nice for *her* to know the difference between good and evil, would she not like to be like God herself? If any of these thoughts had entered her mind sooner she would have lost her innocence on that very occasion. The very thought of wanting something because of a concern for how we appear to the outside world, would have been all that was needed to bring about a gulf between her and God, as that would mean that we are aware of our inner world being different and separate from the outside world. And, even the slightest crack in paradisiacal unity would have been equal to an enormous abyss in a world that was perfect and was defined by that very perfection itself.

The instilling of pride by the serpent in Genesis, and, even more so by Milton’s Satan, is done through the use of reason.¹⁴⁰ It is undoubtedly the case that logic is on the side of Satan; what does God mean by death? When we demand a definition in this way, as Milton’s Satan does, the question will not yield an answer; it is swallowed up and disappears, for there is no context in which it could put its roots down. As the late Jewish writer and poet Edmond Jabès quotes Reb Behit saying: ‘The origin is an abyss’,¹⁴¹ characterising the conceptual void we meet on trying project our ratio on to God. When God speaks there is no meaning outside speech but when Satan speaks his words turn into instruments. At least that will be the case in the world that Eve has inhabited up till that point. Milton’s Satan however shows her that there is a way to deal with such a question, because he limits the

¹³⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p.231.

¹⁴⁰ See also: Flannery O’Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.159 and 227. She articulates the way in which it is modern reason that alienates human beings from themselves and from God.

¹⁴¹ Edmond Jabès, *From the Book to the ‘Book’: An Edmond Jabès Reader*, translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, Hanover and London, Wesleyan University Press, 1991, p.166.

scope of the question by assuming death is what happens when physical bodies cease to be alive. His words come from a place where there is otherness, the sheer exposure to this figure is enough to cause this mythical rupture and enable the start of the human narrative. Rowan Williams characterises the diabolical as that which terminates narratives,¹⁴² and however true that is of the kind of evil that we see in the Grand Inquisitor, in Genesis it is the devil's *attempt* to narrate that gives us our story.

The Serpent in Genesis and Milton's Satan have produced humanity as spirit *or* flesh; Spirit in which we can be forgetful of the body, and vice versa. This forgetfulness will result in the building of the great tower of Babel mentioned by the Grand Inquisitor. 'The dreadful Tower of Babel will rise up again.'¹⁴³

2.3 The Inquisitorial devil

In the Grand Inquisitor's address of the Christ-figure he wants humanity to remain in a pre-gospel situation.¹⁴⁴ He reproaches Christ for his optimism about humanity; the fact that the latter would have set far too high a standard: 'But here, too, your judgement of men was too high, for they are slaves, though rebels by nature.'¹⁴⁵ and: 'I swear, man has been created a weaker and baser creature than you thought him to be!¹⁴⁶ therefore Christ would have demanded far too much of the spirit in a weak creature like the human being. This criticism directed at Christ not only echoes something of the quality of Christ of the Gospels, it might also remind us of the Serpent whose sophistry planted the seeds of freedom. Genesis' Serpent, inspires the haughtiness that the Inquisitor accuses Christ of; the proud and the Godlike. In the end however, the Inquisitor is consumed by Christ as the one who is only concerned with the spirit, so as Christ as his own Other. The dichotomy therefore exists

¹⁴² Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.88.

¹⁴³ Dostoevsky, BK, p.296.

¹⁴⁴ As has been noted by Ivan Esaulov: 'The Grand Inquisitor openly demonstrates his 'correction' of Christ's great deed and a return to a pre-Gospel situation when he states: 'People rejoiced that they were again lead like a herd.' 'The categories of law and Grace on Dostoevsky's poetics' In *Cambridge studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, pp.116-133.

¹⁴⁵ Dostoevsky, BK, p.300. For more information on the translation of the Russian word *buntovshchik* into 'rebel' see Viktor Terras' comments in footnote 49.

¹⁴⁶ Dostoevsky, BK, p.300.

therein that that which the Grand Inquisitor sees as external to himself; as everything that he is not, appears as his Other to which he then must return.

When the Inquisitor speaks about the nothing that awaits the human being beyond the grave, he means that the world is all that the human being will ever be able to experience. The Inquisitor will shield the human being from being drawn to what makes her suffer; the *Mysterium Tremendum*, which makes human beings tremble in the face of infinite possibility. The bread the inquisitor speaks of therefore is not just the food that feeds the body, but the nourishment that we need in our attachment¹⁴⁷ so as not to suffer more than practically necessary because of our attachment. In other words, to silence the needs of the body before we think of virtue, as he says: ‘feed them first and then demand virtue of them.’¹⁴⁸ In the following sentences, he gives us an intriguing insight into the features of the bread that humanity is given:

They will see that we have not made stones into loaves, but they will, in truth, be more pleased with receiving from our hands than with the bread itself! For they will remember only too well that before, without us, the bread they made turned to stones in their hands, but that when they came back to us, the very stones turned to bread in their hands. They will appreciate only too well what it means to submit themselves to us forever.¹⁴⁹

The reversal that the Inquisitor speaks about, namely the bread turning to stones in the hands of the people when they are outwith the power of the Grand Inquisitor and the reverse happening upon returning to him; the stones turning into loaves, alludes to the nature of the sphere of influence that is the Inquisitor’s. Here there is a definite ‘inside’ and a definite ‘outside’. Humanity by itself lacks the power to nourish the spirit; whatever they thought to have found turns to stone in their hands, echoing the words of Edmond Jabès when he says: ‘You perceive what dies with you. What lasts cannot be grasped’¹⁵⁰, and we do want something that lasts, in the Inquisitor’s words ‘something incontestable’¹⁵¹. Whatever we find in terms of living nourishment; its life solidifies in our hands. The church can reverse

¹⁴⁷ In the Eckhartian sense.

¹⁴⁸ Dostoevsky, BK, p.296.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.303.

¹⁵⁰ Edmond Jabès, *From the Book to the ‘Book’*, p.171.

¹⁵¹ Dostoevsky BK, p.298.

this process, it can make something dead meaningful and life-giving. Within the context of the church of the Inquisitor, people can have faith, but outside they will find nothingness, and they will be too afraid and weak to even dare to look at that nothingness.

In other words, the Grand Inquisitor closes off the *Mysterium Tremendum*, that which is capable of reminding me that I am already ‘out in the open,’¹⁵² that I myself turn loaves into stones. The inquisitor provides footholds, even if these are illusory. He makes sure that we will not have to venture into our own inner world, but can remain in the illusory safety of our externality, scarcely aware of our loss. Moreover, the spirit does not need to know its loss if it is not reminded of its potential. In the nineteenth century, Hegel already notes the spiritual starvation our historical situation in the West left us with. He says:

The Spirit shows itself as so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine in general. By the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss.¹⁵³

Like the Christ of the Gospels; the Grand Inquisitor is the enabler, albeit in reverse. He has sacrificed his own faith to ensure passage. ‘Know that I, too, was in the wilderness, that I, too, fed upon locusts and roots, [...]’¹⁵⁴ He enables another forgetfulness, the forgetfulness of the spirit, by removing as much suffering as possible, he also has to remove that which reminds us of the spirit and her needs. Ivan’s kind of suffering at being ‘suspended’ would be terminated at the moment he could surrender to the Inquisitorial element of his mind, which Alyosha at some point suspects he will do.¹⁵⁵ We forget our *suspense*, at least to the degree that we would cease to desire to find God.

The Inquisitor tells Christ that he has joined the other side and has ceased to live his life in His service a long time ago, for he is doing what Christ refused to do when the terrible

¹⁵² Scharlemann: ‘To be free on this reading then is to be in the open. The open is between language and reality’. *The Reason of Following*, p.164.

¹⁵³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, p.5.

¹⁵⁴ Dostoevsky, BK, p.305.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.309.

and wise spirit tempted him in the desert; namely re-rooting faith in miracle, mystery and authority, he says:

But I woke up and refused to serve madness. I went back and joined the hosts of those who have *corrected your work*.¹⁵⁶

Through Alyosha's interruption of his brother's story, we are given what Alyosha names as the Inquisitor's secret, namely that this figure is an atheist:

Whom did he join? What clever fellows?' cried Alyosha, almost passionately. 'They are not so clever and they have no such mysteries and secrets. Except perhaps only godlessness, that's all their secret. Your inquisitor doesn't believe in God – that's all his secret!¹⁵⁷

The nothingness that man will find beyond the grave is the nothingness of atheism, the end of the road, one that runs parallel to the road of mysticism,¹⁵⁸ and sometimes even looks similar in its ascetic nature, but ends in a cul de sac with the death the spirit; with in the end the nothing that is truly the opposite of something; death.

2.4. Satan and his logic

The evil of the hidden atheism as the denial of spirit is a mechanism that the inquisitor brings into being; that which is capable of breaking our logic, of silencing the endless dialogues that our mind engages in, but also capable of terrifying us when we cannot answer its formless call,¹⁵⁹ retreats further and further when we follow the Grand Inquisitor. The project of silencing the spirit, so we do not have to feel its presence through our restless anticipation, can be done if we do not have to feel this restlessness. Or we have to learn not to listen to it in the way that we should. Through this inability to listen to spirit, the world becomes our only home, but now no longer as our dwelling place but as the only ground of out being. And, as there is no 'Other' to that ground, it must remain in the dark about itself.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.305.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.307.

¹⁵⁸ By mysticism is meant the joining forces of the cataphatic and the apophatic, not the apophatic on its own.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.59.

We can then say that our narrative stops in that we can then know neither ourselves nor God; trapped somewhere between heaven and earth and unable to see the reflection of one in the other. Evil in this way makes use of both extremes of alienation; one necessitating the other.

Things and events in the outside world can be kept outside and interpreted as having nothing to do with ourselves, as we can remain completely unmoved by our own thoughts and deeds. In other words, this brings about a capacity for acting purely mechanically, where the spirit does not have to substantiate itself in the body and the flesh does not have to justify itself to the spirit. These are conditions under which we can come to great harm. The logic with which Milton's Satan tempted Eve is now at our disposal without the presence of conscience. As Jean-Luc Marion says:

Evil would not destroy us so thoroughly if it did not destroy us with such logic. In the experience of evil, what, in a sense, hurts the most (*fait le plus mal*) results from the indisputable rigour iniquity deploys. Iniquity is not characterised by any absurdity, any incoherence, nor even by any "injustice" (in the everyday sense of an unfair wage, or an effect disproportionate to its cause). Rather, it is characterised only by immutable logic that produces its rigour without end or flaw, to the point of nausea, according to an insurmountable boredom.¹⁶⁰

This is what Lévinas and Badiou indicated in the principle of *the logic of the Same*,¹⁶¹ the Greek origins of the increasing inability in western thought to understand what is properly Other. When stripped of that which can break its course, such as intuition and/or dogma, it can go on ad infinitum, constantly affirming its right. As the French philosopher, and social activist, Simone Weil says: 'If 1 is God, ∞ is the devil.'¹⁶² In the French writer Roger Caillois' novel *Pontius Pilate*, Pilate is in two minds about what to do with Jesus. In A

¹⁶⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, Translated by Stephan E. Lewis, New York, Fordham University Press, 2002, p.1.

See also: Simone Weil In *Gravity and Grace*, she says about the evil: 'never anything new, everything about it is equivalent. Never anything real, everything about it is imaginary', London and New York, Routledge Classics, 2002, p.69.

¹⁶¹ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: an Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.18.

¹⁶² Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.93.

dream he sees himself as caught in an inescapable cycle in which he is denied all subjectivity and his singularity is nothing but a by-product of his existence:

For, in his haste and half-sleep, Pilate slipped from one metaphysic to another and discovered suddenly that his act had been determined at the beginning of time by the eternal cascade of the atoms, in which he denied with swift passion that the subtle *clinamen* could effect the slightest variation. Not only would the crucifixion be repeated in space but, since the number of atoms and hence of their possible combinations was finite, the crucifixion of the Saviour would be repeated without a foreseeable end throughout an inexhaustible perpetual cycle.¹⁶³

Pilate is caught up in a cycle that to him in his dream appears inevitable, and, paradoxically, in the Christian narrative it must be so. In the novel he declares Jesus innocent: ‘All the same, because of a man who despite every hindrance succeeded in being brave, there was no Christianity.’¹⁶⁴

When this rigour ceases us, we have nothing but ourselves to offer in reply. No one can offer someone else’s singularity as a counter argument; it destroys the subject. This is what Christ did in response the Inquisitor’s logic; he gave the Inquisitor himself. We see something of these workings of logical rigour in Milton’s Satan who makes God commensurable with the idea of justice:

Be real, why not known, since easier shunned?
God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
Not just, not God; not feared then, not obeyed:
Your fear itself of death removes the fear.¹⁶⁵

Implicit in his argument is the idea that God, can be caught in a definition, for when the serpent says ‘Not just, not God’ this means that part of being God would entail being ‘just’; and just must equal fair. Then, when he has got us in a position where we must agree that we can predicate of God that he must be just, it must also follow that when such an attribute is removed, God is no longer God. We have little to say in reply, for we know that by removing an attribute we do not just remove one attribute, we eat the apple all over again

¹⁶³ Roger Caillois, *Pontius Pilate*, Translated by Charles L. Markmann, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2006, p.102. Caillois here uses Nietzsche’s version of the idea of eternal recurrence.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.111.

¹⁶⁵ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book IX, lines 699-702.

and we no longer know what the word 'God' means. It becomes a vacant idea, familiar to many of us; this is the death of God in thought. Flannery O'Connor recognises the same reductionism in the character of Ivan:

Ivan Karamazov cannot believe, as long as one child is in torment; Camus' hero cannot accept the divinity of Christ, because of the massacre of innocents.¹⁶⁶

2.5 Smerdyakov and Prince Myshkin

There are two of Dostoevsky's characters that personify two extremes of a spectrum between demonic in logical rigour and wholly good in a pre-lapsarian way. The former is Pavel Smerdyakov, the illegitimate half-brother of the Dimitri, Ivan and Alyosha, who does not suffer at all in the way that Ivan does. Everything that the Grand Inquisitor curses in human nature, such as freedom and a moral conscience, he does not possess. He is therefore extremely receptive to authority, and has chosen Ivan as his great example. What Smerdyakov believes to be Ivan's will and desire acts as a replacement for his own conscience. This is the case to the extent that Smerdyakov is the one who kills the old Karamazov because he is convinced that this is the way Ivan wants it.

At the other end of the spectrum is Prince Myshkin from *The Idiot*,¹⁶⁷ he is not, like most people someone who *has* a conscience and struggles with it. He is rather immersed in goodness, and operates only with pure intentions, which, as will become apparent, has a curious effect on the characters that surround him. We can look at these two as studies of the human conscience, where Smerdyakov lacks a conscience of his own and Myshkin has no relationship with his conscience because there is no space between consciousness and his conscience; as these are still one and the same. Both have leave a trail of disaster.

Smerdyakov has a mind in which the unyielding, self-contained logic that we attributed to Satan, emerges in a pure and undiluted form; giving this character a quality that is both demonic and pitiable. Smerdyakov has a preoccupation with truth as fact; he

¹⁶⁶ Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.227.

¹⁶⁷ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Classics, 1996.

cannot bear anything open-ended. As Vladimir Kantor notes, this character is 'monosemantic'.¹⁶⁸ Art is therefore something he does not understand. In book five, chapter two, named 'Smerdyakov with a Guitar', Alyosha overhears him when he is in the garden with a girl. Smerdyakov is singing to her and playing the guitar, and then we get the following dialogue:

'Verses are nonsense, miss,' Smerdyakov snapped.

'Oh no, I like a verse very much.'

'The essential of verses, miss, is that they're rubbish, miss. Judge for yourself: who in the world talks in rhyme, And if we all began talking in rhyme, even if it were at the instructions of the authorities, would we ever get much said, miss? Verses are not important Marya Kondratyevna.'

'How clever you are about everything, how is it that you have penetrated the secret of everything?' the female voice said, fawning more and more.¹⁶⁹

Pavel Smerdyakov as 'a closed system' can with contrasted Prince Myshkin,¹⁷⁰ who should be characterised as somebody whose pathology *is* his goodness; a goodness that is so trusting that he is far too 'open'. This gives him a childlike quality which is endearing as well as annoying to those belonging to the society he has landed in. But, above all, it turns out to be too confrontational for his environment¹⁷¹ he provides no opposition or resistance for personalities that need it, and that includes everyone. The world cannot endure him,¹⁷² for while he is there he is an endless source of power struggles.

¹⁶⁸ Vladimir Kantor, 'Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation' In *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, pp.189-225.

¹⁶⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p. 261.

¹⁷⁰ This is what Vladimir Kantor does. However, others like Rowan Williams, have equally rewardingly 'doubled' Myshkin with the character of Roghozin, also from *The Idiot*, with whom Myshkin exchanges crosses. Roghozin is a character with demonic features, but in a politically calculating way, he is therefore legitimately Myshkin's double, but only in the societal context of the novel. *Dostoevsky, Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.54.

¹⁷¹ As Rowan Williams mentions; Myshkin unwittingly is a force of destruction. *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.68.

¹⁷² Notably, both Prince Myshkin and Smerdyakov are epileptics. This has been mentioned by Vladimir Kantor, who remarks: 'But Smerdyakov is the opposite of Myshkin. In Dostoevsky's view, epilepsy develops in a person, in certain instances, a heightened keenness of mind and penetration, which can then be used for either good or evil deeds.' Vladimir Kantor, 'Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation' In *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, pp. 189-225. However, this explanation attributes far too much independence to these characters, as in my view their doubling is more apparent in the effect they have on their surrounding environment. Moreover, what is specifically striking about both is that they are trapped by the one-sidedness of their own constitutions; Myshkin isn't capable of being a bad person, nor is Smerdyakov capable of 'thinking outside the box'. Both reflect the light or darkness of others, this makes the lunar-reference contained in epilepsy also less arbitrary.

Prince Myshkin cannot help but to mirror his surroundings; by his meek and simple goodness, the depth of the others' moral wantonness comes to the surface. This leaves Myshkin as the only one who does not politicise his relationships; creating a social vacuum, the filling of which cannot possibly be a peaceful affair, as those around him were, for an instant, inevitably confronted with their iniquity.¹⁷³ Myshkin possesses a pre-lapsarian quality and cannot do anything but unravel the other's narrative by his presence.

Smerdyakov too is not taken entirely seriously however; he is largely invisible in *The Brothers Karamazov*. His compulsively linear thought processes are irritating, and make him a bad conversational partner. He does not suffer from feelings of frustration at not understanding something, he is deaf and blind to the aporias present in all the hidden crevices and corners of our speech, and, accordingly, he is not aware of any loss or lack on his own part. He simply thinks people who like poetry are dim-witted, for whatever information the poem tries to communicate could be expressed in a far more efficient way without the restrictions of the poetic form. At another point in the novel the following conversation takes place at the dinner table, it was the result of a story about a Christian soldier, who had fallen captive and was tortured, so that he might give up being a Christian to convert to Islam:

'What are you grinning at?' asked Karamazov, noticing the grin at once and realizing, of course, that it referred to Grigory.

'You see, sir,' Smerdyakov suddenly and unexpectedly in a loud voice, 'I can't help thinking that even though the praiseworthy act of that soldier was so very great, he'd have committed no sin if in an emergency like that he had renounced, if I may say so, sir, the name of Christ and his own baptism, so as to save his life for good deeds by which to atone in the course of years for his cowardice.'¹⁷⁴

There is no difficulty in understanding the meaning of Smerdyakov's words: his argument perfectly logical. And Smerdyakov is right in saying that no one would have blamed this soldier had he done precisely as Smerdyakov suggested. So even though Smerdyakov has understood the semantics of the story, he has not understood that it is precisely the

¹⁷³ George A. Panichas In *The Burden of Vision: Dostoevsky's Spiritual Art*, has noted that *The Idiot* can be read as a diagnoses of the crisis of culture, he says: '*The Idiot* is a poetic diagnosis of crisis; it provides no prescriptive or remedial alternatives for a "new ethic"'. Chicago, Gateway Editions, 1985, p.84.

¹⁷⁴ Dostoevsky, BK, p.148

unsayable that is at the centre of this tale. He cannot understand that what makes this a story worth telling is that the impossible was demanded of this man. Strictly speaking, no *amount* of good deeds could *ever* equal that which makes this a story about something heroic, and, in this case, a story at all. Towards the end of the novel, after Dimitri's lengthy trial, it is Smerdyakov who has committed the murder of the old Karamazov, by picking up a wish slumbering in Ivan, and taking this literally as though it was straightforwardly Ivan's will.¹⁷⁵ This inevitably drives Ivan to madness, as he is consumed by guilt. In *Prolegomena to Charity*, Jean-Luc Marion describes the mechanism in which we can recognise the way Smerdyakov has acted:

In its logic, then, evil in no way forbids what we often call the search for justice. Rather, it sets out to give the search for justice a rigorous conceptual status and the means to develop itself. Thus the worst thing about evil is perhaps not the suffering, nor even the innocent suffering, but rather that revenge appears to be its only remedy; the worst thing about evil is not, in a sense, the hurt, but the logic of revenge that triumphs even in the (apparent) reestablishment of justice, in the (temporary) cessation of suffering, in the (unstable) balance of injustices.¹⁷⁶

Ivan Karamazov, by virtue of having a mind that is so deeply influenced by that rational demand for justice, perhaps knows evil like no other. However, he himself might be affected too deeply by what Marion calls the logic of revenge, to really *see*, as we as readers, might feel that Alyosha sees. Alyosha sees with a certain innocence, but does not have the means or the desire to articulate. Alyosha's characteristic goodness and integrity bear similarity to those present in Prince Myshkin. In Alyosha's case too there are clear references that are nods to the tradition of the holy fool when the boys are throwing stones at him.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ The Russian philosopher and Dostoevsky-critic, Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that Ivan has two internal and opposing voices; one that does not want his father to be murdered, one that does have this wish. He finds himself in the conflicting position where he would like his father to be killed without having anything to do with the murder. Smerdyakov only perceives Ivan's wish for his father's murder. Ivan's (largely subconscious) internal dialogue after the murder is one in which he blames himself. Alyosha mirrors back to Ivan that the latter did not kill their father; that he is not as bad a man as he thought he was. Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and Translated by Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. 255-258.

¹⁷⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp.7-8.

¹⁷⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, p.206. Notably, the stone-throwing can be read as reference to the tradition of the holy fool.

However, Alyosha is also fundamentally different from Myshkin, he is not pure goodness in the way that evil is alien to Myshkin. Alyosha, as opposed to Myshkin does possess a degree of distance between himself and the workings of his conscience and, as a result can anticipate and interpret evil in others.

Smerdyakov, like Myshkin then is a character whose presence brings the narratives of those around him to a climax. In Myshkin's case, because his pre-lapsarian 'openness' makes him unable to occupy the political space that social interaction demands, forcing others to fill that space with their political, and therefore potentially hostile selves. Hence Myshkin's presence overturns the sometimes precarious balance between, or within individuals. The faultlessness of his character can only cause harm. As Rowan Williams said:

Finally it collapses into itself. Myshkin goes back into the darkness out of which he emerged at the start of the narrative. For him, at least, the future has been erased, and for several other characters too, it has been ruined or destroyed or corrupted. The premature embrace of harmony turns out to be an act of violence in its own way—including violence, suicidal violence, to the self.¹⁷⁸

In Smerdyakov's case something similar can be observed; he too inadvertently causes narratives to spin out of control, by exposing, in Ivan's case, the political ruthlessness of our wishes, evil thoughts that we can have in the privacy of our own minds, without having to face up to their reality. Both stand outside the human order. Myshkin is too good for this world and Smerdyakov is simply tolerated. This turns out to be the 'disease' that ceases Ivan: the demonic logic with which his allusions have been taken up¹⁷⁹; their demonic nature followed through into physical reality. This is also his salvation, for his madness is a form of kenosis in the same way that the appearance of Christ is a kenosis for the Inquisitor.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps now Ivan can be freed from the cerebral isolation that held him captive.

It has also been noted too by Rowan Williams that Lise Khokhlakova, the girl Alyosha is at some point engaged to, accuses Alyosha of the kind meekness Prince Myshkin is capable of. *Dostoevsky, Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.69. And Dostoevsky, BK, p.681.

¹⁷⁸ Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky, Language, Faith and Fiction* p.50.

¹⁷⁹ Smerdyakov kills the old Karamazov, thinking that he is carrying out Ivan's wish.

¹⁸⁰ Ivan, as opposed to the Inquisitor, meets the devil. Dostoevsky, BK, pp.746-765.

That which makes Ivan and the others human and Smerdyakov demonic is what Marion has named as 'distance', for that, he says, is the difference between a person and Satan:

Satan, or the perfect idiot: *ídios*, the one who assumes his particularity as a proper good, who appropriates his own identity to such a point that he first does not want then is not able to "leave himself," that is to say, to inhabit distance.¹⁸¹

This inability to 'leave oneself' we see manifested in Smerdyakov's inability to understand art, and to recognise in himself an inability. Inhabiting distance cannot be done when all is commensurable in the world we inhabit. Satan is locked in the role that he chose himself. This 'distance' is not there in Myshkin or in Pre-Lapsarian Adam and Eve. The former being devoid of evil overlaps with himself because he projects an unbroken world-view onto the broken world. Smerdyakov is deaf and blind to otherness and therefore cannot look at himself from the outside.

2.6 The paradox of evil

In the film *Man from Elysian Fields*,¹⁸² we find a character in which we can recognise an incarnation of the 'satanic idiocy', where that what appears as idiotic in Smerdyakov is precisely the inability to leave oneself; to at least have the potential to look at oneself as others might see us. The central character in *Man from Elysian Fields* goes by the name of Luther Fox and he runs a male escort service. According to his own testimony there is only one client that he still handles personally; an attractive middle-aged woman whose husband is often away on business. At some point, while they are having dinner, it emerges that he has developed the desire to break free from this situation in which he is paid for sex and his company, in order to enter into a real relationship; consequently, he wants her to divorce her husband and marry him. The woman does not take his completely earnest proposition at all seriously however, and laughs as though, in her perception, she cannot be expected to take this as anything but a pathetic joke.

¹⁸¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, p.26.

¹⁸² 2001, Directed by George Hickenlooper, Los Angeles, Gold Circle Films.

Luther Fox assigned himself the role of male escort and he is denied his attempt to leave his role, in his attempt we suddenly see the great tragedy of this figure. For a split-second we can see that he is completely devastated and we are a witness to the embarrassment that momentarily sweeps across his face. Then he carries on as though nothing has happened. The tragedy in this story is that here Luther Fox has a desire to break free; he wants to enter into the human circle, but his access is denied. We can observe a similar pattern when the Grand Inquisitor is kissed by Christ. Up till then he might have half expected a reply or some sign of disagreement,¹⁸³ which would have been an act that allowed him to enter back into the order that perhaps he felt to be under threat. The kiss puts an end to that expectation or hope, which would have meant his world could remain unchanged.

By not speaking, the Christ-figure prevents the Inquisitor from leaving his self-contained world in which he is the Grand Inquisitor. Through the silence he is suddenly not granted permission to integrate that world into the human and divine world at large. In his role as the Inquisitor he is therefore at that moment excluded; necessarily an outsider in order to fulfil a role that has unmistakably diabolical characteristics. The kiss can only speak to the Grand Inquisitor as human being; the human being is forgiven and in that sense we can legitimately speak of the kiss of reconciliation. However, the external part of this character, the Grand Inquisitor, remains locked out, paradoxically only of 'use' to the world in his diabolical state. And so we are told that 'The kiss glows in his heart but the old man sticks to his idea.'¹⁸⁴ In Roger Caillois' novel *Pontius Pilate*, Caillois experiments with the idea of what would have happened if Pontius Pilate had ceased his own freedom and had set Jesus free. He writes 'very soon Pilate's action began to be a disadvantage to the Rabbi'¹⁸⁵ and: 'The Archangels had lost their chance'¹⁸⁶ Luther Fox and Pilate too are only of service in their role as outsiders where they remain evil. In the same way Smerdyakov remains outside;

¹⁸³ The text does not offer us an unequivocal reading on this subject, but a polyphonic one on an appropriately Bhakhtinean reading. The Grand Inquisitor states that he knows why Christ keeps silent, for this he gives a theological reason, page? But the narrator tells us that he nonetheless did hope for a reply. Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p.308.

¹⁸⁵ Roger Caillois, *Pontius Pilate*, p.111.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.111.

he is technically part of the family, as it is presumed that it was the old Karamazov that fathered him, but he is a lackey, he serves the family as a cook.

2.7 Evil and the human conscience

Myshkin can strike us as innocent and a certain way Smerdyakov too. Neither tries to, or pretends to inhabit two worlds. For Smerdyakov it is the case that the absence of a conscience of his own enables this one-sidedness in him. Therefore conscience, as the reminder of the wholly Other, creates an inner dialogue that he does not have. As a result of this lack, Smerdyakov is unable to be aware of the absence of his own conscience; he does however attempt to enter into the regular sphere of human affairs through his boundless admiration for Ivan, with disastrous consequences.

For Myshkin's to enter into the sphere of human affairs means an appeal to the conscience of those around him; they are continually confronted with the impurity of their own social motivations. However, this appeal is so absolute and undiluted that they generally fail to recognise it as such. Hence this appeal necessarily backfires, making Myshkin an idiot. His unconditional goodness makes that the political and calculating element that is part of human life, and which makes the voice of conscience a voice that is *Other*, is not present *as Other*. This makes Myshkin truly innocent, as he is not a good man through the interaction with his conscience that has gradually enabled him to shed his illusions about himself, but he is good by virtue of the fact that he inhabits the other-worldly. For others their contact with this other-worldly can act as mirror precisely because it is no longer their natural habitat, rather taking the form of a barely perceptible presence or voice reminding us who we are. As Simone Weil says: 'To be innocent is to bear the weight of the entire universe. It is to throw away the counterweight.'¹⁸⁷ Myshkin's idiocy is therefore the lack of this counterweight; the calculating and the political that enable us to look after ourselves, physically and socially, before anything else. We can say then that the counterweight is the

¹⁸⁷ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.91.

attached self, and the presence of the human conscience enables detachment from this attached self without at any point abandoning it.

Marion's distance presupposes the possibility of detachment, a person is therefore not identical with his attachments, although one might be under the illusion that one is. This touches on the heart of Eckhartian theology, as he holds that the created and the uncreated part of the soul are not separated in the ordinary sense. The possibility of change, of detachment, is identical to the possibility of responding to what theologians such as Scharlemann have named as 'responding to the negative'. That is a feature of our broken state; the possibility of responding¹⁸⁸. By virtue of our ability to inhabit distance do we respond, even when this response is seemingly 'not us' as was described by Caputo, who found himself responding before he had time to weigh the pros and cons.

2.8 Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes: The absence of Christian guilt

Smerdyakov has a demonic innocence which enables him to be completely honest, for the impossible demand of the absolute, is absent. Consequently he has no guilt to mask or need to pretend to be any better than he is, as the demand for holiness¹⁸⁹ does not reach him. We get a sense of this curious honesty that befalls him in the conversation that takes place after Smerdyakov's initial response to the story about the Russian soldier:

'What do you mean, there'd have been no sin in it? That's balderdash, and for that they'll cast you straight into hell and roast you there like a side of mutton.' Fyodor Pavlovich had chimed in.

This was the very point at which Alyosha entered. Fyodor Pavlovich, as we have seen, was hugely pleased to see him.

'You favourite subject, your favourite subject!' he giggled joyfully, making Alyosha sit down to listen.

¹⁸⁸ This is what the Grand Inquisitor calls the 'freely given love' which he says is what Christ wanted from humanity. This freely given love would be free because Christ withheld all that is miraculous, mysterious and authoritarian from the human being so that any love could not have any other motivation than the love itself. Dostoevsky, BK, p.300.

¹⁸⁹ As Paul Ricoeur says: 'With guilt, "conscience" is born; a responsible agent appears, to face the prophetic call and the demand for holiness.' *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.143.

'With regard to the side of mutton, sir, that is not so, and there'll be nothing of that kind, sir, nor is it probable that there would be, if the matter be viewed in all justice,' Smerdyakov observed solidly.

'What on earth does he mean—"in all justice"?' Fyodor Pavlovich exclaimed even more merrily, nudging Alyosha slightly with his knee.

'He's a scoundrel, that's what he is!' suddenly burst from Grigory. Wrathfully he looked Smerdyakov straight in the face.

'With regard to calling me a scoundrel I think you'd do better to wait a moment, Grigory Vasilyevich, sir,' Smerdyakov retorted calmly and discreetly, 'and reason it out for yourself, without resorting to abuse: once I'd fallen captive to the tormentors of the Christian race and they had demanded of me that I curse the name of God and renounce my own baptism, then I'd be fully empowered to do that by my own reason, for there's be no sin in it.'

'But you've said that already; stop painting pictures and offer us some proof!' cried Fyodor Pavlovich.

'Bouillon-boy!' Grigory whispered, contemptuously.

'With regard to calling me a bouillon-boy, I think you ought to wait a moment and reason it out for yourself, without resorting to abuse, Grigory Vasilyevich, sir,' [...] ¹⁹⁰

Smerdyakov remains calm in his replies, robotically repeating himself with the controlled confidence of someone who knows that they've got the truth on their side. The others feel that something is awry in Smerdyakov's view on things, but their responses are not alike: The old Karamazov reacts as though Smerdyakov is an idiot, he himself being the sensualist that he is, is not troubled by the fact that reason is on the side of Smerdyakov. Here Fyodor Pavlovich shows how 'the force of Karamazov baseness'¹⁹¹ is an antidote to the trouble that Ivan faces insofar as this trouble is fuelled by the intellectual.

Grigory, the servant and Smerdyakov's adoptive father, gets angry as the impenetrability of Smerdyakov's logic does reach him, causing moral indignation that he cannot really put into words. He instinctively feels that Smerdyakov's paradigm is an assault upon on the Christian ideas of redemption and holiness. It represents a poison that cannot be parried because it exposes a secret that he was keen to protect, making this secret appear like stupidity or hypocrisy. It is this 'hypocrisy' that Caputo wants to shake off in *Against Ethics*. Smerdyakov's tactics are indifferent to whether he himself, or the others believe in God or not; for him, there is no outside to reason.

¹⁹⁰ Dostoevsky, BK, pp.148-149.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.308.

In her novel *Wise Blood*, Flannery O'Connor introduces us to the character of Hazel Motes. He has a literal affiliation to Smerdyakov, for Hazel Motes, like Smerdyakov exposes the hypocrisy of those around him, but he does so in a more literal way: he is a preacher. Hazel Motes has just left the army to return to the deep South where he came from. There is another preacher, his literary double; possessing all the qualities that he has grown to despise, and he kills him. In *Wise Blood*, Hazel Motes kills his shadow, so he himself can be free. He drives over this man as someone completely secure in the knowledge that this is what the other deserves for being dishonest, or, as Motes says to this preacher: 'You ain't true.'¹⁹² After Haze has run him over and reversed his car in order to drive over him again, we get this man's last words which sound eerily insincere, not in the least because they are spoken in the presence of Hazel Motes:

"The man was trying to say something but he was only wheezing. Haze squatted down by his face to listen. "Give my mother a lot of trouble," he said through a kind of bubbling in his throat. "Never giver no rest. Stole theter car. Never told the truth to my daddy or give Henry what, never give him. . ."
 "You shut up," Haze said, leaning his head closer to hear the confession.'
 "Told where his still was and got five dollars for it," the man gasped.
 "You shut up now," Haze said.
 "Jesus . . ." the man said.
 "Jesus hep me," the man wheezed.
 Haze gave him a hard slap on the back and he was quiet.
 He leaned down to hear if he was going to say anything else but he wasn't breathing anymore.¹⁹³

The preacher is confessing his sins, but Hazel Motes is not interested; in his newly embraced linear universe there can be no point to confession. The world cannot be healed, those at the receiving end of your 'sins' are not helped by your confession. He has therefore started his own church:

"You then," he said impatiently, pointing at the next one.
 "What church do you belong to?"
 "Church of Christ," the boy said in falsetto to hide the truth.
 "Church of Christ!" Haze repeated. "Well, I preach the Church Without Christ. I'm a member and preacher to that church where the blind don't see and the lame

¹⁹² Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*, In *Collected Works*, New York, The Library of America, 1988, p.114.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.115.

don't walk and what's dead stays that way. Ask me about that church and I'll tell you it's the church that the blood of Jesus don't foul with redemption."
 "He's a preacher," one of the women said. "Let's go."¹⁹⁴

Both Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes' responses mirror their environment, its dishonesty, a built-in Christian mystery that overtime has come to resemble dishonesty. We may call this a Christian dishonesty because it is a dishonesty that has grown out of—or even been necessitated by—exposure to the call of the absolute, or the call of conscience, and the impossibility of responding to the degree that would constitute a full response. Ivan Karamazov is the only one who bears the full weight of this awareness. In this sense Ivan is a saint, as Simone Weil says: 'The saints (those who are nearly saints) are more exposed than others to the devil because the real knowledge they have of their wretchedness makes the light *almost* intolerable.'¹⁹⁵ Something of this is reflected in one of Hazel Motes' remarks, here he connects peace with the absence of Christ in one's life:

"I can save you," she said. "I got a church in my heart where freedom is King."

He leaned in her direction, glaring. "I believe in a new kind of Jesus," he said, "one that can't waste blood redeeming people with, because he's all man and ain't got any God in him. My Church is the church without Christ!"¹⁹⁶

And further on in the story:

"If you had been redeemed," Hazel Motes was shouting, "you would care about redemption but you don't. Look inside yourselves and see if you hadn't rather it wasn't if it was.

There's no peace for the redeemed," he shouted, "and I preach peace, I preach the Church Without Christ, the church peaceful and satisfied!"¹⁹⁷

Hazel Motes' great strength resides in the fact that he relieved himself of a great burden; namely the burden of what he calls his conscience, because, as he says himself, the human conscience is nothing more than a trick that should be hunted down and killed:

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.59.

¹⁹⁵ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.74.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.69.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.80.

“Your conscience is a trick,” he said, “it don’t exist though you may think it does, and if you think it does, you had best get it out in the open and hunt it down and kill it, because it’s no more than your face in the mirror is or your shadow behind you.”¹⁹⁸

Haze’s description of what he has found his conscience actually is , i.e., a ‘trick’, a mirage, that, like our image in the mirror looks like it has a form of substance, but in fact has no such thing. He has discovered that the human conscience is not a “thing”, that it cannot be reduced to an object, although it is generally treated as though it can; thereby necessitating dishonesty, as the need then arises to pretend one knows what to do because our conscience has told us so. This way the actual reasons behind our actions can remain hidden and muddled; inaccessible to the conscious mind.

Hazel Motes can therefore see more sharply, making those around him appear robotic; simply parroting what has been taught in church. Under Haze’s uncompromising eye their spirituality is void and exterior. What they can perceive in Haze is therefore not the fact that he is, completely publicly, negating the things that they would think were at the centre of their faith, but only the fact that, in form, he is no different from all those other preachers:

The woman looked at him thoroughly and then looked behind him at his car. “What church?” she asked.

He said the Church Without Christ.

“Protestant?” she asked suspiciously, “or something foreign?”¹⁹⁹

What binds Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes is that they possess the dry honesty, an honesty that is possible because neither of them is receptive to the Christian influence. At Fyodor Pavlovich’s dinner table, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, we get a strong sense that the only one who could never be a hypocrite is Smerdyakov. Hazel Motes’ world is full of hypocrites, to the extent that being insincere has become second nature. What he has done is to unite reality, as it appears to him, with that which he preaches:

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.93-4.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.60.

“You needn’t to look at the sky because it’s not going to open up and show no place behind it. You needn’t search for any hole in the ground to look through into somewhere else. You can’t go neither forwards nor backwards into your daddy’s time not your children’s if you have them. In yourself right now is all the place you’ve got. If there was any Fall, look there, if there was any Redemption, look there, and if you expect any Judgement, look there, because they all three will have to in your time and your body and where in your time and your body can they be?

“Where in your time and your body has Jesus redeemed you?” he cried. “Show me where because I don’t see the place. If there was a place where Jesus had redeemed you, that would be the place for you to be, but which of you can find it?”²⁰⁰

And also:

He had all the time he could want to study his soul in and assure himself that it was not there. When he was thoroughly convinced, he saw that this was something that he had always known. The misery he had was a longing for home; it had nothing to do with Jesus.²⁰¹

The gulf between reality, as it might appear to someone brought up in the modern world, and what religion tells us to believe, has been hermetically closed by Hazel Motes. In this way he is the only authentic person in Flannery O’Connor’s story, and consequently the only innocent one. He reunites reality with its appearance, something that puts a stop to insincerity that is perhaps necessarily employed so long as we are not saints. The diabolical in Hazel Motes is that he is no longer suspended; there is no longer a distance that has to be bridged or pretended to be bridged, and in that sense he is no longer alienated from God or himself, because his conscience, in reminding him of the void between him and the divine is gone. As a result he no longer needs illusions and attachments to fill that void. Hazel Motes, and also Smerdyakov, can therefore afford their honesty, because they no longer possess that part of the human being that acts as a reminder of our relatedness to God. For, as the late English potter and poet Mary Caroline Richards said: ‘What is evil but one-sidedness?’²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.93.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.12-3.

²⁰² Mary Caroline Richards, ‘The Vessel and the Fire’ In *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity*, pp.211-224.

2.9 To throw away the double

Hazel Motes has killed his double. At the other end of the spectrum we have Ivan as someone who suffers because he is haunted by his double; his inability to ignore his double is what makes that his conscience is a constant burden to him, as the opposite of Hazel Motes; he can find no release from his feelings of guilt.

From the perspective of Ivan's spiritual predicament there are two more obvious ways out; neither of which actually involves throwing away the counterweight completely, but are attempts there to. The first is the Karamazov way, the second the way of the suffering inquisitor. The Karamazov way is the way of the sensualist, to dull the conscience in the way the father does and Dimitri to a large extent; to look for oblivion in drinking to dull the voice of conscience that speaks by virtue of the presence of our double. Perhaps this is easiest and most obvious way to go about it. The way of the Inquisitor entails that one takes matters in one's own hands; so that the need for reconciliation is no longer felt; the impossible demand is turned into something concrete and measureable. In this way the Grand Inquisitor has taken the plunge where Ivan is still sitting on the fence; he has chosen sides and acted accordingly. The Grand Inquisitor has alienated himself from his double to the extent that he no longer recognises him. The people of Seville recognise him as a matter of course. He identifies Christ with a degree of detachment and disbelief, and proceeds to capture him.²⁰³ His mistake is that he cannot capture what cannot be captured.

2.10 Imprisonment

Only a being that wants to be 'this and that'²⁰⁴ to speak with Eckhart, can be imprisoned in the way the Inquisitor assumes he has imprisoned Christ. Dostoevsky's Christ-figure maintains his equilibrium in the face of everything the inquisitor says. He never leaves his detachment. He is completely free from ideas as we know them, or else he would

²⁰³ Dostoevsky, BK, p.292.

²⁰⁴ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.287 and p.291.

respond to the things that the Inquisitor says to him, or he would show some desire to respond. For, as we noted before, the things that the old man speaks about should concern him, it seems that, as the old man's words are so pungently about humanity and its fate, it would take indifference of demonic proportions to remain unmoved.

In the experience of reading the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, we can at first feel outrage at the things the Inquisitor says, or perhaps, on second thoughts, we feel a certain level of agreement. Undoubtedly, these are the effect of our own convictions, of the attachments we have to our own ideas. In the absence of these convictions we would be unable to form a judgement and consequently we would not even be capable of understanding the Inquisitor's monologue in the way that we do. As we derive meaning, we are forced to force our judgements onto the text in order to understand as we position the opinions of the Inquisitor somewhere in relation to our own opinions. While this is going on however, the presence of the Christ-figure in the story more or less taps us on the shoulder as we wait for his response, which remains suspended to the very end, and when it does come, is of a completely different order than any verbal response could have been.

If we have attained such earthly riches and power as the inquisitor has, when, in other words, we are deeply intertwined with our earthly persona, anything truly Other than ourselves can only come from the most unexpected of places; just the place we had disregarded as most insignificant in order to grow in our role; precisely that which we necessarily had to forget.

2.11 Assuming our guilt

Through the Grand Inquisitor, we experience the pull of the negative as it is present in the Christ-figure's silent appeal. This figure's gaze seems to be the dormant power of the Inquisitor's conscience; free from judgement but demanding the transformation of self-awareness that comes as a second awakening, enabling us to look at ourselves as though at another, hence with complete detachment. As Scharlemann puts it:

Conscience never tells us what to do, and the accusation of conscience, which is popularly understood as a judgement of what we have done, is, if we look more closely at the experience, not a verdict upon the quality of our action but a voice addressing us and summoning us to be willing to answer for the *not*. In Heidegger's terms, conscience calls upon us by summoning us to become guilty, *schuldig werden*. But that activity of be-ing is meant by becoming "guilty," or becoming one-who-owes? It is the activity of answering for the *not*, or, in a certain way, *not* being. What first appears as judgment passed by conscience upon the quality of our actions is upon closer inspection not a judgement upon actions at all but a summons to answer for something, and, in this case, to answer for the negative that is expressed in the combination of *not* and *should* (doing what one should not, or not doing what one should). Conscience in its proper function, is not the voice that judges the deed as *not* being what it should be; rather, it is the voice that calls upon us to be the one who owes, the one who will answer for the negative indicated by the word *not*.²⁰⁵

The Christ-figure's gaze is not a gaze that passes judgement, it does however, change the logic of the things the Inquisitor says.²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, at no point, does it alter the truth value of the Inquisitor's words. Through the prisoner's gaze the reader experiences the arid words of the Grand Inquisitor more poignantly, as though he is being forced, through this gaze, to bear the full weight of its own content. In spite of this implicit 'request', the Inquisitor is left absolutely free to speak as he does. But, with this deconstructing silence that is also present, it makes us feel as though the Inquisitor is asked to say these words while bearing the full responsibility for them. The question of whether he actually does will prove impossible to answer, for, outwardly, things would look the same, as in order to leave the Inquisitor free to be the Grand Inquisitor with his monologue, there can be no approval or disapproval in the Christ-figure's 'conduct'.

In this way the Grand Inquisitor is asked, in Scharlemann's terminology, to answer for the negative, to still say these words while fully aware of the possibility of not saying them. Not merely as a logical possibility, but a possibility in its full significance; to accept his own freedom to the full. Responding to the call of the negative, the call of conscience, the call of Christ can indeed not be a response to a command that urges us to change a particular deed. To be told that, under particular circumstances, we should behave differently, or that we

²⁰⁵ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.17.

²⁰⁶ See also: A.N. Gorbunov, 'Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness: Milton and Dostoevsky' p.5. Unpublished paper read at a conference.

should not do certain things at all does not result in a person assuming full responsibility. Hazel Motes, in killing his own double, is then forever excluded from breaking the cycle of diabolical alienation from God and the self. In doing, he no longer needs to suffer from the trail of undefined guilt that the presence of the double leaves us with.

Even though the appeal of our conscience can contain no concrete ethical demand, this does not necessarily mean the ethical in concrete rules can play no role in addressing our conscience. We might have been told by someone who as a certain amount of authority over us that we ought not to be so quick to judge others. Such a telling off might make us, at least for a while, anxious enough to hold our tongue when around this individual who has this power over us. Furthermore, we might think they are right and enforce this tongue holding practice upon ourselves even when they are not present. It could be that, by having a morality imposed upon us, either by external force, internal force, or a combination of both, we create a moment's silence for ourselves, at the moment we swallow our words, in which we have time to listen to our own conscience, the only force capable of really facing up to and silencing the desire to judge. It might then indeed seem as though conscience tells us what to do; namely not to judge, when, in actuality, it is already our own response that we are observing, not the silent call that might have prompted it. Such a course of events is perhaps a manifestation of what Paul Ricoeur names as 'the law as the pedagogue.'²⁰⁷ There can then be no law or dogma, knowledge of which could make us truly guilty. Only when such 'knowledge' of the commandments is silenced might we have time to follow the commandments with our eyes open.

In the silent plea of Dostoevsky's Christ, the latter does not simply avoid speech or give the old man a moral imperative. He avoids bringing about change in the Inquisitor through positing some knowledge or other, insofar as knowledge is understood as a thing, that can only be appropriated when in Lévinas' words, it has been 'freed of its otherness'²⁰⁸ Such knowledge might consist of the realisation that man is more capable of handling his own freedom than the Inquisitor had hitherto supposed. If this was true we would simply be

²⁰⁷ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.59.

²⁰⁸ Lévinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy' In *The Levinas Reader*, edited by Seán Hand, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 1989, p.76.

dealing with a fact that can be measured, and this being a fact that does not alter the situation in any essential way, it would merely be refuted by the Inquisitor through a combination of evidence and argument. It would mean meeting the Grand Inquisitor on his own terms, leaving Christ and his conscience in their position of unrecognisable otherness.

Hence a counter-argument could only give rise to a change if it could alter the Inquisitor's paradigm, but that cannot be done by external 'force', especially not in the case of the inquisitor, who himself almost embodies external force. The voice of conscience cannot come from the outside. Consequently, in this dynamic between speech and silence lie the workings of what Derrida, *The Gift of Death* calls the *aporia of responsibility*:

To "subordinate responsibility to the objectivity of knowledge," is obviously, in Patočka's view, to discount responsibility. And how can we not subscribe to this implication? Saying that a responsible decision must be taken on the basis of knowledge seems to define the condition of possibility of responsibility (one can't make a responsible decision without science or conscience, without knowing what one is doing, for what reasons, in view of what and under what conditions), at the same time as it defines the condition of impossibility of this same responsibility (if decision-making is relegated to a knowledge that it is content to follow or to develop, then it is no more a responsible decision, it is the technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus, the simple mechanistic deployment of a theorem). This *Aporia of responsibility* would thus define the relation between the Platonic and Christian paradigms throughout the history of morality and politics.²⁰⁹

That which our conscience might appear to do outwardly; namely the positing of a knowledge that tells us what to do, is in fact the result of a process that is outwardly imperceptible, making it impossible for there to be a method for detecting whether, on the above account, an action has been good or not. Strictly speaking, whatever reasons we can offer for our deeds being what they are, and not otherwise, would fail to function as substantiation of our responsibility. As Derrida puts it:

Hence, the activating of responsibility (decision, act, *praxis*) will always take place before and beyond any theoretical or thematic determination. It will have to decide without it, independently from knowledge; that will be the condition of a practical

²⁰⁹ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p.24.

idea of freedom. We should therefore conclude that not only is this thematization of the concept of responsibility always inadequate but that it is always so because *it must be so*.²¹⁰ [my italics]

The logic of why it 'must be so' should now become clear; whatever motivations are genuinely derived from an external force must inevitably pass us by as subjects. That does not mean we must necessarily remain silent, but speaking cannot be a validation for our actions unless the other recognises it as such. Speaking then becomes an act of faith in the other. As Thomas Altizer says:

[...]and human language, as opposed to divine or angelic language, is empty and meaningless when it evokes no response and thus ceases to be language when it is no longer capable of being the instrument of communication or expression.²¹¹

2.12 Silence and the human conscience

The Grand Inquisitor is well aware of that being the reason for why his Christ must remain silent, for, as he says, if Christ were to buy humanity's following with those famous characterisations of the Inquisitor; miracle, mystery and authority, He would close the door forever on man's freedom.²¹² That moment of silence in which the human conscience can wake the human being up to themselves, would be forever filled with what Scharlemann calls an 'actual voice'. Christ would then be as the Inquisitor, relieving man of that burden of his conscience by replacing it with an actual voice. By giving nothing of the sort he gives everything. The Inquisitor's understanding of Christ's silence is therefore of a particular kind, as, his awareness resides more in being aware of the necessity of Christ's lack of speech, rather than a complete understanding of this silence. The Inquisitor cannot allow himself to be aware of the difference between a passive and an active silence. In the passage quoted below, he gives the theological reasons for why Christ should not speak:

Have you the right to reveal to us even one of the mysteries of the world you have come from?" my old man asks him and he replies for himself: "No, you have not. So

²¹⁰ Ibid., p.26.

²¹¹ Thomas J. Altizer, *The Descent Into Hell*, p.34.

²¹² Dostoevsky, BK, p.303

that you may not add anything to what has been said before and so as not to deprive men of the freedom which you upheld so strongly when you were on earth. All that you might reveal anew would encroach on men's freedom of faith, for it would come as miracle, and their freedom of faith was dearer to you than anything even in those days, fifteen hundred years ago. Was it not you who said in those days, "I shall make you free"?²¹³

While speaking, the Inquisitor does not allow himself to be aware of the fact that Christ's silence is much more active than simply the absence of speech. The fact that this silence contains a personal address to *him* and not just a theological act for the well-being of mankind, he needs to ignore. Had he permitted – or been capable of – this awareness, he would have felt the address in this silence and might have been silent himself. The old man cannot notice that through his own, deeply reasonable speech, in which he tells us about Christ's love for human freedom, the Christ-figure himself becomes more and more visible to our mind's eye.

The Inquisitor is therefore unaware of the nature of the Other's silence. The British theologian Oliver Davies has pointed out that in Russian, this qualitative difference in silence can be stressed through the choice of words; there are two kinds of 'silence'; in Russian, there is *tishina*, meaning the kind of stillness you experience in a silent forest, this is, as he says, silence as the absence of noise. Then there is also *molchanie*; this is silence as the cessation of speech.²¹⁴ Christ's silence is an example of the latter form of silence, *molchanie*, but to the inquisitor this difference cannot be perceptible, because looked at from the perspective of the inter-dependence of these figures; it is the cessation of his own speech that he is experiencing. The Other's silence, although in some way an interpersonal silence, is therefore not felt as an interpersonal silence but as the absence of speech.

It is through the mouth of the Inquisitor that we get to know anything about either himself or, indirectly, about the Christ-figure. Because the silence is an interpersonal silence, it exposes the Inquisitor's attachment; his inability to be receptive to the space between himself and Christ that would have enabled him to see himself as the Other sees him. For

²¹³ Ibid., p.294.

²¹⁴ Oliver Davies, Soundings: 'Towards a Theological Poetics of Silence' in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, pp.201-222.

the reader this is a different matter; we feel Christ's eyes resting on the old man as if on ourselves; certainly deconstructing the words of the Inquisitor, but, in the process first making these words radiate with significance. The words that are spoken by the Inquisitor seem to undergo a transformation when we listen to them in the presence of his prisoner, as though their added significance is the significance of conscience that lifts them out of being mere, theological and anthropological facts. Unlike figures such as Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes, the Inquisitor's burden gets heavier and heavier as Ivan's poem progresses. He has not thrown away his double as these other two figures have done, although perhaps he thinks he has. In this charged form of interpersonal silence between the Inquisitor and his double, his conscience is constantly addressed. For Christ, as the Inquisitor's Other, withholding speech is, at the most fundamental existential level an act of love, as a verbal reply would only fortify the structures of attachment of the Inquisitor's person. As Oliver Davies points out:

The fact that it is Jesus who maintains that silence, who refuses the sign, powerfully reinforces Girard's point²¹⁵ that underlying representational violence is the gravitational force of the Other as rival, a structure of pride, conflict and violence which can be overcome only by a refusal to speak which is simultaneously an expression of love for the other.²¹⁶

The Inquisitor embodies a great tension, as, to us readers who are acutely aware of Christ's gaze upon the Inquisitor, a strong sense is conveyed that this gaze is deeply deconstructing, putting any person to silence, yet this is the only way he can be taken completely seriously. The old man resists, successfully it appears, the appeal in Christ's eyes. He must sense that if he failed to resist this appeal the entire mental construct he had produced in order to be the Grand Inquisitor, would disintegrate. Moreover, with the disintegration of his constructed identity, the measure of his responsibility would no longer be in worldly measures that came with his function as inquisitor, but, in the face of the divine, he would become his own measure. His conscience would no longer be part of his outer self, and he would become a 'sinner' like everyone else. As Ricoeur says:

²¹⁵ René Girard, *Dostoïevski du double à l'unité*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1963, p.153.

²¹⁶ Oliver Davies, Soundings: 'Towards a Theological Poetics of Silence' In *Silence and the Word*, pp.201-222.

With guilt, “conscience” is born; a responsible agent appears, to face the prophetic call and the demand for holiness. But with the factor of “conscience” man the measure likewise comes into being; the realism of sin, measured by the eye of God, is absorbed into the phenomenalism of the guilty conscience, which is the measure of itself. If this analysis is brought the light of the Pauline experience justification by the work of the law, it appears that the promotion of guilt – with its acute sense of individual responsibility, its taste for degrees and nuances in imputation, its moral tact – is at the same time the advent of self-righteousness and the curse attached thereto. Simultaneously, the experience in it which had not been felt as fault, becomes fault; the attempt to reduce sin by observance becomes sin. That is the real meaning of the curse of the law.²¹⁷

For the Grand Inquisitor to face his own conscience means facing himself in the most terrifying way. And, if he did, he could no longer be the Inquisitor that he was. In the end he is kissed by Christ; a sign of the affirmation of the union that was already realised, and at the same time a betrayal of the Inquisitor’s identity that is anchored in the absence of such a union. The paradox of evil is embodied by the figure of the inquisitor, as the betrayal of his person in the kiss is the only condition under which he can be absolutely loved. Any other form of love would mean participating in that evil.

2.13 From the fall to silence

The narrative of the fall describes the alienation from God and the self through the separation from the inner and the outer that we inhabit. The event through which it becomes possible to experience the self as separate, means putting on knowledge of good and evil, as it means being able to occupy a single position. Here we can become ethical creatures equipped to judge. What we lost can with time be felt as a sense of loss; or an absence. The divine can now be experienced as absent, but it would be misleading to imagine the God of Adam and Eve’s paradise as a presence in the sense that we can bow speak of the presence of God. To experience the presence of God we must be aware that we ourselves are separate from that presence. For the woman and the man, the ‘presence’ of God was being embedded in the divine. Only in the post-lapsarian world does it become possible to have a concept of God and to feel the abyss between ourselves and that God.

²¹⁷ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.143.

Altizer pointed out that what constitutes 'sin' is the unfaithfulness to this abyss through either an illusory inwardness or an illusory outwardness²¹⁸. This can be identified demonic when we can speak of not just a flight from the suspended state, but a denial, or inability to acknowledge the negative, as in the case of Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes. These characters' lack is the absence of what we called 'the double'; an entity that constitutes everything that personifies what we reject through what Meister Eckhart calls our attachments; formed out of all that the individual does not wish to be identified with. For Hazel Motes that is the preacher that he kills. The double is never far away however, and therefore this spectre-like presence is always a reminder of what we are not. For the Inquisitor the double it is Christ. Hence the Inquisitor, as a deeply ethical being, is mirrored through the divine silence that is about to replace his ethical conscience. From that moment on he is no longer a responsible agent through the self-imposed ethical matters of job as inquisitor, but through the divine, silent gaze that holds an appeal to him as a human being. As a result, the responsibility that he felt as inquisitor is revealed to be the simulacrum of responsibility; a passing state of affairs that cannot be sustained after this event.

²¹⁸ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.169.

Chapter three: Guilt and Responsibility

3.1 Introduction: Conscience and the other-worldly

With guilt conscience is born, as Ricoeur says, but it might be equally legitimate to state the reverse; namely that with the awakening of conscience, we become aware of our guilt or our sin. This should not be understood in the popular moralistic sense where our conscience accuses us of doing something we should not, or not doing something we should.²¹⁹ It rather entails an awakening in our own subjectivity through which we can no longer keep recreating ourselves as objects, as the Inquisitor does in constructing his identity as inquisitor. Responsibility is what follows when such an awakening has taken place. The human conscience is therefore not of this world, in precisely the same way as the Christ-figure in Ivan's poem is not of this world, and, with his silence, addresses that in the Inquisitor which is not of this world either. To the outer self, such an awakening appears always like a betrayal; a paradox that can only end in death and self-destruction, as, ultimately, it requires that we give up the outer identity that the outer self consists of. Ivan Karamazov is an example of someone who acutely faces that paradox, Ivan moreover displays the ethical outrage that can accompany such an event. In the silence of Christ and the words of the Inquisitor we can sense something of that paradox through the deconstructing effect this silence has on the Inquisitor's words, and on his personal identity that is anchored in the content of those words.

As readers, we meet something similar in reading 'The Grand Inquisitor'; we are aware of the secret that has been imparted to us in the kiss, but in the end it leaves the analytic mind in the dark. We as interpreters are as empty handed as the Grand Inquisitor. Therefore this text reflects our inquisitorial consciousness back to us in offering us the silence that that the Inquisitor receives from Christ.

²¹⁹ See: Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.17.

3.2 The silent appeal

It is this silence that deconstructs by its very nature; as an active absence of a reply, it cannot do otherwise than to address the conscience of the Inquisitor himself, as the words of the Inquisitor gain their weight and significance through the gaze of Christ. In return Christ's silence enters the sphere of our awareness, for without the Inquisitor's speech this silence could never break through the surface of our awareness. The Grand Inquisitor is addressed in a place that he is utterly alienated from. He is wordlessly asked to bear the weight of who he has become. Perhaps this is an impossibly difficult appeal to heed, as there is nothing concrete that can be done to silence this 'voice' of conscience. As readers of the text we can see that the distance between these two figures grows with every word the Grand Inquisitor speaks and that Christ has not responded to. Put differently, we become increasingly aware of the infinite distance between these two characters, a distance that takes the form of a void, rather than a distance that could be bridged.

When the Christ-figure rises and kisses the old man on his 'bloodless, aged lips'²²⁰, the void is momentarily non-existent. It is not so much bridged, as it is negated. A moment both demonic and loving, and despite this impossibility there is also something inevitable about it; as though we had been waiting for this moment. We then are told that:

The old man gave a start. There was an imperceptible movement at the corners of his mouth; he went to the door, opened it and said to him: "Go and come no more – don't come at all – never, never!" And he let him out into the "the dark streets and lanes of the city". The Prisoner went away.'

'And the old man?'

'The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man sticks to his idea.'²²¹

The kiss has woken the Inquisitor up, but what he now knows, which was capable of startling him, lifting him out of his own existence, we are not told, and perhaps we do not expect to be told, for instinctively we know it is of a different order than the knowing of the ratio that the Inquisitor has been sharing with us throughout the interview. The Inquisitor has clearly been initiated into the secret, something that we expect could cause him to change his ways,

²²⁰ Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

²²¹ Ibid., p.308.

for the tale tells us that although ‘the kiss glows in his heart, he sticks to his idea’. Everything has changed, but nothing in the external circumstances is different. We sense the presence of a secret that was there all along in the mounting tension we as readers could feel, but what is it? We do not find out.²²²

In a way similar to Kafka’s Joseph Knowledge,²²³ who stubbornly insists on entry to the law, we are continually running up against a brick wall that we expect to give way every time we take a run at it, while the knowledge of the futility of this quest starts to dawn on us. We ourselves gain self-awareness *as* outsiders, because the legend, in its role as a parable, affirms that we are outsiders. The feeling that the truth is right in front of us, but somehow always escapes just when we are about to grasp it, encroaches us. The parable divulges its secret without giving us any further information. In the desire to know what it means we continue to turn loaves into stones; continually suspending the moment of real recognition. In St. Mark’s Gospel Jesus says to his disciples:

And he said to them, “to you has been given the secret of kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables in order that
‘they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.”²²⁴

As forgiveness means a form of reconciliation, as is the case in Ivan’s predicament, then indeed this moment of understanding remains suspended. The secret that has been imparted disappears around the corner as soon as our mind wants to grab hold of it.

²²² Of course commentators have given words to what the kiss expresses. A good is Colin Wilson’s sentence ‘Your reasoning is powerful, but my love is stronger’ *The Outsider*, p.183. Wilson’s interpretation is beautiful in its simplicity, but leaves a whole dimension untouched. At least when taken as a definitive answer, it diminishes the story’s characteristic openendedness. As Rowan Williams says: ‘In other words, the conclusions of the Inquisitor narrative is quite deliberately unresolved, [...], *Dostoevsky, Language, Faith and Fiction*, p.28.

²²³ Kafka, *The Trial*, London, Vintage Classics, 2005.

²²⁴ Mark 4: 10-12. Mark here echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah: ‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking but do not understand.’ Make the mind of his people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.’ Isaiah 6: 9-10.

3.3 Kafka's Joseph K and the admission of guilt

The inquisitor is momentarily stripped of everything he possessed, as all that he had amassed around him in worldly riches is, for that instant imaginary. But what does that mean; what does that tell us? What have we as readers gained in knowledge? There is a distinct 'before' and 'after' perception accompanying this event. However, it is because we have this desire to enter into the text, to know,²²⁵ that we suspect some moment of initiation has taken place. The mind's unwavering enthusiasm for finding a definitive answer is something Kafka's Joseph K enacts for us, potentially ad infinitum, till he dies his dehumanising death at the end of *The Trial*. Joseph K embodies this insistence that he is entitled to know, to have access, without ever leaving himself. Joseph K, like the reader, does listen but he does not understand, and he looks but he does not see, and we undergo being read by the legend of the Grand Inquisitor in the way that we can read Joseph K in his predicament.

In the story of *The Trial* it is not difficult for us to understand why Joseph K has such an unwavering insistence on being allowed access to the law, yet there is also an overwhelming sense of the futility of his quest. A mounting sense that he is asking completely the wrong questions, and, in doing so, is entirely failing to see that he is in fact utterly guilty. Yet we can easily recognise ourselves in him, as we identify with his firm resolve to establish his innocence. With all the characters Joseph K is advised to visit, our sense of unease increases. Is the amount of bureaucracy he meets the creation of his own intellect? Are we witnessing the rational mind running up against its own shortcomings, but is it unwilling and perhaps unable to admit that this is where its power ends? When he goes to see the painter Titorelli, the latter asks him if he is innocent:

'Are you innocent?' he asked. 'Yes,' said K. The answering of this question gave him real happiness, particularly as he was addressing a private individual and therefore need fear no consequences.²²⁶

²²⁵ As Frank Kermode discusses in *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*, Cambridge Mass. And London, Harvard University Press, 1979. p.65

²²⁶ Kafka, *The Trial*, p.139.

K's happiness at declaring his innocence is becoming eerie; we feel him to be completely exposed; his guilt emerges, like the void between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, and ourselves and the text. However, K himself senses nothing of the sort. He persists in treating the problem as a legal matter that has no bearing on him as a subject. Nothing seems to be able to break the self-enclosed legal fortress that is K's own mind. Their conversation carries on and K says:

'I have to fight against countless subtleties in which the court is likely to lose itself. And in the end, out of nothing at all, an enormous fabric of guilt will be conjured up.' 'Yes, yes, of course,' said the painter, as if K were needlessly interrupting the thread of his ideas. 'But you're innocent all the same?'²²⁷

The last question begins to sound more like a factual inquiry into the steadfastness of Joseph K's conviction concerning his innocence than anything else. K however is not of a mind to interpret it as such, and answer the question affirmatively.²²⁸

As we share in Joseph K's position as spectators, we also perceive that the context in which he finds himself has changed, he now finds himself in a place where his innocence is no longer a fact of that kind that can be formally established. He might be innocent in the context of his day to day existence as a functionary in a bank, in which 'guilt' is a legal matter, but he is not innocent in his current situation. He has been led into the law itself, it is all-encompassing, smothering him with his own limitations. He is innocent of a crime, as the opening line of the novel states: 'Someone must have been telling lies about K.'²²⁹ His insistence upon his innocence is precisely the reason for why he must remain an outsider in the new order he has now entered. He is then guilty of not acknowledging where he now is, that he is already on trial, constantly being put to the test and failing with every second that he remains blind to his guilt.

Of course, Joseph K's refusal to accept his own guilt seems an obvious and natural reaction to his situation, for we know and understand the world that he comes from and

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.139.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.139.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

thinks he still inhabits. In that world, all the steps he takes to get out of the situation he is in make good sense. Joseph K lived in a world where guilt was determined by the law; a public matter, not a matter of assuming our guilt irrespective of how law-abiding we are in our externality. In K's former world, the law can never be a summoning for our transfiguration, but rather a matter calling for compensation.

Our feeling of nervousness increases, as within the reader there is a budding realisation that the laws of cause and effect no longer work in the same way as they did in the world in which Joseph K was a functionary in a bank. Without having paid the slightest attention to it, Joseph K has entered a world in which the workings of the law have been reversed in the sense that all the steps he takes to clear his name are likely to add to this 'enormous fabric of guilt.'²³⁰ Here he is guilty as long as he maintains he is innocent, as long as he refuses to let his apparent outward guilt be reversed into his private, subjective sphere.

Dmitri Karamazov, in Book Nine of *The Brother Karamazov* does what K cannot; outwardly he is accused of a crime he has not committed; patricide, but he assumes his guilt irrespective of the particularities. During his trial and his imprisonment, he finds that an anonymous person had put a pillow under his head, simply out of compassion.²³¹ This kind gesture, along with the dream he has had²³² are enough for him so sign the papers, thereby admitting his guilt, but also reconnecting him with himself and the world that he would then have to leave to go to Siberia. In that newly found connection with himself, he also gains a new connection with his conscience. In accepting his guilt as in essence part of himself, he is no longer alienated from himself because he has accepted his guilt.

²³⁰ Ibid., p.139.

²³¹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.597.

²³² This is the frequently discussed dream about the poor peasants and the hungry, crying baby in Book Nine, chapter eight. Sergius Bulgakov for instance explains Dimitri's dream about the 'babe' as an image that captures the state of the Russian intelligentsia, which harbours a great ideal that, among other things, expresses itself in a feeling of moral responsibility towards the Russian peasantry. This ideal has no means of being put into practice. It is a form of love that is constantly wasted and drained away and, as a result, becomes a form of suffering. Sergius Bulgakov, p.40

Joseph K is literally accused of 'guilt': "Yes," said the Law-court Attendant, 'these are the accused men', all of them are accused of guilt.²³³ In the mechanical/contractual public domain you can only be guilty after you have committed a crime and have been declared guilty. K however, is only guilty of being guilty; a charge against his public persona in its entirety. The disruption between his public and private selves cannot be reconciled by changing what is public and external, and that is precisely what he continually fails to see. K continually proves that he is incapable of opening his eyes to the fact that his situation in addressing him in what we called the 'I' and not in 'this one here'. 'This one here' can only conceive of guilt as something particular that one is either guilty of or not.

Dimitri Karamazov is no longer in opposition to the world; his signing of the documents can therefore be read as a great act of faith. By 'signing his life away' he gets it back, irrespective of his public status.²³⁴ In effect this is a moment of detachment for the sensualist Dimitri. Perhaps, had K done the same, a different fate would have been his. At no point does K cease this offence against the mystery²³⁵ by remaining within the legal realm, never assuming his guilt as his own and thereby accepting himself as culpable. Instead he remains inwardly utterly passive, in spite of all his feverish activity. For those who read parables, he helps us to understand our own spiritual and artistic failure. As the French Writer George Bataille says in his book *Literature and Evil*:

Kafka does not evoke sovereign life: on the contrary, the life he evokes, contorted even in its most capricious moments, is unremittingly sad. The Eroticism in *The Trial* and *The Castle* is an eroticism without desire or strength, an arid eroticism from which one should escape at all cost.²³⁶

The 'eroticism without love' that Bataille mentions is most poignantly felt in K's spiritual and artistic limpness, his blindness to the otherness of the law that can only be comprehended if he silences himself for just one moment, not unlike the reader's inability to read parables.

²³³ Kafka, *The Trial*, p.62.

²³⁴ As the story progresses, it of course emerges that contrary to the circumstantial evidence, it was not Dimitri who killed the old Karamazov but the latter's illegitimate son Smerdyakov. Dostoevsky, BK, pp.832-843.

²³⁵ It was pointed out to me by David Jasper that what Joseph K in fact does is to transgress the story in his insistence that he is innocent.

²³⁶ George Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, translated by Alistair Hamilton, London and New York, Marion Boyars, 2006, p.160.

Only through silencing ourselves does it become possible to listen to the voice of conscience that 'is not an actual voice.'²³⁷ A failure to listen perhaps generates an enormous fabric of guilt that will multiply itself until, like Dimitri Karamazov, something kind or beautiful reminds us of the fact that we are already unprotected and 'out in the open,'²³⁸ that the ethical principles we hold on to are temporary and will ultimately be illusory. And, just by being reminded of perfection, as Mitya was, we are reminded of our infinite potential, and in turn our culpability in our shortcomings. As Paul Ricoeur says in *The Symbolism of Evil*:

Shall we say that this infinite measure, this immeasurability of perfection, this ethical immensity sets up an "impotence" of man, a "wretchedness" that alienates him before the face of an Other beyond reach? Does not sin make God the Wholly Other?²³⁹

3.4 Who is the doorkeeper?

Our readings are always self-referential, in that in fact it is the degree to which we are capable of letting the text read us that determines how much we are allowed to read. K refuses to be read, which is, of course the only logical thing to do as there is no guarantee that his fate would have been different if he had allowed the situation to read him. The American literary scholar Jill Robbins, in her book *Prodigal Son/Elder Brother* says in her discussion on Kafka and the activity of hermeneutics:

In other words, the only recognition that the interpreter gains from this self-referential reading is that he was an intruder, an outsider who remained outside, that his interpretation is superfluous (he is "dispossessed by his own metaphor") he recognises himself as excluded.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ In the previous chapter this quote from Scharlemann was used: 'The voice of conscience is not an actual voice, as are the voices of the people around us. In that sense it is the voice of silence. *The Reason of Following*, p.16.

²³⁸ See also Scharlemann in *The Reason of Following*, who says: 'Truth then is to come out in the open and freedom is being there.' p.166.

²³⁹ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p.58..

²⁴⁰ Jill Robbins, *Prodigal Son/Elder Brother: Interpretation and Alterity in Augustine, Petrarch, Kafka, Levinas*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p.87.

But how can we recognise ourselves as excluded; what enables us to do so? Joseph K for one thing does not. An interpretation is only superfluous if it tells us nothing at all about the story *or* about ourselves. However, from what Robbins says we can at least gather that it tells us something about ourselves.

An allusion to the direction that Robbins takes is given in the parable of the doorkeeper, when the peasant,²⁴¹ after all his years of waiting, is about to die, and wonders why he is the only one who in all that time has asked for admittance to the law, the doorkeeper says:

No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended only for you. I am now going to shut it.²⁴²

When the peasant's strength is waning, and his eyes are growing dim, the priest (who is the one telling the story to Joseph K) says: 'But in the darkness he can now perceive a radiance that streams immortally from the door of the Law.'²⁴³ K concludes that the doorkeeper deluded the man, but the priest tells him not to be too hasty with this conclusion: 'I have told you the story in the very words of the scriptures. There's no mention of delusion in it.'²⁴⁴ The conversation carries on in the same vein; K argues that the doorkeeper failed in his duty, and the priest says to K: 'You have not enough respect for the written word and you are altering the story.'²⁴⁵

The British literary critic Frank Kermode says the following on the parable of the doorkeeper:

The outsider remains outside, dismayed and frustrated. To perceive the radiance of the shrine is not to gain access to it; the Law, or the Kingdom, may, to those within, be powerful and beautiful, but to those outside they are merely terrible; absolutely inexplicable, they torment the inquirer with legalisms. This is a mystery; Mark, and

²⁴¹ The nameless individual who asks access to the law is literally mentioned as 'the man from the country' Kafka, *The Trial* p.197.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p.198.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.198.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.99.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.99.

Kafka's doorkeeper, protect it without understanding it, and those outside, like K and us, see an uninterpretable radiance and die.²⁴⁶

So too in our comprehension of 'The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor' we can perceive the shimmering radiance of the shrine without ever being allowed to enter. We perceive the radiance of the shrine, and when we gather our wits and look again all there is the Inquisitor and Christ, as separate as ever and again we look but do not perceive. Perhaps the knowledge glows in our hearts,²⁴⁷ but it does not speak. As Kermode says: 'To perceive the radiance of the shrine is not to gain access to it.' At least linguistically we remain outside. We are 'ever straining to read what is beyond our gaze' to use David Jasper's words in his remarks on Kafka's prisoners *In the Penal Settlement*.²⁴⁸ Here the factual content is the same as in Jill Robbins remarks above, but without the implication that all is in vain. In the end we might see our own reflection in the text which could be the beginning of our transfiguration.

But for now, as we must stay in the dark about the meaning of what we have witnessed in the kiss, so does the Grand Inquisitor himself, his sacrifice is that he is with us in our weakness, to protect us from ourselves, so that we can perhaps forget that we ever wanted to enter the shrine. If K had lived in the Grand Inquisitor's world, he would have been protected; he would not have been killed because he failed to face his guilt. Had he been accused of anything concrete, he would have had something to atone for, as the Grand Inquisitor would have assured there would have been. The old man is an outsider by his own design, so 'those outside' do not have to suffer what Joseph K, in the end, had to experience. To allay the pain of our status as outsiders is then to take hold of our conscience. The old man knows this, he says to Christ:

And instead of firm foundations for appeasing man's conscience once and for all, you chose everything that was exceptional, enigmatic, and vague, [...] ²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p.28.

²⁴⁷ As, at the end of 'The Grand Inquisitor', Ivan and Dostoevsky tell us that the 'the kiss glows in his heart'. p.308.

²⁴⁸ David Jasper, *The Sacred Body: Asceticism in Religion, Literature and Culture*, Waco, Tex., Baylor University Press, 2009, p.62.

²⁴⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.299.

What happens to K in *The Trial* is the result of what, in the previous chapters was named as 'the modern decease'²⁵⁰, which leaves Ivan unable to be reconciled with the world. Ivan and the Inquisitor have in common that they felt compelled to reject reconciliation on ethical grounds; rejecting the necessity of betraying the ethical for salvation. Ivan is in that sense a saint;²⁵¹ he feels everything Joseph K is incapable of feeling. This results in Ivan renouncing reconciliation and K insisting on it. K's resistance towards his own culpability is what destroys him, while, in Ivan's case the realisation of his culpability is what threatens to destroy him. Joseph K is the deeply alienated human being who cannot look at himself as outsider because he is too far removed from himself to recognise his own alienation, and is thereby unable to recognise his own status as outsider. K is caught in this demonic vicious circle, whereby what appears to be the solution to his problem is merely symptomatic of the cause. Only a single moment of detachment would be enough to stop Joseph K rowing against the current that is about to consume him.

The Inquisitor would have granted him his attempt, his world is such that it is filled with the imaginary footholds, avoiding what appears like an abyss of meaninglessness. In his world we might feel that we are guilty, but we would be guilty of something, and atonement; restoration of harmony could follow, although imaginary; leaving K in his entrapped status, but without the pain. The great sacrifice the Inquisitor has made is that he is with us outsiders, which for him has meant giving up his faith in God. An inverted leap of faith in itself, as the consequences to him were unknown. K does not live in the Inquisitor's world, and his inquisitorial transgressions keep him blind. The Inquisitor speaks confidently, certain that he is beyond disintegration, when in fact this disintegration of his outer self is already happening from the moment Christ enters the scene. Unlike K, the Grand Inquisitor is not an outsider, but, without knowing it, is already turning into an insider as Christ's gaze deconstructs his word and seals this process of deconstruction in the kiss.

²⁵⁰ In section 1.2.

²⁵¹ Ivan is a saint when sainthood is understood as having an extraordinarily burdened conscience due to the fact that the person is unable to have any illusions regarding his own goodness, as opposed to the later notion of sainthood in which a saint is the person whose thoughts and actions are all good and 'uncontaminated' with by self-interest.

Where K then ultimately fails is in the recognition of himself as both peasant and doorkeeper, K's ignorance is an ignorance of himself; of his own identity as both the conductor and the performer. He is the suspended spirit, alienated from himself through the denial of his embodiment. The dissymmetry of the *mysterium tremendum* is alien to him. K's inability is a deep ineptitude in the inability to recognise evil in himself; he is unaware of the fact that the devil has already made him an outsider; that what he meets is his own fallenness before anything else. Analogously, in her discussion about the writer of novels, Flannery O'Connor notes that writing does not provide direct insights into how things work, but rather mirrors back to us our inability to see directly. She says:

He may find in the end that instead of reflecting the image at the heart of things, he has only reflected our broken condition and, through it, the face of the devil we are possessed by. This is a modest achievement, but perhaps a necessary one.²⁵²

We can reflect on our broken condition when we are not identical with it, in writing there is distance, and in reading the distance is measured. To be unable to inhabit distance means we cannot recognise the doorkeeper as ourselves. The Grand Inquisitor, in shielding humanity from the pain of 'the devil we are possessed by', has become unable to recognise God, not unlike Joseph K, who has become unable to recognise himself in his environment.

3.5 Recognizing the Other and the call of conscience

The Inquisitor does not recognize Christ in the unmediated way that the people of Seville do,²⁵³ only, by deduction does he know whom he is likely to be dealing with:

At last he approached him slowly, puts the lamp on the table and says to him:

"Is it you? You?"

'But, receiving no answer, he adds quickly: "Do not answer, be silent. And, indeed, what can you say? I know too well what you would say. Besides, you have no right to add anything to what you have said already in the days of old. Why,

²⁵² Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.168.

²⁵³ As Ivan says at the beginning of his 'poem': 'That might have been one of the finest passages in my poem – I mean, why they recognised him. The people are drawn to him by an irresistible force, they surround him, they throng about him, they follow him.' Dostoevsky, BK, p.291.

then, did you come to meddle with us? For you have come to meddle with us and you know it. But do you know what is going to happen tomorrow?
I know not who you are and I don't want to know: whether it is you or only someone who looks like him, I do not know [...]²⁵⁴,

The old man is sharply aware of the power of appearances. He knows he could well be dealing with a false prophet,²⁵⁵ and, to him that would be all the same, there is no need to verify that it is in fact Christ he is dealing with, he will just treat him as if he is, for all that matters is the effect the visitor has on the people that are under his protection. This kind of utilitarian paradigm does not require direct recognition of the other. Anything other than the effect is irrelevant under the happiness principle, truth is equal what the majority believe. So immediately his paradigm is implicitly established; he is ruled by the mind and not by the heart as the people in the city are, whose recognition is childlike, almost pre-Lapsarian.

The Grand Inquisitor does not fully recognise the Other; an unmistakable estrangement has set in. A long time has passed, since he has abandoned following Christ hundreds of years ago, as he says:

Well, then, listen. We are not with you but with *him*: that is our secret! It's a long time – eight centuries – since we left you and went over to *him*. Exactly eight centuries ago²⁵⁶ we took from him what you rejected with scorn, the last gift he offered you,²⁵⁷ [...]

He can still recognise Christ by the phenomena that surround him and perhaps his appearance; this is recognition through the intellect. The Inquisitor does not love Christ, as clearly the people in the city do, for them it is not a matter of a cognitive process to know

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p.293.

²⁵⁵ As Jesus himself says in St. Mark's Gospel: 'And if anyone says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!'—do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be alert: I have already told you everything.' Mark 13:22. See also Matthew 24:12. When the Inquisitor says to Christ that the latter 'may not reveal anything anew' so as not to encroach on men's freedom, he points out the contradictory nature of Christ's appearance. Dostoevsky, BK, p.293.

²⁵⁶ 'The legend of the Grand Inquisitor' takes place in the middle of the 16th century. Therefore Ivan is probably referring to Pepin the Short, the first king of the Franks who, after having conquered Ravenna, donated it to pope Stephan II, thereby establishing the worldly reign of the papacy. Arthur Langeveld, in the notes accompanying the Dutch translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Fjodor Dostojevski, *De Broers Karamazov*, Amsterdam, Van Oorschot, 2009, p. 952.

²⁵⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, p.302. This last gift the Grand Inquisitor mentions is the gift of worldly power.

that it is Christ walking through their streets.²⁵⁸ Inwardly, the Grand Inquisitor remains unmoved. To be an outsider by choice therefore means giving up knowing what it means to be an outsider. What once might have been a living experience of truth, in joining 'him' becomes only the external shell of what it once was.

Recognition requires that there is both a familiarity from the past, but, more obscurely, the notion of 'otherness' features in recognition also in the opposite role to familiarity; as a condition for recognition is also that something manifests itself to us as sufficiently Other than ourselves, in order to be able to awaken in us a consciousness of its presence. Only will we be able to listen to the voice of conscience at those times when we know ourselves well enough to discern this voice's otherness; to recognise the fact that this voice of conscience does not belong to what Scharlemann calls 'this one here,' or what Meister Eckhart calls 'the outer self', namely the part of the human being that is identical with our external features and roles. It is our ability to recognise and acknowledge otherness itself, which, in reverse, is knowledge of ourselves as Other. Recognising the voice of conscience can only be done to the extent that we recognise it as *not* the voice of our attached self, therefore as 'not an actual voice.'²⁵⁹ This too is related to Marion's 'distance'; to be able to perceive the space between us and what we are in the world. It is because of that space that we can know what is Other; that we know that the difference between us and God is always infinite, while, at the same time we are more like God than any other earthly creature.²⁶⁰ To be able to recognise another person as Other, we have to know where we fall short, or are sinful, to speak with Saint Paul.²⁶¹ In other words, the degree of self-knowledge governs the degree of recognition.

Before we have done this Eckhartian work of digging out the divine ground of our being, we could not recognise what was wholly Other, as we were so closely intertwined with it that recognition with our conscious mind is not possible. In the story in the Gospel of Luke, of the road to Emmaus, the two disciples, Cleopas and his companion, can only

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.291.

²⁵⁹ See: Scharlemann in *The Reason of Following*, p.16.

²⁶⁰ See further: Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God*, and his discussion on Pseudo-Dionysius. p.32.

²⁶¹ Romans 7: 7-13.

retrospectively, with the distance of time that had passed, recognise Christ. Even when they were still on the road talking to Christ:

"Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near to the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other. "Where not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"²⁶²

Direct recognition does not come until he breaks the bread, when he 'transforms the meal into the sacrament', as David Jasper puts it.²⁶³ The sacrament turns them around inwardly, as if they have been called by their names. The Grand Inquisitor is continuously exposed to this same call, but does not hear it until the sacramental moment of the kiss.

The Inquisitor's failure to recognise Christ is of a very specific nature, for in a certain way he simply does not recognise Christ, namely in the way our mind recognises objects. Lévinas' thought on the human face and its relation to otherness can illustrate the difference between identifying what the Other is and what I have called recognition: letting the Other wake us up when we see the absolute vulnerability of their unique 'I' behind what Lévinas call the 'plastic forms', he says:

The proximity of the other is the face's meaning, and it means from the very start in a way that goes beyond those plastic forms which forever try to cover the face like a mask of their presence to perception.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Luke 24: 13-32.

²⁶³ David Jasper, *The Sacred Body*, p.11.

²⁶⁴ Emanuel Levinas, 'Ethics as first philosophy' In *The Levinas Reader*, pp. 82-83.

The 'plastic forms' are recognised in the way that we would recognise iconic figures from the past. We could recognise Napoleon or Freud if they were to appear in the form and attire our culture has given them, so in their public persona. Our eyes do not necessarily need to be 'opened' in the way that the eyes of those two disciples were opened, in order to recognise Freud. The Grand Inquisitor however does recognise Christ as an iconic figure. In the same essay, Lévinas explains that beyond these plastic forms and the expressions of the other's face: 'there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defencelessness, vulnerability itself.'²⁶⁵

The nakedness and exposure are there since there is a need to cover ourselves up; therefore a post-Lapsarian need that is the result of the separation of our inner and our outer selves, or the public and the private. We can only be exposed if we first covered ourselves up. The old man's visitor is utterly different from anyone else, as he has no attachments to protect, therefore he could not mask his private identity as he is already a purely private presence. Consequently we cannot speak of exposure in relation to him, or, alternatively, he is complete exposure without fear. This reverses the situation, making it such that it is the Grand Inquisitor is who exposed. To recognise Christ beyond what Lévinas calls the plastic forms cannot not but change us in the aftermath of the fall in which we have learned to cover ourselves up, as it must always bring 'this one here' into contact with the 'I'.

When the disciples say 'Where not our hearts burning within us' they say that in the sacrament they realised what they already knew, as if at that moment they recognised what was given to them. In that recognition they are united with themselves. At that moment Christ disappears, his outer presence no longer there as soon as he is recognised. For the Grand Inquisitor the moment of fully-fledged recognition comes in the sacramental moment of the kiss, here not as an affirmation of what he already knew; but the opposite; a subverting moment of love in which, for a split second, 'everything is permitted' to use Ivan's puzzling phrase. In other words, for a moment the ethical paradigm is transcended. The Grand Inquisitor's attached being is here suddenly silenced in this recognition. To him this destabilising moment, in which his own otherness to himself suddenly stands before him

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p.83.

must be deeply confrontational. Especially as in the appearance of the Christ-figure, the reversed image is, in turn, himself as he has become. And so if he were to recognise Christ, he would recognise himself. For the Inquisitor this homecoming is also an exile, as there is no turning back to the private sphere where he could shield himself from exposure to his Other in Christ.

Like the Inquisitor, Ivan Karamazov also has his Other in Christ whom he cannot recognise, and therein lies his torture. The hell in his heart is the dissymmetry between God and the world to which he belongs that he cannot bridge. Simone Weil captures his state of being in a remark about the state of being of the saint:

Simultaneous existence of incompatible things in the soul's bearing; balance which leans both ways at once: that is saintliness, the actual realisation of the microcosm, the imitation of the order of the world.²⁶⁶

The difference between Ivan and the Inquisitor is therefore that Ivan suffers because of his inability to find Christ as the one who embodies both the divine and the human, where the Inquisitor has taken measures to alleviate this suffering by clearly siding with what is purely worldly. Ivan is therefore not exactly a saint in the above sense articulated by Simone Weil, but rather a potential saint, as his suffering is a sign that a struggle is taking place between two 'incompatible things' in his soul. And, perhaps in telling Alyosha the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, he has exposed his personal potential or vision of such coexistence within himself.

Before the kiss, the Grand Inquisitor's experience of the world is fundamentally different from Ivan's experience. For where Ivan is at a crossroads, he had clearly chosen his path in abandoning the divine. To him, Christ had become Other to the degree that the dizzying dissymmetry was only something he knew about as a structure that is at the root of human suffering. For Ivan the asymmetrical is something he constantly lives with and experiences in every fibre of himself and the world. Ivan is in that sense already deeply exposed to a God that he cannot face yet. He feels the exposure in his bottomless experience of guilt, however this guilt remains largely projected onto his supposed actual

²⁶⁶Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.101.

ethical guilt of his father's death; a delusion that causes the madness in which meets the devil.²⁶⁷

3.6 The paradox of dissymmetry

God as wholly Other is what makes us tremble, as here recognition of the Other means that we ourselves are seen. The experience is something part of us always shuns, because like the Inquisitor, we instinctively know it is the end of our identity as we know it. This is the experience of 'being seen' about which Derrida says in *The Gift of Death*:

How can another see into me, into my most secret self, without my being able to see him in me? And if my secret self, that which can be revealed only to the other, to the wholly other, to God if you wish, is a secret that I will never reflect on, that I will never know or experience or possess as my own, then what sense is there in saying that it is "my" secret, or in saying more generally that a secret *belongs*, that it is proper to or belongs to some "one," or to some *other* who remains *someone*? It is perhaps there that we find the secret of secrecy, namely, that it is not a matter of knowing and that it is there for no-one.²⁶⁸

To be "seen into", to be more exposed than we knew we could be, is what the Inquisitor, in the kiss is made to experience through the (almost) unrecognisable Other, the Wholly Other, being completely exposed himself, without warning. In that sense we have here a reversal of what Lévinas describes above, namely that with God, seeing and recognising always means being seen. The old man himself had been talking of the 'freely given love' that Christ wanted, instead of the love that is bought with earthly bread. But, until this seething moment this could remain a theoretic reality. In being himself *seen*, the Grand Inquisitor now feels the absolute nature of Christ's demand, this is now not only known, but felt in its complete impossibility. For the old man, the result must surely be devastating, as, in that moment everything he has built is taken away.

²⁶⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, pp.746-765.

²⁶⁸ Derrida, *The gift of Death*, p.92.

To the Grand Inquisitor, Christ's otherness is upsetting, the dissymmetry is dizzying, where this complete affirmation of himself also contains a radical denial of all that he created as his own being. As we have already seen, the paradox in the legend of the Grand Inquisitor is its double reality, as the kiss is both the negation of opposition, and therein a continuation of the symmetry as well as a radical denial of the possibility of any symmetry. The Inquisitor, insofar as he does recognise Christ, knows what he has rejected as he his theoretic knowledge of what he has done is clearly very extensive. This is reflected in the symmetry that the Inquisitor himself keeps implicitly emphasising in his words. His ignorance is suddenly exposed in all its shortcomings when the symmetry is so radically denied in the kiss. Instead of recognising the Other, he is introduced to himself as the unknown; as the Other beyond reach, and then perhaps he recognises Christ as the Other beyond reach.

We as readers, experience the legend differently after the event of the kiss, although it tells us nothing of the secret, while we now know that it is *our* secret that the text mirrors back to us. There can be an awareness that, in the aftermath of the fall, the text reads us; that through the fall into knowledge, we have become a secret to ourselves. Paul Ricoeur, in speaking of the tension within the covenant between the finite laws on one side and on the other side and 'an unconditional but formless demand that finds the root of evil in the "heart."²⁶⁹ Consequently, it is *through* the experience of dissymmetry that we come to experience Christ's 'demand' as formless and absolute. The address is to us, and only to us in our most private existence, more private than we ourselves can ever know, as Derrida notes above. Our actions and behaviour belong to our externality, and are not addressed directly.

The experience of dissymmetry is the *mysterium tremendum*, which the Inquisitor does not experience until in the kiss he is made to feel and experience what he spoke about throughout the interview. Before the kiss, he spoke to the Other as a peer, but in their momentary union any sameness is denied, at least any sameness that the Inquisitor himself suggested was there in his words and actions. Derrida, in *The Gift of Death* suggests that in order to understand the *mysterium tremendum*, in order to find out why it is that our bodies react as they do, why we weep and tremble, we would have to find new ways of

²⁶⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.62.

understanding the body,²⁷⁰ because we do not know why we weep. We do not know, as Derrida says, what the body means to say when it weeps.²⁷¹ It knows something that is beyond our reach, perhaps recognising what we cannot. He then says:

What is it that makes us tremble in the *mysterium tremendum*? It is the gift of infinite love, the dissymmetry that exists between the divine regard that sees me, and myself, who doesn't see what is looking at me; it is the gift and endurance of death that exists in the irreplaceable, the disproportion between the infinite gift and my finitude, responsibility as culpability, sin, salvation, repentance, and sacrifice. As in the title of Kierkegaard's essay *Fear and Trembling*, the *mysterium tremendum* includes at least an implicit and indirect reference to Saint Paul.²⁷²

To the atheist that the Grand Inquisitor has become the kiss shatters the foundations, yet calls him to be culpable; in summoning him to bear the weight of who he is and what he has done, without there being any condemnation in this act of the kiss. Through the *mysterium tremendum* we are in fact shown what Scharlemann in the *Reason of Following* tells us, namely that 'conscience never tell us what to do,²⁷³ that in fact the popular understanding of the word falls short of – and sometimes bends – the full meaning of what it asks us to do. Its force is not directly ethical in providing concrete demands, but rather is more like an invitation to bear responsibility for what we do do and what we do not do. Therefore its direct concern is more with the one who acts than it is with the action itself. This is something Joseph K could not understand, as it requires at least some experience dissymmetry, as K's insistence is also on absolute commensurability of an external demand that comes from the society he is part of, and the demand that is only addressed to him in his most private self. When conscience is solely understood as passing moral judgments of right and wrong, we live in the world of the Grand Inquisitor, where we make commensurable what was once a 'spark', a divine trace, and change it into its own other, with perhaps the same outward characteristics, shedding its original, potentially offensive character.

²⁷⁰ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p.56.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p56.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.56.

²⁷³ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.17.

The Grand Inquisitor addresses Christ as another theologian; as though he were speaking to someone essentially like himself, but who has chosen different premises on which to build his anthropology. He, the Inquisitor himself believes freedom is too much for man, and Christ, who has given humanity this freedom believes it to be important enough to uphold it no matter what the cost. The difference is therefore simply in their estimation of humanity which, can be compared and discussed, and in doing so, the Inquisitor synthesises what is incommensurable. In a discussion it is possible to reach a synthesis, either by allowing the other to modify our point of view, or, as in true synthesis, by allowing the encounter with the other to elevate our viewing point such that we realise the disagreement was illusory. However, in this case that is not possible. The Grand Inquisitor provides the dialectic, where the Christ-figure sustains it as long as he doesn't act, but does not participate, and is in the paradoxical 'role' where we can speak of a coming together of opposites, but not synthesis. The kiss is then not a more elaborate form of synthesis, but a moment of true deconstruction. It is a radical denial of any reconciliation, and yet being reconciliation itself. This reconciliation inevitably provides the Inquisitor with knowledge of himself that he had not deemed possible and had necessarily forsaken; he can now see himself as the Other sees him. Paul Ricoeur articulates the difference between the potential experience of degradation in being seen by God, and the potential to transform that resides in being seen:

Finally, if the principle emphasis is not placed on the degrading character of the situation of being-seen-by God, it is because the primordial significance of this seeing is to constitute the *truth* of my situation, the justness and the justice of the ethical judgement that can be passed on my existence. That is why this seeing, far from preventing the birth of the Self, gives rise to self-awareness. The examination of conscience is thus justified: my own observation of myself is the attempt of self-awareness to approximate the absolute view; I desire to know myself as I am known²⁷⁴, (Ps. 139:23–24).

To know ourselves as we are known, as the Other knows us can only be done by someone who loves us unconditionally. This has to be the perfect Other that is not blinded by their own limitations, causing them to like or dislike me to varying proportions.

²⁷⁴ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.85.

Consequently, the degree to which we succeed in loving someone determines how well we can truly know him. It is then the attached self that can feel humiliated under the gaze of God; the self that looks at himself with the limitations with which we look at others, and like or dislike them in accordance with our shortcomings. The question then comes to the fore of how this mechanism could be interrupted such that there can be a revolution in the way we experience this gaze.

3.7 Ethics and the Other

This leads us back to Lévinas' project of creating an opening in which there is space for the Other, so that what is Other can be recognised, which cannot be done without love. And, ultimately this works both ways; in being seen we can learn to see, as a fissure is generated in the inquisitorial in our mind in which there is space for us to recognise the Other. Lévinas is then concerned with breaking the cycle in which we can remain trapped *ad infinitum*, unable to face ourselves in our inability to see the Other. The French philosopher Alain Badiou articulates this concern as follows:

Roughly speaking: Lévinas maintains that metaphysics, imprisoned by its Greek origins, has subordinated thought to the logic of the same, to the primacy of substance and identity. But according to Lévinas, it is impossible to arrive at an authentic thought of the other (and thus an ethics of the relation to the Other) from the despotism of the same, which is incapable of recognising the Other.²⁷⁵

Lévinas himself puts it by saying that in knowing, knowledge seizes the known and transforms it into the same 'substance' as itself. We could say that it does not know any better than to 'know' in this way. Therefore what is Other becomes unknowable by definition:

Here the known is understood and so *appropriated* by knowledge, and as it were *freed* of its otherness. In the realm of truth, being, as the *other* of thought becomes the characteristic *property* of thought as knowledge.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.18.

²⁷⁶ Lévinas, 'Ethics as first philosophy', In *The Levinas Reader*, p.76.

The diabolical form of alienation from ourselves; that which we named the inquisitorial, cannot do otherwise than to claim ownership, in the way that the Inquisitor claimed ownership of Christ by taking him prisoner, and also in having claimed ownership of the public persona of Christ Jesus, in his allegiance to the Catholic Church. Deconstruction constitutes a fundamental denial of any such ownership; it postulates the secret *as* secret, and, in Derrida's words, belongs to no-one. Perhaps the steps taken here are what John D Caputo calls the 'remoralisation of deconstruction', he refers to Derrida, who, in his book *In Passions: an oblique offering* has characterised the task of coming the aid of ethics as a 'congenial' one. Caputo says:

For the names of "ethics," "morality," and "responsibility" are "fine names," and we regret losing them. But however congenial a task, the "remoralisation of deconstruction" is too easy, too hasty a project. One needs to avoid generating.²⁷⁷

For Caputo, Lévinas' project is too hasty and pious. When we now look at the moment of the kiss in the light of Caputo's thought, we could indeed speak of a moment that is devoid of ethics. However, the project of remoralisation is not one made out of hasty anxiety or fear of anarchy, but because by stating that this moment is devoid of ethics we have only told a half-truth. There is rather a hastiness in the way the intellect, in not finding that deconstruction is obliged to generate a firm new foundation for our ethical beliefs and ideals, concludes that therefore it is devoid of the ethical. Rather, in its utter denial of foundations, it demonstrates its total *and* paradoxical dependence on the ethical. To say that the re-moralisation of deconstruction is something we ought to avoid doing is to turn things on their head, as all that *is* denied is that the origin of the ethical belongs to the world of systematic thought. Only if we turn things on their head by trying to turn ethics into a closed system as such can we forget its origin, and does it suddenly seem perverse to attribute it with a divine beginning. Only as a result of an unwillingness to be transfigured ourselves does ethics shed all its validity.

²⁷⁷ Caputo, *Against Ethics*, p.3.

3.8 Derrida on the Undecidable

What is exposed is that an ethical decision, one that will affect others or the world in a way that can be known, can no longer be reduced to a first principle. Ethics, so to speak, cannot exist outside ourselves. Only a being that can say 'I' can be ethical, and no-one can decide in my place. Derrida, in his essay 'Force of law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority',²⁷⁸ introduces the notion of 'the undecidable' for that moment when we realise that the responsibility for a decision we are about to make is our decision; that any resort to ethical principles is of a temporary nature, only postponing the moment I have to act, but yet integral to the process of justice. When we feel that the ethical has become powerless to take the responsibility away from us, we experience the undecidability of a decision. This experience of the undecidable is required for making a responsible decision, a decision that can be called 'just'. Without the element of undecidability we cannot be just. Derrida says:

The undecidable is not merely the oscillation or the tension between two decisions; it is the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable or the rule, is still obliged to give itself up to the impossible decision, while taking account of law and rules. A decision that didn't go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision; it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process. It might be legal; it would not be just. But the moment in suspense of the undecidable, is not just either, for only a decision is just (in order to maintain the proposition "only a decision is just" one need not refer to the structure of a subject or to the propositional form of a judgement).²⁷⁹

That which is 'obliged to give itself up', which is 'foreign to the calculable or the rule' is an experience of truth that we can characterise as pre-linguistic and paradisiacal. In committing itself, by taking account of the law and rules, it leaves paradise. The element with which it is then to be united in the just decision is the law, as in the 'calculable or the rule'. Hence in a just decision there is something of a union between what is set, fossilised perhaps, and in that applicable to the world, and the terrifying experience of freedom of the undecidable. Both elements can, as we saw in the previous chapter, in isolation lead to forms of the demonic. In their mystical union it is not ethics that has been given a new foundation but the human subject that has been brought face to face with their own freedom. An experience

²⁷⁸ In *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, pp. 3-67.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

we instinctively know to be so terrifying that it seldom crosses our path in an undiluted guise.

The Grand Inquisitor, who so deeply inhabits the ethical as a system, knows the end that he strives for; the happiness of as many people as possible, a universal goal capable of providing every ethical dilemma with an answer. The thinking subject,²⁸⁰ for whom a situation can become uninterpretable and who suffers anxiety (what Derrida calls the 'ordeal') is then an obstacle. In the Grand Inquisitor's words, this is 'the free decision of the heart' that he says Christ wanted from humanity. As he says:

Is the nature of man such that he can reject a miracle, and at the most fearful, the moments of his most fearful, fundamental, and agonising spiritual problems, stick to the free decision of the heart?²⁸¹

The experience of making any decisions is characterised by the weighing up of the pros and cons of the different options, in which we experience the possibilities, and then choosing one or the other. To choose one is to accept responsibility for what we did not choose, for the passage that has been closed-off; this we can avoid if we just apply the rules. In that sense every just decision requires betrayal, as it was not through some inevitability that we decided one way and not another. Going through the ordeal of the undecidable means accepting responsibility for the decision, and consequentially also for the negative of that comes with that decision.

Not to go through Derrida's undecidable is to resort to just the mechanics, to limit ourselves to the legal side or to 'calculate' what would be most likely to produce happiness.²⁸² Either way the human subject remains side-lined. A denial of Derrida's ordeal means a denial of freedom which we can only encounter when the impossibility of the responsibility that is ours can reach us. If not, our morality is nothing but an unfolding of a mechanical process; stripped of responsibility. The happiness principle is therefore not only

²⁸⁰ When the Grand Inquisitor speaks about *the free decision of the heart* he talks about what later became 'the subject', when the need for this term arose.

²⁸¹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.300.

²⁸² Although it has proven so difficult to determine what happiness means in a utilitarian context that the theory became so complex that the utilitarian goal is best served by being discarded.

an example of a first principle, and in that symptomatic of the evil that keeps our being suspended, it also contributes to it. It helps us forget that we are outsiders. Easing anguish means forgetting. Slavoj Žižek, in *The Puppet and the Dwarf, The Perverse Core of Christianity*, articulates the consequences of holding on to happiness as the highest of human goals; its only outcome is a totalitarian society as the Grand Inquisitor envisioned it. As Žižek says:

The ultimate fantasy of happiness here would be that of an anonymous state institution doing this [(By “this” Žižek means the possibility of the state doing genetic research and telling its citizens whether or not they will contract Huntington’s disease, and at what age.] for all of us without our knowledge—but, again, the question crops up: do we know about it (about the fact that the other knows), or not? The path to a perfect totalitarian society is open....

There is only one way out of this conundrum: what if what is false here is the underlying premise, the notion that the ultimate ethical duty is that of protecting the other from pain of keeping him or her in protective ignorance?²⁸³

By replacing the open-endedness of thought we can start to feel something of what Dostoevsky sensed when he returned to Russian society after his years in Siberia,²⁸⁴ and contributed to his inspiration for writing *The Brother Karamazov*. This is a mechanisation of the concept of man that had slowly been gaining ground in people’s minds while he was away. Moreover, it can evoke images of Satan’s Machines that Milton describes, as though Milton’s vision was partly a foreshadowing of the cultural realities from the future in which the individual has no place and in which the striving is to eliminate the subject from thought altogether. In his book *Ethics: an Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Alain Badiou argues that the happiness principle must be indicative of a denial of humanity: ‘The root of the problem is that, in a certain way, every definition of man based on happiness is nihilist.’²⁸⁵

Badiou, Žižek and, more discreetly Derrida, recognise that to give humanity a goal in being happy and/or content we cannot at the same time preserve our humanity. It means denying the openendedness of our narrative, or superimposing a frame of reference onto

²⁸³ Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Cambridge Mass. and London, The bMIT Press, 2003, p.46.

²⁸⁴ Diane Oenning Thompson, ‘Dostoevskii and Science’ In *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky*, pp.191-211.

²⁸⁵ Badiou, *Ethics: an Essay on the Understanding of Evil* p.37.

ourselves that belittles us in such subtle ways that it becomes very difficult to oppose, without seeking refuge in a form of mysticism that would paralyse us politically by only constituting a retreat from the world. A utilitarian paradigm is therefore not only a symptom of a certain atheistic and perhaps materialistic concept of humanity; it also contributes to the formation of a concept of man that disables the ability to ever experience freedom and our own subjectivity in the experience of the undecidable. A concept of humanity that is only capable of recognising the value of happiness cannot invite real responsibility, only something that looks like it, something that Badiou characterises as a *simulacrum*.²⁸⁶ This *simulacrum* is incapable of recognising that we must go through Derrida's 'undecidable' to assume our responsibility, as it is on this non-road that we meet our double. And, realising that we meet these aporias means a constant reminder of our humanity in our embodiment, for it is in turn our embodiment that makes for these aporias.

The greatest literary expression of this aporia itself is found in Abraham, as someone who cannot be followed, as Kierkegaard demonstrates. Abraham moreover demonstrates that the ethical, although nihilist when left to its own devices, is utterly indispensable in the process of responsibility. The free decision of the heart needs the ethical as much as it needs the spirit, and therefore in turn becomes the ethical again. In the kiss the Grand Inquisitor experiences a moment of faith, as the union between the ethical and the divine in which the realisation of accountability is inescapable.

3.9 Abraham and aporia

Through the experience of dissymmetry, comes accountability. Hence a concept of humanity that is incapable of incorporating the openendedness implied by dissymmetry is ultimately nihilist, for as Badiou says: 'Ethics is nihilist because its underlying conviction is

²⁸⁶ Badiou uses the word as follows: 'Simulacrum' must be understood here in its strong sense: all the formal traits of truth are at work in the simulacrum. Not only a universal nomination of an event, inducing the power of a radical break, but also the 'obligation' of a fidelity, and the promotion of a *simulacrum of the subject*, erected – without the advent of any Immortal – above the human animality of the others, [...] *Ethics: an Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.74.

that the only thing that can really happen to someone is death.²⁸⁷ We are then only members of the species, to use Hannah Arendt's words.²⁸⁸ The antithesis of this faceless creature is the man of faith, described by Kierkegaard as the Abraham of Genesis 22 who has to suspend the ethical in such an uncompromising way in order to respond to what God asks him to do:

Then God said. "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."²⁸⁹

Abraham's response is one of complete faith, making him a nihilist in the eyes of the world which is under the law of the universal. In the story we see something that has all the characteristics of a complete abandonment of all logic and reason, and as soon as we hand over Abraham's willingness to kill his son to the faculty of reason, there is nothing glorious left for us in the story. Its glory resides precisely in a real overstepping of logic and reason; not the abandonment of reason as an end in its own right, which would be demonic, but a suspension of the ethical that nonetheless means a connection with the ethical. However, Abraham's faith must involve such an abandonment of reason. What he is willing to do is equal to madness; to take the life of his innocent son. Nevertheless, it is something he must do with complete presence of mind, and therefore he must go against every instinct. Kierkegaard therefore says:

The story of Abraham contains just such a suspension of the ethical. Abraham acts on the strength of the absurd. As a single individual before God he found himself to be higher than the universal. This paradox cannot be mediated – there is no middle-term to explain it. If Abraham had tried to find an explanation, he would have been in a state of temptation, and in that case he would have never sacrificed Isaac, or if he

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.35.

²⁸⁸ Margaret Canovan, in the introduction to Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* sums Arendt's view up: 'Human animals unconscious of their capacities and responsibilities are not well-fitted to take charge of earth-threatening powers. This conjunction echoes Arendt's earlier analysis of totalitarianism as a nihilistic process propelled by a paradoxical combination of convictions: on the one hand the belief that "everything is possible," and on the other that human beings are merely an animal species governed by laws of nature or history, in the service of which individuals are entirely dispensable.' *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p.xi.

²⁸⁹ Genesis 22:3.

had done so he would have had to return as a murderer repentant before the universal.²⁹⁰

If Abraham had been limited to that which is within the grasp of the rational; to the demands of the universal, his willingness to sacrifice his son could only have sprung from a madness or a badness, for the demand would only appear to him, as it does in the context of the universal, in all its gruesomeness. Scharlemann, in his discussion of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* captures the above phenomenon fittingly: 'Faith believes God when God speaks, but *ratio* calls the things God says monstrous.'²⁹¹ This makes evident to us the completely unbridgeable nature between what we recognise as glorious in the story, so that we are not in actual fact inclined to judge Abraham, and the ethical reality:

The "ethical expression" of what Abraham did is that he "would murder Isaac"; the religious expression is that he would "sacrifice Isaac"; the "dread which can well make a man sleepless" lies in the contradiction between the two.²⁹²

The sleepless nights that the oscillation between one and the other can give us is the impossibility of this situation that manifests itself to us again and again, without offering any delivery. This contradiction that Scharlemann articulates is precisely the contradiction between the ethical and the religious that torments Ivan. As Simone Weil says: 'contradiction experienced to the very depths of the being tears us heart and soul: it is the cross.'²⁹³ The intellect can only occupy one place at the time, and as a result must always insist on dualism. Only then can it function. Like the Inquisitor, it must take a side. Contradiction affects it in a number of ways, it can be experienced to the depths of our being, that, as Simone Weil says, is the cross. It can dispossess the intellect of the need to possess²⁹⁴ the object of knowledge. When wrongly understood this will lead to the madness

²⁹⁰ Kierkegaard, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, edited by Charles E. Moore, Farmington PA, The Plough Publishing House, 2002, p.26.

²⁹¹ Scharlemann, *The Reason of following*, p.9.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁹³ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.98.

²⁹⁴ See also Denys Turner's book *The Darkness of God*. In his discussion of Eckhart and the latter's strategy of detachment, he says: 'The strategy of detachment is the strategy of dispossessing desire of its desire to possess its objects, and so to destroy them' p.183.

of the belief in an arbitrary God, or, it can lead us to the Inquisitor and the ethical. Kierkegaard says:

If the ethical is final, if it is the ultimate determination of life's meaning, then Abraham should really be remitted to some lower court for trial and exposed as the murderer he is.²⁹⁵

3.10 Abraham must remain silent

Like the Christ-figure in *The Grand Inquisitor*, if Abraham were to use language to explain himself, he would no longer embody this aporia, and would sacrifice everything to the ethical. The unutterable quality of the deed that Abraham was willing to commit, is what makes that deed unique in a way that goes beyond the ethical. That however, cannot take away from the fact that the chasm between the ethical 'murder' and the religious 'sacrifice' is real. That element in the story which can make us sleepless is that this unutterable quality can only manifest itself to us by its impossibility. We can get a glimpse at it *only* at the moment when we are completely convinced of the utter unbridgeability of these two realities, and we can only be completely permeated with the reality of this contradiction when the horror inherent in the ethical is in our mind. Then, the mind must again and again be horrified by the co-dependence in the story of that which we recognise as glorious and that which is terrible. As Derrida in *The Gift of Death* has pointed out, Abraham could not be responsible if the rules and structures of human society were somehow altered by his deed:

Abraham must assume absolute responsibility for sacrificing his son by sacrificing ethics, but in order for there to be a sacrifice, the ethical must retain all its value; the love for his son must remain intact, and the order of human duty must continue to insist on its rights.²⁹⁶

These two faculties, the religious and the ethical/rational have no common ground; there is no language that can name what connects them. Therefore Scharlemann points out that for Abraham only silence is left, for speaking would entail breaking faith with the act

²⁹⁵ Kierkegaard, *Provocations*, p.26.

²⁹⁶ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p.66.

and then also with God, for it would mean surrendering the act to the ethical, as Scharlemann says:

Such a faith can be described only by silence because there is no concept common to or mediating between murder (ethically) and sacrifice (religiously).²⁹⁷

And further:

To the trial by God he responds alone and unprotected, unmediated by any universal concept under which his deed can be subsumed and made intelligible. He can speak of it only by silence.²⁹⁸

Language does not allow us a direct passage to the source of Abraham's glory in the same way that it does not allow us passage to what Christ asks us to do. In this way Abraham could not refer to the source of the deed he was willing to commit by reference to anything outside of himself as the cause of what he was about to do; to make his deed intelligible. Scharlemann here says:

If any reason can be given for the deed it can be given only in the language of silence, not in the language of causality or intentions or norms." I did it because God told me so" is not an answer that makes the deed intelligible.²⁹⁹

The first step towards making this deed intelligible would be to start speaking; to seek to integrate it into the intelligible order of things; to impose a structure onto it so that it becomes compatible with all the other things that already exist. But to do that, as Kierkegaard tells us, in this case would be temptation itself, the ethical is the temptation:

Abraham cannot be mediated, and the same thing can be expressed also by saying that he cannot talk. So soon as I talk I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me. Therefore Abraham could not express himself in terms of the universal, he must say that his situation is a temptation (*Anfechtung*), for he has

²⁹⁷ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, p.10.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁹⁹ Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, pp.11-12.

no higher expression for that universal which stands above the universal which he transgresses.³⁰⁰

Trying to speak would mean offering something to the universal that it could not digest, creating a wound that can only be healed by declaring it murder and then treating it accordingly, in other words, by assuming that all deeds can and must be judged within the same context. This is what Scharlemann means by 'Abraham responds alone and unprotected', for he acts outside of the context of the world that he knows, which can give meaning to our actions by affirming their place and worth in its order. Consequently, by denying the ethical, his deed would lose all its value, as the meaning of our action emerges from its place in the society that we belong to. Killing another person is murder; we incur a debt, and although completely irreversible, making it impossible to ever satisfactorily settle this debt, steps are nevertheless taken towards such a settlement. Under the universal we go through the motions of reconciliation, even though we know it can never be enough.

So for Abraham, to speak of his response would be to destroy that which makes it glorious, a willingness to speak would mean an irreversible surrender to the ethical. Speech, in this situation would turn Abraham's faith into murder, for the glory that can only exist in the suspending of the ethical would disappear beyond the horizon if Abraham would have told his family what he was about to do. To attempt to mediate would be to destroy:

This position cannot be mediated, for all mediation comes about precisely by virtue of the universal; it is and remains to all eternity a paradox, inaccessible to thought.³⁰¹

Its inaccessibility to thought, as the intellect, is necessary, this is where the intellect meets its boundary and knows that it can go no further. To speak would be to possess that secret that could never be ours to possess.

³⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, In, *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, p71.

³⁰¹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.66.

3.11 The Grand Inquisitor and the absolute

The contradiction brought to the fore by Abraham, in which the individual was shown to be higher than the universal without the ethical losing any of its validity, is what the Grand Inquisitor must experience in the kiss. It is the contradiction that eventually subverts the Inquisitor's words, as the ethical, once cemented in rules and laws, into its own Other, momentarily transforming it into the divine. And, in its wake uniting the old man with his double, converting what was his great power into his complete weakness. The Inquisitor, in his address of Christ proceeds in the mode of the universal. He is what Kierkegaard could call a 'tragic Hero'; as he has sacrificed part of himself for the deeply ethical cause of shielding humanity from pain, and, therein the inherent contradiction lies dormant.

As an atheist, he does not feel the gaze of Christ upon him and consequently he is not filled with dread when he speaks of the divine. He is able to articulate his point of view without anxiety, and this frees him to judge Christ by the criteria of the universal. This explains why he half expects a reply from Christ: 'The old man would have liked him to say something, however bitter and terrible'³⁰². As a human being however, he is perhaps aware of the potential 'fear and trembling' that will be his lot when he stops speaking.

The Grand Inquisitor's unbroken transgression then is that he does what Abraham did not, namely turning everything over to the universal. This is what enables him to occupy a position from which to judge what quantity of goodness human beings are capable of. Human freedom, in the sense of being unprotected like Abraham, and out in the open to rely only on the free decision of the heart is then nothing but an obstacle that we need to learn to cope with whenever it manifests itself again. Within the universal, he can say that the demands Christ makes on humanity are too high; that love of humanity would also mean tailoring demands to what most humans are capable of achieving:

³⁰² Dostoevsky, BK, p308.

But here,³⁰³ too, your judgement of men was too high, for they are slaves, though rebels by nature. Look around and judge: fifteen centuries have passed, go and have a look at them: whom have you raised up to yourself? I swear, man has been created a weaker and baser creature than you thought him to be! Can he, can he do what you did? In respecting him so greatly, you acted as though you ceased to feel any compassion for him, for you asked too much of him – you who have loved him more than yourself! Had you respected him less, you would have asked less of him, and that would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter.³⁰⁴

His language is full of references to what is quantitative and allows for comparison; to loving or respecting man more or less. Human beings, he says, have been created a *weaker* and a *baser* than Christ thought them to be. The meaning of his words are instantly accessible to the reader; we can move along with his line of reasoning without any trouble, for the same reason as we can move along with Milton's Satan. Both speak from the rational, and this type of dialectic always has the advantage that the truth it contains becomes self-evident if the argument is constructed skilfully. There are no gaps to bridge or secrets to face that we can never possess and thereby deconstruct our worldly identity. The old man's words are of this kind; they compel at least to a level of agreement, and disagreement can never match his reasoning for logic and empirical evidence, and moreover, it could not be understood. However, through the presence of the Christ-figure, it is almost as if his words are under Derridean erasure; evoking the negative image of their opposite, the image of the silent Christ is then already present where Grand Inquisitor is. The reverse of his words are therefore present but must remain unspoken. As a consequence of the widening gap between the Grand Inquisitor and Christ, and is reminded of the reverse of what he says; that, parallel to every assertion about humanity's weakness the infinite potential is simultaneously present in its being unspoken. The matter of Christ's demands being too great becomes unanswerable, as it can only be intelligible to speak of moral strength in quantitative ways within the universal.

³⁰³ By 'here' the Inquisitor refers back to his preceding sentence, which is 'You hungered for freely given love and not for the servile raptures of the slave before the might that has terrified him once and for all.'

Dostoevsky, p.300.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.300.

We are left with the contradiction in which it is not intelligible to say that Christ demands anything of me, nor is it intelligible to say that he demands nothing of me. This cannot be felt in the same way by the old man, as this contradiction is rooted in faith it can never be truly understood within the universal. Christ's demand can therefore only be absolute or not at all. That demand cannot be understood by the human understanding that Kierkegaard speaks of, for as soon as we ask what Christ demands, we cannot answer in a straightforward way. As a result, any speech about what God asks us to do is an offense to the source – without necessarily being a complete untruth – turning it into the universal, which it can only escape again through contradiction. For, as Marion says about faith: 'Faith has nothing like a discourse.'³⁰⁵ And also: 'The higher it rises the less it expresses itself. Its function of communication disappears as its vigour increases.'³⁰⁶

3.12 Abraham and Saint Paul: To be dead to the law

The paradox embodied by Abraham is that, in the *mysterium tremendum*, a twofold reality emerges, the ethical and the religious, where one is irreducible to the other, yet these polar opposites belong together in the glory of Abraham's deed. They are even mutually dependent. We could not recognise Abraham's glory if it were not for the ethical that he overstepped, in the same way that we could not recognise the Christ-figure's detachment if it were not for the Grand Inquisitor whose words are so deeply political. Derrida shows the mystical nature of the union between the ethical as law, and the religious as the justice that exists independent of law or rules. This is a secret we cannot access in our role as inquisitors, but it is a secret both revealed and concealed by the parabolic Abraham, where the ethical manifest itself from its other side; namely as being the temptation. Abraham is already out in the open, and 'unprotected'; he is dead to the world in the Pauline sense. As Saint Paul opens the seventh letter to the Romans:

Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding to a person only during that person's lifetime?³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, p.183.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.183.

³⁰⁷ Romans 7-1.

Here he speaks in an analogy from marriage, where the woman is no longer an adulteress when she marries another man when her husband is no longer alive. Then he says:

In the same way my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.³⁰⁸

Dying to the law is then analogous to dying to sin; sin in the sense of being blind to our status as outsiders, making Abraham the polar opposite of Joseph K, and the man from the country, who both insist on entry to the law. Abraham assumes his guilt in the face of the ethical completely and without hesitation. The command to murder his son is the profoundest assault on his earthly existence that we could image; as a father and a husband. In Eckhartian language this means a sudden and complete transfiguration of the attached self. It is a form of betrayal that at the same time means the beginning of a deep transformation of a Pauline nature.

³⁰⁸ Romans 7-4.

Chapter four: The Hyper-Ethical

4.1 Introduction: The personal address

Abraham's utter responsibility is there by virtue of his ability to refrain from speaking about what he is willing to do; it is there because he is willing to carry every aspect of the negative, including the betrayal of the ethical. In this respect Kierkegaard's Abraham is godlike; he personifies everything that the Inquisitor deems humanity incapable of in its most extreme consequences.

This chapter deals with that negative, which comes to us through speech and silence. It will be argued that it is the apophatic that is most capable of addressing us, as the unsayable is the only force capable of addressing us in our detached self. This is not something that can be learned in the sense that we acquire a skill; but something that we can learn over and over again to become receptive to. In encountering the unsayable, as we do quite explicitly in the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the kiss, the demand on us as readers is a demand that invites detachment; and in that a demand to become utterly responsible. The unsayable is therefore the language of the ascetic and the saint; it is the ability of language to address us there where we are most unworldly, where there is nothing political left. It is therefore the only force capable of holding a person truly accountable. To the potential saint, this is true in the most severe sense; here there is the example of Ivan Karamazov who is riddled with guilt. However, for most of us it only opens or reopens the possibility of the hermeneutic between ourselves and the world, doing that which Joseph K is incapable of and the Grand Inquisitor has *become* incapable of, at least until Christ's kiss. The Inquisitor is brought face to face with his inequities in the literary moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, so for him this moment divination also means the descent into his own hell.

4.2 Secret of the Kingdom

The moment of the kiss, as a moment of initiation in which a secret is disclosed that we might not have access to in the way that we desire, becomes an instant in which we learn more about ourselves as the keepers of this secret, as embodying the secret ourselves. It is therefore an encounter that can be the beginning of learned ignorance³⁰⁹, in which we, figuratively speaking, stop asking access to the law. This moment of recognition, as a turning-point, cannot occur without a moment in which there is betrayal of the former order of things, in which it was intelligible to speak of 'external' and 'internal' as two distinctly separate and relatively stable notions. This betrayal is compelled by the fact that the order of things as we know them, and as the Grand Inquisitor and Joseph K know them, emerges as a temporary construct, already unstable before we realised this to be the so. As the Jewish Scholar Edmond Jabès speaks: '[...] this invisible crack that one day destroys the wall³¹⁰, this crack in wall was invisible as long as the wall was still standing, but, as with the Inquisitor, the crack will become visible to him *after* the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*. To the Inquisitor, everything that came before the kiss might now seem but an introduction leading up to this moment.

This sense that the situation between Christ and the Inquisitor was already unstable to begin with is something we already came across in the contradictory nature of Christ in Ivan's poem. He both participates in the dichotomy between the Inquisitor and himself in being a pillar within this construct, and at the same time transcends it, paradoxically, where he can only transcend it *by* at the same time being part of it. The instability of this construction means that when there is a passage from one to the other; so in the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the one whose identity rested only on the opposition is betrayed. In this way the greatest love is the greatest love because it consumes what is other while at the same time preserving it. The Grand Inquisitor is in that sense stripped of his identity when Christ kisses him, while, simultaneously having his identity absolutely affirmed. In that way the kiss condones as well as condemns. In this union that both preserves and undermines identities as separate, roles are reversed; they have to, if only for our 'Euclidean

³⁰⁹ See: Nicolas of Cusa, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, pp.87-89 and pp.127-206.

³¹⁰ Edmond Jabès, *From the book to the 'book'*, p.163.

earthbound minds³¹¹ to perceive the mystery as mystery. The role of the traitor, as the role of Judas belongs in equal measure to Christ, whose kiss burns in the Inquisitor's heart. As a consequence, the 'greatest love' surfaces as the greatest curse, leaving the Inquisitor with the hermeneutical task to interpret what has ultimately happened to him. As Derrida said about Abraham's love for those closest to him; including Isaac of course: 'He hates them not out of hatred, of course, but out of love.'³¹² Derrida here in effect compares Abraham's love to divine love.

4.3 Silence and the Secret

The role of silence is then also reversed into a sign of power instead of self-negation, as speech becomes a sign of absence, silence becomes as sign of presence. It becomes in fact the holding back of speech that commands speech itself. Hence it is through Christ's silence that the words of the old man speak to us, ultimately, *regardless* of their factual truth or the level of intelligibility. In *The Self-Embodiment of God*, Thomas Altizer notes this synergy between speech and silence, where the same paradox is implicit as the one noted above. Here silence is both the Other of speech, as Christ is the Grand Inquisitor's Other, but, parallel to this, they work together to make manifest what he calls the unsayable,³¹³ which is neither speech in itself nor silence in itself:

When silence is present in speech it is not a mere emptiness, just as it is not a simple absence, it is far rather a presence, and a presence which is present in the presence of speech. Speech gives this silence its identity and its meaning as well, for when silence is meaningful it is only insofar as it is related to speech. If silence can be

³¹¹ Just before the Ivan tells the story of the Grand Inquisitor, he talks to Alyosha about the human mind and its inability to understand anything that requires more than three dimension, for, as he says: 'if God really exists and if he really has created the world, then, as we all know, he created it in accordance with Euclidian geometry, and he created the human mind with the conception of only three dimensions of space.' Dostoevsky, BK, p.274.

³¹² Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p.65.

³¹³ What Thomas Altizer in *The Self-embodiment of God* calls the unsayable is what by Plato and the Neo-Platonists and post-modern thinkers such as Heidegger and also Kristeva is called the *khora*. Paul S. Fiddes, in his essay 'The hiddenness of God' sums it up: 'The *khora* is thus both absent and present; it's a place and yet not a place. There is a complexity about the relation of this space to the space or 'void' that has appeared in human experience with the loss of the centred self and the difficulty of naming the world.' And a bit further: 'The *khora*, by contrast, represents an 'outside' to the web of human linguistic signs which is 'inside' at the same time, without being an area that can be actually reached.' In: *Silence and the Word, Negative Theology and Incarnation*, p.42.

present in speech, then so likewise speech is present in silence, and a common dimension of each made manifest by that which cannot be said.³¹⁴

The unsayable is then what we get to know, through speech and silence, *as* being the unsayable:

Silence is not the unsaid, or not the unsaid in speech, in that speech which actually speaks. The unsaid and the unsayable are truly the “other” of speech, they are that which speech ceases to be when it is spoken.³¹⁵

Speech and silence then form the symmetry, the fissures of which make known the unsayable. The unsayable is therefore what makes language breathe, and what makes it capable of the address that can be perceived only by the individual. This Other of speech ceases to be the Other when it is spoken, it must follow then that here it is the unsayable that shapes the new language that emerges when we try to speak theologically; to say what cannot be said, or, in other words, to speak about God. It is not the unsayable that undergoes a change by being said, but rather speech, even though it has only just come into being; it irreversibly ceases to be what it used to be. From this true Other of speech, speech itself must emerge. Could it be then, that, ultimately, it must be the apophatic that shapes the cataphatic, even when neither can do without the other? The unsayable can bring forth the actual language in all its wordiness, although language can perhaps never say the unsayable, it does make it possible for us to sense the unsayable that surrounds it.

Speech then must always bear the mark of what it failed to say. The openendedness of the text is therefore the *Gelassenheit* of the text itself. It speaks through its own failure to speak; in other words its failure to be divine language. It is this that refers us back to its divine origins by way of its body-language rather than in its literal semantic existence, as is actually the case in the Grand Inquisitor’s language, which is theological language that is forgetful of what it means to fail to speak of God. Thus, in the Inquisitor’s language this failure can be more painfully felt, as it lacks the quality of self-awareness of speech that is aware of the unsayable. Although the Grand Inquisitor is deeply aware of the fallenness of the

³¹⁴ Altizer, *The Self-embodiment of God*, p.9.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

world, he himself does not face his own fallenness until the kiss. All speech is in fact constituted out of otherness, paradoxically its otherness from itself as Altizer says:

Speech is itself only in its otherness, and not only in its otherness from the other, but also in its otherness from itself.³¹⁶

Thus we can say with Jabés: ‘Subversion is the movement of writing: the very movement of death.’³¹⁷ For insofar as language about God is successful in conveying meaning, it has also irreversibly deviated from its unsayable source, for if it did not deviate it would remain inarticulate, therefore it is only successful to the extent that it fails to speak of God. This movement of deconstruction is constantly present in the old man’s elaborate language, but for the duration of him speaking he remains immune to it.

The presence of Dostoevsky’s Christ provides a silence to his speech. It is not the silence of protest or of any other emotion for that matter. He is rather the embodiment of the appeal that is always there in speech. To the Inquisitor, that appeal is to see himself as the Other sees him. Through him we feel the mystery, as through his silent presence our ears are opened to the ‘failure’ of language. To perceive the failure in language is then nothing other than the beginning of Nicolas of Cusa’s learned ignorance, in which the rational inquisitive mind, always in search of knowledge,³¹⁸ capable of generating endless chatter, becomes quiet in recognition of its Other. The unsayable that is said in the kiss becomes nearly tangible in the dynamic between these two figures, as a constant address to the Grand Inquisitor that he himself is incapable of responding to.

4.4 ‘Gelassenheit’ and the unsayable

The appeal of the Christ-figure to the Inquisitor, is asking him to see and to bear the weight – not only of his own words – but also of the unsayable to which these words belonged. It is asking him to open his eyes again. To the Grand Inquisitor, this means having

³¹⁶ Altizer, *The self-embodiment of God*, p.22.

³¹⁷ Jabés, *From the Book to the ‘Book’* p.178.

³¹⁸ David Jasper, in his book *The Sacred Body* says: ‘Of course, we are inveterately, all of us, stupid readers, searching for knowledge and missing the truth.’, p.59.

to bear the enormously heavy burden of all that he rejected; of his double in Christ, and this irrevocably means being faced with every veiled short-coming that brought his words into existence. We can envision how the old man must suddenly be overcome with the truth of his own contention, namely that Christ wants us to go into the world empty-handed; as he himself said to his visitor: 'You want to go into the world, and you are going empty-handed, with some promise of freedom,[...].'³¹⁹ This not only means not having anything to depend on, but also the feeling that we have nothing to offer to make the things that come to us interpretable; to make them compatible with what is already known to us. The kiss is such an occurrence for the Inquisitor, as it has no place in what is already present in him, where language was only a political tool. In forgetting that our language is only human language, and therefore must bear the mark of its failure to speak of God, it finally does fail to speak of God, as in forgetting its embodiment its words become vacant. In chapter two we noted that when Satan speaks, his words become tools. Mark A. McIntosh, in his essay 'The Formation of mind 'Trinity and understanding in Newman''³²⁰ warns against such a treatment of language as only using it as a means and never as an end, whereby we forget language itself. He notes that the argument Newman uses against this mode of thought is an appeal in which the argument is an apophatic one. As McIntosh words it:

It is for this reason that he is so impatient with the kind of self-satisfied, short-circuited way of thinking about religion which fails to recognise this 'economic' or regulative, or analogical character of our language. Such interpretative flatness renders its proponents immune to a transforming encounter with divine reality; or else its mortally attenuated version of divinity inevitably disappoints and is rejected, often leaving potential believers mistakenly sure they have tried religion and found it wanting.³²¹

This immunity to 'a transforming encounter' raises questions about how to enter a hermeneutical encounter with the text, as a hermeneutical encounter means being receptive to the unsayable. When this fails, language loses its self-awareness and becomes precisely the economic and regulative language of the old man, disabling the possibility of

³¹⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.296.

³²⁰ In *Silence and the Word*, pp.136-158.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p.141.

recognising the voice of what is Other. Without deconstruction that helps us to hear what cannot be said, language can only be identical with what *is* said.

Heidegger, in his short essay *Gelassenheit*³²² speaks of the distinction between two very different modes of thought. The one that is identical with itself is what he calls 'calculating thought' (*das rechnende Denken*), it has no choice but to be identical with itself, as it is its existence in the world that it is concerned with. These are the thoughts of 'this one here'; of the person situated in the world and dependent on that world. This is the mode of thought of the suspended spirit that we talked about in chapters one and two, that, in its alienation from itself cannot know itself, and in being unable to know itself as other, has no access to the wholly Other. It cannot reflect because it has no knowledge of otherness in being identical with its own functioning. Heidegger here says:

Calculating thought calculates. It calculates with ever new, ever more promising, and ever cheaper options. Calculating thought chases from one opportunity to the next, it never holds back; never reaches a moment of reflection. Calculating thought is not contemplative thought; it is not thought that desires to access the sense that dwells in everything that exists.³²³

Opposed to the calculating mode of thought (*das rechnende Denken*) he places *Gelassenheit*, as that which enables us to be open; receptive to the secret (*das Geheimnis*) that will only disclose itself in the space between us and our thoughts. This receptivity and the spirit of *Gelassenheit* belong together, as he says:

³²² The word *Gelassenheit* is difficult to translate. Robert Detweiler gives a fitting description, in which he expounds its role in our relationship with the text: 'Two German terms not easily translatable suggest what both religious and interpretative groups could strive for: *Gelassenheit* and *Geselligkeit*. *Gelassenheit*, a term already used by the fourteenth-century German mystic Meister Eckhart and developed by Heidegger, is sometimes rendered as 'releasement' or 'abandonment', but it also conveys relaxation, serenity and nonchalance, a condition of acceptance that is neither nihilistic nor fatalistic but the ability – and it may be a gift – to move gracefully through life's fortunes and accidents, or to wait out its calamities.', Robert Detweiler, *Breaking the Fall, Religious Readings of contemporary fiction*, London, The Macmillan Press, 1989, p.35

³²³ Translated from the German by myself and Matthias Rozemond.

'Das rechnende Denken kalkuliert. Es kalkuliert mit fortgesetzt neuen, mit immer aussichtsreicheren und zugleich billigeren Möglichkeiten. Das rechnende Denken hetzt von einer Chance zur nächsten. Das rechnende Denken hält nie still, kommt nicht zur Besinnung. Das rechnende Denken ist kein besinnliches Denken, kein Denken, das dem Sinn nachdenkt, der in allem waltet, was ist.' Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, pp. 14-15.

Gelassenheit in the face of things and the receptivity to the secret belong together. They provide us with the opportunity to be in the world in a completely different way.³²⁴

Gelassenheit enables us to recognise the secret in the text. This could be rephrased by saying that we can find our own reflection in the text. Robert Detweiler, in his book *Breaking the Fall: Religious Readings of Contemporary Fiction* rightly calls this reading in the spirit of *Gelassenheit* 'religious reading'. He says:

Religious reading, moreover, is the deep play that reminds us how the text can never *really* be completed, no more than the author or the reader. It is an effort that requires belief because we are always on the verge of being seduced by the (non-)vision of nothingness, the ultimate abstraction and the final goal of interpretation, and we need to recall, against that nihilism, the enduring inexpressibility of form that incessantly inspires our desire.³²⁵

The religious element in this way of reading is there not only in the fact that it requires belief, but also in the holding back of oneself, in which we free the space for the text to be itself, a space in which the text can show us something of its otherness, this is the same space as the Eckhartian space into which God is drawn in detachment.³²⁶

Reading in the spirit of *Gelassenheit* is not a technique, in the sense that it is something we can learn and then know how to do. For, as Detweiler says, we are 'constantly learning anew what religious reading is.'³²⁷ It is then rather learning to stand empty-handed, to be reminded again and again of the open-endedness of ourselves and the text, and in that it is an unlearning of the way we are taught to read; to be as critical and positional as possible. It is therefore practically unavoidable that we should forget how to do this, since our desire is generally not a 'desire dispossessed of the desire to possess'³²⁸ it will not be able to proceed in the spirit of *Gelassenheit*, as it is our desire to possess that leads us to treat language only as a means to our goal, as the Inquisitor uses Christ as a means to his

³²⁴ 'Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen und die Offenheit für das Geheimnis gehören zusammen. Sie gewähren uns die Möglichkeit, uns auf eine ganz andere Weise in der Welt aufzuhalten.' Ibid., p.26.

³²⁵ Detweiler, *Breaking the Fall*, p.46.

³²⁶ Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p.172.

³²⁷ Ibid., p.61.

³²⁸ See Denys Turner's discussion on Meister Eckhart's notion of detachment, in *The Darkness of God*, p.183

goals. The 'I' that is not completely identical with the 'this one here',³²⁹ in Scharlemann's words, is, in a sense, freed to be present in religious reading. Or, put differently, in 'religious reading' when we succeed, we cross the boundary between 'I' and not-I, in which the 'I' that cannot be part of the actuality that 'always already exists'³³⁰ can enter the circle.

The presence of the Christ-figure in 'the interview' is as an image of *Gelassenheit*, or, as I said earlier, of detachment. He does not enter into the narrative; he remains disembodied, and still is utterly present, yet is the one without whom all these words would remain unspoken. Only in the kiss, in the coming together of opposites is this *Gelassenheit* fulfilled, in that it fulfils its implicit promise. His passionlessness is not void of desire but rather a cleansed desire that no longer drains itself in it striving to possess its object; creating the paradox that through this passionlessness, he is ultimately the one that commands the situation. For us, religious reading is learning to dwell in the dissymmetry, a suspending of the voice that cannot stop asking 'what it means'. From the outside this perhaps resembles resignation or even indifference to what has been found to be uninterpretable, but in reality it can be a respecting of the openendedness in which the mystery can make itself known as mystery. It is an acknowledgment of our fallen state in its consequences; a recognition of guilt and of ourselves as doorkeepers.

4.5 Meister Eckhart's Anthropology and the Grand Inquisitor

Gelassenheit is then both a readiness and the ability to be changed by the text and not, as we might mistakenly think, indifference to the truth that we might find there. In this lies the *religious* element in 'reading religiously'; it is the difference between detachment and indifference; a difference that touches the boundaries of language; as language falls short in its ability to pin down any discernible difference. In the last of the Four Quartets, T.S

³²⁹ Scharlemann, *Reason of Following*, p.46.

³³⁰ As he says: 'To be human is to find oneself as the unity of the "I" and this-one-here, a unity of what can never exist with what does always already exist. Whether this unity of opposites involves a conflict (as it does in some existentialist conceptions of human being) or only a polarity is question that can be left open here.' *Ibid.*, p.49.

Eliot captures the difference between detachment, indifference³³¹ and attachment to 'self and to things and to persons', where detachment (indifference in his words) has the potential to appear as either one or the other:

There are three conditions which often look alike
 Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
 Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
 From self and from things and from persons: and, growing
 between them, indifference
 Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
 Being between two lives—unflowering , between
 The live and the dead the nettle. This is the use of memory:
 For liberation—not less of love but expanding
 Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
 From the future as well as the past...³³²

Indifference, here as detachment, is what dwells between the attachment to the world and detachment from the world, as being neither one nor the other. They can be present in the same place, or the same person. We are attached there where we are as the Grand Inquisitor, or even in the ignorance of Joseph K, where 'original sin' is simply our human condition. When we have no interest in what comes to us from the outside, as we do not perceive it to have any bearing on our own existence in the world, we become indifferent. The other side of the same coin is that when we do feel that something is important in sustaining our worldly existence, we act from attachment. For this there could be many different reason; varying from getting fed to gaining recognition from others as an affirmation of our worth. Indifference and attachment are then both manifestations of our existence in the world, without which life would become almost impossible and nearly unbearable.

In between we have detachment, which can appear in whatever way it wishes; not at all necessarily differing from the other two in its external appearance, as it is the inner place from which an action is performed; not the action itself. Eckhart's language of interiority and

³³¹ Note that T.S Eliot's use of the word 'indifference' is different from mine. His 'indifference' is much closer to what I have called detachment and vice versa.

³³² T.S Eliot, *Four Quartets*, London, Faber and Faber, 1959, p.40.

detachment is steering us towards silence. It steers us towards a subverting of the mental quest to possess the truth; to quench our thirst for knowledge. Rather, it must change us, as though trying to unite thinking and willing, as a uniting of light and darkness. Meister Eckhart sees detachment³³³ as the ground from which all other virtues are possible and the non-quality that brings us to the non-place where we unite with God. As he says:

I have read many writings both by the pagan teachers and by the prophets and in the Old and the New Law, and I have inquired, carefully and most industriously, to find which is the greatest and best virtue with which man can most completely and closely conform himself to God, with which he can become by grace what God is by nature, and with which man can come most of all to resemble that image which he has in God, and between which and God there was no distinction before ever God had created things. And as I scrutinise all these writings, so far as my reason can lead and instruct me, I find no other virtue better than a pure detachment from all things, because all other virtues have some regard for created things, but detachment is free from all created things.³³⁴

Detachment can therefore not be a 'quality' in the regular sense of the word, because in its being free of created things it cannot be something we possess as we might possess other qualities. Detachment is rather a deeply religious pose or attitude that strictly speaking is always present in us, but is usually buried deeply underneath layers of often unacknowledged fears and concerns that fill us with an infinite stream of inner chatter. To illustrate how detachment, as a non-quality is the force that enables what is virtuous, Eckhart explains to us that 'our Lady' could not have drawn attention to her detachment, for doing so would involve terminating her detached mode of being, even through the simple act of mentioning detachment:

And if she had, by so much as a word mentioned her detachment and had said: "He regarded my detachment," detachment would have been troubled by that, and would not have remained wholly perfect, for there would then have been a going

³³³ My use of the words *Gelassenheit* and the English word detachment have the same denotation but with different emphasis. Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, in the context of the religious reading of Robert Detweiler takes more the character of the *process* of learning to let go of the possessive nature of our interpretation. Eckhart's detachment, although an English translation of *Gelassenheit*, is more often discussed as though it is a state of being.

³³⁴ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.285.

out. There can be no going out, however small, in which detachment can remain unblemished.³³⁵

So even the naming then of detachment with regards to oneself is inappropriate and harmful, for in naming it, it becomes something we possess, like an asset, making it impossible for there to be any detachment, only the illusion of it. The absence of any such 'going out' then would mean that detachment cannot in reality be anything we can name in the way that we can recognise an act of kindness and identify it as such. So for a human being there can be no 'detached act' in the way that there can be a kind act, it could only be that that kindness is made possible by detachment. In apophatic fashion, Eckhart tells us that where detachment to be anything we could name, it could not be detachment: 'Now detachment approaches so closely to nothingness that there can be nothing between perfect detachment and nothingness.'³³⁶ To name detachment as if it were a quality is to say the unsayable, which ceases to be the unsayable as soon as it is spoken.

As far as the unsayable is God, the detached self is the divine nature in human beings; the place in us where opposites come together, where we are neither *this* nor *that*.³³⁷ It is the place where God is already and always present in us. Where God's self-emptying creates a multitude of all that exists, human self-emptying in the form of detachment creates an empty space where God is, as reading in the spirit of *Gelassenheit* creates space for the unsayable. Denys Turner puts it in the following way: 'Detachment is complete self-emptying: it is the digging out of a void, an abyss within the self, a vacuum into which God is inevitably drawn.'³³⁸ As Meister Eckhart himself says:

And yet I praise detachment above all love. First, because the best thing about love is that it compels me to love God, yet detachment compels God to love me. Now it is far greater for me to compel God to come to me than to compel myself to come to

³³⁵ Ibid., p.287.

³³⁶ Ibid., p.286.

³³⁷ Eckhart says about detachment: 'All it wants is to be. But to want to be this or that, this it does not want.' Ibid' p.287. And also: 'And what is the object of pure detachment? My answer is that neither this nor that is the object of pure detachment' Ibid., p.291.

³³⁸ Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p.172.

God; and that is because God is able to conform himself, far better and with more suppleness, and to unite himself with me than I could myself with God.³³⁹

The practice of negative theology as such can then only be to work on clearing this space for God, the space itself is already there. Accordingly, when Christ kisses the Inquisitor, the latter has a capacity for understanding what has happened to him, even though his 'inner man' was a stranger to him. In the following neo-platonic simile, Eckhart illustrates how what he calls the 'inner man' controls the movement of the 'outer man', as he compares the former to the hinge and the latter to the door. He says:

Consider a simile of this: A door, opening and shutting on a hinge. I compare the planks on the outside of the door with the outer man, but the hinge with the inner man. As the door opens and shuts, the outside planks move backwards and forwards, but the hinge remains immovable in one place, and the opening and shutting does not affect it. It is just the same here if you understand it rightly.³⁴⁰

The hinge serves as an image for the inner self which is always 'detached' and immovable, and, at the same time is the source of any possible movement. It serves to help us understand how the dichotomy of the inner and outer man only works when we use the language of the outer, or any human language for that matter, for that is the element in the simile that moves, the door cannot be in more than one place at the same time; its way of occupying its place in space we can relate to the outer man, which is the part of the human being³⁴¹ that lets itself be swayed from one thing to the next; the part that depends on its own external circumstances to have an experience of its own existence. The hinge, however, does not move, but holds within it the capacity to let the door move in any direction its circumstances dictate, without having to move itself.

Analogously, the Grand Inquisitor, in his encounter with Christ, is reunited with the source of his own being that he had forgotten, but perhaps never completely. In the kiss this estrangement is erased; the unity of the inner and the outer self is suddenly self-evident, the

³³⁹ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.286.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.291.

³⁴¹ Eckhart himself speaks of the 'members' of the human being.

alienation being obliterated by the kiss of Christ in erasing everything oppositional. In same way, Eckhart's 'inner self' knows that there is no distinction between inner and outer; for that reason it is the Christ-figure, who, with his utter interiority does the kissing, and erases the separateness; being himself undivided, already having overcome the dichotomy between inner and outer man. Elsewhere in speaking about Eckhart, Turner says: 'So the linguistic distinctions serve only the outer self.'³⁴² And also: 'The language of 'interiority' is, as it were, self-subverting: the more 'interior' we are the more our interiority opens out to that which is inaccessibly above and beyond.'³⁴³ The unity of the person³⁴⁴ is of great importance, for the achievements of Eckhart's apophatic anthropology falls or stands with its success. Eckhart's message is then perhaps an eschatological one; on the one hand having the unity of the human being always already realised and simultaneously having it as its end. In Christ there can be no distinction, and so what Eckhart describes is both divine reality and the human reality of the process towards the realisation of this union. The inner self is only placed in opposition to the outer self as a way to 'lift' the duality; for the inner self is already one with Christ; as it was never other than Christ.

4.6 The Grand Inquisitor and the unknowing of Nicolas of Cusa

The inner self is that part of ourselves that is always above and beyond the everyday cares of the outer self, that part of us that is always already detached, even if none of that detachment is recognised by us. It is in fact the part where we always already 'know' God, not as an object of knowledge, as only the outer self would relate in that way, but precisely as the space where there is no distinction between knower and known, so that strictly speaking we cannot distinguish between who is known by whom.³⁴⁵ The dichotomy that the

³⁴² Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p.208.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.69.

³⁴⁴ This is of course in part what Eckhart was charged with by the Inquisitors at Avignon; breaking the person into two, where one part is divine and the other is not.

³⁴⁵ Don Cupitt in his book *Mysticism after Modernity* rightly asks the question of how we can still speak of knowledge when the subject-object distinction is transcended. He says: 'In the mystical the subject-object distinction is transcended; yet such experience is always described as noetic. How can there be *knowledge* if there is no longer any distinction between the knower and the known?' p.25. Cupitt is concerned with showing that in fact it is unintelligible to speak of knowledge, and mystical experience, as knowledge is dependent on language, and where there is language there is the subject-object distinction. However true that is, there remains the 'experience' of unity with the divine that Eckhart and Nicolas of Cusa enable when language is

Inquisitor constructed is what led him to be estranged from the Other, but it is erased by the unsayable in the kiss. In this climax of the story his estrangement from his own fallenness becomes a form of learned ignorance. In being stripped of everything he acquired in worldly wisdom, he suddenly gets to know himself as a human being. We can then say that what the way of detachment is to the soul, learned ignorance is to the mind, although, such a distinction is bound to be somewhat artificial in the context of the spiritual life of the human being where everything is intertwined.

The fifteenth century Cardinal and theologian, Nicolas of Cusa, introduced the term learned ignorance, it is the awareness of our unknowing of God, where ignorance is not simple ignorance but an acquired ignorance, enlightened by its own knowing and then unknowing.³⁴⁶ Here the ratio meets its own limits when it meets – and is humbled by – the infinite when trying to speak of God. Denys Turner calls this ‘the acquired ignorance of the via negativa.’³⁴⁷ Nicolas of Cusa’s search was for unity of thought, overcoming opposition in thought,³⁴⁸ as has been noted by Birgit H. Helander,³⁴⁹ where the way of learned ignorance is there to make us see that we cannot know God only through the ratio; that we have to be changed through our efforts. Here the mind is no longer alienated and aloof from the heart. In other words, this means knowing ourselves to be known by God, for, as Nicolas of Cusa says in the following passage; learned ignorance only has its place in our singularity:

Aristotle in his First Philosophy affirms it to be true of the things most evident to us in nature—then in presence of such difficulty we may be compared to owls trying to look at the sun; but since the natural desire in us for knowledge is not without purpose, its immediate object is our own ignorance. If we can fully realise this desire, we will acquire learned ignorance. Nothing could be more beneficial for even the most

pushed to its boundaries. This is not necessarily an extra-linguistic experience as it is an experience of truth that is ‘freed up’ in the process of deconstruction.

³⁴⁶ Nicolas of Cusa devoted a lot of study to the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Aereopagite, Brigit H. Helander, ‘The Search for a Perspective on the Unity of the Universe’ In *Nicolas of Cusa on Christ and the Church: Essays in Memory of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, edited by Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki, Leiden, New York and Koln, E.J. Brill, 1996. p.312. This becomes apparent in his ideas of knowing and unknowing; reminiscent Pseudo-Dionysius’ notion of affirmations and their denials. See his *Mystical Theology* and *The Divine Names*, both in *The Selected Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, New York and Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1987, pp.135-141 and pp. 45-131.

³⁴⁷ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p. 19.

³⁴⁸ John van Schaik, *In het Hart is Hij te vinden: een Geschiedenis van de Christelijke Mystiek*, Zeist NL, Uitgeverij Christofoor, 2005, p.114

³⁴⁹ Brigit H. Helander, ‘The Search for a Perspective on the Unity of the Universe’ In *Nicolas of Cusa on Christ and the Church: Essays in Memory of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, p.309-321.

zealous searcher for knowledge than his being in fact, most learned in that very ignorance which is peculiarly his own; the better a man will have known his own ignorance, the greater his learning will be.³⁵⁰

This is then characteristic of what we call the negative; it cannot be 'had' as something we can share, at least directly, or given away. It is akin to the door in the parable of the doorkeeper, where 'No one but you could gain admittance through this door'³⁵¹ in the words of the doorkeeper. Learned ignorance then is, as he says, *peculiarly our own*, it is no longer the universal, it is not knowledge that we can share through language directly. This is the difficulty that Derrida undertakes to communicate in 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials'; by spending most of the lecture speaking about the anxiety and reluctance of speaking about the negative. The secret of the 'knowledge' of unknowing then only divulges its 'secret' when the outer in Eckhart, and the mind in Nicolas of Cusa, cease their activity without ceasing to be present so that we ourselves can be known; exposed by the text. In the same way, the Grand Inquisitor's inability to perceive the way in which his language is falling short is sensed by the reader. He himself remains still immune to the address it contains. In 'How to Avoid Speaking', Derrida comments on the paradoxical nature of what we have been calling 'the secret':

At the crossing point of these two languages, each of which *bears* the silence of the other, a secret must and must not allow itself to be divulged. It can and it cannot do this. One must not divulge, but it is also necessary to make known or rather allow to be known this "it is necessary," "one must not" or "it is necessary not to."³⁵²

In acquired ignorance, opposites can come together; but ultimately this leads to the cessation of speech, as the Grand Inquisitor has lost all desire to continue his speech after the kiss. As Nicolas of Cusa says:

In all faces the face of faces veiled and in enigma. It is not seen unveiled so long as one does not enter into a certain secret and hidden silence beyond all faces where there is no knowledge or concept of a face. This cloud, mist, darkness or ignorance

³⁵⁰ Nicolas of Cusa, *Of Learned Ignorance*, p.8.

³⁵¹ Kafka, *The trial*, p.198.

³⁵² Derrida, 'How to Avoid speaking: Denials' In *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, edited by Stanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, Stanford Cal., Stanford University Press, 1996. pp.3-70.

into which whoever seeks your face enters when one leaps beyond every knowledge and concept is such that below it your face cannot be found except veiled.³⁵³

The Grand Inquisitor, before the *coincidentia oppositorum*, sees the Christ figure's eyes on him, but as yet, to him, there is hardly anything deconstructing about this gaze, and therefore there is no divine address. Christ remains veiled to him until the kiss. Only retrospectively does he know that 'he has been read'. It is the most sudden and shocking putting on of learned ignorance. His atheism had up till that point protected him, much like a shield, from this terrifying exposure in the divine address.

The Inquisitor's atheism consists not of rejecting God's existence as such; it is more akin to Ivan's atheism, not in rejecting God's existence but rejecting God's world.³⁵⁴ As we already noted; Ivan says just after he speaks of returning his entry ticket: 'It is not God I do not accept, Alyosha. I merely most respectfully return him the ticket.'³⁵⁵ The Grand Inquisitor is the final stage of the part of Ivan's mind that cannot accept the suffering in the world. Ivan however, is fundamentally different in that he possesses no such shield, and never fails to feel the divine gaze on him; in rejecting the broken world, where paradoxically this brokenness has become necessary, through Christ, for God to have access to this world, the Grand Inquisitor also rejects the dissymmetry: he says: 'But I woke up and refused to serve madness.'³⁵⁶ In this short sentence, uttered after his declaration of independence from Christ, he rejects the impossible struggle involved in following Christ that is too much to ask from the masses. Instead, he has taken this burden upon himself, absorbing sin, in order to shield humanity from the burden of dissymmetry. But for him too this has become a shield. He is an honest man for having abandoned the idea of reconciliation in a world where there is suffering of the innocent and where reconciliation comes at such a cost. In spite of the fact that the Inquisitor is so manifestly a character attached to the outer self in his deep identification with his role as cardinal and inquisitor, and linear in thinking, it is paradoxically

³⁵³ Nicolas of Cusa, *On The Vision of God*, In *Nicolas of Cusa, Selected Spiritual Writings*, p.244.

³⁵⁴ Ivan's atheism is ambiguous; in his conversation with Alyosha he says that it is just God's world he rejects. Dostoevsky, BK, p. 275. However, earlier in the story, in a conversation with his father, he utterly denies God's existence when his father asks him: "But tell me all the same: is there a God or not? Only seriously, mind! I want it seriously now." 'No, there is no God.'" Dostoevsky, BK, pp.155-156. Ivan's relationship with atheism appears to shift with time, or is dependent on his conversational partner.

³⁵⁵ Dostoevsky, BK, p.287.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.305.

through his rejection of dissymmetry that the outer self cannot come into its own. In his alienation from his Other in Christ his outer self too is estranged, suspended in the no-man's-land of non-belief, unable to know itself. In this curse of ignorance, the asymmetrical way of the world can only appear in its binary reality of glorious and horrific. Hence for him too there is no freedom.

Rejecting any form of detachment means that we close-off dwelling with and *in* these two-faces of dissymmetry, and as a result we also close-off the possibility of letting the unsayable be an encounter with truth. The asymmetrical only appears in its outer manifestations of glory and betrayal. To the old man then this atheism is not simply a rejection of God's world in all its manifoldness, but of the asymmetrical in that world, for it is this that is the source of openendedness; the unbearable freedom that he speaks of. The 'glorious', is not an option for most of us, as the Inquisitor says to his visitor:

Or are only the scores of thousands of the great and strong dear to you, and are the remaining millions, numerous as the sand of the sea, who are weak but who love you, to serve only as the material for the great and strong? No, to us the weak too are dear.³⁵⁷

Deeply reasonable as he is, he sees with pronounced sharpness how this dissymmetry is responsible for the surges of the spirit that can always destabilise ethics. Binary structures of opposition can provide the illusion of stability he needs to be able to offer humanity protection against the constant and burning presence of God. This presence will mostly be felt indirectly, through the impossibility of being wholly good and the unease this brings about. In his old age however he has forgotten that he himself is also out in the open, as his drive to protect humanity from the depths of the abyss has become his attachment. Then the opposition is suddenly eradicated, denied as though it never existed. Immanence and transcendence become one seething presence. The implication of the asymmetrical then suddenly becomes abundantly clear; to the Inquisitor; as his own identity; that rested on the binary opposition. His identity was defined by a rejection of Christ, which is at that point annihilated. In this radical breaking of these boundaries the Grand Inquisitor has nothing and Christ has everything. We would be saying the same thing in putting it such that the Grand

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p.299.

Inquisitor is suddenly fully addressed in his inner self, where he is nothing, as there can be 'nothing between perfect detachment and nothingness.'³⁵⁸ to recall Eckhart. And for this he was, almost by definition, not prepared.

For a moment his spirit is no longer suspended when the curse of ignorance becomes an instance of learned ignorance and in that moment it is no longer apparent who has betrayed whom. In *The Descent into Hell* Thomas Altizer says about the moment of reversal:

It must rather be accomplished by an individual act of giving. And not only a dying to our public image or our persona, but more deeply a dying to that private selfhood which is most interiorly and individually our own.³⁵⁹

Now, when we return to the learned ignorance of Nicolas of Cusa, we can recall in that in the infinite, in God, all distinctions become one. He illustrates this idea using geometry, where the circle, when we imagine it becoming ever wider, must eventually become equal to a straight line. At the moment when the distinction between circle and line has disappeared, the circle gives up its centre as something distinct from the periphery. The Grand Inquisitor is not only stripped of his public persona but in the momentary of the coming together of opposites, he must know that even that intimate, singular interior self belongs to Christ. He now knows that there is no outside. This 'dying to that private selfhood' then must feel like giving up one's own centre.

4.7 Betrayal of the Self

When T.S Eliot speaks of liberation from future as well as past, we can now get a sense of what is meant, as the kiss, as the *coincidentia oppositorum* gives an impression of timelessness, it bears the characteristics of a revelation; in revealing what actually is already the case; that his union with Christ was already realised. For the Grand Inquisitor, whose identity is anchored in being other than Christ, this kiss, as a Judas-kiss, does not unveil to

³⁵⁸ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.286

³⁵⁹ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.160.

him the knowledge that from that moment on he belongs to Christ, but rather that this was the truth of his situation from the very beginning. This then entails a radical revision of the life he has lead up till that point. To us, this revolutionary moment is eschatological as it denies that before this kiss there ever were any two separate entities, or that there could ever be such a thing. The linear world of the Inquisitor is unexpectedly exposed as temporary and even illusory. It is revealed to be the construct that it is.

In this *coincidentia oppositorum*, in which what was seen as two separate identities revealed as a seething unity, the reader can feel that they are one and always were one. When we and the Inquisitor return to our senses, the newly uncovered reality leaves us with the insight that these entities are mutually dependent; Christ relies on the Inquisitor as he relied on Judas, without whom there would have been no crucifixion and resurrection. The Grand Inquisitor is divinised, as his otherness from Christ is radically denied. Against his knowing it was perhaps his Other that lead him to this moment, it was then by the same token he himself that lead him to this moment to be consumed by himself/Other the way the ascetic consumes himself, or in the words of Thomas Altizer in *The Descent into Hell*:

Now the "I" takes into itself everything from which it has withdrawn itself, and therefore it ceases to stand apart. In losing its autonomy, it loses its own unique centre or ground, and thereby it loses everything which had once appeared as an individual identity or "face."³⁶⁰

The inner self as the ground of the human being, or the 'hinge', in Eckhart's simile, does not shed the self of attachment, the apophasis is not the moment at which we identify fully with our divine nature, but the moment at which the outer self is divinized; no longer suspended in the no-mans-land of alienation from the self. Rather, it is taken into the inner-self for the inner self to become outer and the outer to become inner. The Christ-figure moves for the first time in the interview: 'But suddenly he approached the old man and kissed him on the bloodless aged lips.'³⁶¹ For the old man this moment must be like dying. In *The Reasons of the Heart*, John S Dunne says:

³⁶⁰ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.155.

³⁶¹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

Releasing and being released is like dying, like willingly dying. It is like going through the letting go of everyone and everything one is called upon to go through on one's deathbed.³⁶²

It is a moment of being turned inside-out and outside-in; and in that he loses that which he thought could never be taken from him; his own distinct identity; in this same way, Nicolas of Cusa's circle loses its centre when it becomes its own absolute maximum in becoming both circle and infinite line.³⁶³

For the one being kissed this apophasis is like being forsaken by God, as every form of knowledge is eradicated, even the denial finally denied with no further negations to follow. For the Grand Inquisitor this is his crucifixion, the giving up of the self that knows itself in what is Other than itself. As Altizer says in *The Descent into Hell* about Christ's death:

Jesus not only fully realizes his work and proclamation in his death; but in his death he wholly died to everything which was individually and particularly himself.³⁶⁴

In this role-reversal, the Inquisitor is asked to die to everything that is individually and particularly himself. The Grand Inquisitor is then no longer grand inquisitor or cardinal, or anything belonging to this world. What he is given is everything he rejected. Stripped of his outward identity, he is overcome by the negative in the truly apophatic fashion that reveals a secret without disclosing it. In the words which Pseudo-Dionysius addresses to Timothy at the beginning of *The Mystical Theology*:

For this I pray; and, Timothy, my friend, my advice to you as you look for sight of the mysterious things, is to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge.³⁶⁵

³⁶² John S. Dunne, *The Reasons of the Heart*, p.61.

³⁶³ As Nicolas of Cusa says in *Of Learned Ignorance*: 'If the curved line becomes less curved by as much as the circumference of the circles increases, then the circumference of the maximum circle, which cannot be greater, is minimally curved and therefore maximally straight. Consequently, the minimum coincides with the maximum in such a way that the eye perceives that the maximum line must be maximally straight and minimally curved.' In *Nicolas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings* p.103.

³⁶⁴ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.140.

³⁶⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, in *The Complete Works*, p.135.

The Grand Inquisitor's initiation into the secret must take the form of a betrayal, and perhaps, ultimately, such an initiation always is. To him, the kiss is equal to having the question put before us whether we are willing to die to everything we hold dear. At the same time, everything he held dear is placed before him, with all the iniquities that were his; all the shortcomings that he could simply not afford to look at while in his role as Inquisitor. He explains to Christ that in taking it upon himself to act in Christ's name he is forced to lie: 'That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie.'³⁶⁶ And a bit further on in his speech he says: 'And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as benefactors who have taken their sins upon ourselves before God.'³⁶⁷ His role made it necessary for him to absorb his own sins³⁶⁸ in order to be an authority for the people, instead of being a human being amongst human beings, equally uncertain and fragile. His identity therefore became so inextricably allied to his role that sudden separation appears in a gaping nothingness.

4.8 The descent into hell

Dying to his private selfhood is therefore his descent into his own hell; having to face up to every short-coming entailed in his words; having to undergo the crumbling of the construction that gave his words their truth. In the face of Christ's presence, these constructs now disappear into the bottomless pit of relativism. Yet this relativism is not a philosophical relativism in which everything must finally lose its meaning and language loses its ability to speak meaningfully. It is the opposite of such philosophical relativism that leads to nihilism, it relativizes all that is not absolute, and in doing so makes manifest the unconditional relationship to the absolute, a relationship that then holds the individual to maximum accountability. It is thus the opposite of nihilism and in that a moment of dying as is present in the kiss, it appears as absolute nothingness. Here the Inquisitor loses Christ as his opponent and has not yet gained him as his own Other who would never leave him as a human being. The kiss then puts the responsibility for every word he spoke and every deed

³⁶⁶ Dostoevsky, BK, p.297.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. p.304.

³⁶⁸ David Jasper.

he has done onto the old man's human shoulders, raising what was ethical to the hyper-ethical,³⁶⁹ but also descending to nothingness at the same time, as the Inquisitor dies to everything that gave his efforts their context.

The moment of deification is for the Inquisitor first and foremost his descent into hell, and, through the breaking down of all his worldly attachments he must become human again. That which placed him above his congregation is burned away. He can, in the future, only serve others as one human being to another; in equal vulnerability. In this he mirrors Christ's descent into hell, for if Christ had only ascended into heaven his connection with humanity and the earth is lost and he becomes just solely the haughty and elusive being that he appeared to be to the Grand Inquisitor before the kiss. Thomas Altizer rightly maintains that Christianity, perhaps more than any other religion, has such an intimate relationship with the fall that the 'the death of God' has become necessary for the Christian narrative of salvation to become possible. He says:

If ancient Christianity envisioned Christ as ascending ever higher into Heaven, we must envision Jesus as descending ever deeper into Hell. Eternal death or Hell is his final destiny, and not as its passive and impotent victim, but rather as a consequence of the Word which he embodied and proclaimed.³⁷⁰

Without the descent into hell the Christian narrative could have no bearing on our lives, Christ would be seen as God or as a remarkable human being, but he would be powerless to bridge the God-man divide. Only by descending into hell, and in the Grand Inquisitor's case the hell particular to the human individual that he is can there be salvation.

It is then not only that we can call the fall the 'fortunate fall' because it gave us Christ, but Christ *could* not come to us at all if it were not for our affiliation with the devil, as Robert Detweiler notes: 'Christ needs the broken individual.'³⁷¹ That is not to say that we

³⁶⁹ See also Paul Ricoeur, who uses the term hyper-ethical in stating that the public realm of legal and legalistic relations is necessary to progress to a higher order. As he says: 'in short, it is possible that a whole part of human existence, the *public* part, cannot raise itself above the fear of punishment and that this fear is the indispensable means by which man advances toward a different order, hyperethical in a way, where fear would be entirely confounded with love. Hence the abolition of fear could only be the *horizon*, and so to speak, the eschatological future.' *The Symbolism of Evil*, p.45.

³⁷⁰ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.129.

³⁷¹ Robert Detweiler, *Breaking the Fall*, p.81.

need to be evil, but to discount the possibility or the wish to be free of sin. 'Sin' comes to us in every attachment that we have to world in which we, like the Inquisitor have to absorb certain evils to be who we are. Only in retreating from the world as much as possible without physically dying of starvation could we then be as blameless as possible; but never entirely. In this way it is the apophatic that is capable of holding us accountable in the way that the Inquisitor is held responsible by the Christ-figure. The apophatic holds the potential to deconstruct the layers of worldly identity that envelop us, and is therefore the force that can address us where we are neither this nor that.³⁷² The apophatic itself is always a horizon; 'just' the *threat* of us losing our centre of gravity. But without this threat God can only be worshipped as a creature. Nicolas of Cusa, in the following reference to the beginning of John's Gospel, notes that this light of the negative is always present, but remains unrecognised by our darkness:

He who is worshipped as Light Inaccessible, is not light that is material, the opposite of which is darkness, but light absolutely simple and infinite in which darkness is infinite light; that He who is infinite light itself shines always in the darkness of our ignorance, but the darkness cannot comprehend the Light. Negative Theology, in consequence, is so indispensable to affirmative theology that without it God would be adored, not as the Infinite but rather as a creature, which is idolatry, or giving to an image what is due to truth alone.³⁷³

Without this darkness of our ignorance, God would become an idol, fallenness is therefore needed to worship in truth. Without the apophatic there could be no meaningful theological discourse, it would become only an impenetrable image, incapable of speaking to us through what it is incapable of representing and incapable of the moral address. It could perhaps speak to us as members of society, as the law does, or as members of the species, but not as individuals. In other words, it could only speak to our outer selves. Neither could there be justice, as Derrida demonstrated in his essay 'The Force of Law', unless we are prepared to go through the ordeal of the undecidable, which only the individual can do when they are prepared stand empty-handed. The same is true for the Inquisitor's words, deeply worldly and heavy with reason, which could not contain any ethical tension if it were

³⁷² See also: Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.287 and p.291.

³⁷³ Nicolas of Cusa, *Of Learned Ignorance*, p.60.

not for the deconstructing gaze of the Other. The apophatic has as its end the unsayable, which is always present in language. This is what enables us to know our own fallenness, because it enables us to be other than our fallenness. In the same way we and Ivan feel accountable for what we cannot be; namely saints, the Grand Inquisitor is held accountable for every lack through the Christ-figure's silence. The moral address comes from the unsayable, which in its turn can only be heard through our broken condition. Consequently, if it is through the fall that we have been given the potential to become free, this freedom is not fully realised until we are raised to the hyper-ethical by Christ. This realisation of freedom could not come about without Christ's descent into hell and eventually our own descent into hell.

4.9 Ivan Karamazov and the descent into hell

As the descent into hell entails the letting go of 'everything perceived and understood'³⁷⁴, it must mean that termination of even our unique centre; every position we occupied in the world from which we could judge right and wrong is suspended. Consequently ethics can no longer exist in the form of moral law. This must be the terrifying freedom that the Inquisitor deems humanity incapable of. This freedom that comes at the moment of deification, in which the ethical in its worldly semblance is no more, might be the freedom that Ivan feels to be impending; the moment at which everything is permitted. For him this moment has not come yet, but its presence is felt like the approaching of death, as Ivan says to Alyosha right after telling him the story of the Grand Inquisitor': 'I told you all I want is to live till thirty and then – dash the cup to the floor!³⁷⁵

The kind of atheism commentators have traditionally credited Ivan with,³⁷⁶ is one of conflicting beliefs, not in the least because of that striking phrase of 'everything is

³⁷⁴ See: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, in *The Complete Works*, p.135.

³⁷⁵ Dostoevsky, BK, p.308.

³⁷⁶ For instance, Robert L. Jackson, in his book *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions*, maintains that Ivan's struggle is the result of what for Ivan himself are conflicting beliefs: 'The torment of Ivan Karamazov as God-struggler is that he allows for the existence of religious moral law but does not believe in the immortality of the soul or the goodness of man.' Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993. p.295.

permitted.³⁷⁷ In the light of 'The Grand Inquisitor' however it looks as though Ivan's conflicting beliefs are not so much beliefs as they are two realities about human existence that he has not been able to bring together yet. On the one hand there is the unconditional love for life and for the world, a force that is just there, and on the other hand there is the reality of suffering that makes him feel that the former force of love and optimism could never be justified; that he has no right to feel that way. Although such an inner conflict is by no means unique to Ivan, he suffers more deeply as a result of his profound honesty which renders him unable to avoid the impact of the strain brought about by these opposing forces. The virtually inescapable result is that he rejects God's world. Ivan is therefore at a crossroads where the end of suffering is either demonic; the lawlessness of everything is permitted; or divine; the hyper-ethical, as the termination of the law, in which everything is permitted.

Ivan's present state of being does not relieve or avoid suffering; it rather cultivates it by default. It projects its pain into the abyss, while having to hold the ethical tension without even the promise of release, for Ivan there can be no going back, and so release could only be found in salvation or lawlessness. The position Ivan finds himself in is that his descent into hell has already started, yet his own fallenness is what he cannot accept. He is the personification of the tension between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor. Altizer in *The Descent into Hell*, notes that when the Christian fails to acknowledge his fallen ground, Christian love becomes demonic, as he says:

Love, as the Christian has been given it in Christ, is not acceptance and affirmation of the other. It is rather an attack upon all the distance that creates the alien and the other, an assault upon the actual estrangement of a fallen condition. Christian love is illusory and demonic when it ignores or sets aside its fallen ground, attempting to bridge the unbridgeable by pity or feeling.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ Dostoevsky, BK, p.309.

⁵⁹ Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, pp. 201-2.

³⁷⁸ In her book *On the Mystery: Discerning the Mystery in Process*, Catherine Keller makes a related point in which she emphasizes that agapic love, as traditionally interpreted by Christians, renders the individual powerless to really act and make structural changes, as the idea of turning the other cheek is not taken as a *law* of love; she then says: 'Agapic or compassionate love has seemed sentimental, ineffectual, patronising. It prefers charity to structural change. In response we can only insist: those who are oppressed don't want our compassion, they *just* want justice. They want a shift in the structures of power that block their possibilities that shut down their life process.' Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, p.114.

This is in fact the kind of dangerous outlook that Flannery O'Connor attributes Ivan with when she says:

One of the tendencies of our age is to use the suffering of children to discredit the goodness of God, and once you have discredited his goodness, you are done with him.

And a bit further, O'Connor stresses the fact that in our inability to see our own fallenness we become powerless to feel the presence of God:

Busy cutting down human imperfection, they are making headway also in the raw material of good. Ivan Karamazov cannot believe, as long as one child is in torment; [...] ³⁷⁹

Ivan rejects the necessity of the broken world in the salvation narrative, as does the Grand Inquisitor; at least in practice. This amounts to a conscious rejection of the dissymmetry; recognition of brokenness but a rejection of its necessity. Only a fallen human being in the fallen world could occupy such a position; it is the ultimate state of brokenness, with the maximum distance between the individual and the world. Not only is the separation of the inner and the outer world a given fact about the human condition, but the world is even rejected. When, as in the case of Ivan, he still loves that world, the ethical is stretched to its limit, with moral perfection constantly at the horizon but necessarily out of reach. ³⁸⁰

For the Inquisitor this reality is inverted when he himself momentarily becomes part of that horizon. That does not strictly speaking mean the ethical tension is now a thing of the past as the paradox lies therein that without this condition of fallenness the coincidence of opposites cannot occur. The call of the so-called hyper-ethical cannot do without the ethical, as in Pauline theology love and grace cannot do without the law. In this radical reversal between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor it was first the Inquisitor who let Christ die in his church when now he himself has to return the favour.

³⁷⁹ Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.227.

³⁸⁰ As has been noted by Edith Wyschogrod in her book *Saints and Post-Modernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p.150

4.10 The Sainthood

As the Inquisitor now knows, after ethics, the moral address only comes in its infinite form, transfiguring everything to become ethical; where in the previous order of things, the ethical existed by delineating what does and does not belong to its domain or realm, it is now without boundaries. Without these boundaries, its demand becomes infinite, while simultaneously withholding every particular imperative command. Just as Dostoevsky's Christ withholds every particular command, but, in this reversal of the worldly order, commands everything about the situation through his inwardness. In the kiss the Inquisitor perhaps suddenly recognises his mirror image in front of him, which shatters everything he held dear by exposing him to everything he is not. This is what Simone Weil calls the 'real knowledge of their wretchedness,³⁸¹ which she attributes to the saint³⁸², to whom the whole of their existence can become the reflection of their own brokenness; an unrelenting reminder of the impossibility of being entirely good³⁸³. The saint, or the possible saint, is the one who knows that absolute sainthood is unattainable. Sainthood can then only ever be a horizon as far as its actual realisation is concerned.

Ivan suffers because he feels guilty for having failed to see that Smerdyakov might interpret his words as the condoning of killing the old Karamazov. However, as Sergius Bulgakov says; Alyosha allowed it to happen as much as Ivan did.³⁸⁴ The American Jewish philosopher Edith Wyschogrod, in her book *Saints and Post-Modernism: Revisioning Moral philosophy* puts the impossibility of absolute sainthood as follows:

³⁸¹ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.74.

³⁸² After the word 'saint' she fittingly writes: '(those who are nearly saints)'. Ibid., p.74.

³⁸³ In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt discusses the simple *impossibility* of goodness in the public life, as its essential 'worldlessness' (*sic*) makes it a superhuman quality. She says: 'The philosopher can always count upon his thoughts to keep him company, whereas good deeds can never keep anybody company; they must be forgotten the moment they are done, because even memory will destroy their quality of being "good."' moreover, thinking, because it can be remembered, can crystalize into thought, and thoughts, like all things that owe their existence to remembrance, can be transformed into objects which, like the written page or the printed book, become part of human artifice. Good works, because they must be forgotten instantly, can never become part of the world; they come and go, leaving no trace. They truly are not of this world.' p.77.

³⁸⁴ Sergius Bulgakov, p.37.

Still another factor, the factuality of hagiography, precludes the notion of full saintly realization. The temporal horizon of factual interpretation intersects the saintly narrative so that the narrative can never be brought to closure.³⁸⁵

The realisation of the saintly narrative is as impossible as it is to live in the permanent state of dying and negation that the Inquisitor has to endure in the kiss while still having to remain living in the world. The other-worldliness of the wholly good becomes moreover manifest in the fact that time goes forward and makes it impossible to do good when the full consequences of what we do are virtually always out of our hands, so that we have to accept that guilt cannot be avoided; that there can be no return to paradise. This is perhaps what Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, names as the eternal 'too late'³⁸⁶ that makes what he calls 'higher man' suffer. The obligation of the possible saint is an impossible one; demanding complete annihilation of the self. As Thomas Merton in *The Wisdom of the Desert* said about the hermit, as a person who retreated from the world: 'The Hermit had to be man mature in faith, humble and detached from himself to a degree that is absolutely terrible.'³⁸⁷

The call to respond to the world with infinite love,³⁸⁸ to use Derrida's term, can only be answered with complete other worldliness, otherwise the good deed ceases to be good as soon as it becomes entwined in the causal chain of events full of desirable and less desirable consequences. The demand for holiness is like a void into which the possible saint is drawn, which cannot be resisted emotionally and intellectually, as in the case of Ivan who does not spare himself or the world in his thoughts. Ivan does not tolerate any illusory sense of harmony or reconciliation that could give the believer comfort, and such reconciliation requires that evil cannot be looked squarely in the face. In the long conversation he has with

See also Derrida in *The Gift of Death*, here he says that goodness can only exist on the condition that there be annihilation of self to the extent that the good act is free of self-awareness: 'On what condition does goodness exist beyond all calculation? 'On the condition that goodness forget itself, that movement be a movement of the gift that renounces itself, hence a movement of infinite love' pp. 50-51. Finally the reference is of course also Biblical; in Luke 18:19 Jesus is asked by 'a certain ruler': 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.'

³⁸⁵ Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Post-modernism*, p.150.

³⁸⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Helen Zimmern, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1997, p.136.

³⁸⁷ Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century*, translated by Thomas Merton, New York, New Direction Book, 1970, p.7.

³⁸⁸ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, pp. 50-51, p.56.

Alyosha in the inn where he eventually comes up with 'The Grand Inquisitor', it emerges that he has collected a long list of stories, from other times and places and from nineteenth century Russia itself, of the suffering of children: 'I've collected a great deal of facts about Russian children, Alyosha³⁸⁹ The suffering of the innocent who have not eaten of the apple yet³⁹⁰, exposes the unbridgeable distance that evil has opened up between us and God, and of which we are nearly always (perhaps necessarily) forgetful in some way, including novice Alyosha, or perhaps especially Alyosha. After telling a story of the naked serf-boy being chased by the hounds of his master (an ex-army General), because he had thrown a stone at one of the hounds; Ivan then says about the General:

'Well, what was one to do with him? Shoot him? Shoot him for the satisfaction of our moral feelings? Tell me Alyosha!

'Shoot him!' Alyosha said softly, raising his eyes to his brother with a pale, twisted sort of smile.

'Bravo!' yelled Ivan with something like rapture. 'If you say so, then—you're a fine hermit! So that's the sort of little demon living in your heart, Alyosha Karamazov!'

'What I said was absurd,—'

'Yes, but that's the trouble, isn't it?' cried Ivan. 'Let me tell you, novice, that absurdities are only too necessary on earth. The world is founded on absurdities and perhaps without them nothing would come to pass in it.'³⁹¹

In getting Alyosha to see the inherent paradox in his belief in reconciliation, he has made visible this void that we are so used to living with; between being unavoidably attached to the world and always already beyond that world. Ivan deliberately lays bare to Alyosha the paradox of brokenness, and the absurdity we have to get involved in to keep up the pretence of reconciliation, perhaps the result of nearly two thousand years of Christian thought. Instead of simulating reconciliation, Ivan *lives* this absurdity; he can neither reject it through some new intellectual construct, nor does he sidestep it through a form of dishonesty; as Alyosha said at the beginning of their exchange: 'Ivan is a riddle.'³⁹² Ivan has earlier on already responded to the paradox that he has exposed by saying that in spite of everything he loves life, even if the mind cannot be reconciled with the heart:

³⁸⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.282.

³⁹⁰ Ivan says to Alyosha about young children: 'But little children haven't eaten anything, and so far are not guilty of anything.' Dostoevsky, BK, p.278.

³⁹¹ Ibid., pp.284-5.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 267.

'It's not a matter of intellect or logic. You love with all your inside, with your belly. You love to feel your youthful powers asserting themselves for the first time. . . .Do you understand anything of this rigmarole, Alyosha, or don't you? Ivan suddenly laughed.³⁹³

In this part of the conversation he also speaks to Alyosha about going travelling through Europe, although, as he says, 'I know very well that I'm only going to a graveyard, but it's a most precious graveyard – yes, indeed!³⁹⁴' Ivan here experiences the world as dead; an empty shell. And it is most likely no coincidence that this graveyard is specifically mentioned as Europe, as the way the Russian experiences the spiritual climate in Western Europe as impoverished by intellectualism. Europe; having gone through the reformation followed by the enlightenment; leaving materialism and intellectualism in its wake, harbours a spiritual climate that is markedly akin to Ivan's, but then Ivan, being a Russian, is able to experience it as dead and paradoxical. He says about this 'graveyard':

Every stone of them speaks of such ardent life in the past, of such passionate faith in their achievements, their truth, their struggles, and their science, that I know beforehand that I shall fall on the ground and kiss those stones and weep and weep over them and – and at the same time deeply convinced that it's long been a graveyard and nothing more.³⁹⁵

The dual nature of his response becomes evident in these words; on the one hand the world is devoid of meaning, with no divine presence left in it, the days of paradise as far away as they could be, and on the other the love for life and the world is just there, without needing any ethical ground. Moreover, Ivan knows that there can never be such an ethical justification unless we pretend that the paradox of brokenness is just not there, which in turn means a betrayal of our humanity, as the Grand Inquisitor has done.

Owing to this truthfulness in Ivan, his response resembles nihilism, but, especially in the light of Ivan's 'legend of the Grand Inquisitor' certainly also permits us to read it entirely differently. It is however no surprise that commentators have held the book to be about

³⁹³ Ibid., p.269.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p269.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p.269.

demonism, the kind of nihilism that can only resort to hedonism and needs ever more sensual pleasures to avoid reflection. As was noted in chapter one; it is thought that the Starets Zossima should be the antidote to this demonism.³⁹⁶

Yet the nature of Ivan's struggle runs deeper; it is not a simple denial of the ethical he is heading for, his suffering is inescapable; there is no turning back to the moment when he had not looked into the abyss yet. Where Alyosha, as the youngest of the three brothers, is at this point in the story perhaps still possesses a sincere, uncomplicated, and almost prelapsarian outlook on the world; responding to the world with a natural reverence and sense of the fullness of divine wisdom, Ivan could not be further removed from paradise. He has started his descent into hell. He anticipates the turning point that is unavoidably approaching, that it is death in one form or another; perhaps something akin to what the Grand Inquisitor was subjected to in the kiss, this however, hinges on how we read Ivan's narrative. It can be read as a tragic story of indifference and death; of a person too delicate for this world, or we can read it as a narrative of transfiguration through detachment. Edith Wyschogrod notes this obscurity in telling the difference between the demonic narrative and a saintly one:

To insert oneself into a hagiographic chain is fraught with the risk of misprision, of mistaking a demonic or simply indifferent narrative for a saintly one. On the other hand, to avoid a story's imperative opens another risk, that of moral inertness that belongs to the non-human or to things. There can be no certainty of inscription because the meta-narrative that draws the tail into the future has not yet been written.³⁹⁷

The point is that from where Ivan is standing now, there is no difference between a world in which only the bare physicality is real (i.e. the world as a graveyard), or a world that is infinitely worthy of love, so much so that the heart cannot contain it, because it has become divinised through Christ's resurrection. At the same time, Edith Wyschogrod is right that

³⁹⁶ To note, Sven Linnér, in *Starets Zosima in The Brother Karamazov: A Study in the Mimesis of Virtue*, who says: 'The Starets, such as we come to know him in this book, is to represent an answer – or alternative – to the demonism or denial *The Brothers Karamazov* is otherwise about.' p.9. Colin Wilson is of the opinion that there is a linear progression in the level on which a person can live. He agrees with Alyosha that Ivan is only 'half saved', as Alyosha says: 'half your work is done Ivan: you love life. Now you must try to do the second half and you are saved' Dostoevsky, BK, p.269. Colin Wilson says: 'Man can live in Ivan's level or on Zossima's.' p.187. And: 'Ivan is half a mystic; as Alyosha says: he has only solved half the problem.' *The Outsider*, p.187.

³⁹⁷ Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Post-Modernism*, p.150.

there is a risk of mistaking a truly indifferent narrative for a saintly one; as there is a difference, that difference is determined by the presence or absence of the hagiographic horizon, a horizon not of this world. The fact that we can never be certain, as Wyschogrod says, if we are dealing with the demonic or the saintly narrative, is not because of the presence or absence of a universal meta-narrative, but because this narrative is such that it can only be written by the reader in a hermeneutic act. Writing it, which Dostoevsky did neither for Ivan nor the Inquisitor, would make this hagiographic horizon a worldly horizon. We do not find out whether Ivan kills himself when he reaches thirty, as Alyosha suggests when he says ‘And if you don’t [join the Jesuits] you will kill yourself. You won’t be able to endure it!’³⁹⁸. Or, when we read Ivan’s narrative differently, perhaps it is not a bodily death that he will be dying, but a death that is already being executed as he descends into hell.

4.11 Everything is permitted

As their conversation proceeds after ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, it reaches its ambiguous culmination in Ivan’s famous phrase of ‘everything is permitted’. After Alyosha’s has expressed his worry about Ivan’s ability to endure ‘the hell in his heart and head,’³⁹⁹ Ivan replies:

‘There is a force which can endure all!’ said Ivan, this time with a cold smile.
‘what force?’

‘A Karamazov one—the force of Karamazov baseness.’

‘You don’t mean to wallow in vice, to stifle your soul in corruption, do you?’

‘I daresay, only till I’m thirty I’ll perhaps escape it, and then—’

‘Escape it? How will you escape it? It’s impossible with your ideas’

‘That, too, *à la* Karamazov.’

‘You mean, “everything is permitted”? Everything is allowed. That’s it, isn’t it?’

Ivan frowned and suddenly turned strangely pale.⁴⁰⁰

The moment at which ‘everything is permitted’, after Ivan turns thirty, is what he envisages as a turning point of some sort at which he escapes the force of Karamazov baseness. A genuine escape can then be either a Pauline reference to the realisation of freedom the soul

³⁹⁸ Dostoevsky, BK, p.309.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p.309.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p.309.

experiences in the *coincidentia oppositorum*, and the dying to the law that this entails. Or, it could mean the demonism of the unethical, where the refusal or inability to descent into one's own hell turns earthly existence into hell. If the latter were the case, there would still have to be a significant break with the past, so a discontinuity in 'the force of Karamazov baseness' of wallowing in vice and corruption, as Ivan would actually already be living in a deliberately unethical paradigm before he turned thirty. As a consequence, a momentous break with his former way of life could only mean a leap beyond the ethical to where the laws of ethics are no longer binding. Anything other than that is not a change worthy of note in the way Dostoevsky has written it; it would just be the intensification of what was already the case. Lawlessness, in Ivan's case is likely to be something entirely different from the lawlessness of his father or other characters with an inclination towards the demonic.

Ivan, at the moment when he is speaking to Alyosha in the inn, has already started his descent into his own hell in his suffering at the hand of his conscience. Further on in *The Brothers Karamazov*, this narrative deepens when Ivan meets the devil.⁴⁰¹ The narrator tells us that Ivan has been unwell for some time now before he has this nervous breakdown:

He knew that he was ill, but he was loath to be ill at this time, at these approaching fateful moments of his life, when he had to appear in court, when he had to put his case boldly and resolutely and 'justify himself to himself'⁴⁰²

So in an apparent reversal of what happens to the Inquisitor, Ivan comes face with the devil, whom he however recognises as projection of himself. In his conversation with this figure he gets agitated and threatens to kick his visitor, but then he realises that in abusing him he would be abusing himself:

Abusing you, I abuse myself!' Ivan laughed again. 'You are I – I myself, only with a different face. You are merely putting my thoughts into words – and you can't say anything new to me!⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Dostoevsky, BK, pp.746-765.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p.746.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p.750.

Ivan has come face to face with himself, in fact not unlike the Grand Inquisitor who, in his the kiss also has come face to face with himself when he is suddenly lifted out of the essentially positional ethical paradigm that he inhabited and has to see himself through the eyes of the absolute. Ivan has in fact constantly been exposed to what the Inquisitor is made to see in split second. However, Ivan has not yet accepted the kiss of forgiveness, but perhaps he will. It is therefore unlikely that Ivan, when he finally abandons ethics, would be a source of pain and destruction to others. He has been brought face to face with himself and has descended into his own hell, so would not project this hell onto others. Simone Weil comments on this phenomenon; that it is the victim of a crime who experiences the hell in the other, where the offender remains alienated from his or her own hell:

The sensitivity of the innocent victim who suffers is like felt crime. True crime cannot be felt. The innocent victim who suffers knows the truth about the executioner, the executioner does not know it. The evil which the innocent victim feels in himself is in his executioner, but he is not sensible of the fact.⁴⁰⁴

The alienation that we attributed to Ivan and modern humanity in general, as the alienation from ourselves and God is the failure to descend into hell. Put differently, we could say that this dark night of soul can either be faced inwardly, as St. John of Cross speaks about it, or it can be the exile of the soul, in which case its pain is projected outward, forcing its hell unto others. Ivan suffers as a result of this exile, perhaps the beginning of the end of his alienation. John Dunne says in *The Reasons of the Heart*, the only way to paradise is through hell and purgatory:

If we are living in a split between mind and body, if loss of soul is our historic condition, as we have been saying, then we are in a state like Dante between losing and finding Beatrice. It may be that the direct path to fulfilment is blocked for us too and that we too must take the darker way that leads through hell and purgatory to paradise.⁴⁰⁵

St. John of Cross is also in praise of the self-knowledge that is necessary for this purgative process that can lead us out the other side. To him, there is something inevitable about the

⁴⁰⁴ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p.72.

⁴⁰⁵ John S. Dunne, *The Reasons of the Heart*, p.112.

occurrence of the dark night of the soul, where the 'light' that the soul has up till then acquired turns into darkness, as though their strength and authenticity is potentially consolidated through this trial:

But, now that the soul has put on its other and working attire—that of aridity and abandonment—and now that its first lights have turned into darkness, it possesses these lights more truly in this virtue of self-knowledge, which is so excellent and so necessary, considering itself now as nothing and experiencing no satisfaction in itself; for it sees that it does nothing of itself neither can do anything.⁴⁰⁶

Of the other-side we cannot of course have any knowledge, and neither does Ivan. He does not know what awaits him when he gets older. Dostoevsky really only writes the introduction to Ivan's life. However, I have argued that this introduction lends itself to a far more hopeful reading than we might think.

This is then, in a sense, a theology of hope, but a theology of hope that requires the modern world to be as it is now, otherwise there would be no descent into hell for Ivan. In that sense it must remain offensive. In other words, in its outward form, it requires what I have called the paradox evil; the fact that there is evil that utterly disrupts the divine order, yet simultaneously is made part of that order. This is what roots this theology of hope in the world and not in a Utopian future.⁴⁰⁷ As with Abraham, we need the unacceptable, without making it any more palatable.

⁴⁰⁶ St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, translated by Allison Peers, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1993. p.31.

⁴⁰⁷ Thomas Altizer notes that theologies of hope have failed to affirm the modern world, for the reason that they have to direct our belief in God away from the unacceptable modern world we live in, to a utopian future. He says: 'Despite appearances to the contrary, neither theologies of "secularization" nor theologies of "hope" truly affirm the modern world. For the one embraces the progressive historical dissolution of religion in the West only as a means of radically distinguishing the centre of faith from the centre of the world, and other the directs faith away from the historical present to a distant and utopian future, and a future which can become real for faith only when it is linked with the traditional and the archaic symbol of the resurrection.' *The Descent into Hell*, p.28.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The starting point of this thesis has been the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. For me the appeal of this parable rested both in its spiritual beauty and simplicity that is characteristic of the climax in the kiss, and, at the same time the enormous theological and philosophical complexities that arise when trying to come to grips with it intellectually. Out of this contrast between the part of us that understands with the simplicity of the heart and the part that understands only through the complexity of the intellect, the narrative of thesis arose. This has taken the shape of a series of conversation with a variety of literary, theological and philosophical texts. In these conversations I have sought to narrate the journey made from the initial simplicity of the parable, through to the intellectual effort to understand some of the theological complexities that are exposed when we start regarding the parable with the intellect, and then back to the simplicity of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. With the parabolic as my starting point I have set out to open up the possibility of a theology of hope. The groundwork for such a theology consists in the confrontation with evil that is part of any hermeneutical process. I have argued that this particular confrontation with evil is a confrontation with our very individual iniquity, not a general or universal evil. And so it has not been my objective to write an exhaustive interpretation of 'The Grand Inquisitor', but to expose some aspects of our inevitable relationship with evil and its central role in both our salvation and our damnation.

The Inquisitor himself is a literary figure who fails hermeneutically, his response to Christ's visit is a response as though this visit has nothing in particular to do with him as an individual, and he proceeds to speak to Christ as one theologian might address another, not as an apparition who is there exclusively to address him. But, the silence between his own words becomes increasingly stressed by the silent gaze of Christ. This is where the Inquisitor's story becomes our own story as readers when we engage in interpretation with the text that ultimately resists any interpretative finality. At the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum* we meet the truth of the legend as ultimately unsayable. However, such an encounter with the unsayable truth inescapably leads us to desire an understanding that is not only felt, but can also be argued. When the intellect becomes involved in this way we

run up against its limitations, as, at least for an instant, it was possible to see Christ and the Inquisitor as one seething unity, the intellect, when actively trying to analyse what it has just witnessed, is incapable of replicating this experience. It only comes to an understanding in the world, where things are either this or that. And so, it leads us back to the dualism of Christ and Inquisitor, good and evil. In this way the hermeneutical process began as essentially an encounter with the fall and its aftermath, in which the inner experience and outer actuality are two separate realities that form an opposition in which one excludes the truth of the other. What the interpreter experiences is mirrored back in the two figures of Christ and the Inquisitor; as for the Inquisitor there is only the world of either/or, and Christ, in withholding language, never enters this world of either/or, but in the end confirms the Inquisitor's participation in the unsayable whole of which no one can be excluded. In hermeneutics, the interpreter comes face to face with his or her own Inquisitor. And so for me, writing this thesis has been a meeting with evil.

As a result this thesis narrated the encounter with what both limits and enables our understanding; namely the theological and the ethical whose business it is to judge, as it provides a context from which we are able to do so. On the other hand there is the wordless knowing, or understanding of the text that, when not somehow brought into relationship with the ethical or the theological, is always there in the background, but can never be truly made to be 'of this world'. Here literature shows its affiliation with the apophatic in relation to theology; it speaks to us directly, and is indifferent to whether we have understood or not. The parable in itself remains untouched by our contextualisation and interpretation; it remains outside the realm of the ethical and can therefore manifest itself to us as concurrently demonic and divine. For that reason it addresses the reader as Christ addresses the Grand Inquisitor; as an appeal to suspend our judgement and practice *Gelassenheit*. And so it is the marriage of literature and theology that teaches us to read religiously; it is what teaches us to transfigure the indifference of the text into our own detachment.

In the first chapter I problematized Ivan Karamazov's ethical and spiritual position; making him the embodiment of the modern and post-modern inner confrontation with evil in the West. I continued to use the figure of Ivan throughout the thesis, as he is both an example of the spiritual exile that is characteristic of modern condition of brokenness, and

also is at the threshold of either drowning in this alienation or overcoming it. I discussed the enigma that surrounds Ivan Karamazov, who suffers because he is so profoundly spiritually exiled; caught between the two human poles of unbridled and passionate love for life⁴⁰⁸ and the world on one side and the rational, scientific mind-set on the other. Neither of these extremes can be fully attributed to Ivan, who is caught in the middle in a position that is in one way deeply ascetic, as he is unable to give way to either his unrestrained youthful love for the world or his rational demand for earthly justice and atheism, but in another respect running the risk of being deeply indulgent in its melancholia. Ivan is still capable of loving, but, in the words of Flannery O'Connor, is cut off from the source of that love.⁴⁰⁹ I said that that which makes Ivan exceptional and potentially saintly is the asceticism of the suspense between head and heart, of the endurance of the impossibility of living within this contradiction in which he has to bear the fact that he loves the world while enduring the weight of being unable to put that love into action by easing the suffering of others.

After having problematized Ivan's position, I discussed the way in which the suspended spirit, in a position of alienation from the divine, has two ways of being in the world that might make this alienation less tangible, and ease the suffering in the way the Inquisitor suggests. I argued that this can either be gravitation towards the material and the purely physical, in which case the spirit is denied. Alternatively, there can be a tendency in which the body and the world is what we try to escape from. Either way entails alienation from God and the self. And so I argue that this produces a form of imprisonment in which the soul can no longer have a place. Ivan is caught in this demonic contradiction, but as opposed to the Inquisitor, is not at the point of accepting it as necessary and inevitable. The Grand Inquisitor has internalised this contradiction; he has taken sides and has consciously taken leave of God.⁴¹⁰ For him this has become a form of self-definition. Ivan's great temptation is to follow him in this, but he does not.

We meet evil in the Inquisitor, who has deliberately left Christ, and whose soul has become so arid and sour that he is now no longer capable of real recognition of the Other.

⁴⁰⁸ Dostoevsky, BK, p.269.

⁴⁰⁹ See also: Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, p.227.

⁴¹⁰ Dostoevsky, BK, p.302.

The Grand Inquisitor's response to this suffering is an ethical response founded on the deeply utilitarian convictions that happiness is the greatest good and that happiness can be measured. His position is that humanity suffers because it has been given a freedom to act ethically while having to rely entirely on what their heart tells them. For this they lack the moral strength, and this weakness is at the root of most human suffering. Moreover, it can be prevented, and in order to do so he must operate on the level of the universal. However, in the end there is the kiss, the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, in which the ethical is transformed into the hyper-ethical, where the self-created otherness of the Inquisitor is radically undone; an apophatic and literary moment that holds the beginnings for a poetical theology of hope. And so, this parable coming from Ivan might also hold the solution to his exile; an answer he could only hope to put across in a parable.

In the second chapter I proceeded to develop the motif of alienation further within the literary context of the story of the fall in Genesis, *Paradise Lost* and the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. I offered a reading of the Christian narrative of the fall, looking primarily at the story of the fall in Genesis, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I argued that in both stories evil first came to humanity in the shape of Satan in Milton and the Serpent in *Genesis*, who awakened in Eve the awareness of the being a self as apart from the divine. I argued that in this awakening of selfhood the inner and the outer separated for the first time. This meant knowing ourselves as being other than God. I described how, in these narratives, it is through the use of logic that this alienation is achieved, since logic can make incontestable truth-claims without necessarily involving the *experience* of truth; the truth that can be felt in the process of thought or in experiencing art. As a result truth becomes progressively an intellectual matter; divorcing the content of the truth-claim from the lived experience of the wholeness that was the reality pre-lapsarian humanity lived in. This process is perhaps most distinctly seen in Milton's Satan and Eve, whereby Satan, in his effort to persuade her to eat the fruit, uses a deductive argument to demonstrate to her that if God were to punish her for eating the fruit, God would not be just, and, as he says, to be just is a necessary condition of being God: 'Not just, not God'⁴¹¹. I said that to Eve, God was God, undivided, because he was as much inside her as outside. Now, through having been shown a

⁴¹¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, line 701.

perspective, a perspective in which God is Other than her and outside her, she is shown how to think about God as an object, as a collection of properties, some of which are essential to being God and others perhaps are not. The results of this event is not just that Eve now had a different concept of God, but a splintering of the universe, where the human being, through having gained her own perspective is no longer connected with the world as a matter of course.

I suggested that this alienation is an on-going process, perhaps finding a climax in the atheism of modernity that was so deeply felt by Dostoevsky when he returned to society after his years in Siberia,⁴¹² and embodied by Ivan. I suggested that without this separation there could have been no ethics, as in order to tell good from evil we have to occupy a single position in the world; something that would not have been possible in paradise where boundaries between the inner and the outer did not exist. Moreover, with this separation between the inner and the outer, humanity not only becomes susceptible to sin, but can no longer be in the world without sin. I argued that the consequences of the fall for a human being can be separated into two basic modes, namely an outward or an inward form. It can appear as either the false inwardness that the Serpent instilled in Eve as the pride that can inspire indifference to the world, or its opposite in the false outwardness that consists of too much attachment to the world; of which the Inquisitor has become an example.⁴¹³

I said that the Grand Inquisitor's transgression is that he has become so attached to the world that his persona has become so deeply intertwined with his worldly identity that he has grown blind to the unsayable that comes to him through the deconstruction of his own language through Christ's silence. In this sense he has succumbed to evil; his language is laden with political power, it has, as in the case of Milton's Satan, become a political tool. However, he remains a human being and is not without a conscience. When Ivan tells us that Christ's silence distressed the Inquisitor⁴¹⁴ we realise that he is not entirely resistant to Christ's deconstructing gaze. The distress he feels must be an indication that within him a memory is stirring that he does not want to surface. Had he completely succumbed to evil;

⁴¹² Diane Oenning Thompson, 'Dostoevskii and Science' In *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky*, pp.191-211.

⁴¹³ See also: Altizer, *The Descent into Hell*, p.169.

⁴¹⁴ Dostoevsky, BK, p. 308.

he would have been incapable of this distress, as both Smerdyakov and Hazel Motes are incapable of this kind of distress. Somewhere the Inquisitor is reminded of his Other; the double that he fought to forget.

Using a range of literary texts and characters such as Pavel Smerdyakov⁴¹⁵ and Hazel Motes,⁴¹⁶ I explored the task of our double in becoming responsible. I said that submitting to evil is to turn away our double, whose haunting presence at the edges of our consciousness always deconstructs, showing us what we are not, to see our brokenness and to take on the unavoidable responsibility that comes with it. The face of the double can be either divine or demonic, where one inevitably summons the other; as both deconstruct by precisely invoking the presence of their opposite. Consequently, for the Inquisitor to be faced with Christ means also having to feel his own shortcomings to their full demonic depth.

In order to illustrate the depth and extent of the alienation from the divine I used the character of Prince Myshkin,⁴¹⁷ a character with a pre-lapsarian innocence, whose purity and goodness merely make him comical to the real world; a holy fool. His way of relating to others is strictly a-political, but it is impossible for the others to interpret them as such. Like the double, he mirrors to others their deep worldly attachments, but is never really recognised as such. As a result his movements are always received and interpreted in a political way, with often disastrous consequences for himself and the other characters.

In the third chapter I continued to explore the notions of responsibility and guilt and the role of evil as both a force to which we owe the possibility of becoming responsible and a force that must always strive to prevent us from assuming responsibility for what we are and are not.

I used the literary example of Joseph K⁴¹⁸ as an example of a person whose resistance to the formless legal charge against him increasingly becomes a resistance to his own guilt; a resistance to the acceptance of what he is not. I argued that what Joseph K

⁴¹⁵ Dostoevsky, *BK*.

⁴¹⁶ Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*.

⁴¹⁷ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*.

⁴¹⁸ Kafka, *The Trial*.

persist in is the attempt to make commensurable what can be characterised as ‘public guilt’ and the private guilt that the presence of our double exposes us to. The former can be an ethical matter, a legal matter, or both; it is public insofar as it constitutes a debt to society or another person. To the degree to which this is the case, there should always be something we can do to try to pay that debt. The latter form of guilt has nothing to do with this so-called public guilt. This is purely private, and as such can only be experienced by the individual on their own behalf. It cannot be wiped away by any individual act. I discussed how this can be felt in moments of responsibility in which we experience our freedom, such as the moment of having to cast a decision.⁴¹⁹ It is the acceptance of the responsibility for who we are and what we are *not* as also belonging to us. At these moments, the sense that the ethical and the rational are ultimately incapable of lifting the real responsibility off our shoulders, can expose our vulnerability such that we know ourselves to be responsible no matter what the outcome of our decision might be. Rather than this being guilt towards one individual, it is a guilt towards the whole of mankind that the elder Zossima⁴²⁰ speaks of to the monks and novices the day before he dies about the life of the monk:

But when he realises that he is not only worse than all the worldly, but that he is responsible for all men for all people and all things, for all human sins, universal and individual – only then will the aim of our seclusion be achieved.⁴²¹

This acceptance therefore comes about at times when we know ourselves not to be identical with what we are,⁴²² it also creates a distance between ourselves and what we are; we learn to see ourselves as the other might see us. Eventually it must also mean the acceptance and forgiveness of our double as the Christ-figure in the legend accepts and forgives the Grand Inquisitor. At this moment, the greatest trial for the Inquisitor is the matter of how he could accept this kiss of forgiveness, as, in the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, he also saw himself at his most ugly and corrupt.

⁴¹⁹ See Derrida’s ‘Force of Law: The mystical foundation of authority’.

⁴²⁰ Dostoevsky, BK.

⁴²¹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.190.

⁴²² See also Derrida in *The Gift of Death*: ‘The responsible man as such is a *self*, an individual that doesn’t coincide with any role that he might happen to assume [an interior and invisible self, a secret self at bottom] –something Plato expresses through the myth of the choice of destiny [a pre-Christian myth then, one that prepares for Christianity] [...]’ p.52.

I argued that it is only the individual that can accept the guilt that Joseph K is incapable of accepting. In the parable of the doorkeeper, it emerges that the doorkeeper is only there for the individual who seeks admittance to the law. I said that it is then the individual who is his own doorkeeper. We are kept outside the kingdom of heaven to the extent that we keep ourselves out in our inability to be other than Joseph K and face the negative. The shrine is protected as long as we fall short of the detachment from ourselves that demands access to the shrine. Joseph K's transgression is therefore that he is blind to what is Other, that he is incapable facing his own Other and so incapable of engaging with it. Joseph K's insistence on his own innocence is thus a literary expression of the kind of attachment that causes us to be incapable of recognising what is wholly Other. In 'Ethics as First Philosophy', Lévinas expresses this such that in order for something to be knowledge, it has to be denied its otherness, in other words, *being*, as the true Other of thought cannot be incorporated into the body of knowledge unless it becomes the property of thought.⁴²³ In this process it is inevitably stripped of its otherness and consequently its unsayable character.

Appropriating the thought of Alain Badiou, in his essay on evil,⁴²⁴ I argued that this leads to what he calls 'the logic of the same' of which both Joseph K and the Grand Inquisitor are guilty. It constitutes a use of logic that is the logic of either/or, where all things can be reduced to each other or exclude each other. And so the logic of the same is blind to the asymmetrical that exists between ourselves and God and equally within our own being. When Christ kisses the Inquisitor, the dissymmetry of the situation is suddenly deeply felt by the Inquisitor. Christ is no longer Other than the Inquisitor in the way that one theologian differs from another in the beliefs that they profess, but is now seen as the absolute, divine Other. It follows that having perceived this utter otherness in Christ, he must, by contrast, see his own complete humanity. The *coincidentia oppositorum* has therefore broken the cycle of evil in which he was caught.

⁴²³ Lévinas, 'Ethics as first philosophy', In *The Levinas Reader*, p.76.

⁴²⁴ Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*.

I argued that the example of Abraham, as he is depicted by Kierkegaard⁴²⁵ and later by Derrida,⁴²⁶ portrays the antithesis of this logic. He is the embodiment of the parabolic and the unsayable. He is a man who lived in this dissymmetry, where speaking about it would have meant succumbing to the world/the universal. Abraham leaves the unsayable unsaid; that which Kierkegaard names as glorious but cannot be understood through the lens of the ethical, is the unsayable through which Abraham becomes utterly responsible. Ethics does the only thing appropriate by condemning Abraham's willingness to kill Isaac as monstrous. Abraham therefore does precisely what Joseph K could not; he embodies the impossible space that exists between the ethical and the universal.

In the fourth chapter I discussed the relationship between the unsayable and the personal address, in which the ethical gains the potential to become the hyper-ethical. I argued that the silence of the Christ-figure deconstructs the Grand Inquisitor's language, and that through that deconstruction of his own words, the unsayable resonates along with these words; addressing him exactly where he is neither this nor that,⁴²⁷ where only he is responsible for what he has become. I further argued that it is this silence that addresses the individual, as a personal address to the individual to turn around to face themselves. That means bearing the weight of all our short-comings, a dying to private selfhood, a betrayal of the former self, in other words; a descent into our own hell.

I proceeded to place the Inquisitor's situation in Meister Eckhart's anthropology, in which he speaks of the inner and the outer part of the human being.⁴²⁸ In this Eckhartian distinction, it is the inner self that is immovable and already detached. And so it is that the address that comes through the unsayable can only be heard by the inner self, as the inner self, through being neither this nor that,⁴²⁹ is free of the cycle of alienation from God that I described in chapter two.

⁴²⁵ In *Fear and Trembling*.

⁴²⁶ In *The Gift of Death*.

⁴²⁷ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.291.

⁴²⁸ Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' In *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.290.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.290

Here I also used Heidegger's reading of Eckhart in his notion of *Gelassenheit*, where it is through *Gelassenheit* that we become receptive to the secret of the unsayable.⁴³⁰ In this way Heidegger developed the eschatological potential that was already contained in Eckhart, where, in *Gelassenheit* or detachment, lies the potential to be reunited with our divine ground. Put differently I could say that *Gelassenheit* enables us to see the truth of our identity, both in our intertwinement with evil and in our divine ground. I argued that *Gelassenheit* therefore not only enables us to come face to face with our own divinity, as the Inquisitor came face to face with his divinity in Christ, but that initially, it brings us into contact with our fallen condition. However, having said that, it follows that this form of self-knowledge places us opposite our attached self, and so always reminds us in some way of its divine, negative image.

Consequently it is the case that alienation from the divine, and on an individual level from the inner self, also means estrangement from our fallen condition. Only when, through *Gelassenheit* we comprehend something of the *coincidentia oppositorum* that we ourselves embody, does fallenness become an actuality that can be truly known and perhaps even accepted. Through such acceptance, through the loosening of bonds between us and the worldly, we can begin to step out of the vicious circle of alienation from God. I proceeded to explore this motif with the example of the Inquisitor who, through having been exposed to Christ's kiss in this moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, has unexpectedly been placed face to face not only with God, but also with himself as immersed in evil. In this turn of events he was suddenly stripped of everything that constituted his outer self, and in the case of the Inquisitor that was everything he had put his faith in. I argued that this meeting was therefore his personal descent into hell and a dying to everything that he knew as his individual identity. This deconstruction of the outer self means a transition from the concrete moral demand that belongs to the public world, to the infinite moral demand to which we can only respond by assuming all responsibility for everything we are.

I proceeded to compare the Inquisitor's position to Ivan Karamazov's, where, unlike the Inquisitor, Ivan is continually exposed to the moral absolute of the unsayable, but at the

⁴³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, p.26.

same time he is so cut off the divine that the only way in which he can respond is by feeling his guilt at every individual instance, where ethically, he could have done better. Ivan is at a point between acceptance of guilt, and, perhaps the kiss of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Ivan has done what Joseph K could not, that is to accept the formless charge of guilt. I argued that this is what gives Ivan the quality of a saint; the suffering of the intense experience of a universal guilt of humanity that has become his personal guilt. Ivan it seems has no way forward yet, he has started his descent into hell, with no paradise in view at the other side.

I then discussed Ivan's conversation with Alyosha before and after the parable of the Grand Inquisitor, in which Alyosha asks Ivan how he will cope with the hell in his head and his heart.⁴³¹ I mentioned how Ivan responds to Alyosha's question by answering that he wants to live till thirty and then 'dash the cup to the floor.'⁴³² I argued that at first sight this appears as though Ivan anticipates that he will end his suffering by renouncing the cup of poison that is his suffering and, it seems the only way he can do this is to put an end to his life. Another way out of his predicament is suggested in the phrase 'everything is permitted,'⁴³³ which the reader can interpret in the way Alyosha interpreted it, namely as meaning that Ivan plans to drown his sorrows by wallowing in vice and stifling his soul in corruption.⁴³⁴ This would mean leaving behind the ethical by forgetting his personal guilt.

However, I maintained that there is another reading of Ivan's words; a more hopeful one, and one more in accordance with the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. On this reading of Ivan's narrative, I argued that we might interpret the phrase 'everything is permitted' as containing an eschatological and Pauline reference to the dying to the law that St. Paul speaks of in Romans 7.⁴³⁵ In Romans 7, St. Paul compares the law to the bonds of marriage which are only binding during a person's lifetime,⁴³⁶ but not after death. However here too this dying to the law is not a physical death when he addresses his audience saying:

⁴³¹ Dostoevsky, BK, pp.308-309.

⁴³² Ibid., p.308.

⁴³³ Ibid., p.309.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p.309.

⁴³⁵ Romans 7:4.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 7:1.

In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Jesus Christ, so that you may belong to another.⁴³⁷

Accordingly, I suggested a reading of Ivan's 'everything is permitted' as implying not the abandonment of ethics to replace it with lawlessness, but the leaving behind of the ethical as something that only belongs to the one that finds their guilt outside themselves. In this way the hyper-ethical is the return of ethical to the sphere of the apolitical. In the same way, I argued, the Grand Inquisitor is suddenly initiated into this apolitical sphere of complete detachment in which every concrete word that he spoke was suddenly placed into a context in which it is not the Inquisitor who had to bear responsibility for these words but the individual to whom that title belongs. The instance of *coincidentia oppositorum* in the parable provides the context through which Ivan's words can actually be read in this way, for it is only within the parabolic that such a thing could be said.

Ivan's words and the parable of the Grand Inquisitor together form the foundation for a theology of hope that is at no point explicitly suggested in the text but is born out of the subjectivity of the reader. There is however an inevitability about such an outcome. By having taken the parabolic situation of Ivan's 'poem' of the Grand Inquisitor as my starting point we are situated in a context that ultimately resists every effort to give it a universal outcome. That which the simplicity of heart understands in the *coincidentia oppositorum*, it understands wordlessly, as the language of the unsayable. This experience of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, as something understood in the totality and emersion in the text and the literary experience is as much the end product of reading as it is the beginning. I do not want to suggest that the philosophical and theological complexities that occur upon reflection of the meaning of the text are shortcomings or should be avoided if possible. The reverse is true. The complexities and moral dilemmas that arise constitute a meeting with our double in the way that Joseph K meets himself through the infinite intricacies of the law that continue to torment him. The only thing is that Joseph K does not recognise these dealings as constituting the spectres of what is ultimately his own handiwork. In the same way the Inquisitor is being mirrored through Christ's gaze, which gradually creates an opening between his public persona and him as a human being.

⁴³⁷ Romans 7: 4

For the Grand Inquisitor, the moment of the kiss is both the moment of salvation and the moment of betrayal. Therefore we can speak of a true moment of *coincidentia oppositorum*, as it is both in the physical sense that these two characters come together and the instant that is beyond good and evil; in other words beyond the ethical. Here salvation and damnation are identical, united in one act.

Betrayal, on the part of the Inquisitor, consisted of his life's work; the giving up of his belief in God in order to serve the interests of others, which, in time became his own interest,⁴³⁸ as this role became nearly the full extent of his identity. In Christ's kiss, a fulfilment of this betrayal takes place. For the Inquisitor, this betrayal was a sacrifice; he has sacrificed his own relationship with God, and in that his own salvation, in order to become the safe-keeper of mankind in his role as protector.⁴³⁹ For him, the betrayal was seen as an act that has taken place in a moment in the past; the moment when he decided to take leave of God.⁴⁴⁰ He sees it as irreversible, a done deed. At the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum* however, his betrayal is revealed to its full extent; he now sees the other as the absolute Other, realising that such betrayal can never be limited to a theological decision made in the past, but from then on is a betrayal that takes place every second of his life, and, parallel to the Judas-narrative, he all at once realises what he has done. The weight of the responsibility must be almost unbearable.

This realisation is an initiation into the meaning of his own words; all along he spoke to Christ of freedom and the heavy burden of freedom that humanity had to suffer for being out in the open; having to decide for themselves between good and evil. For the first time he is now 'out in the open himself', as in the moment of *coincidentia oppositorum* the inner and the outer disappear into one ambiguous unity; dissolving his worldly identity. The moment of freedom is the moment of being precisely on the boundary between inner and outer⁴⁴¹ self where he is neither this nor that.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ See also Alain Badiou in *'Ethics: an Essay on the Understanding of Evil'*. He characterises betrayal as follows: 'to give up on a truth in the name of one's interests' p.91.

⁴³⁹ Dostoevsky, BK, p.304.

⁴⁴⁰ Dostoevsky, BK, p.302.

⁴⁴¹ Scharlemann writes on freedom as a boundary concept in *The Reason of Following*, pp.23-4.

⁴⁴² Meister Eckhart, 'Counsel 23. Of interior and exterior works' in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, p.291

From the inquisitorial side of this boundary, Christ's kiss is the Judas-kiss of betrayal that heralds the death of the Grand Inquisitor. In this way, the Inquisitor's betrayal is answered with betrayal, and notably in precisely the same measure. For the extent to which the Inquisitor deviated from the divine; has acted to fortify his worldly identity as cardinal and Inquisitor. This is the extent to which he has to die, and the extent to which he has to descent into hell. So by becoming the one he became he had already sealed his own fate.

From the other side of freedom, the kiss is the kiss of salvation; the end of brokenness and a return to his own divine ground, and here it is the case that the deeper the descent into hell, the more powerful becomes his salvation. Without the alienation from God, the kiss would not have been felt; the Inquisitor's language is therefore like all human language, both divine and demonic, a sign of absolute alienation from God and the measure of our salvation when we die.

Bibliography

Altizer, Thomas J., *The Descent Into Hell: A Study of Radical Reversal of the Christian Consciousness*, Philadelphia and New York, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970.

---. *The self-embodiment of God*, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco and London, Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.

---. 'The Self-Saving of God', In *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, edited by Graham Ward, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005. pp. 427-443

Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, translated by Peter Hallward, London, Verso, 2002.

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, translated by Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Bal, Mieke *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Berdyaeu, Nicolas, *The Beginning and the End*, translated by R.M. French, London, YMCA-Press, 1952.

Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Bulgakov, Sergius. Reference lost.

Caputo, John D., *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction*, Bloomington, IN., Indiana University Press, 1993.

Clairvaux, Bernard of, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, New York and Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1987.

Clark, Timothy, *The Poetics of Singularity: The Counter-Culturalist Turn in Heidegger, Derrida, Blanchot and the later Gadamer*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

Cunningham, Valentine, *In the Reading Goal: Postmodernity, Texts, and History*, Oxford and Cambridge Mass., Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

Cunningham, David S., 'The Brother Karamazov as a Trinitarian Theology' In *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian tradition*, edited by George

Pattison, and Diane Oenning Thompson, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001. pp. 134-155

Cupitt, Don, *Mysticism after Modernity*, Malden, Mass., Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

---. *Taking Leave of God*, London, SCM Press Ltd, 1980.

Cusa, Nicolas of, *Of Learned Ignorance*, translated by Francis G. Heron, London, Routledge, 1954.

---. *Nicolas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, New York and Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1997

Daiches, David, *God and the Poets: The Gifford lectures*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984

Davies, Oliver, 'Soundings: Towards a Theological Poetics of Silence' In *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.201-222.

Derrida, Jacques, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials' In *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, edited by Stanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, Stanford Cal. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996. pp.3-70

---. 'Force of law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'', In *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, edited by D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld, and D. Gray Carlson, London and New York, Routledge, 1992 pp. 3-67

---. *The Gift of Death*, In *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret*, 2nd edition, translated by David Wills, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Detweiler, Robert, *Breaking the Fall: Religious Readings of Contemporary Fiction*, London, The Macmillan Press, 1989.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *The Brother Karamazov*, translated by David Magarshack, London and New York, Penguin Classics, 1982.

---. *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by David McDuff, London and New York, Penguin Books, 2003.

---. *The Idiot*, Ware, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Classics, 1996.

---. *Crime and Punishment*, Ware, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Classics, 1995.

---. *Notes from Underground*, translated Michael R. Katz, New York, London, W.W, Norton and Company, 1989.

Dunne, John S, *The Reasons of the Heart: A journey into Solitude and back again into the Human Circle*, London, SCM Press LDT, 1978.

Eckhart, Meister, *Selected Writings*, translated by Oliver Davies, London, Penguin Classics, 1994.

---. *Meister Eckhart The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, translated by Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, Paulist Press, London, 1981.

Eagleton, Terry, *On Evil*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2010.

---. *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly*, www.thetablet.co.uk/review418, accessed February 2012.

Esaulov, Ivan, 'The categories of law and Grace on Dostoevsky's poetics' In *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, edited by George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp.116-133

Fiddes, Paul S. 'The Quest for a Place which is 'not a Place': The Hiddenness of God and the Presence of God' In *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.35-60

Gallacher, Patrick J., (ed.) *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Published for TEAMS (The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages) in association with the University of Rochester, 1997.

Gibson, Boyce, *The Religion of Dostoevsky*, London, SCM press, 1973.

Haraway, Donna J., *Simians, Cyborgs and Women, The Reinvention of Nature*, London, Free Association books, 1991

Hartmann, Geoffrey H., and Budick, Sanford (eds.), *Midrash and Literature*, New Haven Conn. and London, Yale University Press. 1986

Hegel, Georg W.F., *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, translated by G.W.F. Miller, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977.

Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, Pfullingen, Tübingen, Neske, 1959.

Helander, Brigit H., 'The Search for a Perspective on the Unity of the Universe' In *Nicolas of Cusa on Christ and the Church: Essays in Memory of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, p.309-321

Hocks, Richard A., "'Novelty" in polarity to "The Most Admitted Truths": Tradition and the Individual Talent in T.S. Coleridge and T.S. Eliot', In *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity*, edited by Shirley Sugerman, San Rafael, CA, The Barfield Press, 1976. pp.83-97

Jabès, Edmond, *From the Book to the 'Book': An Edmond Jabès Reader*, translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, Hanover and London, Wesleyan University Press, 1991

Jackson, Robert L., *Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993.

Jasper, David, *The Sacred Body: Asceticism in Religion, Literature and Culture*, Waco, Tex., Baylor University Press, 2009.

Jones, Malcolm V. 'Dostoevskii and Religion' In *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky*, edited by William J. Leatherbarrow, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp.148-173.

Kadinsky, Wassily, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications, New York, 1977.

Kantor, Vladimir, 'Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation' In *Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature: Dostoevsky and the Christian tradition*, edited by George Pattison, and Diane Oenning Thompson, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001. pp.189-225

Kaufmann, Walter, *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York and Scarborough, New American Library, 1975.

Kazantzakis, Nikos, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, translated by P.A. Bien, New York, Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1988.

Keller, Cathrine, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008

Kermode, Frank, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On Interpretation of Narrative* (the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1977-1978) Cambridge Mass. and London, Harvard University Press, 1979.

---. 'Endings, Continued', In *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, edited by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, Stanford Cal., Stanford University Press, 1987.

Kierkegaard, Søren, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness unto Death*, translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968.

---., *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*, compiled and edited by Charles E. Moore, Farmington, PA, The Plough Publishing House, 1999.

Kroeker, Travis P. and Ward, Bruce K. *Remembering the End: Dostoevsky as Prophet to Modernity*, London, SMC-Canterbury Press, 2002.

Mayne, Ethel Colburn, *Letters of Fyodor Michailovitch Dostoevsky to his Family and Friends*, translated by Ethel Colburn Mayne, London, Chatto and Windus, 1914,

Leatherbarrow, William, *Fedor Dostoevsky, Twayne's World authors Series: Russia*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1981.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.

Linnér, Sven, *Starets Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov*, Stockholm Sweden, Almqvist and Wiksell International,. 1975

Marion, Jean-luc, *Prolegomena to Charity*, translated by Stephen E. Lewis, New York, Fordham University Press, 2002.

---. *God Without Being*, translated by Thomas A. Carlson, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1991.

McGinn, Bernard, (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, New York, The Modern Library, 2006.

McIntosh, Mark A., 'The formation of Mind: Trinity and Understanding in Newman' In *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.136-158.

Menut, Albert D., *Dostoevsky and Existentialism*, Lawrence, Kan., Coronado Press, 1972.

Merton, Thomas, *The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century*, translated by Thomas Merton, New York, New Direction Book, 1970.

Miller, Robin Feuer, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Milton, John, *Paradise Lost*, edited A. Fowler, London and New York: Longman, 1998.

Moore, Stephen *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1994.

Nietzsche, Friedrich , *The Anti-Christ*, In *Twilight of the idols / The Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, London and New York, Penguin Books, 1990.

---. *The Genealogy of Morals*, In *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Francis Golffing, New York, Anchor Books, 1990.

---. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Helen Zimmern, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1997

Norwich, Julian of, *Revelations of Divine Love*, translated by Elizabeth Spearing, London and New York, Penguin Books, 1998.

O' Connor, Flannery, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, selected and edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1972.

---. *Wise Blood*, In *Collected Works*, New York, The Library of America, 1988.

Oenning Thompson, Diane, 'Dostoevskii and Science' In *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky*, edited by William J. Leatherbarrow, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp.191-211.

Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, translated and annotated by R.P. Lawson, Westminster US, The Newman press, 1957.

Palmer, G.E.H., Sherrard, Philip and Bishop Kallistos Ware,: translators, *Philokalia: The Eastern Christian Spiritual Texts*, Woodstock VT, Skylight Paths, 2006.

Panichas, George A, *The Burden of Vision: Dostoevsky's Spiritual Art*, Chicago, Gateway Editions, 1985.

Pascal, Blaise, *Pensées*, translated by A.J. Krailsheimer, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1966.

Piehler, Paul, 'Milton's Iconoclasm' In *Evolution of Consciousness, Studies in Polarity*, edited by Shirley Sugerman, San Rafael, CA, The Barfield Press, 1976. pp.121-135.

Rancière, Jacques, *The flesh of Words, The Politics of Writing*, translated by Charlotte Mandell, edited by Judith Butler and Frederick M. Dolan, Stanford Cal., Stanford University Press, 2004.

Richards, Mary Caroline, 'The Vessel and the Fire' In *Evolution of Consciousness, Studies in Polarity*, edited by Shirley Sugerman, San Rafael, CA, The Barfield Press, 1976. pp.211-224.

Ricoeur, Paul, *The Religious Significance of Atheism*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1969.

---. *The Symbolism of Evil*, translated by Emerson Buchanan, New York, Harper and Row publishers, 1969.

Robbins, Jill, *Prodigal Son/Elder Brother: Interpretation and Alterity in Augustine, Petrarch, Kafka, Lévinas*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Rozanov, Vasily, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, London, Cornell University Press, 1972.

Ruysbroek, Blessed Jan van, *The Spiritual Espousals*, London, Faber and Faber LTD, 1953.

Schaik, John van, *In het Hart is Hij te vinden: Een Geschiedenis van de Christelijke Mystiek*, Zeist NL, Uitgeverij Christofoor, 2005

Scharlemann, Robert P., *The Reason of Following: Christianity and the Ecstatic I*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Sneller, Rico, *Het Woord is Schrift Geworden*, Kampen NL, Agora, 1998

Soskice, Janet M., 'The gift of the name: Moses and the burning bush' In *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.61-75.

St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, translated by Allison Peers, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1993.

Terras, Victor, *A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language and Style of Dostoevsky's Novel*, Madison Wisc. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Ward, Benedicta, *Harlots of the Desert, A study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources*, London and Oxford, Mowbray, 1987.

Wallace, Mark I. 'Earth God: Cultivating the Spirit in an Ecocidal Culture' In *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, edited by Graham Ward, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005. pp.209-228.

Ware, Timothy, *The Orthodox Church*, London, Penguin Books, 1997

Weil, Simone, *Gravity and Grace*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002

Williams, Rowan, Dostoevsky, *Language, Faith and fiction*, London, Continuum, 2007

Wilson, Colin, *The Outsider*, New York, Tarcher Penguin, 1982.

Wyschogrod, Edith, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1990.

Žižek, Slavoj, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, The MIT Press, Massachusetts, 2003.

Zweitzer, Albert, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1910

Word Count: 73.000