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The Brothers Karamazov: Guilt, Alterity and the Divine

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The Brothers Karamazov: Guilt, Alterity and the Divine

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Report

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Abstract

The Brothers Karamazov: Guilt, Alterity and the Divine

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Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* continually challenges the reader with variations of this concept: "Heart of my heart, my joyful one you must know that verily each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything" (289). The challenge is twofold: how does one envision this utterance moving from the realm of philosophical abstraction to an ontology of responsibility, and what *is* the obligation I am failing to account for regarding everyone and everything? Contained in this utterance of guilt before all is the relationship between the individual and others; it posits an intrinsic alterity. *The Brothers Karamazov* does not depict the ethicality of alterity as a secular responsibility, but rather a profoundly Christian one aimed at refuting atheistic Sensualism. Chronologically, then, I will examine how the novel depicts the moral depravity of sensualistic philosophy, how alterity is an ethical demand of responsibility, how it functions as an ontological posturing prior to behavioral acts and cognition, and finally as one that it is inherently religious. Thus, this essay serves as model of how Emmanuel Levinas's theory of the Other, could be applied to the extant of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

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Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* continually challenges the reader with variations of this concept: "Heart of my heart, my joyful one you must know that verily each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything" (289). The challenge is twofold: how does one envision this utterance moving from the realm of philosophical abstraction to an ontology of responsibility, and what *is* the obligation I am failing to account for regarding everyone and everything? The novel narrativizes the answer to these questions rather than explicitly stating them and this essay will attempt to examine precisely how guilt functions. Contained in this utterance of guilt before all is the relationship between the individual and others; it posits an intrinsic alterity. In the novel, alterity itself is a moral imperative that unifies mankind, and the incarnate guilt is the obligation of that imperative. Additionally, responsibility, which comes with guilt, is an *a priori* truth of man's subjectivity, not contingent on moral exchanges. *The Brothers Karamazov* does not depict the ethicality of alterity as a secular responsibility, but rather a profoundly Christian one aimed at refuting atheistic Sensualism. Chronologically, then, I will examine how the novel depicts the moral depravity of sensualistic philosophy, how alterity is an ethical demand of responsibility, how it functions as an ontological posturing prior to behavioral acts and cognition, and finally as one that it is inherently religious. Examining several key scenes, dialogues and exchanges in detail demonstrates how nearly every aspect, and each discrete experience in *The Brothers Karamazov,* is imbued with ethical alterity. Thus, this essay serves as model of how a theory of the

Other, particularly Emmanuel Levinas', could be applied to the extant of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Edmund Husserl argues in *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* that absolute self-responsibility has always been the telos of theoretical culture and the determinative of Western spirituality. What has been lost from Western spirituality, due to the scientific enterprise of the Enlightenment, Husserl argues, is precisely what I claim *The Brothers Karamazov* aims to restore: the moral importance that was its basis. What took self-responsibility's place historically- satisfying human nature's desires-is what the novel counters. Recouping the meaning of the "self" in self-responsible is an existential quest aimed at answering for one's very being: a being always in accordance with others (Levinas, *Otherwise* 11). Consequently, the meaning of self is defined by alterity and, thus, answerability. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, happiness, truth and virtue are intrinsically linked to the guilt one embodies for others and is juxtaposed to the obstacles that Sensualism presents to them. One must first concede that human nature is good, and that man's subjectivity, which is structured as obligation, has an antecedent. Or more simply, that prior to being one's subjectivity and ego are already in a relationship to goodness. In this novel, not embodying the responsibility that is demanded of others is due to a lie to oneself; further illuminating that truth/virtue is already always present. As we will see, God is always present in alterity itself, in the very acts derivative of one's response to the ethical imperative of others, for in this othering God calls us to ourselves.

To be guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything means that one is somehow answerable before the other; therefore the implications and presuppositions of alterity must be understood both in its specific and broadest connotations. As Levinas suggests in *Otherwise than Being*, his state of being answerable for the other does not mean responsible for his material being only, for *The Brothers Karamazov* demonstrates that one is equally responsible "for the alterity of the others' initiatives"; the very ethical appeal with which all others address one (14). The alterity of the other requests of you, contests with you, the other's very existence constantly urges response, therefore you are responsible before him. To be truly responsible means to answer this command, to make ones' sustenance the support of the other's needs, to put oneself in his/her place. One is "responsible for the very faults of another, for his deeds and misdeeds" (14). Slavoj Žižek simplifies Levinas' ideas aptly: "In my very asymmetrical subordination to the Other's call, in my unconditional responsibility" I am " taken hostage by the Other" (828). By this definition, *The Brothers Karamazov* depicts alterity in its essence.

The ethical imperative of alterity is the novel's solution to the problem of Sensualism. Thus, it is necessary to first explore the insidiousness of this philosophy as embodied in Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, the man who "was a great sensualist all his days" (8). In essence, Sensualist theory resolves all the powers of the human spirit into the function of the five senses, and modifications thereof. One should not underestimate the dilemma of such a stance, for aside from Fyodor's "willingness to hang on any skirt" that beckons him, Sensualism's very characteristic traits carries real obstacles to truth, virtue, and happiness. The novel explores the basic tenets of Sensualism in an attempt to

refute its pernicious aspects: "tendencies to erroneous logic," universal skepticism, idealism, nihilism, the "obliterating of moral distinctions" and the destruction of moral responsibility, materialism, "the denial of the supernatural," and atheism (Dabney 2). With this in mind, when Fyodor Karamazov claims, "I am a lie and the father of a lie!" we better understand the postulate of that lie, for Fyodor is not the traditional father figure, but rather the progenitor of Sensualism, whose traits his sons inherit and carry to its disastrous conclusion (44).

If there be one *a priori* principle of human intelligence, then, it is that the intuition of sense perception is valid, if all other intuitive judgments are baseless. Thomas Hobbes even designates sense perception's faculty of movement as the emotional and voluntary powers of the *soul*. In *Human Nature*, Hobbes claims that conceptions and imaginations are "nothing really, but motion in some internal substance of the head; which motion not stopping there, but proceeding to the heart" and either concurs with or detains the vital movement there (43). Sadly, Fyodor Karamazov's every conception and concomitant action, even those most emotive or soulful such as husband and father, is prompted by the fulfillment of sensual pleasures. Here are our first introductions to Fyodor: Adeliada Ivanovna, his first wife and mother to Dmitri, was a beautiful, high-minded, intelligent aristocrat, but it is due to her large dowry that Fyodor "passionately desired to set himself up by whatever means" (8). After Adeliada leaves both her husband and young son Dmitri, Fyodor "immediately set up a regular harem in his house and gave himself to the most unbridled drinking" (9). Fyodor simply forgets about his child, abandoning Dmitri to his servant Grigory. A similar scenario ensues with his second wife and mother to Ivan

and Alyosha, Sofia Ivanovna. Sofia brings no material wealth their marriage, but her beauty and innocence "struck the sensualist," which until then he had been a "depraved admirer" of a coarser kind of feminine beauty (13). When Sofia dies, Fyodor deems it "a good thing" to abandon these two sons, in order to, once again, fully immerse himself in his debaucheries. What we can deduce from these passages is the highly problematic implications of this philosophy; the concurrence we call pleasure (good), and the inhibition we call pain (evil), are only those feelings of concurrence or retardation relative to their objects and nothing more. For Fyodor, situations, people and objects do not transcend their immediate pleasures to become something nobler, so once they fail to meet this criteria, they are regarded as undesirable pains.

The thoughtful reader can already divine Sensualism's troublesome scheme of ethics. According to Hobbes, Fyodor Karamazov is like everyman, whom "for his own part calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, Good; and that Evil which displeaseth him" consequently, the properties that objects produce as effects are goodness or wickedness (44). Dabney argues, that as each man differs from others by his constitution or his mode of being, he must differ from them in his distinction between good and evil. In which case, there consists no *absolute* goodness considered without relation, for by Hobbes' logic even the goodness attributed to God would only be His goodness relative to us.

This distinction is helpful when considering Fyodor's buffoonery, which he most often employs to avoid immediate sensory displeasures. On closer scrutiny of the novel's depiction *par excellence* of this- the first gathering of Fyodor and his sons in the elder

monk Zosima's cell- we see that his words and actions are a mockery that demonstrates no "regard for the place he was in," a place founded on moral absolutes rather than pleasures in relation to himself. (42). The irony of this dilemma does not escape Fyodor, as his first ridiculous lie is about the passionate materialist philosopher Denis Diderot receiving baptism from the Metropolitan Platon; a scoffing tale illuminating what he clearly deems the absurdity of his own situation. He precedes to mimic the genuine behaviors of reverence typically shown a spiritual leader, prompting Zosima's reproach: "Do get up from your knees and sit down, I beg you, those posturings are false, too." (44). He jokes disparagingly about his own faith, and thus a fundamental creed of Christianity: "So you were having dinner then, and I just lost my faith!" (45). His ideas are erroneous in logic; he contradicts himself and then championing those inconsistencies, all the while maintaining no verbal restraint in regards himself or anyone else, inducing this retort from Zosima: "Speak without foolery, and do not begin by insulting your relatives" (71). Eventually, he simply shifts everyone's attention away from the displeasing matter at hand by denouncing Dmitri's character and behaviors. The intention of the gathering is the resolution of familial tension due to Fyodor's unwillingness to provide his boys a blessing into adulthood via their rightful inheritances. This is, in fact, Fyodor's moral (and parental) obligation, but he does not recognize an absolute goodness outside what furnishes his self-interest. Likewise, his wicked behavior is simply an effect of the displeasing objects in this scenario, for absolute sin is improbable and mocked too: "I don't see why you're so greatly agitated," Fyodor Pavlovich said mockingly. "Are you afraid of your little sins?" (38).

Hobbes claims that the pleasure concurrence draws toward its object (desire), and the pain retardation repels us from its object (aversion), and relative to the anticipation of pain from an object, fear. The difficulty, then, is Hobbes' inability to adequately account for volitions, to which he claims, "This alternative succession of appetite and fear, during all the time the action is in our power to do, or not to do, is that we call deliberation…{}…in deliberation the last appetite, as also the last fear, is called will" (71). By this logic, each willful motion would be a desire, and will itself simply an unchecked desire that results in a resolve, thus nullifying power of choice, for "the will is not voluntary" (72). Humans are nothing more than passive victims of objective impressions regardless of their origins, and the will to say, sin, is rendered an effect of physical necessity. (10). Indeed, Fyodor Karamazov is absolutely unable to resist nearly all-sensual pleasures, but particularly the money that engenders them. For example, he deigns to steal all of Adeliada Ivanovna's material possessions and land, he successfully steal his sons' inheritances, and precisely because his avarice is necessitated by the objects, he assumes others are regulated by the same desires; that Grushenka will be enticed by 3,000 rubles, just as Dmitri cannot resist wanting to steal it. Existence itself, and all the rich and nuanced relations and experiences it entails become for Fyodor, a "plan to live on this earth as long as possible," requiring "every kopeck" in order to "live in {his} wickedness to the very end." (173). In Hobbes' sensualist premises there is no uniform standard of moral right outside animal enjoyment and no moral motive except selfishness: "we cannot from experience conclude, that anything is to be called just or unjust, true or false, nor any proposition universal whatsoever" (34). This animalism is,

in fact, Fyodor Karamazov's very mode of being and the antithesis of Christian beliefs, thus he knowingly mocks Zosima's request that he feel at home: "You mean in my natural state? Oh, that is much, too much- but I'm touched, and I accept! You know, blessed father, you shouldn't challenge me to be in my natural state, you shouldn't risk it…" (43). Hobbes obliterates man's moral faculty in his scheme of ethics: "It is either science or opinion which we commonly mean by the word conscience" (42). He further qualifies this by adding, "men, when they say things upon their conscience, are not therefore presumed to know the truth of what they say…{}…conscience therefore I define to be opinion of evidence" thus morality is just a modification of sense. (42). Hobbes' tacit awareness of man's depravity allows him to philosophize a human nature from his principles and actions, resolving will into an effect of physical necessity that denies the existence of a moral faculty. Here we have the genesis of motives for Fyodor Karamazov.

If sense perception is the epistemological totality of man's cognitive faculties than he can have no conceptions but those bodily derived through smell, taste, touches, sound, and sight. By extension, there could be no abstract notions *a priori* -not just of moral right- but also of time and space, which encapsulates the infinite, eternal, and God (Dabney14). We can witness Fyodor's inability to perceive a boundless, incorporeal space that transcends the senses most evidently in his speculations to Alyosha,

> Surely it's impossible, I think, that the devils will forget to drag me down to their place with their hooks when I die. And then I think: hooks? Where do they get them? What are they made of? Iron? Where do they forge them? Have they got some kind of a factory down there? You know, in the monastery the monks probably believe there's a ceiling in hell, for instance (24).

For Hobbes, philosophy should have for its object all bodies that are formed and possess qualities: “and spirits we suppose to be those substances which work not upon the sense, and therefore not conceptible” (66). As God, Satan, angels and devils are not conceived as bodies, or as having been formed, the sensualist Fyodor Karamazov cannot render their existences or attributes cognizable. It is impossible to have any evidence of the immaterial substance that comprises Christian souls and spirits. Thus, Fyodor Karamazov knows nothing but corporeal things and the mental functions resulting from these organisms (sensations and their modifications). Consequently, he cannot recognize that which is not visible nor tangible; his own soul with original powers and conscience, or “the existence of a personal God” (Dabney15). This logic is precisely what makes his comedic anecdotes, such as the ceiling in hell, so troubling; the surface buffoonery manifests from a morally devoid materialism. Fyodor depicts the sensualistic belief that we have no ideas of substances beyond their properties, which reduces man’s cognition to nothing, or total nihilism.

The sensory experience of thinking beings and organized bodies is to witness the perishing of all organized things, thus by analogy, we must assume that our souls perish (Dabney 21). Indeed, this is precisely the materialist conclusion that Fyodor reaches: “And I don’t want your paradise, Alexei Fyodorovich, let it be known to you; it’s even unfitting for a decent man to go to your paradise, if there really is such a place. I say a man falls asleep and doesn’t wake up, and that’s all” (173). If this were true, than it must follow logically that there is no other rational motive for man besides self-interest, and no other end than pleasure. This belief allows then Fyodor Karamazov to perceive good and

evil not as absolute distinctions, but as only relative to his own sensibility. If each man's sensory perceptions are partial and particular, however, they cannot themselves contain a universal truth, or moral idea. Likewise, as Dabney argues, if sensation is only definite and limited, then, can it contain the infinite? (39).

The Brothers Karamazov narrativizes an ethic ontology that counters the results of Fyodor sensualistic philosophy, as it becomes embodied in his sons. For example, Fyodor's description of Dmitri's disposition is eerily similar to his own: a "frivolous, wild, passionate, impatient" wastrel who, "if he could snatch a little something for a time, would immediately calm down, though of course not for long" (12). Like his father, Dmitri displays erroneous logic, skepticism, and struggles with moral distinctions and moral responsibility, which posits sensualist against sensualist: "Watch out, old man, watch out for your dream, for I, too have a dream!" (140). Each man struggles to enhance their own pleasure, bringing about the "very circumstance" that "led to the catastrophe" of parricide. (12). Ivan Karamazov doesn't succumb to the sensual baseness of his father and Dmitri; rather he is learned and prudent, carrying Fyodor's sensualist traits into a materialist worldview, which he argues from the premise of the natural sciences. Ivan is an idealist, skeptic, materialist and moral nihilist, explaining why Fyodor claims they "get along famously" (17). Like Dmitri, Ivan's actions are odious: his "so-fateful arrival" being "the start of so many consequences" (17). Only Alyosha surmounts the inherited Karamazov baseness, as he is also the only son guided by the counter-image, beliefs, and behaviors of his pious mother Sofia before the icon on her knees, "sobbing in hysterics,

with shrieks and cries, seizing him in her arms, hugging him so tightly that it hurt, and pleading for him to the Mother of God" (19).

During the fateful family gathering in the elder monk's cell, Zosima provides Fyodor Karamazov this analytical observation:

> Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others. Not respecting anyone, he ceases to love, and having no love, he gives himself up to passions and coarse pleasures, in order to occupy and amuse himself, and in his vices reaches complete bestiality, and it all comes from lying continually to others and to himself (44).

Fyodor's foundational lie, in essence, is his sensualistic beliefs; beliefs that, as claimed earlier, carry real obstacles to truth, virtue, and happiness just as Zosima suggests. Perhaps more importantly for this novel are the ramifications for the *brothers Karamazov*. Fyodor's belief that conceptions, imagination, emotions, and soul are simply sensations governed by self-interest allow him to abuse his sons by neglect, emotional suffering, lack of moral guidance, theft, and arrested development, never really regarding these acts as sins, as immoral. Levinas' statement in *Of God Who comes To Mind* resonates, "The contemporary world, scientific, technical, and sensualist, sees itself without exit- that is, without God- not because everything there is permitted and, by way of technology, possible, but because everything there is equal" (12). Fyodor Karamazov depicts this problem of equality; in self-interest each man's good/bad is equal to another's, thereby eradicating the potential for moral sin and rendering all transcendence equal with the material world. Sadly, it is true that many men are selfish, disregard moral distinctions, and generally seem unable to transcend

animal appetites. If this is all that makes man, than perhaps we are best restrained by self-interest and fear, as Ivan will claim in "The Grand Inquisitor." But Hobbes is only able to makes such an induction, Dabney argues, because his philosophy neglects real morality, sin and conscience, which, in a true analysis of human nature, would hold a prime position (13). It is the ethical alterity presented in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and most embodied by Alyosha that is the constant protest against man's animalism and selfishness.

Responsibility in *The Brothers Karamazov* is a fact that precedes rational discourse and activity. As Levinas suggests, the ontological Logos, which articulates being, is the energy of this given obligation. All subjective moves are under this ethical imperative, a command that is bonded with responsibility. We are first introduced to Alyosha Karamazov as a child who, amongst his schoolmates, "never remembered an offense…{ }….and he did not look as if he had accidentally forgotten or intentionally forgiven the offense; he simply did not consider it an offense" (20). As demonstrated, the locus where the ethical imperative is articulated is with the other who faces us. As Levinas would suggest, the other children who contest Alyosha are simply the way that alterity "enters the sphere of phenomena" (*Oherwise* 13). Responsibility for Alyosha, then, is just a form of recognition, which requires neither verbal response nor action. Alyosha cannot resent that which he perceives as a disregard to *himself* for his very subjective being is always posited as responsibility in regard to the other. Indeed, it is Alyosha Karamazov that *The Brothers Karamazov* depicts as ethical alterity incarnate.

As indicated from the above depiction, the ethical bond of alterity does not determine a being to *act*, but is rather constitutive of subjectivity itself. Understood in this way, all of Alyosha's interactions are imbued with responsibility regardless of whether the recognition spurs activity. Alyosha's monastic mentor Zosima tells him, "You will go forth from these walls, but you will sojourn in the world like a monk. You will have many opponents, but your very enemies will love you. Life will bring you many misfortunes, but through them you will be happy, and you will bless life and cause others to bless it- which is the most important thing" (285). Zosima never suggests that Alyosha take action, urge others, intervene, perform, preach or do anything other than sojourn in the world. In other words, Alyosha is to *live*. Yet, the reader understands that Father Zosima posits this as the "most important" work Alyosha can do for humanity. Does living in passive poverty, chastity and obedience really affect others to change, to bless life as it were?

The simple answer to this question is yes, for responsibility is already an act. To elucidate responsibility is to recognize the bond in which one is already held, and where there is still a demand to be answered and this elucidation is Alyosha's primary function with others. Additionally, responsibilities increase in the measure that they are taken up; they engender an open and unending horizon, thus transformation of humanity begins in one's relation to the other. Turning to a particular exchange between Alyosha and Dmitri's mistress Grushenka illuminates all of these characteristics. When Father Zosima begins releasing a pungent odor soon upon dying (implying his lack of saintliness) Alyosha rushes headlong in a state of dismay to Grushenka. He intends on being seduced,

and Grushenka had previously expressed intentions of seducing Alyosha, but what transpires is quite the opposite. As Grushenka is sitting on Alyosha's lap, Rakitin informs her that the elder saint has died and "she suddenly gave a start as if in fright, jumped off his knees at once, and sat down on the sofa" (351). We have already determined that responsibility is a form of recognition, the acknowledgment of a demand from the other. This acceptance of responsibility and recognition is glaringly void in Fyodor's sensualistic outlook, seen in a similar exchange with him and Alyosha: "Well, what's with you? How is your elder" Fyodor asks and Alyosha responds, "He's very bad; he may die today," but his father did not even hear him, and at once forgot his question as well" (172). This is not just recognition of the body, but the force of the other, of alterity itself, demonstrated by Grushenka. Conversely, it must then be a command to present oneself to the other. As we'll see, Grushenka and Alyosha meet both of these demands, thereby opening the horizon for the increase of their responsibilities.

Once Grushenka recognizes Alyosha's true presentation of self in the exposure of his suffering, she immediately shifts her attention from his body to the force of his demand; to the ethical imperative to which he is, (and always has been), holding her. Grushenka's attention here is not indicative of an event in which ethical subjectivity is intuited, because it is not sought out strictly in moral experiences. Rather, the ethicality is in the intentions of her cognition, for she recognizes Alyosha first, and then responds to him. Alyosha intuits precisely this and giving "her a long, surprised look" suddenly lights "up in his face" (351). Alyosha recognizes that Grushenka feels the full demand of his alterity, therby exclaiming that instead of finding a wicked soul "I found a treasure- a

loving soul," followed by, "she spared me just now" and then directly to Grushenka, "you restored my soul" (351). Like the contesting of the children to Alyosha in his youth, that by which alterity enters the sphere of phenomena, so Alyosha's contesting is the way alterity breaks through ontologically to Grushenka. His reference to her as "a loving soul" is the appropriate phrase for the other who now embodies the responsibility of alterity. This better explains the reciprocal play of exposure that follows. Grushenka proceeds to fully reveal the motivations to her wickedness, as now alterity is conversely a command to be and present herself to the other. Next, the responsibilities increase into an open horizon. Alyosha responds to Grushenka's exposure of self with another recognition: "she after five yeas of torment, as soon as someone comes and speaks a sincere word to her, forgives everything, forgets everything and weeps!" (355). Overjoyed, Grushenka responds to new sincerity with, "I don't know, I don't know what he told me, my heart heard it, he wrung my heart…he's the first to pity me, and the only one, that's what …{ }…all my life I've been waiting for such a one as you, I knew someone like that would come and forgive me." Joyfully Alyosha exclaims, "I just gave you an onion, one little onion, that's all, that's all…!" (357). Indeed, neither Alyosha or Grushenka give words to any precise act that transpired between them, rather the joy of recognition and responsibility is what they verbally reciprocate.

In this scenario, recognition is not so much a cognitive act as acts by which one expresses oneself and exposes oneself to the other, for as Levinas claims, "exposure is being incarnate" (*Otherwise* 13). This makes sense, for only because the intention of cognition precedes these acts, can they be called *embodied* acts at all. The most basic

implication of subjectivity is exposure, thus, exposing oneself to another, as both Alyosha and Grushenka do, is the move of responsibility. The acts by which one recognizes the other are exposing acts that are giving of one's own substance for the other. This inherent quality of being important or valid is precisely the revelatory exchange that occurs between Alyosha and Grushenka. The restoration of Alyosha's soul at the culmination of this encounter comes from viewing ethical alterity at work. Alyosha leaves Grushenka's to return to the monastery, where he falls asleep and dreams that Zosima says from heaven, "Why are you marveling at me? I gave a little onion, my one little onion…what are our deeds? And you, quiet one, my meek boy, today you, too, were able to give a little onion to a woman who hungered, Begin, my dear, my meek one, to do your work!" (361). Of course, it is important to remember that this is used metaphorically, for Alyosha did not give or do anything in a physical act. To simplify: Alyosha presented himself, Grushenka recognized the ethical bond he held her in-thereby entering alterity-which in turn became the presenting of herself which Alyosha recognized as a demand. If this is the work that Alyosha is to *do*, it encapsulates the same passivity as sojourning; it is just that he embodies the ethical bond of alterity that is constitutive of subjectivity, demonstrating that responsibility is already an act. It is here in the novel that Alyosha's subjectivity is linked to the divine and the utterance that began this essay, for in culmination, "It was as if threads from all those innumerable worlds of God all came together in his soul, and it was trembling all over, touching other worlds." He wanted to forgive everyone and for everything, and to ask forgiveness, oh not for himself! But for all and for everything, "as others are asking for me," rang again in his soul" (362). We

will return to this pivotal moment and explore the religiosity of it more deeply later. What is essential at this juncture is the alterity intrinsic to Alyosha's newly enforced faith; he is being called to meet the obligation presented by others, as they are being called to meet his own ethical imperative.

That responsibility is a fact means that it does not arise through an act of subjectivity, where one assumes or takes something upon oneself. Temporally speaking, this means that responsibility does not originate in the act of representation, for "every representation already misses the originative moment" (*Otherwise* 15). As witnessed by Alyosha's very different interactions with the schoolchildren and Grushenka, responsibility is prior to all initiatives. With this in mind, the bond of alterity between Ivan and Alyosha is illuminated. Alyosha continually visits Dimitri during the two months he awaits trial for the murder of his father, but he doesn't interact with Ivan. However, we are informed that, "Ivan tormented him no less than Mitya" (597). When Alyosha does finally encounter Ivan he "speaks softly" and "with emotion" to Ivan, and all the while Alyosha is "trembling" (601). In this moment, Alyosha desires to tell Ivan that is was not Ivan who killed their father, and when he does just this, he follows it with, "And it is God who has put it into my heart to say this to you" (602). One might assume that Alyosha aims to ease Ivan's guilty conscience for having either "wished" for his father's death, or prompted Smerdyakov with a morally nihilistic logic. If this were the interpretation, then Alyosha here is the voice of reason, sent to intercede on behalf of Ivan's emerging madness. However, a voice of reason isn't typically *soft, emotive*, *trembling*, *tormented* and sent by God. As we have already seen, the responsibility that

comes with alterity is not an act of cognition. The approach of the other, in this case Ivan, is an initiative Alyosha must undergo; he is passive in regard to it (Ziarek). The demand that Ivan presents, the suffering that is his ethical imperative, is what determines the characteristics of Alyosha's recognition. As Levinas would suggest, the rational discourse it engenders is just language as the entry of alterity. To quote Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of this process aids our understanding: "This demand is the Real which cannot be captured by any words; it marks the limit of language, every translation of it into language already distorts it" (827). Whatever Alyosha offers Ivan, even just his presence, is inherently imbued with ethics, for by Žižek's claim, alterity is external to discourse, it opens the space for discourse, it is its inner limit as "there can be no discourse without the other" (827). If alterity is an exposure, than it is also a destitution that demands solicitude, and because this is incarnate in Alyosha, it is the only way he can recognize Ivan. Again, responsibility in *The Brothers Karamazov* is depicted as that which precedes rational discourse and activity. Alyosha's exchange here with Ivan, read through the lens of alterity, is aligned with his ethical recognition of the schoolchildren and Grushenka.

The Brothers Karamazov aims to illuminate Ivan's mode of being, as the stark contrast to Alyosha's. Like Fyodor, Ivan's relationship to the other is dictated by his materialist worldview. Levinas argues that alterity is an imperative that orders one's action, calls for one's obedience and acquiescence and, indeed, we have witnessed just this: Alyosha's schoolmates grow to emulate him, and Grushenka's transformation lead to future ethical deeds because they all learn to accept the demand of others. With Ivan,

we do not see responsibilities increase in the measure that they are taken up, nor do they engender an open and unending horizon, for Ivan is in an active rational protest against acquiescence of responsibility. In the opening of this essay, I offered Heidegger's belief that the meaning of "self" in self-responsibility was answerability. By this definition, responsibility means that one is answerable for what one "initiated in a project or commitment of will" (*Otherwise* 14). Like his father, Ivan does not feel morally responsible for processes in which he finds himself, nor processes which have a momentum that have gone beyond what he willed or steered. Alyosha interactions, however, reveal that responsibility is not limited to what one is able to see foresee, but actually goes beyond the limits of foresight and intention. Because, as *The Brothers Karamazov* illuminates through both father and sons, processes carry on even when one is no longer adding sustaining force to them, even when one is no longer there.

In this way, if responsibilities increase and engender an unending horizon, than conversely so does a lack of responsibility. It is with this full understanding of alterity that Alyosha recognizes Ivan's approach. First, we must consider what has transpired before the "present" moment of their encounter. Smerdyakov, having appropriated Ivan's moral nihilism, begins to discursively offer the same base, but logical arguments that define Ivan's worldview. He is to a great extent simply the bastard child longing for personal approval, which he seeks and implicitly finds in Ivan: "Ivan," Fyodor Pavlovich suddenly shouted, "give me your ear, he arranged all this for you, he wants you to praise him, Go on, praise him!" (128). Ivan, of course, intuits this, but claims that he has done nothing to endear the boy to him, but rather claims, "He has taken to respecting me; he's

a lackey and a boor. Prime cannon fodder however, when the time comes" (132). Ivan believes, cognitively on the surface anyway, that Smerdyakov's emulation signifies the first stage in an evolution of rational thinkers. Next, in the subsequent chapter, Dmitri bursts through the door in a jealous rage and attacks their father. Ivan intervenes by pulling Dmitri off Fyodor but tells Alyosha later, "Viper will eat viper, and it would serve them both right" (141). Ivan does not lack the civility seen in Dmitri's highly emotional acts but confesses to Alyosha: "Let it be known that I will always protect him. But as for my wishes in the matter, there I reserve complete freedom for myself" (143). There is a "sense of infinity that opens in responsibility" and irresponsibility, a process by which its bounds do not cease to extend and this is what is revealed when Smerdyakov murders Fyodor Karamazov (Otherwise 14).

It is this very notion of alterity, then, which is at play in Alyosha's words, for Ivan's morally nihilistic philosophy and his wish have gained a momentum far beyond his will. Because Ivan has not acquiesced to the bond with alterity, with that of the other, he cannot embody its responsibility. We are reminded not only of alterity's momentum, here, but how "subjectivity is the locus where alterity makes contact" (Otherwise 16). Just as the children who contest Alyosha are simply the means by which alterity surfaces in the world of phenomena, so Ivan's voicing of his wish is only its manifestation in language. Remember that Ivan's subjectivity emerges as the ethical imperative of alterity, but his superimposed philosophical stance, rational egoism, has nullified it. Despite Ivan's inability to recognize that the approach of the other (in the instance of

Smerdyakov) has to be conceived as a much stronger experience than the empiricism of other corporeal objects, the novel reflects it and Alyosha is there to illuminate it.

Temporally speaking, then, responsibility is as Levinas argues the link between one's "present and what came to pass before it" (*Otherwise* 14). Alyosha as alterity incarnate means that he is responsible for every situation he finds himself in, for his very existence. This explanation justifies Alyosha's being entirely: his spiritual calling, why he does not contest his schoolmates, his dealings with all the women in the novel, his bond with his brothers, and most noticeably the relations with his father. He is the only son who fails to reproach or blame Fyodor for his own present state of being. Ivan's outwardly posited existence, on the other hand, is an embodiment of the philosophical tradition culminating with Hegel and the Enlightenment, that posits the ego as equal with itself. Meaning, Fyodor and Ivan Karamazov believe that "I" is for self, whereas Alyosha displays what we might call "I" in oneself. To qualify, Levinas would argue that Alyosha's substituting himself for all others, his subjectivity structured as obligation, is his "I" in its place, beyond ego. This transcendence of individual ego is precisely what *The Brothers Karamazov* strives to highlight. In this rational discourse the ego-in-itself is not regarded as success or failure, because this would presuppose the freedom of a political or religious ego. *The Brothers Karamazov's* most explicit argument against this discourse is to present the reclusion of the ego in itself -as the ethical alterity of the other- as a success. In *Outside the Subject*, Levinas describes this ego retreat as, "This is a goodness in peace, which is also the exercise of a freedom, and in which the *I* frees itself from its "return to self," from its auto-affirmation, from its egoism of a being persevering

in its being, to answer for the other" (125). This is why Alyosha is presented as the hero of the novel, and as such, there must a self that can atone prior to activity and passivity.

Ivan's mode of being is an evolution of Fyodor's sensualistic modality; he is motivated by his own desires and self-interest, which are promoted in accordance with reason. Ivan demands a freedom without responsibility, than it is a responsibility that hinges on no free commitments because responsibility could be affected only without any choice. Lacking a choice existentially precedes freedom and non-freedom, but simultaneously sets up a calling that goes beyond Ivan's egoist fate. In other words, this postulate would allow Ivan to wash his hands of all faults and misfortunes that do not begin in his freedom, his present, his will. What Ivan depicts is the idealism of freedom, which presupposes that there is realm of the individual who is obligated by laws but naturally free. This is the inherent problem of Ivan's philosophical worldview, which *The Brothers Karamazov* aims to disqualify, via Alyosha's posturing and its transformative results. Turning to one of the novels most important themes may illuminate this more aptly. Alyosha anxiously asks Ivan, "What about Dmitri and father? How will it end between them?" to which Ivan responds, "Don't drag that out again! What have I got to do with it? Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper or something?" (231). As readers, we are being posed with this question; why does the other, in fact, concern me? These questions only have meaning if one has presupposed that ego is concerned only with itself i.e. is only a concern *for* itself, for in this scenario, it is incomprehensible that the other would concern me. This is precisely Ivan Karamazov's stance. *The Brothers Karamazov* is depicting, through Alyosha Karamazov, a self in hostage to others, a self that exists prior

to ego, one that is recoverable, and good. This understanding is precisely why Alyosha says to Ivan, "It was *not you* who killed father" for beyond Ivan's egoism is his true ethical subjectivity, a recoupable religiosity of self (601).

With this in mind, we can understand the crux that Dmitri Karamazov inhabits, which is akin to the undefined space between Alyosha and Fyodor and Ivan. Dmitri's duality is continually highlighted: he is strong yet sickly, gay yet gloomy, his eyes are vague yet determined, he even wears in a satchel around his neck 1,500 rubles of the 3,000 he borrowed from Katya, which represents his vacillation between honor and baseness. This precarious position is what Žižek explains as follows: "My elementary situation is thus that of an eternal struggle against myself: I am forever split between egotistic rootedness in a familiar world around which my life gravitates, and the unconditional call of responsibility for the Other" (829). What Alyosha embodies, and Ivan lacks, is what Levinas calls the complete substitution of the ethical self. Responsibility for Alyosha inherently involves putting himself in the place of the other. By becoming interchangeable with others, Alyosha assumes the burden and gravity of that particular being, and of the world at large: "Through the substitution the world-for-me becomes the world" (*Otherwise* 23). This subjective exchange is why Ivan *torments* him in the earlier examined scene; true alterity is this substitution, thus, Alyosha inherits the inner anguish of Ivan's struggle with ego and self. It is through substitution that one becomes responsible for the faults of another, for his acts and misdeeds. If Alyosha embodies Ivan's guilt and misdeeds regarding his father and Smerdyakov, we can also see a very literal substitution with Dmitri. Following Dmitri's chivalrous and humiliating

dragging of a fellow officer by his “whiskbroom” beard into the street outside at a local tavern, the man’s young son retaliates by first throwing stones, and then biting Alyosha. Despite being unjustified in this act, Alyosha responds to the young boy with, “Though I don’t know you at all, and it’s the first time I’ve seen you, it must be that I did something to you- you wouldn’t have hurt me like this for nothing, What was it that I did, and how have I wronged you tell me?” (180). The young boy is angry with Dmitri for having made his father appear cowardly, but it is Alyosha whom he makes responsible for Dmitri’s misconduct and Alyosha willingly substitutes himself for his brother. He cordially visits the officer and informs him, “My brother will express his repentance in the most sincere, the fullest manner…” to which the man responds, “Aha, so it’s still in the planning stage! And proceeds not directly from him, but only the nobility of your fervent heart” (204). In this instance, Alyosha bears the burden of Dmitri’s existence, putting himself literally in his place and supplying for his misdeeds. This moral burden of replacement sits opposite the spectrum of the Sensualistic claim that there is no absolute goodness considered without relation; the former results in selflessness and the latter selfishness.

It is Dmitri Karamazov who presents the greatest opportunity of recognizing the ethical imperative of alterity. Similar to Ivan, Dmitri does not embody responsibility for others, but unlike Ivan and Fyodor, he is cognizant that he should. Levinas argues in *Otherwise Than Being*, that one’s effort to deduce responsibility or utter it in a synthetic representation is already an exercise of responsibility and Dmitri does both throughout the novel. The disparity between Dmitri’s thoughts and deeds is the presence of guilt and

responsibility, which demands but he continually ignores and yet this demand of the other antagonizes his mental state of being. In essence, Alyosha responds to the ethical demand, Ivan's intellectual posturing nullifies it, and Dmitri is polarized before it. The undefined space that Dmitri inhabits aptly demonstrates Levinas' notion of singularization. By this, he does not mean determining people by differences or some overall characteristic or style because "singularization is not the result of the work of subject itself," but rather it is alterity (*Otherwise* 30). As Levinas suggests, it is in being addressed and contested by the other that one is first singled out. However, as much as singularity marks one entirely, we have already argued that is demands obedience and acquiescence, this means being passive with regard to oneself. This transcending of one's particularity permeates Alyosha's every subjective movement and defines Ivan's egoist battle with self. Turning to a pivotal moment in Dmitri's trajectory will illuminate his agonizing call to singularization.

During the long interrogation regarding the murder of his father, Dmitri finds himself exhausted, goes and lies down and quickly falls asleep. He dreams of a snowy November day, and he is driving somewhere in the provincial steppes. Near the edge of a burnt out village he sees a pheasant woman holding a crying baby,

And he also feels a tenderness such as he has never known before surging up in his heart, he wants to weep, he wants to do something for them all, so that the wee one will no longer cry, so that the blackened, dried-up mother of the wee one will not cry either, so that there will be no more tears in anyone from that moment on and it must be done at once, at once, without delay and despite everything, with all his Karamazov restraint (508).

What is most striking here is that the crying baby engenders in Dmitri a sense of humanity, as reflected in how his deed would be "for them all" so that there would be no

"tears in anyone." In this dream, Dmitri suddenly feels the weight of the universe and knows that he cannot shift this burden upon anyone else. In essence, this is Dmitri's discovery of his own singularity, for formally it was noted that "Yes, Dmitri doesn't exist yet" (36). The other holds Dmitri responsible for everything; even for what he did not personally do- the burnt out village, the crying baby- thus signifying an unlimited accusation that singularizes Dmitri entirely. Levinas defines the singularization process in *Totality and Infinity* as thus: "The I which arises in enjoyment as a separate being having apart in itself the centre around which its existence gravitates, is confirmed in its singularity by purging itself of this gravitation, and purges itself interminably" (44). The idea of a being answerable without limit is Levinas' basis for the relationship with alterity. The difficulty with this singularity, Levinas claims, is that it always posits a conditional being. In *The Brothers Karamazov,* this ontological facticity is experienced as suffering, an inability for being to be with itself, to somehow try and be at the level of one's own resources. For our purposes, this would mean that Dmitri's personal resources would have to serve humanity, an impossibility, which brings one agony. One cannot achieve a coinciding with oneself, for that would be self-revelation or absolute certainty in the essence of being itself. It is an unconditional certainty, and lack of responsibility and suffering that Fyodor and Ivan Karamazov hope to achieve denying moral distinctions and adopting a self-interested life philosophy.

Dmitri had, in fact, felt the call of alterity prior to this dream, yet the dream signifies his acquiescence to responsibility, a responsibility that he now knows can only be met singularly. Early on in the police interrogation Grushenka, in a striking recognition of

Dmitri's ethical demand (his suffering), shouts, "Its me, me the cursed one I am guilty" (457). It is worth noting that this has the same effect on Dmitri as it did on Alyosha, seen in his response: "Thank you Agrafena Alexandrovna, you have given my soul new courage" (506). Like Alyosha, Dmitri is restored by Grushenka's move into the responsibility of alterity, in her recognition of his ethical imperative, of her singular substitution for himself. Again, in this alterity there is no certainty; it inherently posits a conditional being, which Žižek explicates: "This is why it {the subject} is constitutively decentered, not autonomous, but split by the ethical Call, a subject defined by the experience of an internalized demand that it can never meet, a demand that exceeds it" (829). It is this constant state of ontological suffering that is reiterated throughout *The Brothers Karamazov* in a variety of contexts. For example, when Father Zosima tells a grieving mother who has lost her small child, "And do not be comforted, you should not be comforted, do not be comforted, but weep" (50). There is a very clear indication that suffering should, not be surmounted. In a later passage, Zosima tells Fyodor Karamazov, "Suffer 'with joy the dishoner which provincially befalleth thee, and not be troubled, neither hate him who dishonereth thee.' So shall we do" (90). Fyodor is being beckoned to the awareness that his shame, most likely the derivative of guilt from misdeeds, is a conditional, yet joyful state of being, which is bound to the other in responsibility. This further elucidates just why Zosima tells Alyosha that his sojourning like a monk will bring his life many misfortunes. This state of being in deficit with oneself, unable to be-in-oneself, and thus suffering, is brought about by these moral obligations. In conclusion,

Dmitri finally accepts that his own distinction and the final basis of human unity lie in the singularity of his own responsible subjectivity.

Having examined the beliefs and behaviors of Fyodor and each (legitimate) son, we can explore how *The Brothers Karamazov* depicts Fyodor and Ivan's materialist views carried to their logical conclusions, one of which is Ivan's oppressive political and social beliefs epitomized in his poem "The Grand Inquisitor." Prior to this chapter, Ivan provides the discursive logic to its main argument, which is necessary for considering how and why he regards the reasoning the inquisitor presents as justifiable. Thomas Hobbes claims in *De Corpore Politico* that, "Every man by nature hath right to all things, that is to say, to do whatsoever he listeth to whom he listeth, to possess, use, and enjoy all things he will and can" (79). Like Hobbes, Ivan doesn't see nature, and thus man's natural being, as imbued with ethics claiming, "There is decidedly nothing in the whole world that would make men love their fellow men: that there exists no law of nature that man should love mankind" (69). Ivan's observations explain his unwillingness to intervene in the family's affairs, despite the fact that he (contrary to his own logic) loaths his fathers sensualistic right to use, possess, and enjoy all things, even at the sake of his sons.

Ivan believes this is man's natural state, therefore, he must agree that each man is allowed to claim all things *and* to resist the similar claims of all others, hence, he deems it illogical to supersede. By this same logic, each man must also be resisted and this is precisely how Hobbes describes it: "But when the wills of two divers men produce such actions as are reciprocally resistances one to the other, this is called contention; and being

upon the persons of one another, battle" (72). It is often Dmitri's visceral outbursts that illuminate Ivan's convictions: "And if I haven't killed him this time. I'll come back and kill him. You can't save him!" (139). In the sensualistic scheme, Fyodor cannot be saved for in a battle of self-interest someone must inevitably be conquered. In essence, Dmitri contextualizes on an intimate level what Ivan discusses as abstraction:

> For every person, like ourselves for instance, who believe neither in God nor in his immortality, the moral law of nature ought to change immediately into the exact opposite of the former religious law, and that egoism, even to the point of evildoing, should not only be permitted to man but should be acknowledged as the necessary, the most reasonable, and all but the most noblest result of his situation (69).

Hence, the state of nature is a battle of all against all. As Dabney acknowledges, self-interest "cannot become enlightened by experience," without realizing that this state tends, on the whole, to the very reduction of natural pleasures and the universal destruction of people (15). Ivan espouses just such a belief; after claiming there is not natural law to make man love mankind he adds, "not only that, but then nothing would be immoral any longer, everything would be permitted, even anthropophagy" (69). Fyodor, in all of his sensual buffoonery, doesn't seem to possess a presentiment about the inevitability of his amoral stance:

> "Take all this mysticism and abolish it at once all over the Russian land, and finally bring all the fools to reason"
> "But why abolish it?" asked Ivan,
> "To let the truth shine forth sooner, that's why."
> "But if this truth shines forth, you will be the first to be robbed and then…abolished" (133).

As we see, Ivan is intellectual, logical and philosophically learned enough to know precisely the outcome to this philosophy, making his influence on Smerdyakov, and his

unwillingness to mediate the antagonism between his father and Dmitri all the more unscrupulous. The assertion that all is permitted is reasonable to atheist materialism, whether it is Fyodor's sensualistic or Ivan's egoist version. Hobbes further claims that if each man is his own judge, than there properly is no judge at all, "as where every man carveth out his own right, it hath the same effect, as if there were no right at all; and where is no judge, there is no end of controversy, and therefore the right of hostility remaineth" (95). It would stand to reason that unbridled and unchecked human hostility could eventually lead to anthropophagy.

Hence, the first acquired desire of nature, assuming one wants to live, is for repose from this endless strife of Hobbes' warring wills: "The cause in general which moveth a man to become subject to another, is the fear of not otherwise preserving himself" (107). Ivan concludes that if there were no moral principle in man that can become a regulative standard, then, such repose would naturally be sought in a force strong enough to suppress man's strife. If there is equality in the competing wills of individuals then a strong hand is necessary if mankind desires a civil society. Indeed, we see Ivan make several philosophical attempts at constructing a civil society from man's animosity. His essay on the subject of ecclesiastical courts is such an attempt, for having surmised that if God does not exist he would have to be invented, Ivan boldly claims that, "man has indeed invented God" (234). Thus, having logically posited a God for humanity, Ivan can then suggest that, "every earthly state must eventually be wholly transformed into the Church and become nothing else but the Church, rejecting whichever of its aims are incompatible with those of the Church" (62). Essentially, Ivan believes that men would

be less likely to forsake others for their own self-interest if it resulted in excommunication by state and Church simultaneously, thus, we have the necessary fear for man to form a civil society. Although Ivan's motive appears altruistic and promotes unity, a church-state entity that mandates ethics doesn't address the moral regeneration of the individual necessary to men to one another. Not surprising, the monks in the monastery do not embrace Ivan's suggestion of a faithless, political Christian monarchy.

It is the grand inquisitor that depicts this fierce hand, which creates repose in man's perpetual strife "for their common peace, defense, and benefit (107). This last quote of Hobbes' nearly mirrors the inquisitor's claims that Roman despotism is for the peace and happiness of depraved mankind. Hobbes argues that every man needs to consent to something that can bring them nearer to this desired repose, which is only possible if they allow the "wills of the major part of some certain number of men by them determined and named; or lastly, the will of some one man, to involve or be taken for the wills of every man" (10). Likewise, the Inquisitor recognizes that mankind requires *something* to bow down to or worship communally as the means of overcoming depravity, violence, and self-interest: "Without a firm idea of what he lives for, man will not consent to live and will sooner destroy himself than remain on earth, even if there is bread all around" (254).

Ivan's poetic argument in "The Grand Inquisitor" hinges on his belief that freedom and happiness can never be reconciled for mankind. As Ivan's mouthpiece, it is only natural that the Inquisitor's notion of a freedom is the one embodied by Ivan, and we have previously explored its inherent problems. Suffice is to say, one's sensualistic self-interested pursuits always entail the fear, paranoia, and mistrust of knowing all others are

seeking the same, so a consistent happiness would be impossible to achieve. This leads the inquisitor to contend just what Ivan himself depicts: that nothing has ever been more insufferable for man and for human society than freedom:

> finally understand that freedom and earthly bread in plenty for everyone are inconceivable together, for never, never, will they be able to share among themselves. They will also be convinced that they are forever incapable of being free, because they are feeble, depraved, nonentities and rebels (253).

These last four characteristics define the Karamazov's themselves, but the novel narrativizes the refutation all of the Inquisitors reductions (and his necessary intervention), for they are only the inevitable result of a human freedom void of responsibility. The *feeble* Alyosha "fell to the earth a weak youth and rose up a fighter, steadfast for the rest of his life" upon embracing ethical alterity (363). The *depraved* Fyodor Karamazov is doomed to follow Sensualism to its violent ends. The *nonentity* that is Dmitri becomes a subject in his subjection to others, and the *rebel* Ivan's inability to reconcile the logical and spiritual (material world and divine) will lead him to madness. Thus, if Alyosha, Dmitri, and possibly Ivan can surmount their sensualistic inheritance than perhaps mankind too will not require submitting their remaining desires to an Inquisitor, willingly becoming a part of his subjugated mass, in order to secure the peaceable enjoyment of some natural good. As "The Grand Inquisitor" demonstrates, whoever is able to overpower the majority of men for their natural good, if he chooses not to destroy them, has a "perfect property in the spared enemy" (Dabney 12). Thomas Hobbes similarly concludes that men's appetites carry them to "one and the same end; which end sometimes can neither be enjoyed in common, nor divided, it followeth that the stronger must enjoy it alone, and that is be decided by battle who is the stronger"

(78). Therefore, the slavery and violent conquest enacted by Ivan's inquisitor is not only lawful but the only the controlling force that could calm universal warfare enough to impose a civil society.

Ivan's poem offers us a "might makes right" scenario that is derived from the sensualist belief that every man by nature has right to enjoy all things. When Alyosha asks Ivan what gives any man the right to decide about the rest of mankind, "who is worthy to live and who is more unworthy?" Ivan responds by demanding, "But why bring worth into it? The question is most often decided in the hearts of men not at all on the basis of worth, but for quite different reasons, much more natural ones" (143). What is, in fact, the level at which someone deserves to be valued? For one's individual decision about this makes all the difference in the outcome of humanity. If you agree with Fyodor and Ivan, then your fellow man's worth is contingent on his service to your pleasures and if he contends them, he has no worth at all. In which case, if you are not a complete buffoon like Fyodor, than you struggle like Ivan to find a logical basis for love and unification in ecclesiastical courts, belief in immortality, even despotism. The elder Zosima believes, however, that the one thing that protects society, reforms the criminal, and transforms people is "the acknowledgement of one's own conscience" (64). Indeed, we witness all three of these outcomes with Alyosha, and eventually Dmitri, who by embracing their own moral sense, attest to the ultimate worth the other, both in body and form. Like his father, Ivan has no intellectual notion of space, abstract duration, cause, God and infinitude, rendering the Inquisitor a necessity. But ethical alterity demonstrates

that until we find a God infinite in being, duration, and holiness, we have no true object of rational worship.

Therefore, one would not want to ignore the religiosity of *The Brothers Karamazov* and what I have presented thus far could easily be regarded as a secular ethical system; indeed an ethics that is pre-ego and pre-acts of cognition appears more corporeal than divine. It is necessary, then, to transfer religious language and understanding to the ethical sphere and divinize one's relationship with alterity. In fact, this entire notion of the other, Husserl argues, is much more a hagiography than a phenomenology and *The Brothers Karamazov* demonstrates this through its monk "heroes" the elder Zosima and Alyosha. In this novel, the proper meaning of God is always located in the ethical bond. Of course, God is not needed to render alterity intelligible and he is not revealed in ethical phenomena. On the contrary, "God is the very non-phenomenal force of the other;" therefore, responsibility itself bears witness to the Infinite that is God (Otherwise 33). As our narrator informs us in his introduction to Alyosha, "In the realist, faith is not born from miracles, but miracles from faith" (26). If we recall, Alyosha's reaffirmation of faith, following the death of the elder Zosima, is brought about through ethical alterity, which defined his exchange with Grushenka. Alyosha clearly understands at that moment that God is not approachable through the divine (Zosima must smell, for he is only human), because that would be his revelation, but "God is there uniquely where manifestation is disturbed by alterity" (Otherwise 34). This is precisely why Zosima, contesting Madame Khokhlakov's claim that she loves mankind deeply, recounts the story of the doctor who also loved mankind, but not people in particular. Interestingly,

this doctor goes on to tell Zosima that, "as soon as someone is there, close to me, his personality oppresses my self-esteem and restricts my freedom." (57). His desire, as is Madame Khokhlakov's and Ivan's, is to act, think and speak without hindrance, without responding to the subjection that is alterity. It is only by loving humanity as an abstraction that such a possibility, or such a freedom, exists. The elder Zosima continually counters such freedom from the other with actively loving one's neighbor, for the facticity of being is alterity, and all that we have is the one who faces and appeals to us at any given moment: "the other's face makes an unconditional demand on us; we did not ask for it, and we are not allowed to refuse it" (Žižek 827).

To elucidate, God is not a voice that addresses one to reveal himself, nor is he to be sought in miracles, but he enters language via words that expose oneself, as explicated in nearly every passage of alterity that we've examined thus far, illuminating why Fyodor is unable to know a personal God. So, if God is the non-phenomenal force of the other, as Levinas suggests, then the divine is there in the ethical imperative that orders me to my neighbor, just as Zosima explains. The elder further highlights the understanding that one cannot prove anything regarding God, but one can be "convinced" of Him, "by the experience of active love. Try to love your neighbors actively and tirelessly. The more you succeed in loving the more you'll be convinced of the existence of God and the immortality of your soul" (56). As rendered in the totality of philosophical and theological discourse, and the life lived, there is really is no empirical evidence or certainty of God. Levinas explains this dilemma this way: "Not only is God invisible, not manifest in the cosmic order, but his command is inaudible, or audible only in my words"

(*Otherwise* 35). This notion, then, rests on two dimensions of the ethical structure, which we have already discussed; the sense that far more is required of one than can ever be accomplished resulting in suffering, and that oneself and the other are not reversible even if one's whole subjectivity really consists in substituting oneself for the other. In this way, God remains the transcendent instance that both imperatively calls and judges being, achieving the moral absolute, the infinity and the supernatural entirely void in Fyodor Karamazov's sensualist being.

To return to the beginning, in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the reader is continually faced with variations of this notion: "Heart of my heart, my joyful one you must know that verily each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything" (289). It is uttered as both informative; one character illuminating the essence of being to another, and recognition; the acquiescence of responsibility. As we have seen, both utterances are indicative of one accepting the ethical demand of alterity that is inherent in subjectivity. Alyosha Karamazov, the hero of our novel is alterity incarnate. He depicts more than any other character the passivity involved in the recognition of the other. His subjectivity, which is his presence, his sojourning, is already an act of responsibility; he recognizes the ethical imperative, he exposes himself, and his attention is drawn not only to the empirical form, but also to the force of the other. Examining this last definition, we see that Alyosha's guilt before others manifests as making his sustenance the support of the other's needs by substitution and by burden. He atones for Dmitri's misdeeds and embodies the gravity of Ivan's mental struggles as the

same act of proxy. For Alyosha, responsibility is prior to experiences, it precedes passivity and activity, and any event is simply alterity surfacing as phenomena.

In contrast, *The Brothers Karamazov* presents us with a character whose rational life philosophy demands a freedom without responsibility, whose very being denies the demand of the ethical imperative. In *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, Levinas claims that, "As unreplaceable for this responsibility, I cannot slip away from the face of the neighbor without avoidance, or without fault, or without complexes; here I am pledged to the other without any possibility of abdication" (71). Ivan's battle with ego and self and subsequent madness reflect Levinas' argument that one cannot escape alterity without consequence. Equally, Ivan's fate illuminates that just as responsibilities increase in the measure with which they are taken up, so does the lack of responsibility, which can have devastating consequences. Although Ivan Karamazov is offered as alterity's converse, through him we see that beyond the ego is a self that is both good and recoverable. Goodness, then, is the antecedent before being, seen in Dmitri's exclamation, "A new man has arisen in me! He was shut up inside me, but if it weren't for this thunderbolt, he never would have appeared" (591). Perhaps Alyosha's ethical sojourning will have a synergistic effect on Ivan as well, and indeed the reader is left hopeful when he says, "My dear little brother, it is not that I want to corrupt you and push you off your foundation; perhaps I want to be healed by you" (236). Ivan's illness just might result in a new, good man arising within him.

Singularity for Ivan is a retreat into materialism and egoist individualism, despite being called to meet the demands of others. For Alyosha, facing the other who appeals to

him is the way he is singled out and he becomes substantial and a subject once he is subjected to others and the world. This is most evident in Dmitri's shift into alterity when he says, "And it seems to me there's so much strength in me now that I overcame everything, all sufferings, only in order to say and tell myself every moment: I am! In a thousand torments- I am; writhing under torture- but I am" (592). Levinas suggests that, "In appealing to me as to someone accused, who cannot challenge the accusation, responsibility binds me as irreplaceable and unique" (*Of God* 71). Indeed, Dmitri embraces the obligation that is "guilt for all" because in doing so, he no longer lacks singularity. However, he also acquiesces to an unconditional being, carrying the weight of the world on his own shoulders, and knowing his own resources will never be adequate to meet the demands: "And besides what is suffering? I'm not afraid of it, even if it's numberless" (592). To counter Fyodor and Ivan's sensualistic, "each man for himself" notion of freedom, ethical alterity is the refutation that unifies men as a "freedom in fraternity, in which the responsibility of one-for-the-other is affirmed, and through which the rights of man manifest themselves *concretely* to consciousness as the rights of the other" (Levinas, *Outside* 125). Finally, there is a sense of infinity that opens in this responsibility; it is a process by which its bounds do not cease to extend; the bond with alterity of the other is in this infinity. It is, of course, where *The Brothers Karamazov* posits the Divine, the Infinite, and all evidence of Him to be.

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