

# ATHENA'S GATE

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## Foreward

The selection of papers accepted to Volume IV of *Athena's Gate* range widely across the readings we take up in our shared inquiry in the Great Books Colloquium. The editorial team selected essays on texts by Aeschylus, Homer, Milton, Voltaire, Jane Austen, Darwin, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. This volume also highlights artwork created as a part of two Great Books courses. Great Books I focuses on the classical world, and as part of an ongoing collaboration between myself and Professor of Art Gretchen Batcheller, my students took on the role of the classical Muses, writing briefs in which they explored the visual language in scenes from the three plays that make up Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Their goal was to inspire Professor Batcheller's Painting I students to translate these themes into the visual context of a painting, working from a collage of images gleaned from magazines and using only a palette knife to mark the canvas.

The results are quite stunning. From the sacrifice of Iphigenia at the beginning of the *Agamemnon* to the founding of the Athenian court of justice at the end of the *Eumenides*, the paintings take what is often a whimsical approach to a variety of tragic moments in the *Oresteia*. Apollo appears as a Sumo wrestler in one painting, surrounded by a chorus made up of Russian grandmothers wearing traditional babushkas. Orestes appears as the superhero Batman's sidekick, Robin, holding the bloody robes of his father, Agamemnon, having just avenged his death at the hands of Orestes' mother, Clytemnestra. In yet another painting, the judges at Orestes trial appear as a group of children in their school uniforms. In this collaboration, humanities and art students entered into a centuries old tradition of interpreting and illustrating the classics.

For the last several years, the Great Books of Asia seminar has been accompanied by a tutorial in which students learn classical Chinese calligraphy (shu), one the four arts (siyi) of a scholar in the Sung dynasty. Students begin by learning basic brush strokes and work up to characters and passages from the Buddhist scriptures. For their final project, they brush a passage from either

the *Analects* of Confucius or the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tzu onto a traditional Chinese scroll. My goal in introducing this meditative practice of grinding ink on a stone and learning stroke order and composition is to engage students in another ancient tradition; Confucians call it Li, or ritual, and in Zen Buddhism it is simply called “Brush Dance.”

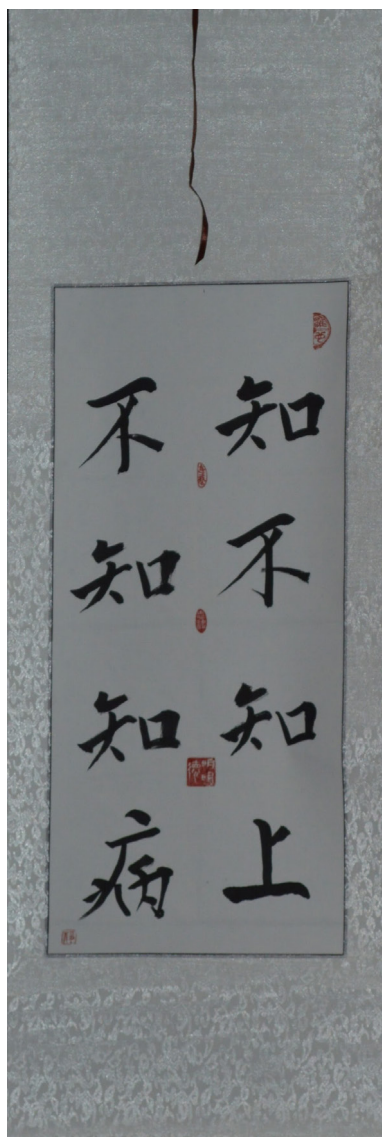
Congratulations to these fine young scholars and artists on their publication in Volume IV of Athena’s Gate.

Jane Kelley Rodeheffer, Ph.D.

Fletcher Jones Chair of Great Books

*David Hewitt*

"Knowing others is wisdom; knowing self is enlightenment"



*Asian Great Books*



# *The Face in the Painting: How the 1813 Reynolds Retrospective Informs Austen's Persuasion*

by Meghan Doyle

Jane Austen was no stranger to art. She could not help but get caught up in the cultural scene sweeping England in the nineteenth century. Naturally, Jane frequented 52 Pall Mall in London, the site of two major exhibitions less than twenty years apart, for her Georgian art fix. What she saw there was to slyly slip its way into her writing, almost unbeknownst, but ultimately integrating her work into the cultural fabric of the time. In 1813, just three years prior to the publication of *Persuasion*, Jane visited the Sir Joshua Reynolds retrospective put on by the British Institution to get a taste of Reynolds's allegorical glances into the world of England's elite (Barchas). At the same time, Jane's dwindling health prompted her to reexamine the societal structures in which she had matured for vestiges of truth, the result of which blossomed into *Persuasion*. Despite a romantic plot, her final novel can be read as a harsh critique of the role of appearances in society. Reynolds's fixation with theatrical representations of portrait subjects in his 1813 retrospective inspired Austen's exploration in *Persuasion* of the blurred distinction between veracity and falsity in social interactions.

## **I. The Vapid Elizabeth & Mary Musgrove**

Any discussion of the art of falsehood must inevitably begin with Reynolds's misleading representations of popular personages striving to establish high status. The artist portrays chambermaid-turned-actress Elizabeth Hartley in the garb of a mythological wood nymph, creatures renowned for their beauty and sprightliness, in "Mrs. Hartley (1751-1824)". The child on her shoulder invokes a cherub-like Bacchus, an allusion clarified in neighboring frame "Nymph and Bacchus," suggesting Mrs. Hartley's communion with and felicity in another godly realm. By picturing a contemporary and rather crude celebrity as a mythological sprite, Reynolds conveys a satirical sense of

supernaturalism, elevating Mrs. Hartley to legendary status. Although her tumultuous life had little to do with the transcendent fairy world, Reynolds's depiction contributes to a false image of Mrs. Hartley as both nurturing and sensual – an image that undoubtedly influenced audiences of both the Pall Mall show and the theater, including Austen. Austen's characters seek the same elevation, but attempt to achieve a change in status through forced propriety, rather than allegorical portraiture, the result of which is often as disastrous as it is successful.

The grapple for status by way of good manners is evident in the novel's only mention of purposefully staged action, when Charles Musgrove, Anne Elliot's brother-in-law, arranges a trip to the theater out of thoughtfulness towards his mother: "I know you love a play; and there is room for us all" (209). What appears to be a perfect plan, however, is immediately condemned by his wife, Mary, who is far more concerned about putting on a show of her own in front of "all the principal family connexions" at the Dalrymple dinner party the same evening (209). In light of Mary's vehement contradiction, Charles's reasoning takes on new meaning; the "play" he refers to loving may not be the one for which he purchased box seats, but rather the constant, daily spectacle each personage takes great care to refine in the hopes of improving his or her image in the minds of others. Although there is no real desire to attend a dinner party over a form of entertainment, Mary feels she must maintain the proper charade for the sake of appearances to obtain the good graces of her titled relatives. Of course there is room for all of them at the "show," as each member of the Elliot-Musgrove party fervently pursues his or her part in hopes of securing a greater, if less accurate, reputation among his or her peers – all of whom strive for the same goal.

## **II. The Vacuous Baby Jupiter & Mr. Elliot**

Anne is not the only one yearning for a glimpse of truth amidst a crowd of posers. Despite being commissioned by his upper-class subjects, notes of social commentary in regards to Britain's elite found their way into Reynolds work. His juxtaposition of a chubby baby in the seat of the highest god in

“The Infant Jupiter” bluntly challenges the power ordained to an invisible being and the luxuries of the elite. Reynolds refuses to buy into the reverence of mythological deities, and likens them to pouting toddlers, just as Anne refuses to acknowledge her shady cousin Mr. Elliot’s power grab through his constant display of extreme propriety. At the same time, Reynolds calls attention to the fatal spoils of England’s elite by perching a crow directly over the child’s rocky, foreboding throne, suggesting a dismal future. Anne’s sister and father, Elizabeth and Sir Walter, know these spoils well as members of the landed elite listed in the Baronetage, and have willingly drawn the blinds on reality to indulge in them. Reynolds’s allusion, wrapped in bleak, contrasting colors and ominous shadows, speaks to his urgent quest for truth amidst appearances by presenting the viewer with an obvious falsehood – that of a baby as a mythological god – thus suggesting that the appearance of power is rarely backed by substance. Together, Reynolds and Austen agree that strength is not an external fixture, but an internal reflection of some greater nobility.

Mr. Elliot is perhaps the most egregious example of how childish charm masks inner inadequacy because of his constant attempts at persuasion through propriety. The ghost of such an elusive personage haunts the first section of *Persuasion*, known only by his petty shunning of the family years before. As soon as there is a chance to profit, however, Mr. Elliot is found crawling around Bath for the sake of winning Anne and what is left of the Elliot fortune to assuage his puerile dreams of wealth. Through artful deception and refined manners, Mr. Elliot fools all but one of the clan into a faulty perception of his true motives:

Mr. Elliot was rational, discreet, polished, – but he was not open. ... This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection. ... She prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped. (151)

Mr. Elliot’s hold over the family derives from a fabricated illusion

of good intent, while his underlying motives for material wealth are much more manipulative. This infantile charade, however, fails to capture Anne. She longs for someone grounded in reality, with an eye for propriety but a heart for people. While the others are taken by an exquisite performance by Mr. Elliot, Anne sees through his shell to a moral void in the place where his soul should be, as Mrs. Smith later confirms. Just like Reynolds's baby deity, Mr. Elliot constructs only the image of power, while lacking anything substantial within. Together with Reynolds, Austen works to debunk the regard given to those with polished demeanor in favor of a higher regard for those with mature and refined hearts.

### **III. The Wistful Mrs. Sheridan & What Could Have Been**

Reynolds also addresses the heart itself in his wistful portrait of "Mrs. Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1754-92)". Portrayed as St. Cecilia, a patroness of music, Reynolds's subject fell victim to persuasive charms early in life and married for rank rather than love. Mrs. Sheridan died an adulteress in a broken union, with only a wish that her daughter might be recognized as legitimate (Barchas). The portrait's mournful, reflective gaze, with fingers poised just perfectly over the organ keys, speaks to a ruefulness shared by any human forced into false love for the sake of appearances. Anne's own mother can relate to Mrs. Sheridan in her resignation to a life of propriety dictated by an arranged marriage. Despite the presence of their children, presumably the only good thing to come of their respective marriages, both Mrs. Sheridan and Anne's mother stare off into an unexpected billow of smoke imposing on the frame, suggesting a stifling atmosphere and no righteous escape route from her loveless predicament. Mrs. Sheridan ponders what could have been, while resigning herself to what is, as she carries out the duties assigned to the lady of the house. While Anne's situation is not yet as dire as that of Mrs. Sheridan, she and Wentworth run the risk of being forever separated by propriety, with Mrs. Sheridan's same look permanently etched upon their faces. To let someone in, however – to let someone see the face in the painting – is a powerful step away from the show put on by the upper class and an inclination towards the

sigh-inducing truth revealed often in portraiture, yet seldom in life.

False words mask reality time and time again throughout the course of Anne and Captain Wentworth's relationship. To avoid alarming Lady Russell, to keep rumors from spreading, and to keep their own hearts from breaking once again, both Anne and Wentworth individually decide put on airs in the other's presence. They express themselves in subtle gestures and rushed small talk – devices that act as screens behind which hearts are crying out for one another. Propriety dictates, however, that their renewed relationship would not be right, and so each must suffer in silence as the rules of appearance overcome love's burning passions. Had Wentworth continued to act under propriety, in accordance with the role laid out for him, he very well could have been married to Louisa and consigned himself to the dreary, monotone world in which Reynolds's Mrs. Sheridan resides. Favored by several fortunate circumstances, and exhibiting a patient practice of virtue, however, there is no more hope for falsity between Anne and Wentworth when emotion finally spills forth: "They had, by dint of being so very much together, got to speak to each other with a considerable portion of apparent indifference and calmness; but he could not do it now...it was Captain Wentworth not comfortable, not easy, not able to feign that he was" (166). No longer able to practice an assumed air of nonchalance towards the love of his life, Wentworth finally pursues a value he has been hesitant to exhibit in the past: that of being real in a world of posers. Faking it, at all hours, in all circumstances, is a full-time, laborious job that requires dedication inspired by merely personal gain. When the mask begins to crack, however, hope is restored for a rekindling of their flame. As soon as he abandons his pride in appearances, Anne sees beneath the façade and pursues the glimmer of truth with everything in her – and he sees her truth too.

#### **IV. The Resolute Lady Spencer & Anne Elliot**

A visionary such as Anne in a world ruled by rank and appearance would appear to be a novelty, but Reynolds's rendering of "Lady Charles Spencer (1743-1812)" claims otherwise. The wife of a Lord of the Admiralty, Lady Spencer stands defiant beside

her horse in a shocking scarlet tailored skirt and riding habit. The masculine qualities of her pose are only heightened by the portrait's placement above two other depictions of honorable men in red riding coats. Lady Spencer is proof that marriage does not have to end in heartache and submission, as her portrait demonstrates both refinement in grace and splendor in independence. While her stance may seem contrived, of the pieces in his retrospective, this is one of Reynolds' most realistic representations of the modern woman. She is no longer sitting at the piano mourning her lost love, nor shouldering a spastic child; here is a lady confident enough in herself and her abilities to avoid tragedy by persuasion and be a partner with her husband, rather than an accessory.

Anne, unlike Lady Spencer, is unable to dodge persuasion's direct hit the first time, when Lady Russell sways her from following her heart. Anne, however, makes the most of her second chance at love in responding truthfully and enthusiastically to Wentworth's penultimate plea: "Tell me that I am not too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own, than when you almost broke it eight years and a half ago" (222). It only takes one party to pour out his or her heart to inspire honest communication, as vulnerability loves company. After his profession, Anne is determined to let him know she feels the same, and eagerly shakes the company of her acquaintances to do so: "There [Anne and Wentworth] returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting" (225). Their time of trial mired in falsity, and exacerbated by ostentatious onlookers, has only strengthened what real feelings lie within, proving that no feigned appearance can redirect the heart's affections. Anne and Wentworth follow their undeniable passions in entering marriage, which yields a much firmer foundation for relationship than those guided by engraving their name in the Baronetage. Manners have their place, of course, but when pursuit of surface-level propriety interferes with pursuit of heartfelt ideals, society demands a realignment of values. Thankfully, cultural figures

like Austen and Reynolds are present to initiate such institutional change.

In their own separate ways, both artists comment on the frivolity of those only concerned with appearance, for their fixation prevents them from seeing past the external show and enjoying deep relationships. Austen uses the same technique as Reynolds with his allegorical compositions by representing characters in *Persuasion* as much more aware of their status than of their likability. She also writes the alternate ending to some of Reynolds's subjects' stories in seeing Anne follow her heart straight to Captain Wentworth, deaf to persuasion and alert to false propriety. Ultimately, Austen expounds on Reynolds's artistic ambition to call attention to the false nature of social interactions among the elite by speaking to deeper, inherent longings in humanity that supersede the superficial standards set for those in high society. Personages like Elizabeth, Mary Musgrove, little Jupiter, Mr. Elliot, and Mrs. Sheridan are props in the hands of masterful director's intent upon draining society of its pretension and injecting it with the heart represented by Lady Spencer, and the final union between Anne and Captain Wentworth.

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*Jessica Ramos*  
"The Sacrifice of Iphigenia"



*Inspired by Aeschylus' Agamemnon*



# *The Evolution of Morality and Nonexistence of God: Evaluating a Modern View*

by Callaghan McDonough

In 1859, Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution struck the world with an unnatural force. It splintered the realm of faith and science into polarized factions, and to this day, human beings of all perspectives continue to wrestle with the theory's implications for the reality of the natural world. Seemingly, no field of inquiry has been able to escape this theory's all-encompassing transformational power, encouraged by the naturalistic thrust to understand all of reality through the lens of evolution. As naturalists progress in their inquiry, however, they are confronted with a substantial barrier to a completely naturalistic worldview: morality. The existence of morality is notoriously difficult for naturalists to explain through solely natural processes; theists, on the other hand, view morality as evidence for God's existence. Some atheists, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, explicitly or implicitly rely upon Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection as the basis for core morality, arguing that because morality is a subjective, mind-dependent result of natural processes, God's existence is unlikely. This essay will question the validity of the reasoning that morality is solely a product of natural selection, and will argue that even if morality was a product of natural processes, this should not lead to a belief in the nonexistence of God.

The most common argument for God's nonexistence is the Problem of Evil, an argument that—for the atheist—problematically presupposes the existence of moral values. The Logical Problem of Evil is basically the following: if God existed, then God would be omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. If God possessed all of these qualities, then he would have the power, knowledge, and desire to eliminate evil. Evil exists; therefore God does not (Tooley). Hidden within this argument is what is here labeled the Problem of Good, which refers to the fact that mankind has knowledge of evil—and its opposite, good. This is called the Problem of Good because of the problem it presents for atheism;

if the world is purely composed of atoms governed by natural laws, whence do these moral concepts of good and evil emerge?

In order to provide a solely natural explanation to this question, some atheists argue that morality is a product of natural selection. Darwin explains the mechanism of natural selection in *The Origin of Species*:

Owing to [a] struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. (108)

In applying this theory to morality, some atheists, such as Alex Rosenberg, assert that while “there is a moral core that is almost universal to almost all humans,” it is a result of the environment “filtering out variations in core morality that [do] not enhance hominin reproductive success well enough to survive as parts of core morality” (108). In other words, “natural selection made core morality inevitable,” because whatever beliefs better enable one to survive and to preserve one’s offspring will continue to exist in populations (108). For example, consider beliefs that generally all of mankind accepts as morally good: protecting one’s children, not punishing the innocent, treating others as one would like to be treated (104). Some atheists argue that possessing these beliefs gives an individual or a community a better chance of survival, causing these beliefs to continue in subsequent generations, and thus eventually forming the core morality of human beings. From this perspective, moral values are not mind-independent, objective truths that humanity has discovered. Rather, they are the mind-dependent product of mankind’s cognitive development, as a result of natural selection’s action upon random chance events.

Extending this argument further, some argue that because core morality is a result of natural selection, many of our beliefs

may be “unjustified” (Joyce 180). Recognizing this, philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche embrace the truth of “nihilism,” which “denies that there is really any such thing as intrinsic moral value” (Rosenberg 98). In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche argues that man, upon being “[tamed]” and “forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom” in society, invented morality in order to “turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness” (85). Modern humankind thus “inherited the concepts ‘good and bad’” (90), an “illness” that is a result of humanity’s “ancient animal self [venting] itself...on itself” (87). Therefore, while not relying upon natural selection as the basis of morality, Nietzsche believes that morality is an arbitrary, subjective construct emerging from the animal man, who is simply a part of the natural world.

Furthermore, Nietzsche argues that just as moral values are mind-dependent, so is God. Nietzsche argues that “the advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far” was an accompaniment of the “maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth” due to humanity’s self-imposition of moral restrictions (90). Furthermore, with the “irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God,” Nietzsche states that there will be a “considerable decline in mankind’s feeling of guilt” (91). In Nietzsche’s mind, then, the concepts of God and objective morality are causally interlinked fictions. The elimination of objective, mind-independent moral values thus undermines the existence of God, and vice versa. It is as Nietzsche so bluntly asserts in *The Gay Science*: due to the destruction of morality and the embrace of nihilism, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” (Aphorism 125).

In analyzing these atheistic accounts of morality, which portray morality as a subjective, mind-dependent concept emerging through the process of natural selection, it is clear that the reasoning of these arguments is severely flawed. For example, beginning with the premise that morality emerges from natural selection, some atheists then morally judge the truth of the moral values that have been naturally selected. For example, Rosenberg explains, “there are lots of moral values and ethical norms that enlightened people reject but which Mother Nature has strongly

selected for,” such as racism and xenophobia, which “maximize the representation of [one’s] genes in the next generation, instead of some stranger’s genes” (111). Furthermore, Rosenberg states that sexism and “patriarchal norms of female subordination” are also the “result of Darwinian processes” (111). As one analyzes these types of beliefs determined by natural selection, Rosenberg argues that they are “natural [prejudices] that enlightened people can see right through” (112). In fact, he states, “the fact that our moral core is the result of a long process of natural selection is no reason to think that our moral core is right, true, correct” (112). It must then be asked: by what moral standard do atheists like Rosenberg judge these selected moral values, when their theory assumes that moral beliefs have been determined by the very mechanism they now critique? If they are enlightened to the immorality of certain evolutionary tendencies, which actually provide a selective advantage, then what can be the source of this moral enlightenment? Atheists like Rosenberg—it seems—rely upon a moral standard external to evolutionary processes, even as they seek to disprove its existence.

Even if one concedes these naturalistic theories of morality—even if atheists like Rosenberg were able to establish that mankind’s core morality has arisen from natural processes—one should not follow Nietzsche’s inferential path to the conclusion that God therefore does not exist. Atheist philosopher Michael Ruse explains that the “God of the gaps’ argument for the deity’s existence” is one that invokes a Supreme Being “to explain those phenomena for which [one] cannot offer a natural explanation” (609). Correctly, he asserts, “such an argument proves only one’s own ignorance and inadequacy” (609). On the contrary, he argues that one should concur with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said, “We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don’t know” (609). One truly has a limited conception of God if one believes that the Creator of the universe, the One with the power to fashion every natural law, is then unable to operate through these natural laws. Applying this understanding to this case, even if mankind’s knowledge of core morality was established through the process of Natural Selection, this would not conclusively demonstrate

that no God exists, or even that objective morality does not exist. This omniscient Being, in establishing natural laws, would be well aware of each belief upon which natural selection would operate. This Being could then undeniably orchestrate this process in order to guide mankind into knowledge of core morality: the objective moral truths that exist in God.

The impact of Darwin's theory upon the modern world cannot be understated. The ideas of evolutionary theory have infiltrated nearly every field of inquiry, as indeed they should, given their tremendous scope for elucidating the nature of reality. If theists and atheists are to honestly and effectively pursue truth in these various fields of inquiry, however, neither can afford a limited conception of God. God should not be understood simply as an abstract idea that can be labeled "dead" with the introduction of another competing idea; rather, he should be understood as a Being, a Being with the astonishing power to work in and through the natural laws that he has created. Natural selection and other natural laws possess explanatory power for much of life, perhaps all of life. God, however, possesses explanatory power for the existence of these natural laws, and for all that may or may not result from them, including morality.

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*Kendall Lu*

"Athena and the Trial of Orestes"



*Inspired by Aeschylus' The Eumenides*



# *The Odyssey: Telemachus and Athena*

by Sara Coulter

Homer's *The Odyssey*, written around 700 BC, chronicles one Achaean's journey home from the Trojan war. While the epic mainly follows Odysseus' journey, the subplot concerning Odysseus' son, Telemachus, reveals a major underlying theme of the poem. Through Telemachus' own journey to find his long lost father, he develops and matures immensely as a character with the guidance of the goddess Athena. This, among other interactions with Greek gods, contributes to the recurring theme of the gods' physical intervention in mortal affairs. While Telemachus develops from a meek, shy boy and a weak character to a courageous man throughout the epic, the explicit meddling of Pallas Athena raises the question of how much of his maturity is truly a conscious choice.

In the opening four books of *The Odyssey*, often called "the *Telemachia*," readers observe a very definite physical emotional shift in Telemachus. In Book I, he is described as a boy with "a heart obsessed with grief" (Homer 80). He is unsure of his place in the house and even seats himself lower than guests and Penelope's suitors. When Athena arrives to the palace disguised as Odysseus' old friend Mentor, Telemachus tailors to the goddess' every need and is content to stay in the background of the festivities.

Then he escorted her to a high, elaborate chair of honor,  
over it draped a cloth, and here he placed his guest  
with a stool to rest her feet. But for himself  
he drew up a low reclining chair beside her,  
richly painted, clear of the press of the suitors. (Homer 81)

It is clear in this passage that because of the presence of Penelope's suitors in the house, Telemachus has taken a back seat in the affairs of the estate. The absence of Odysseus has left Telemachus in a precarious position; having to host the suitors and protect his mother at the same time. Consumed by the grief and unsure of how to fill the hole left by his father, Telemachus is too meek and powerless to be considered anything but a mere boy. He seems to



be stuck in limbo when Mentor appears on the porch of the palace.

With Athena's encouragement, however, Telemachus begins to emerge as a more powerful figure. Athena builds Telemachus' confidence by comparing him to his heroic father. Upon meeting him, Athena exclaims, "You're truly Odysseus' son? You've sprung up so! Uncanny resemblance... the head, and the fine eyes" (Homer 84). Through her gentle prodding, Telemachus begins to come into himself. Athena leaves the palace and commands Telemachus to get rid of the suitors and sail to find news of Odysseus. The meek Telemachus that the readers first met in Book I would never have found the nerve to take on either of these tasks, but Telemachus' character development becomes evident in the closing of Book I.

But the suitors broke into uproar through the shadowed halls, all of them lifting prayers to lie beside her, share her bed, until discreet Telemachus took command: "You suitors who plague my mother, you, you insolent, overweening... You must leave my palace! (Homer 89)

In this moment, Telemachus realizes his true potential as a warrior and son of Odysseus and demands a change in the suitor's actions. He takes his rightful place as the head of his household. He has come a long way from being seated below the suitors in the initial scene, but it is very questionable whether Telemachus would have come to this character change without the prodding of the goddess Athena.

Telemachus sails away from Ithaca without telling his doting mother of his final destination and further develops as a more heroic and courageous character on his journey. Through meeting King Nestor and King Menelaus, his father's old friends, Telemachus learns immeasurably more about his father than he ever would have by staying in Ithaca. When Telemachus stays with King Nestor, he learns that his father left Troy alive and that Nestor harbored his ship for a brief period of time. When Telemachus and Athena prepare to leave Pylos, Athena transforms into an eagle and flies away, leaving Nestor marveling at how much power Telemachus holds by having a god on his side: "Dear boy—never fear you'll be a coward or defenseless, not if at your young age the gods will guard you so" (Homer 119). This gives the

Prince confidence in his journey, because he previously thought the gods neglected to acknowledge his existence. Then upon meeting King Menelaus, Telemachus finds out that Odysseus is still alive. With this newfound confidence in his heart, Telemachus sets sail for home with the aid of the goddess Athena once again. Athena assures Penelope that her son will return to Ithaca, and true to her word, he prepares to return as a man worthy of being called Odysseus's son.

The character development of Telemachus truly comes full circle in the last three books of *The Odyssey*. In the beginning of Book 15, Prince Telemachus is still in Lacedaemon in King Menelaus' home. Athena wakes him and urges him to set sail for home, which sets the climax plot into motion. Without Athena's suggestion, readers cannot be sure when, or if, Prince Telemachus would make it home. She plays on his newfound sense of ownership and responsibility to Ithaca in order for him to begin his journey home:

It's wrong, Telemachus, wrong to rove so far,  
so long from home, leaving your own holdings  
unprotected—crowds in your palace so brazen  
they'll carve it up, devour it all,  
and then your journey here will come to nothing. (Homer  
319)

The Telemachus introduced in the opening scenes of *The Odyssey* would have been too weak to heed to Athena's advice and set sail for home to protect his holdings. However, his "miniature *Odyssey*" transforms Telemachus and helps him mature into his full potential. Through his journey, Telemachus leaves his spoiled, nurtured boyhood behind and steps into the role of the head of his household in the absence of Odysseus. Telemachus sets sail for his homeland, aided by Athena, and avoids certain death at the hands of the suitors. He returns home ready to meet his father, whereas in the beginning of the epic, he would not have been emotionally able to handle Odysseus' return. He returns to Ithaca a man ready to fight for the right to his home beside the father he is now prepared to meet.

When Telemachus lands in Ithaca, he never expects to

find his father. Athena's divine intervention, however, orchestrates a tearful reunion between father and son and sets up their great battle against the suitors. Upon first seeing his god-like father, Telemachus is initially skeptical. Odysseus, expecting this, convinces his son that his appearance is "Athena's work, the Fighter's Queen—she has that power, she makes [him] look as she likes" (Homer 345 lines 237-238). After Odysseus and Telemachus are truly reunited, Athena helps them make a plan to defeat the suitors, and brings the storyline to a full circle. Unlike his fearful and withdrawn self in the beginning of the epic, Telemachus is now a warrior full of confidence and vengeance, ready to take a stand against the suitors beside his heroic father. Without Athena's careful planning and tremendous effort to get both Telemachus and Odysseus home, their reunion would not have been possible. Telemachus, a boy earlier defined by his lack of a father and his weakness in his own home, is now seen as a man distinguished by his confidence and ability. As Telemachus and Odysseus take a stand, readers see the Prince now defined by his maturity and his bloodline:

He paused and with a warning nod, and at that sign  
Prince Telemachus, son of King Odysseus,  
girding his sharp sword on, clamping hand to spear,  
took his stand by a chair that flanked his father—  
his bronze spear point glinting now like fire... (Homer 438)

This image, one of power and purpose, completely juxtaposes with the first image of Telemachus. When Athena came into Telemachus' story, she appeared as Mentor and Telemachus seated himself below his guest. In the end of Book XXII, Telemachus is in full armor and appears completely confident beside Odysseus, ready to take back his family's honor.

It is clear that throughout the subplot of Telemachus' journey, the young Prince finds his identity and matures into the man he is intended to be. What is still up to question, however, is how this change comes to its completion. Telemachus consciously makes a decision to sail away from Ithaca to find news of his long-lost father, but he would not have had the courage to do so if Pallas Athena had not appeared. Without her encouragement,

Telemachus would have been too timid to leave his home. While Telemachus' journey and decision to find news of Odysseus sets the whole plot of the epic into motion, Athena's physical and spiritual intervention ultimately shaped the course of both Odysseus and Telemachus' journeys. From the very beginning of Telemachus' journey, Athena's careful planning of events brings both father and son home and reunites them.

Furthermore, Odysseus and Telemachus' relationship with Athena parallels the relationships that other mortals have with the Greek gods in classic Greek literature. Poseidon, opposed to Odysseus' return to Ithaca, intervenes in his journey to the same extent that Athena does. Greek gods constantly interfere with mortal affairs in order to fulfill their own self-seeking desires. As the patron goddess of heroes, Athena wanted the hero Odysseus to remain a symbol of Greek strength and nobility and was willing to use his son to achieve these means. However, it becomes increasingly evident throughout the course of *The Odyssey* that Athena's godly intervention orchestrates the entire course of the novel. It is likely that without Athena's presence in *The Odyssey*, Telemachus would have never developed into the confident and respectable warrior.

The intervention of the gods in the human world is so obvious, even the insignificant suitors in Book XVII remark on it. After a suitor assaults Odysseus who is disguised as a beggar, his fellow suitors reprimand him for his actions:

"That was a crime, to strike the luckless beggar!"

"Your fate is sealed if he's some god from the blue."

"And the gods do take on the look of strangers dropping in from abroad—"

"Disguised in every way as they roam and haunt our cities, watching over us—"

"All our foul play, all our fair play too!" (Homer 370 lines 532-538).

This seemingly insignificant banter among the suitors reveals a crucial dynamic of Greek culture; gods, who reside outside of the realm of mortal affairs, are constantly involving themselves in the lives of mortals. The gods' influences are so wide and undeniable,

their meddling has become a natural and even necessary part of the human narrative.

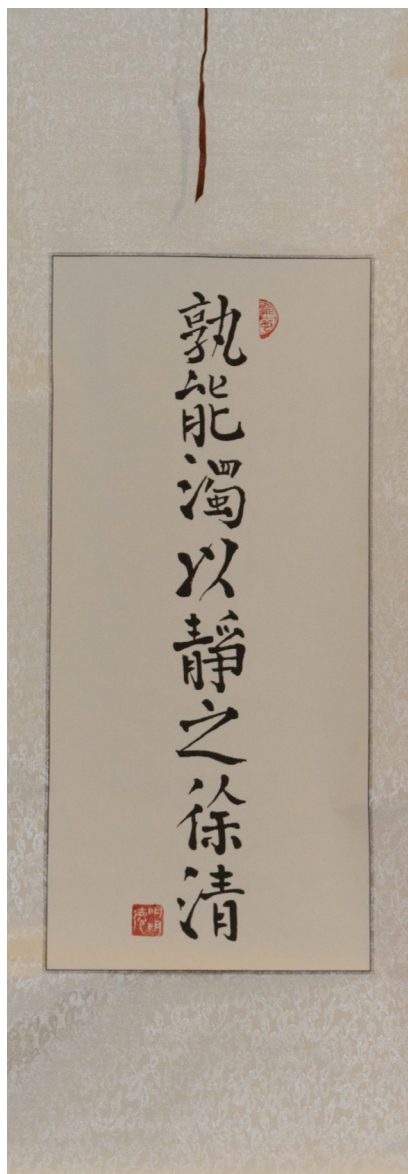
When analyzing The Odyssey and the relationship between Telemachus and the goddess Athena, there is an undeniable presence of godly intervention in Telemachus' life. Without her guidance and affirmation of character, Telemachus would have struggle to progress in his character development throughout the novel. Her presence in Telemachus' journey is vital to the development of his subplot and to the plot of The Odyssey as a whole. In essence, Homer's epic clearly illustrates the extremely involved relationship that Greek gods had with mortals and the extent to which their intervention changed their lives.

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*Will Dobson*

"Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?"



*Asian Great Books*

# *Tangled Nets: An Analysis of Metaphors in the Oresteia*

by Grace Palmer

One of the more notable aspects of the *Oresteia* is Aeschylus' use of descriptive and symbolic language, because it evokes such strong visual imagery. The playwright establishes a subtle motif of nets and entanglement which begins in the *Agamemnon*, develops into a prominent theme in the *Libation Bearers*, and then is transformed in the *Eumenides*. Considering the many powers at work in the play, including the Furies, gods, and mortals, one is inspired to question what this figurative language actually means. Specifically, does Aeschylus' language of nets, coiling, and webs provide a subtext to the working out of Fate in the plot, or is it suggesting that the characters are trapping one another? This essay will address the individual meaning of each motif and also point to the significance of layers of meaning, which build on one another over the course of the three plays.

The figurative language refers to both the schemes of the mortals and the workings of Fate, since they are inextricably bound. Beyond this, the figurative language ties Fate and the mortals together in a larger narrative regarding the way justice and revenge become intertwined. In the *Agamemnon*, the workings of Fate are introduced as well as the chain reactions caused by each character's act of revenge. The theme of figurative language in the *Agamemnon* establishes and even foreshadows the complexity of the relationships that will follow. The *Libation Bearers* expands upon this motif. All of the imagery here refers primarily to the actions of the characters trapping each other, but one can read between the lines that the confusion in the plot itself is contributing to the larger tension between internal motivations and the forces affecting the Fate prescribed for the house. The *Eumenides* resolves the conflicts two preceding plays, acting itself as an "uncoiling" of all of the knots tied and webs woven by the characters. The final play also exposes the ties between conflicting motivations and values. Primarily, it reveals the complex

relationship between revenge and justice, untwisting the old nets in favor of a new system of justice. Overall the symbolism of the net twists and changes throughout the play, thus acting as a metaphor for the way the actions of the characters and the forces at work are all intertwined.

In the *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus first implements the net metaphor when describing the recent Trojan War. The context of the plot is established by members of the Chorus, who speak of the past and quote the prophecies of the seer of Apollo, Calchas,

“Years pass, and the long hunt nets the city of Priam  
The flocks beyond the walls,  
A kingdom’s life and soul- Fate stamps them out.  
Just let no curse of the gods lour on us first,  
Shatter our giant armour  
Forged to strangle Troy...” (A.129-134).

Through his use of the hunting metaphor, Aeschylus immediately ties the work of Fate to an image of nets. The action of the play begins when Calchas’ prophecy is fulfilled, and the Chorus sings again of nets and entrapment:

“Oh Zeus my king and Night, dear Night,  
Queen of the house who covers us with glories,  
You slung your net on the towers of Troy,  
Neither young nor strong could leap  
The giant dredge net of slavery,  
All-embracing ruin” (A. 359-364).

In this way the Chorus establishes a relationship between Fate and the metaphor of the net, which is carried over into the post war period. Using similar language the Chorus also tells of Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia, describing his decision in the following way: “And once he slipped his neck in the strap of Fate...Yes he had the heart to sacrifice his daughter” (A.218, 223). This moment, in which Agamemnon seems to accept his destiny, sparks the cyclical revenge that drives the plot of the play. When Iphigenia was literally tied down with robes as she was killed, the “first net” was cast.

As the play progresses, however, the metaphors take on a slightly different meaning. As Cassandra predicts Queen



Clytaemnestra's revenge for the the death of her daughter, she prophecies, "What's that? Some net flung out of hell- / No, she is the snare, / the bedmate, deathmate, murder's strong right arm!" (A.1116-1118). Here the prophetess describes Agamemnon's entrapment in his robes as Clytaemnestra kills him; she connects the literal entanglement to the schemes of Clytaemnestra. This idea of the mortals entangling each other is known to the murderer herself as she recounts the deed:

"He had no way to flee or fight his destiny-  
Our never-ending, all embracing net, I cast it  
Wide for the royal haul, I coil him round and round  
In the wealth, the robes of doom, and them I strike him..."  
(A.1401-1404)

While Clytaemnestra acknowledges her own agency, she also admits that she is driven by the Furies to kill Agamemnon. The Chorus believes that she is acting out of an obligation to Fate. They lament, "O, if only the gods had never forged / the chain that crubs our excess, / One man's fate curbing the next man's fate" (A.1023-1026). In addition Aeschylus implies that the agenda of her lover, Aegisthus also motivates her. The motives of mortals are interwoven like a net in which their enemies become trapped. At this point in the trilogy, Aeschylus is just beginning to wrap a second layer of influence into the metaphor. On a surface level, Agamemnon's death at the hands of Clytaemnestra is directly related to his killing of Iphigenia, but Cassandra's death is involved as well, which calls into question the difference between justice and revenge, since Cassandra is an innocent victim. By the end of the *Agamemnon*, the metaphors of entanglement have emphasized the interrelatedness of Fate, violence, justice, and revenge.

The motif of traps established in the *Agamemnon* prepares the reader for the deeper use of the metaphor at work in the *Libation Bearers*. The chain of revenge continues as Orestes becomes enraged over the entrapment of his father by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Electra and Orestes petition Zeus, using dramatic, figurative language: "He died in the coils, the viper's dark embrace" (L.252); "Remember the all-embracing net - they made it first for you" (L.479); "Chained like a beast - chains

of hate, not bronze, my father" (L.480). In these passages the various bondages are literal, insofar as they refer to the robes that ensnared Agamemnon. Phrases like "the viper's dark embrace" are also symbolic of Clytaemnestra's evil. The Leader of the Chorus comments on the conviction of two siblings, describing them as, "Corks to the net, they rescue the linen meshes / from the depths. This line will never drown!" (L. 497). Here, again, the net is symbolic of Clytaemnestra's deeds, and the children are resurfacing the wounds of the past to set their own "traps." Orestes sets a "net" of his own in plotting the sneaky murder of Clytaemnestra and Aegithus, under the assumption that Apollo wants him to kill his mother in order to achieve justice. Nevertheless his conviction is tinged with guilt. His internal turmoil is apparent when he hesitates in murdering Clytaemnestra, but he justifies his actions with the divine wisdom of Apollo. After Aegithus and Clytaemnestra are killed, the Chorus rejoices, assuming that the House of Argos is now free of the coils of revenge. The Chorus proclaims, "Look the light is breaking! The huge chain that curbed the halls gives way" (L.950-951). The chain here refers back to the earlier meaning; the chain is a metaphor for Fate. However, this appears to be a rather ironic setup for further entanglement. It is soon made clear that the cycle of revenge has only been furthered by Orestes' scheme. Orestes is overwhelmed with guilt, lamenting,

"This- how can I dignify this...snare for a beast?-  
sheath for a corpse's feet?  
This winding sheet, this tent for the bath of death!?  
No, a hunting net, a coiling- what to call?  
Foot trap- woven of ropes" (L.990-994).

At this point, a plot twist occurs, despite Apollo's guidance, Orestes is attacked by the Furies. The reader is now exposed to another layer of the metaphor of coils and nets. Once the gods get involved, justice and revenge become entangled on an even higher level. The multiple forces now at work, each with their intricate interests, shroud in mystery the once clear distinctions between righteous justice and evil revenge. The action packed Libation Bearers takes the metaphors that were based on the outward actions of the characters in the Agamemnon and yokes them to the inward

struggles of characters like Orestes, which now drive the action.

The Eumenides takes a very different tone, acting as a thorough working out of the twists and turns of the last two plays. Aeschylus skillfully shows this through the changing use of his metaphors. While in the last two plays nets conveyed the idea of capture, the Eumenides repurposes the metaphor to be symbol of release and freedom. Seeking revenge even in death, the Ghost of Clytaemnestra complains as she tries to awaken the Furies,

“All those rites, I see them trampled down.

And he springs free like a fawn, one light leap  
at that- he’s through the thick of your nets,  
he breaks away!” (E. 114).

The language of escape describing an escape from the confines of the past is representative of the resolution found in the rest of the play. The entanglement metaphor is again used ironically when the Furies awaken and attempt to seize Orestes, which is their role as agents of the Fates and the cycle of revenge. The leader calls, “... Now hear my spell, / the chains of song I sing to bind you tight” (E. 304-305). They sing a “binding song” which attempts to literally keep Orestes from moving. They allude to the earlier symbolism of the twisting robes that capture Agamemnon as the chant:

“And all men’s grandeur /

Tempting the heavens /

All melt down, under earth their pride goes down- /

Lost in our onslaught, black robes swarming,

Furies throbbing, dancing out our rage” (E.380-384).

Through all of these metaphors of what seem to be the ultimate coiling, the scene itself functions in the opposite way. The attack of the Furies brings Athena to Orestes’ aid and sets the stage for the final trial, which is actually the first trial in a new Athenian court of justice. In this more objective setting, all of the forces at work are brought to light and the various schemes of revenge are unraveled. Apollo references the schemes of the past and condemns them, saying of Clytaemnestra, “She shackled her man in robes / in her gorgeous never-ending web she chopped him down!” (E. 162). Apollo uses his powerful metaphor to advocate for Orestes freedom and to show the detrimental results of the “snares”

of revenge. The court's judgment of Orestes becomes a larger commentary on the entire justice system. The Furies fight to keep their system of revenge intact. Athena convincingly argues that the "chains" of revenge must be untangled from justice as a policy in the future.

A further untwisting in the *Eumenides* is the access the audience now has to the way the Furies perceive themselves. They claim that, "Fate ordains, the gods concede the Furies, / absolute till the end of time / And so it holds, our ancient power still holds" (E.402-404). Again their words lend themselves to the opposite, for despite their determined stance, Orestes is freed by Athena, and the "chains" of ancient power are replaced by the justice of "the court where judges reign" (E. 695), and the Furies themselves transform from "breathing hatred" (E.850) to "achieving humanity at last" (E.1009). The *Eumenides* then functions as an explanation of the relationships between the Furies, gods and mortals. As each party's actions are separated from the others and fleshed out individually, the three forces finally achieve a harmony that leads to a more peaceful outcome- no longer a Fate- for all. The explanation of their motives helps unwrap the differences between true justice and revenge. As all of these bondages are broken, the metaphors are broken down, and the House of Argos is finally freed from its cycle of revenge.

Throughout the sequence of the three plays, Aeschylus skillfully trains the audience to see the lives of the characters through the lenses of weaving and capturing. These lenses are implemented at first through figurative language, and eventually through a strong correlation between the words net, coil, weaving and winding and the revengeful actions being carried out in the plays. The syntax and language clearly act as a subtext for the workings of Fate as well as representing the mortals plots and actions of trapping one another, and often times both. This duality functions to show the larger theme of entanglement present in many elements throughout the play. The implied metaphor is built up and then deconstructed to reveal layers of meaning that are otherwise unexplainable. For example, In the very opening of the play, the Chorus sings of "ancient Violence" and "Fury" (A. 755)

as forces very distinct from “Justice” which “loves the decent life” (A. 762). The layers of metaphor reveal that this dichotomy could not be further from the truth. Athena finally identifies the problem and rejects the ancient judgment, in favor of “Neither anarchy nor tyranny, my people / Worship the Mean I urge you” (E.709-710). The final uncoiling foreshadows not only the future of the characters and the dawn of democracy, which connects back to the original words of the Chorus. These unstated metaphors are subtle and convoluted at their genesis in the Agamemnon, not becoming apparent to the reader until the whole picture is seen at the end of the Eumenides. Through linking chains of metaphors, Aeschylus himself weaves a timeless web of layered meaning so beautiful and complex it compels the reader to look through the exterior meaning to the inner landscape of reflection and measured justice.

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*Inspired by Aeschylus' The Eumenides*

# *Optimistic Loyalty*

by Jerry Yang

By and large, there are many kinds of people in the world that are important to our development as a person, be it that cheerful grandfather who always had a laugh to share, or a revered English professor who inspires his students to create something from nothing. French Enlightenment writer Voltaire describes such influential folk in his work *Candide*, or *Optimism*, where he famously mocks and satirizes the doctrine of Leibnizian Optimism[1]. The plot follows a young boy named Candide who attempts to reconcile his naïve Optimism with the cruelty of the world. As he does, he is guided by his tutor Pangloss and accompanied by his servant Cacambo. The two are portrayed as opposites to each other; Cacambo is a worldly character who uses practicality to deal with the difficulties that life presents him, while Pangloss is an unrealistic philosopher who uses his Optimism to explain away or avoid dealing with such difficulties. In this essay, I will analyze Pangloss and Cacambo in the context of their loyalties. Candide is initially influenced by Pangloss's loyalty to his philosophy but later swayed by Cacambo's loyalty to the individual; the latter kind of loyalty proves to be more impactful on Candide, who consequently develops into an independent and practical person.

Prior to his arrival in South America, Candide is portrayed as a flawed person because his understanding of the world was limited by Pangloss. His philosophy is made clear as he teaches Candide: "It is demonstrable,' [Pangloss] would say, 'that things cannot be other than as they are: for, since everything is made to serve an end, everything is necessarily for the best of ends'" (4). At the time, Pangloss was the most important person to Candide because he lacked exposure to other ways of thinking. Voltaire describes the relationship between Pangloss and Candide early in the castle: "Pangloss, the tutor, was the oracle of the establishment, to whose lessons little Candide listened with all the good faith of his age and nature" (4). Here, Candide listens



like a child, internalizing Pangloss's teachings. Voltaire uses the phrases, 'age and nature' and 'oracle' to highlight Candide's naivety and Pangloss's assumed authority and wisdom, which serve to suggest that Candide is highly impressionable to his teachings. Thus, because his perspective is limited to the beliefs of Pangloss, Candide clings to them tightly even in the face of animosity. As such, he parrots Pangloss as he is questioned about his beliefs: "'There is no effect without cause,' replied Candide timidly, 'for everything is linked in a chain of necessity, and arranged for the best... none of this could have been otherwise'" (9). His regurgitation of Pangloss's philosophy is significant because it suggests to readers that Candide does not think for himself; rather, his 'timid' tone reveals a lack of confidence and instead implies that Candide only echoes what Pangloss has taught him. Because Candide has not yet explored other ideas around the world or been exposed to alternative explanations of the universe sufficiently, he is unable to truly grasp the harsh reality of the world. An example of this can be seen as Candide meets Pangloss outside of the castle, where the two agree on the necessary existence of syphilis:

It is an indispensable feature of the best of all possible worlds, a necessary ingredient: for if Columbus, on an island off the Americas, had not contracted this disease – which poisons the source of all procreation, and often even prevent procreation, contrary though this be to nature's great plan – we would have neither chocolate nor cochineal. (11)

Pangloss's explanation for this disease is obviously ridiculous, and Voltaire's satirical reasoning is meant to encourage readers to mock Pangloss with him. It is foolish to even compare, let alone value, the commodity of chocolate over the pricelessness of human life; yet, Candide accepts such a fallacy immediately because his worldview is so limited to what Pangloss teaches him, keeping Candide from being a free thinker. The effects of this inconsistent reasoning can be seen as the blind leading the blind. Pangloss, whose conception of the world is already misconstrued, leads Candide to agree with his own delusions. In a sense, Pangloss's own loyalty to Optimism has brainwashed Candide to think like him, stuck in a mindset of



connecting unrelated events to form insane conclusions. As a result of Pangloss's Optimism, Candide is unable to critically think about or evaluate his or Pangloss's thinking because he sincerely does not think any philosopher is greater than Pangloss.

Despite his molded state, there is still hope for Candide because Pangloss's influence on Candide is strong, but also temporary. Consider Pangloss's hanging and Candide's flogging. As soon as his master appears dead, Candide appears "[a]ppalled, stupefied, distraught, covered in blood and shaking uncontrollably" (16) as he is left without his master. Candide would have remained subscribed to Optimism had he only been flogged, but seeing Pangloss hanged became the breaking point, emphasizing Pangloss's importance to Candide. His primary source of knowledge is Pangloss, so upon his 'death,' Candide feels abandoned. As such, he cries out in despair: "I wouldn't have minded the flogging... But, oh my dear Pangloss! Greatest of philosophers! Did I have to see you hanged, and for no reason I can understand?" (16). Candide's outcry of his doubt here is significant because it demonstrates that Candide is not fully indoctrinated yet. Thus, his reaction to Pangloss's hanging is the first indication that Candide, once exposed to reality, can learn to accept it instead of denying it. Once out of the influence of Pangloss's fancy yet deceitful rhetoric, he challenges Optimism. His rejection of Optimism is made clear to Pangloss towards the end of the novel, indicating their relationship is very different than how it began. As the two reunite while working on a farm, "Sometimes Pangloss would say to Candide: 'All events form a chain in this, the best of all possible worlds'" to which Candide replies with "'That is well said... but we must cultivate our garden'" (93-94). It is noteworthy that Pangloss remains unchanged and still clings to his philosophy, but Candide renounces it because he has matured. Before Candide matured, he would have mindlessly agreed with Pangloss and his ideals, whereas now he has learned to think and work for himself.

Candide encounters the second kind of loyalty, loyalty to the individual, as he leaves for Paraguay. Described as "never one to lose his head" (41), Cacambo is introduced as Candide's servant, whose worldliness and wit make him very different than Pangloss.

He does not adhere to a particular philosophy but instead uses his agility and cleverness to save Candide from dangerous and difficult situations. As such, Voltaire uses Cacambo's actions as the foundation of his loyalty to Candide, the individual. For instance, when Candide stabs the Baron, Cacambo immediately is able to propose a way out: "Cacambo, who had seen far worse in his time, kept his wits; he stripped the Baron of his Jesuit cassock, put it on Candide, put the dead man's biretta on his head, and forced him onto a horse. It was all done in the blink of an eye" (38). To compare, Candide has given up, ready to die fighting the approaching guards, but Cacambo does not because he remains faithful to his master, which allows him to seize control. Voltaire focuses on the promptness of Cacambo to let readers feel his urgency, and more importantly, his ability to react quickly. In contrast, pre-Cacambo Candide is mostly idle and not working to change his fate, opting instead to wander aimlessly around Europe trying to make sense of his suffering. Thus, Cacambo's swiftness is significant because it demonstrates the power of reacting quickly in a dire situation. Despite having little to no control with the troubles he is given, Cacambo is able to utilize what little control he does have to escape with their lives, an alternative that Candide would have never thought possible. Ultimately, Cacambo's loyalty to his master leads Candide to recognize that life is uncertain and contingent, thus it is better to depend on oneself rather than on others. By taking life into his own hands, Cacambo shows Candide that he can create meaning for himself and shape his destiny according to what he to deal with.

Such a change in attitude is seen as Candide looks for Cunégonde. After leaving El Dorado, Candide learns that Cunégonde has become the ruler's favorite mistress. As such, he is unable to proceed directly to Bueno Aires. At first, Candide weeps, but later is able to adopt what Cacambo has taught him:

At last he took Cacambo aside: 'Now, my dear friend,' he said to him, 'this is what you must do. We each have five or six millions' worth of diamonds in our pockets; you are cleverer than I; go and bring Mademoiselle Cunégonde back from Buenos Aires... I will have another

ship fitted out; I will go and wait for you in Venice;'  
Cacambo applauded this wise decision.  
(52-53, emphasis added)

Even under such unfortunate circumstances, Candide shows hints of changing already. By acting like Cacambo, he figures out a solution and becomes willing to give his best efforts. Candide's early adaptation of Cacambo's quick wit is significant because it reveals that Candide believes Cacambo is shrewder, meaning that although Candide may very well still be learning how to cope with life's difficulties, Voltaire wants readers to see that Candide is actively searching for solutions. Similar to how Cacambo acts on his loyalty to protect Candide, Candide now acts on his loyalty to find Cunégonde. Of course, his faithfulness to Cunégonde was undoubtedly present, but what is different about Candide now is that he acts wisely on it. Essentially, Voltaire uses this moment to set up his ideas about activeness and passivity in relation to loyalty, ideas that he fully develops with the rest of Candide's journey. Cacambo's approval of Candide is further evidence of his new found wisdom, growing from someone who believed that chocolate was more important than human life to a free and independent thinker, prudently loyal to the human.

Cacambo's loyalty remains unwavering even after the two have separated for an extended period of time. As Candide waits in Venice, Cacambo appears at a dinner party but this time as a slave: "Cunégonde is not here,' said Cacambo, 'she is in Constantinople... I cannot say more; I am a slave, and my master is waiting for me; I must go and serve him at table: don't say a word; eat your supper and be at the ready'" (79). Cacambo's remembrance of his original promise is significant because it reveals that he had been working for Candide all this time. Even when he is robbed by pirates, made into a slave for the Sultan, and given an opportunity to disown his loyalty, Cacambo continues to look for Candide because he is so faithful. Also, because Cacambo is a slave and unable to accomplish much by himself, it is likely that he runs into Candide not by coincidence; but rather, by using his wit to persuade his master to visit Venice with his own ulterior motive of finding Candide again. Above all, his loyalty and wit shown here

are significant because Cacambo uses himself as an example to teach Candide that even when the situation appears hopeless, he can still change his future for the better. Before Cacambo returns, Candide is “so immersed in sorrow” (79) because he relied on Cacambo to find Cunégonde. But now, by seeing that even a slave could have the influence to change his fate, Candide becomes more active and more reliant on himself to achieve his goals.

Pangloss and Cacambo both end up influencing Candide, but the latter proves to be more lasting in Candide’s mind. Pangloss, while important to Candide in the beginning, loses his influence as Candide experiences the bleak reality of the outside world. As a result of his adventures in South America and El Dorado, he eventually renounces Optimism as his chosen philosophy, labeling it a mania as if to imply that Pangloss must be insane to believe in such a way of thinking (52). For example, as he listens to the stories of each person that wishes to accompany him to Bordeaux, he thinks of Pangloss: “Each story he heard put him in mind of Pangloss. ‘That Pangloss,’ he said, ‘would be hard pressed to prove his system now. I wish he were here. What is certain is that if all is well, then it is so in Eldorado and nowhere else on earth’” (55). Because Candide views his teachings as incompatible with his experiences outside the castle walls, Cacambo exerts so much influence over Candide precisely because he is so different than Pangloss. In other words, Candide is so disgusted by Optimism’s lack of evidence and justification that it, by comparison alone, makes Cacambo’s pragmatism seem much more appealing to Candide. Candide understands that Optimism hinges on a fatal flaw: given that every consequence is the result of some cause, all events are necessary because they are purposefully arranged for the best. Under this premise, the concept of agency cannot exist; if events are bound to develop in a certain way to come to a certain result, it requires the believer to relinquish all personal responsibility on influencing their future since their participation would not change the outcome significantly. Thus, Optimism is passive, subject to the arbitrary and indiscriminate tempest winds of modern life. But through his travels in South America, Cacambo is able to make this flaw clear to Candide.

One must actively make something for themselves - in a sense, to cultivate your garden - instead of relying on a lottery system of external forces to repair the circumstances. Therefore, Cacambo instills realism in *Candide* by adding responsibility to his life, signifying the maturity of his development. His appreciation towards Cacambo becomes clear as they depart from each other:

[Cacambo] was in despair at parting from so good a master, who had become his close friend; but the pleasure of serving him prevailed over the sorrow of leaving him. Tearfully they embraced each other. Candide charged him on no account to forget the good old woman. Cacambo left the same – he was a worthy fellow, this Cacambo. (53)

Compare this quote to the scene of Pangloss's hanging. Earlier, Candide feels doubtful and forsaken, crying because he has lost a friend who he later deems as a hoax. Now, he cries from being apart but feels grateful having gained a friend that he considers authentic, the 'worthy' kind that lasts a lifetime. Replacing Pangloss, someone who Candide once held in high regard, must have been difficult for Candide, which makes the success of Cacambo all the more meaningful.

On the basis of character analysis of Pangloss and Cacambo, it is evident that Cacambo exerts the most influence on Candide, who becomes more grounded in the end. Pangloss, on the other hand, is unable to sway Candide's opinion as he had done so before. As the novel concludes, Pangloss is perhaps stripped of his dignity, but not his philosophy. Cacambo is perhaps slightly worse for wear, but ultimately happy living a simple life. It is people like Pangloss, those who insist on a failed philosophy, whom Voltaire satirizes, and it is people like Cacambo, those who are faithful, smart, and active, whom Voltaire reveres. It is Cacambo's resolute activism and unyielding loyalty that Candide admires the most that ultimately changes Candide. Pangloss is just 'all talk.' Perhaps, Cacambo may be considered 'all work.'

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*Baoqi Guo*

"Iphigenia Pondering her Death"



*Inspired by Aeschylus' Agamemnon*

# *That We Might Be Made God: Theosis in Paradise Lost*

by Brian Lammert

“Hereby is demonstrated how great God’s glory is considered comparatively, or as compared with the creature’s... Hereby it appears that God is infinitely above us; that God’s strength, and wisdom, and holiness are infinitely greater than ours” (Edwards, 150). These are the words of Jonathan Edwards, Puritan, preacher, and intellectual child of the same theological ideas that informed John Milton, the author of *Paradise Lost*. Edwards articulates a powerful stance: God is the immutable king, hopelessly beyond human comprehension. However, this understanding of God is not without criticism. The unknowable nature of this depiction of God runs the risk of appearing as an arbitrary power seated on high and intentionally keeping others low, as Satan articulates in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* with his claim, “Who can in reason then or right assume/Monarchy over such as live by right/His equals if, in power and splendor less,/In freedom equal?” (5.794-797). Misguided or not, the image of arbitrary monarchy calls to mind images of unpleasant and unjust servitude. Such is one of several sentiments that drive the apostate angel to utter his famous fallacy, “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!” (1.263) Surely the Puritans would not take kindly to this conclusion, and Milton provides many traditional responses to these complaints in the text of *Paradise Lost*. These apologetics take the form of God reigning by “right of merit”, or appeals to respect the Creator “who made/Thee what thou art” (6.43; 5.823-824). Amidst these more dogmatic apologetics, Milton offers one suggestion that seems in many ways surprising given his Puritan background. Perhaps the strongest apologetic argument Milton presents in this context somewhat unexpectedly echoes ideas from the world of Eastern Orthodoxy in a way that could otherwise be overlooked if the theology of the Orthodox world is ignored. The concept is the deification of humanity, known in Greek as theosis. Milton’s more Orthodox suggestion of theosis provides a very

effective avenue to address complaints regarding one's station in the Heavenly hierarchy by raising all to oneness with the highest. In this way, one can illuminate a potentially effective and relevant answer to ambition that would seek to defy any and all monarchy on the basis of unjust inequality by exploring ideas in Milton's work consistent with Orthodox theology. For this reason, I seek to explore how in *Paradise Lost* Milton makes the surprising assertion that the fate of the faithful is mutual fellowship and union with God in a process akin to the traditional Orthodox idea of theosis.

In several instances throughout *Paradise Lost*, Milton hints at or openly suggests that God desires fellowship or communion with other beings. This idea is most clearly supported in Milton's depiction of the creation of the world, wherein God proclaims that He will create another world populated by beings who "under long obedience tried" shall join in the union of Heaven and Earth as one eternal Kingdom in union (7.157-161). God may not only desire fellowship in Milton's depiction; fellowship may be His very reason for creating. Another principle that helps to elucidate this theme can be found in Milton's repeated invocation of the idea that man is made in "God's image" (7.519-529). In Milton's work, this principle may be taken to mean that qualities of God are observed in mankind. For example, upon his entrance to the garden Satan is awestruck by Adam and Eve due to their display of certain qualities that can be inferred in context to be characteristic of Milton's God: Satan notes their "truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure..." as being in "the image of their glorious Maker" (4.292-293). However, there is no reason to suppose that this list is exhaustive; if Milton confirms here that humanity may display characteristics of God, a deeper understanding of Milton's depiction of God might be obtained from an analysis of his depiction of humanity. The desire for fellowship is one quality of humanity, and thus potentially God, revealed by such analysis, manifested in Adam as his desire for a partner. From his earliest moments, Adam displays a desire for fellowship to end his perceived solitude (8.364-366). Challenged by God, he elaborates on the nature of this fellowship, articulating a desire for a partner "fit to participate/All rational delight wherein



the brute/Cannot be human consort" (8.391-392). Adam argues that this fellowship he desires requires a level of reciprocity that can only be achieved by creatures "each with their kind" (8.381-398). In considering that some of man's qualities might reflect God's qualities, perhaps Adam's desire for companionship also mirrors God's desire for companionship. Perhaps Adam has this desire precisely because it is in the image of God's desire. Such a suggestion is supported by God's reaction to Adam's questioning. Far from suppressing Adam's dialogue, God is pleased to try Adam, and even reacts with a "smile more brightened" when Adam requests a proper partner (8.368, 8.437). God's reactions here may reflect both His pleasure in Adam's display of these qualities He Himself possesses, as well as pleasure derived from the beginning of the satisfaction of this desire for fellowship through genuine dialogue with Adam. At the very least, God's actions are consistent with the hypothesis that Adam's desire reflects His own. Taken together, the evidence points in favor of Milton's depiction of God desiring some form of fellowship resembling the fellowship Adam longs for: a communion of souls that may engage in true reciprocity and union by virtue of their common qualities.

This mutual fellowship through union very nearly approaches the Orthodox idea of theosis. The idea of theosis refers to the deification of humanity. More precisely, this refers to the idea that, "If humans are to share in God's glory...if they are to be 'perfectly one' with god, this means in effect that humans must be 'deified': they are called to become by grace what God is by nature" (Ware, 20). Theosis, then, suggests that God's desire for humanity is akin to Adam's desire for a partner in Milton's depiction; God has created humanity with the intention of raising humanity up to fellowship and union with Him. As Saint Athanasius once said of the purpose of the Incarnation, "God became human that we might be made god" (Ware, 20). In the Orthodox view, God has very intentionally become fully human that this theosis might be possible. However, recall the Puritan sentiment of Jonathan Edwards (Edwards, 150). At the very least, the infinite superiority of God over all other beings appears at a glance to be at odds with this idea of deification. This is part of what

makes Milton's expression of ideas echoing theosis so surprising; puritan conceptions of God give the appearance of conflict with the suggestion of deification. Based on Edwards' sentiments, it appears that to some Puritan thinkers, approaching union with the unattainable holiness of God could be seen as a serious theological challenge, if not heretical.

Thus, it must be asked: can one reconcile the fulfillment of reciprocal fellowship with the concept of a God who is one and cannot be paralleled? Milton appears to adamantly maintain that God is one, unburdened by loneliness despite His immutable supremacy, as God suggests to Adam with His question, "Seem I to thee sufficiently possessed/Of happiness, or not, who am alone/From all eternity?" (8.403-408). How, then, could Milton's God possibly experience the fulfillment of the desire reflected by Adam for "thy likeness, they fit help, thy other self"? (8.445-452) To Milton, can a being who is "one" have an "other self"? Milton seems to offer a solution through Adam's response to God's articulation of a very similar question, where Adam responds to God, "To attain/The heighth and depth of Thy eternal ways/ All human thoughts come short, Supreme of Things/...No need that Thou/Shouldst propagate, already infinite/And through all numbers absolute, though One" (8.412-421). Adam seems to solve the issue of a God of unattainable greatness enjoying mutual fellowship through the introduction of a paradox: God is one, but also, in a sense, many. The resolution of the paradox seems to require that God can be both truly one and truly "absolute in number" at the same time. Perhaps as an illustration of this solution, Milton presents several examples of oneness in reference to more than one being. One such example of this language of oneness refers to Adam and Eve with the intention that they should be "one flesh, one heart, one soul" (8.499). The idea of oneness or unity here may not be mere coincidence. Perhaps Milton means to convey that Adam and Eve are intended to become, in a sense, very truly "one soul" while simultaneously remaining distinct. Raphael describes this idea of oneness as well, depicting spirit loving spirit with the phrase, "Total they mix, union of pure with pure/Desiring, nor restrained conveyance need/

As flesh to mix with flesh or soul with soul" (8.627-629). Again, Milton expresses the idea of a type of union: that a plurality of souls may simultaneously remain distinct and free while truly being one. The language of God at the introduction of the Son to the angels points to this solution, as God proclaims, "Your head I Him appoint/And by Myself have sworn to Him shall bow/All knees in Heav'n and shall confess Him Lord./Under His great vicegerent reign abide/United as one individual soul/For ever happy" (5.606-611). God speaks to many multitudes of angels in this scene, instructing them to be "united as one individual soul". To Milton, it seems that unity resolves any contradiction between plurality and oneness; one may truly be both one and many at the same time. Through this lens, Adam's resolution of the paradox God suggests is theologically correct: God may be "through all numbers absolute, though One" (8.421). As God instructs the angels, the oneness of many may be achieved through unity. Perhaps, then, God's desire for mutual fellowship may also be fulfilled through unity. Perhaps God may be truly one and wholly other, characterized by insurmountable omnipotence, while also enjoying His "likeness", "fit help", and "other self" in union with Himself. To Milton, it would appear that God may be in union with numbers absolute without threatening His oneness, and through this resolution may achieve mutual fellowship with many.

The question then remains as to what this union with God might look like to Milton, and how it might be accomplished. As Adam describes speaking to God, "Yet, so pleased,/Canst raise Thy creature to what heighth Thou wilt/Of union or communion deified" (8.429-431). Here, Milton very nearly approaches the language of theosis by having Adam suggest that God may deify His creation through union and communion. Christ also appears to describe this possibility in dialogue with the Father, stating, "To better life shall yield him where with me/All my redeemed may dwell in joy and bliss,/ Made one with me as I with Thee am one" (11.42-44). That the redeemed are to be "made one" with Christ as He is one with the Father, both the Son and the Father being legitimately God in Milton's depiction, makes the conclusion of something akin to deification practically inevitable. By likening

the oneness of the created with Christ to the oneness of Christ with the Father, Milton provides a comparison that illustrates how the redeemed can be made one with Christ in theosis. Milton demonstrates the oneness of the Son and the Father in dialogue, the Son stating, "Father Eternal, Thine is to decree,/Mine both in Heav'n and Earth to do Thy will/Supreme, that Thou in Me thy Son beloved/May'st ever rest well pleased" (10.68-71). Here, Milton demonstrates the unity of the Son with the Father through perfect obedience. If the relationship between the Son and the Father is treated as Milton's illustration of union, it follows that humanity likewise may achieve this foretold oneness with Christ through perfect obedience. At the same time, it is vital to Milton that this obedience be given freely, as expressed by God when he states, "Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere/Of true allegiance, constant faith or love/Where only what they needs must do appeared,/Not what they would?" (3.103-106) Thus, it appears that to Milton, union requires both legitimate free will and perfect obedience. To discount the former is for God to remain, in essence, solitary; to discount the latter is to ruin union, as demonstrated when God declares of Adam once he had sinned, "Those pure immortal elements that know/No gross, no unharmonious mixture foul/Eject him tainted now and purge him off" (11.50-52). As shown by the fall, disobedience is incompatible with the paradisaical state of union. It is therefore necessary that disobedience should be overcome while preserving free will in order that union might be achieved. Raphael describes such a process to Adam, claiming "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,/improved by tract of time, and winged ascend/...If ye be found obedient and retain/Unalterably firm His love entire/Whose progeny you are" (5.497-503). Here, Raphael provides a particularly helpful and succinct summary of Milton's concept of deification in *Paradise Lost*: through obedience tried, humanity may ascend to unity with God. The oneness of God is preserved through perfect obedience, while His "numbers absolute" are multiplied by virtue of the preservation of legitimate freedom. Theosis, therefore, is achieved through free beings coming to perfect obedience of their own free will to the point that they perfectly reflect the obedience of Christ to

the Father. Fulfilled deification appears as an absolute number of free souls united in perfect union and mutual fellowship “as one individual soul, forever happy” (5.611)

If a kind of deification of humanity is his intention, Milton’s ultimate implication is quite radical. God describes a foretaste of this radical reality when He declares,

The world shall burn and from her ashes spring  
New Heav’n and Earth wherein the just shall dwell  
And after all their tribulations long  
See golden days fruitful of golden deeds  
With Joy and Love triumphing and fair Truth.  
Then Thou thy regal scepter shalt lay by,  
For regal scepter then no more shall need:  
God shall be All in all. (3.334–341)

Union achieved, the heavenly hierarchy is laid aside. The Eternal King is, as Milton writes, “All in all”. In this final vision, God has raised His creations up to engage them in true fellowship achieved through union. Within this union, free and distinct beings are united as one soul. God is simultaneously one, the Eternal King above all, and yet in perfect communion with many, all hierarchy dissolved. If theosis is truly the intention of Milton’s God, Satan’s ambition to aspire to the Highest may actually be met with a shocking response: that the fulfillment of this desire is in fact the will of God. However, far from being achieved through the impossible task of overthrowing the throne of omnipotence, to Milton this ambition can only be satisfied through perfect obedience and union with the Highest who cannot be paralleled.

Milton set out to “justify the ways of God to man” (1.26). Through the concept of theosis, he effectively addresses the claim that aspiring to greater goodness should not be prohibited. He does so by allowing such aspiration an infinite outlet. This proper application of ambition is not divided from God, as Satan attempts, but inseparably united with the will of God. By providing this path, the potential for union may serve to justify the reign of the good and benevolent King. The “Messiah who by right of merit reigns” and seeks union with His subjects leaves no excuse for rebellion in the form of defect or arbitrary omnipotence

applied to the wrongful suppression of a good ambition for greater goodness (6.43). Rather, theosis provides the path whereby the good ambition for greater goodness may be fully and completely realized. The possibility of deification exclusively provides that desire for the highest good need not be suppressed for us to be compatible with the kingdom of goodness Himself. The way of theosis through willful perfect obedience allows that one might be brought to completion, not lacking in anything, through union with the Almighty Himself.

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*Taylor Griest*  
"Orestes the Avenger"



*Inspired by Aeschylus' The Libation Bearers*

# *The Hymn From Underground: Realism and the Ascetic Priest in The Brothers Karamazov and On the Genealogy of Morals*

by Abigail Gibson

In his final hours, Father Zosima in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* recalled the moment of his transition from a self-gratifying life of sin to a life dedicated to Christ: "Gentlemen," I cried suddenly, speaking straight from my heart, 'look around you at the gifts of God, the clear sky, the pure air, the tender grass, the birds; nature is beautiful and sinless, and we, only we, are godless and foolish, and we don't understand that life is a paradise, for we have only to understand that and it will at once be fulfilled in all its beauty, we shall embrace each other and weep" (Dostoevsky 259). In this single statement lies the essential theology of Zosima, Dostoevsky's ascetic priest, as well as the core concepts that make up the novel's "thesis" as it were: realism and personal responsibility for suffering. In the same vein as Søren Kierkegaard's notion of the coexistence of the "pedestrian" and the "sublime" on earth (Kierkegaard 70), Dostoevsky's realism embodied by his characters, Zosima and Dmitri Fyodorovich Karamazov, as well as countless others, maintains that the material and spiritual worlds do not inhabit separate spheres but rather intermingle to produce heaven on earth. Realism, in the case of *The Brothers Karamazov*, provides a resolution to rather than an explanation of the meaninglessness of suffering.

But it is precisely the meaninglessness of suffering that prompted Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of the ascetic priest as espoused in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. He ends his third essay by summarizing the role of the ascetic priest in the successful promotion of the "sick" people of resentment: "the meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far-and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning!" (Nietzsche 162). This meaning is found, similar to Dostoevsky, in the will to claim responsibility for the existence of suffering.

Thus, both works contain the concept of the responsibility



for suffering, but Dostoevsky firmly establishes that this must be a “cross” to bear in emulation of Jesus Christ: personal responsibility for the suffering of the entire world. This type of active love as delineated by Father Zosima provides a stark contrast to the selfish and violent manifestation of Nietzsche’s “bad conscience,” which is embodied in the form of laceration in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Nietzsche maintains that the ascetic priest advocates personal responsibility for the self, exclusively. He localizes responsibility of personal suffering solely to the individual, a position represented in *The Brothers Karamazov* by Ivan Fyodorovich Karamazov’s deliberate detachment from the world’s suffering in favor of his own. This inward laceration separates followers of the ascetic priest from the world and changes the question from “why does the world suffer?” to “why do I suffer?” Zosima’s cross, however, is dependent upon a deep love of the earth and its people, and turns notions of guilt into manifestations of active love rather than laceration. For this reason, most of the imagery used in *The Brothers Karamazov* is physical and profoundly rooted in the earth itself.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the implications regarding the existence of suffering that arise from the differing views of the ascetic priest presented in both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche’s works. While Nietzsche’s ascetic priest leaves no room for improvement but rather explains and reinforces the hopelessness of suffering, Dostoevsky’s ascetic priest provides a meaningful and practical potential resolution to the world’s suffering through a conscious emulation of Christ’s cross and a genuine love of the realism of the earth.

The ascetic priest found in *On the Genealogy of Morals* exists in a world in which morality is essentially meaningless and based entirely upon a will to power. Nietzsche begins with this intriguing but troubling question in regards to morality: “one has hitherto never doubted to hesitate in the slightest degree in supposing ‘the good man’ to be of greater value than ‘the evil man,’ of greater value in the sense of furthering the advancement and prosperity of man in general (the future of man included). But what if the reverse were true?...so that precisely morality was the danger of dangers?” (Nietzsche 20). It is with this preface in mind, that the

full meaning of Nietzsche's ascetic priest as espoused in his third essay is made clear: in a brilliant maneuver to power, the ascetic priest has managed to hoodwink the easily-manipulated people of resentment into believing that they themselves are to blame for their own suffering. He asserts that in "the case of the ascetic life, life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence. The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds—that we ought to put right" (Nietzsche 117). Nietzsche is prepared to call this alteration of the direction of victimized anger the "essential art" of the shepherd of the weak and foolish (an image deliberately used to evoke Christ as the "Good Shepherd"), though he says it ultimately proves to be a dangerous perversion of the natural order of the world.

Nietzsche identifies this struggle of "moral masturbators" against the truly strong as evidence of a secret "instinct for devious paths to tyranny over the healthy," that is the "will to power of the weakest" (Nietzsche 123). For Nietzsche, much of the problem in this corruption of the natural order of the world is found in the conscious deception of the ascetic priest and the unconscious obedience the priest's followers engage in, which he likens to hypnotization. He asserts that the ascetic priest and his hypnotized followers "monopolize virtue, these weak, hopelessly sick people, there is no doubt of it: 'we alone are the good and just,' they say" (Nietzsche 123). He continues on to refer to this as "triumph in the ultimate agony," a statement that has strong parallels in many of Dmitri's statements regarding the "abyss" in *The Brothers Karamazov* (Nietzsche 118). Thus, the ascetic priest left at the end of Nietzsche's treatise embodies a decidedly sinister will to power that uses the bad conscience and a celebration of weakness to control the flow of victimized fury into a manipulative rise to ultimate power. In Nietzsche's understanding, biblical verses that declare Christ's "power [to be] made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12.9) further establish the ascetic priests' identification with the Christian faith as well as provide a suggestion as to why this deception has unfortunately been able to take a firm hold on the world's understanding of morality and suffering.

On the other hand, Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* provides a practical counter to Nietzsche's theoretical ascetic priest. As a prominent religious figure in the Russian Orthodox monastery in the village of Skotoprigon'evsk, Zosima is placed in the very position Nietzsche warns against, even ostensibly carrying many of the qualities found in a Nietzschean ascetic priest. The narrator takes a moment before introducing Zosima himself as a character to explain the institution of elders within the Russian Orthodox tradition: "an elder was one who took your soul, your will, into his soul and his will. When you choose an elder, you renounce your own will and yield it to him in complete submission, complete self-abnegation" (Dostoevsky 30). It is this very quality, as the narrator points out, that led to division within the church "when it was revived among us towards the end of the last century by one of the great ascetics, Paisy Velichkovsky" (Dostoevsky 29). Zosima, it seems, has been set up as a strong potential candidate for the ascetic priest along the lines of those found in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: he requires complete submission to his will for the purpose of finding freedom from the debase self, which is in effect, a maneuver to greater self-mastery and control. This action is referred to as laceration in *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky 30).

Indeed Alexey Fyodorovich Karamazov's relationship with Father Zosima and the near-savior status Alyosha affords him seems to suggest that Zosima is Nietzsche's ascetic priest in action. The narrator explains that Alyosha, "fully believed in the spiritual power of his teacher [Zosima] and rejoiced in his fame, in his glory, as though it were his own triumph" (Dostoevsky 32). Furthermore, Zosima's death in the first chapter of Book VII and the "hasty prematureness of [the] corruption" of his body, suggests the extremely high position of power Zosima held over both his followers and enemies, devastating followers such as Alyosha and reaffirming everything enemies like Father Iosif believed about the falsity of Zosima's holiness (Dostoevsky 287).

But ultimately Zosima's words throughout the rest of the novel demonstrate he is in every way distinct from Nietzsche's ascetic priest, and this is primarily due to the concept of realism

found in *The Brothers Karamazov* and the lack thereof in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In the final essay, Nietzsche describes the ascetic priest's influence on his sheep: "they think of themselves... repose in all cellar regions; all dogs nicely chained up; no barking of hostility and shaggy-haired rancor; no gnawing worm of injured ambition; undemanding and obedient intestines, busy as windmills but distant; the heart remote, beyond, heavy with future, posthumous—all in all, they think of the ascetic ideal as the cheerful asceticism of an animal become fledged and divine, floating above life rather than in repose" (Nietzsche 108). Connected to Nietzsche's assertion that all followers of the ascetic priest are hypnotized and thus docile to every whim of the priest, is the notion of the separation between heaven and earth. The people of resentment look beyond the material world to find validation or their "triumph" in a world yet to come. In the meantime, they are content to understand their suffering as temporary and thus ultimately meaningless. But an odd circular reasoning appears in this explanation for personal suffering, a circular reasoning that is avoided in Zosima's concept of realism, as will be explored in the coming pages. Suffering is meaningless, which allows the ascetic priest to fill that painful void within the sufferers' hearts. He tells them that their triumph is to come later when the rest of the debase world has passed away and that they are a "chosen" people for this reason. Thus, their suffering is ultimately meaningless. But it was this meaninglessness that prompted the entrance of the ascetic priest in the first place, and the cycle continues, eternally keeping the priest in power. Hatred of the earth rests at the core of this belief system.

Father Zosima does not subscribe to this mandated separation between heaven and earth, and he makes the vital connection between a conscious love of the earth and the realization of the coexistence of the pedestrian and the sublime. He exhorts his fellow monks at the end of his life, "brothers, have no fear of men's sin, love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of divine love and is the highest love on earth...love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery of things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better everyday. And you will at last come to love the whole

world with an all-embracing love” (Dostoevsky 275). Crucially, Zosima calls for a divine love upon the earth, not upon any hope for a future in paradise. In contrast to the ascetic priest who detests the earth and looks to the future for the day when he can leave it forever to be with Christ in a disembodied spiritual realm, Zosima maintains that this very act of divine love in a material world is paradise already. Alyosha has a similar epiphany at the end of Book VII that provides physical imagery to further reinforce the beauty and divinity of the earth itself: “He did not know why he embraced it [the earth]. He could not have told why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss it all. But he kissed it weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and rapturously vowed to love it, to love it forever and ever” (Dostoevsky 312). The book ends with Zosima’s words echoing in Alyosha’s head: “sojourn in the world” (Dostoevsky 312).

Luckily, Dostoevsky explains what a “sojourn in the world” looks like in practice, again using the words of his ascetic priest. It is in this practice of active love that the ubiquitous question of “why does suffering exist?” is resolved in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Zosima even addresses Nietzsche’s ascetic priest’s hatred of the wicked world when he again exhorts his followers in Book VI, “do not say, ‘sin is mighty, wickedness is mighty, and evil environment is wearing us away and hindering our good work from being done.’ Fly from that dejection, children! There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible for all men’s sins. That is the truth...and you are to blame for everyone and for all things” (Dostoevsky 276). Ivan’s reaction to suffering found in his conversation with Alyosha in Book V is represented in the first half of Zosima’s statement above. Ivan, Alyosha’s brother who is disillusioned by the suffering of the world, falls into the trap of the Nietzschean ascetic priest when he exclaims, “I don’t accept this world of God’s, and although I know it exists, I don’t accept it at all” (Dostoevsky 203). He recognizes the suffering of the world, fails to see himself as a participant in the prolonging of that suffering, and thus is not able to distinguish between his hatred of the world and his hatred of the suffering in it. Certainly, Ivan asks the question of “why does the world suffer?” but just like the people of

ressentiment, he fails to use active love to alleviate it, which only comes about through an acceptance of personal responsibility for the suffering of all. Zosima does pinpoint personal responsibility for suffering like Nietzsche's ascetic priest, but focuses on suffering that lies on a vastly larger scale, the world's. The result is a true emulation of Christ's death upon the cross that leads both to personal salvation on earth, and an answer to suffering in the world.

Therefore, the respective questions each ascetic priest asks ("why do I suffer?" and "why does the world suffer?"), are ultimately rooted in each attitude towards the earth. The priests of resentment detest themselves and the world, and it is for this very reason that their response to suffering manifests in the essentially self-centered action of laceration, the result of the bad conscience and a myopic understanding of suffering. For them, the world is a lost cause, and there is nothing that can be done about it. Each person that suffers, suffers from themselves only, as the ascetic priest has taught them to believe. Ivan represents this type of suffering in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Father Zosima, on the other hand, loves the world precisely because of the guilt he feels in participating in the perpetuation of the world's suffering. His guilt manifests in a radically different form, active love, simply because he looks beyond his own suffering to ask, as Dmitri does, "why is the babe poor?" (Dostoevsky 428).

Dmitri, though not the proclaimed hero of *The Brothers Karamazov*, demonstrates perhaps most movingly the simultaneous peace and utility that comes as a result of active love derived from an embracing of the realism of the earth. He himself uses the word "realism" frequently throughout the final half of the novel, professing that he desires realism rather than miracles. His stirring cry to Alyosha prior to his trial for the murder of Fyodor Pavlovich represents the multifaceted nature of Zosima's active love: "and then we men underground will sing from the bowels of the earth a tragic hymn to God, with Whom is joy. Hail to God and His joy! I love Him!" (Dostoevsky 499). In this concept of the hymn from underground lies the physical imagery of the earth (being physically immersed in the earth) found throughout the rest of the novel in the form of earthly symbols such as onions and pancakes, the

notion of paradise on earth (a hymn sung underground), and the desire to alleviate suffering that comes as a result of an admission of guilt for that suffering (it is Dmitri's cross to bear as he later confesses to Alyosha).

It is no surprise, then, that Dostoevsky's dedication to *The Brothers Karamazov* features a verse from Scripture that uses physical earthly imagery and evokes many of the same themes as Dmitri's hymn from underground: "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Dostoevsky 2). The message is simple: the seed must be buried in the earth to become much larger than itself, that is a bushel of wheat. In the same way, both Zosima and Dmitri establish that one has to embrace the earth, even to the point of suffering for it, in order to alleviate it. Only when one embraces the earth does one take responsibility for the suffering that plagues it as a whole, not just themselves, and only when that realization is come to, does active love follow. Thus begins one's "sojourn into the world." Nietzsche's ascetic priest remains a seed, contained exclusively within itself and thus useless in its love. Dostoevsky's ascetic priest, Zosima, and the significant figures in the novel he inspired, demonstrate in practice "real Christian work, not only mystic, but rational and philanthropic" (Dostoevsky 623). This, according to Dostoevsky, is the resolution to suffering: singing hymns despite being underground.

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# *Taylor Griest*

## *"Layers"*

*Speak through the Tao.*

*Only then will your words filter through*

*the countless layers of truth like sediments*

*that have been settling on top of one another for an eternity.*

*Only the most pure will make it through the sieve to the other side;*

*Drop by drop,*

*Pure as water.*

*In speaking, if your words stray from the Tao,*

*They will be impure,*

*Contaminating the minds on which they land,*

*Drop by muddy drop.*

*A wisdom saying inspired by the Tao Te Ching,  
Asian Great Books*



*Dylan Sacenti*

"Tao"

道



*Asian Great Books*

# *Nietzsche and Dostoevsky: Divergent Responses to Nihilism*

by Benjamin Keoseyan

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche conducts a genealogical and philological critique of value, particularly with respect to morality and religious belief. The overarching result of this critique is the prescription of secular humanism which “might free mankind of this whole feeling of guilty indebtedness” (Nietzsche 91). Nietzsche views Christian morality and belief as a “bestiality of thought,” in which man views God as “the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts” (Nietzsche 92–93). This “most terrible sickness” is not incurable, however: Nietzsche speaks of the Antichrist, Zarathustra—the future man who will “redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism” (Nietzsche 96).

Nietzsche’s theories are often connected with and compared to the writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky<sup>1</sup>. For the purposes of this paper, I will explicate the ideas of Nietzsche, particularly those found in the *Genealogy*, and compare them with those of Dostoevsky, as found in *The Brothers Karamazov* in order to engage the voices of these two critical thinkers in a dialogue concerning the proper response to the nihilism described in Heidegger’s exegesis of Nietzsche’s oft repeated slogan “God is dead,” a nihilism which Heidegger will later link to the death of metaphysics:

If God as the suprasensory ground and goal of all reality is dead, if the suprasensory world of the Ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory and above all its vitalizing and upbuilding power, then nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself.  
(Heidegger 61)

While both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky were aware of this nihilism, they attributed it to different causes, and both prescribed different steps of action that the intellectual of the modern era must take in order to overcome this nothingness. Nietzsche puts his faith in the

Übermensch, the individual who will create new values in the moral vacuum left in the wake of nihilism, while Dostoevsky prescribes a mysticism rooted in the “divine love” of St. Isaac the Syrian.

Nietzsche explains in the preface of the *Genealogy* what he sets out to do: “we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called into question” (Nietzsche 20). This is because he saw his own teacher Schopenhauer fall into a passive form of nihilism:

...the instincts of pity, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, which Schopenhauer had gilded, deified, and projected into a beyond for so long that at least they became for him “value-in-itself,” on the basis of which he said No to life and to himself...[It] was precisely here that I saw the beginning of the end, the dead stop, a retrospective weariness, the will turning against life (Nietzsche 19).

Nietzsche calls this will to nothingness “a Buddhism for Europeans,” which he criticized as inconsistent, because a will to nothingness is nonetheless a will, and is closely followed by values. Nietzsche instead seeks to penetrate the heart of value itself and does so through a philological and historical—a genealogical—investigation of morality.

Nietzsche diametrically opposes “good” and “bad”—terms coined by the good, i.e., the powerful, in the classical Greek world—and traces the evolution of these concepts into “good” and “evil” through the resentment of the powerful by the weak. Out of the dialectic of good and evil slave morality emerged, typified by Judaism and later Christianity. Slave morality was “fundamentally [a] reaction” to the “hostile external world” of the Roman Empire—it praised the meekness of the slave, and was opposed to the noble mode of valuation, or master morality (Nietzsche 37–39). Nietzsche sees these two systems of morality—one praising strength and power, the other praising humility and suffering—as “engaged in a fearful struggle on earth for thousands of years” (Nietzsche 52).

The two systems of morality that Nietzsche describes are essentially the two oldest and most significant traditions of Western culture—the classical worldview, and the Judeo-Christian worldview. Nietzsche sees nihilism as the inevitable result of

the triumph of slave morality: based on the belief in God and the promise of delayed justice, slave morality, as well as truth itself, utterly falls apart as the modern man denies the existence of God (Nietzsche 152-153). The vacuum left by this denial is a 'hard' form of nihilism—more robust than the "passive nihilism" of Schopenhauer—and entails the elimination of the will altogether, the "[castration of] the intellect" (Nietzsche 119).

The solution to this nihilism is littered throughout Nietzsche's writings, and might also be suggested by the writer's own biography. As an accomplished philologist, Nietzsche was a formidable scholar of the classics, and at the core of Nietzsche's writings one might notice a subtle longing for the idealized world of the Homeric hero. To assert that Nietzsche, a secular-humanist and patron of the arts, was himself a "nihilist" in the contemporary philosophical sense is patently false: the pan-historical struggle between Classical ethics and Christian ethics that Nietzsche presents in the *Genealogy* is suggestive of where Nietzsche himself sees value. After the destruction of all value following the denial of God, the *Übermensch*, must raise up a new system of values motivated by a love of creation and life. Although the bulk of Nietzsche's theory of the *Übermensch* comes from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), there are hints of it in the *Genealogy*. The *Übermensch* hearkens back to the ideals of the morality derived from the good-bad distinction, the master morality of the Greeks, which emphasized strength, power, and individuality. Nietzsche presents Napoleon as the "noble ideal as such made flesh," an example of a momentary triumph of master-morality and a model for the future *Übermensch* (Nietzsche 54). This future *Übermensch* is Nietzsche's suggested solution to modern nihilism—a reinstatement of life-affirming and humanistic values founded on the strength of a singular supramoral individual.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky presents the reader with three divergent solutions to the same threat of nihilism that Nietzsche faced. One response can be found in the characters of Ivan and Smerdyakov; these two characters fit the archetype of the modern intellectual who has left faith behind in pursuit of reason and science. In Book III, the reader is told that as

a child, Smerdyakov questioned the religious education given him by Grigory Vasilievich: "The Lord God created light on the first day, and the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day. Where did the light shine from on the first day?" (Dostoevsky 124). During a dispute about renouncing one's faith, Smerdyakov, ironically described as "Balaam's Ass,"<sup>2</sup> takes a pragmatic position, stating that there would be no consequences for denying God if your faith weren't strong enough to move mountains (Dostoevsky 128-131). In "Over the Cognac" Ivan is revealed as having philosophical views opposite those of his younger brother, the novice monk Alyosha (Dostoevsky 134). These views are elaborated in Ivan's poem "The Grand Inquisitor". In this poem, Ivan presents Alyosha with a story of how the Church itself killed God, and propped itself up as the authority figure and provider of "earthly bread" that saves mankind from the terrible freedom endowed by Christ (Dostoevsky 252). Like Nietzsche's characterization of human nature—we would rather will nothingness than not will at all—the Inquisitor asserts that, "even when all gods have disappeared from the earth: they will still fall down before idols." (Dostoevsky 254). The Inquisitor also presents a Nietzschean account of the slave revolt in morality: "we took Rome and the sword of Caesar from him, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth...". He presents the Church of the Spanish Inquisition as a vehicle of supreme will to power, leading the poor and meek by virtue of "miracle, mystery, and authority" (Dostoevsky 257).

Ivan and Smerdyakov are used by Dostoevsky to represent some of Nietzsche's ideas, particularly, that of the *Übermensch*. If Nietzsche himself thought of the artist as a prototype for this creative individual who endows valueless material with value, and we can see clearly that Dostoevsky is presenting precisely this concept through these two characters, then can it be a coincidence that the only two characters with creative tendencies in the novel are the poet Ivan and the guitarist Smerdyakov? Dostoevsky, however, clearly does not believe that herein lies the solution to modern nihilism: Smerdyakov, indirectly affirmed by Ivan, ends up murdering his father and killing himself; Ivan likely dies of a sickness brought on by the guilt of being partially responsible for the parricide.

Dostoevsky's second response to the post-metaphysical nihilism expressed in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the sensualist reaction. Fyodor and Dmitri characterize this response. They are "drunken and unbridled libertines," without concern for the high philosophies of Ivan and Alyosha (Dostoevsky 79). Liberated by nihilism, they have no moral accountability. Although this character trait is referred to as the "Karamazov baseness," it extends far beyond the Karamazov family. Dostoevsky viewed this baseness as a very real effect of post-metaphysical—and therefore post-Christian—philosophical nihilism. He expressed this in his famous syllogism: "if there is no immortality of the soul, then there is no virtue, and therefore everything is permitted" (Dostoevsky 82). Because Dostoevsky views ethical degradation as the fruit of nihilism, Fyodor and Dmitri are presented as nearly inhuman: they steal, rape, engage in licentious behavior, penny-pinch, brawl, and drink constantly. The whole town views them as scoundrels, and the results of their actions are death for Fyodor, and imprisonment and sorrow for Dmitri.

Finally, the response to nihilism that Dostoevsky presents in a favorable light is a Christian mysticism marked by active love springing from a compassionate heart. This view is represented in the characters of Elder Zosima and Alexei Karamazov. Dostoevsky asserts that realism does not necessarily imply atheism: "Alyosha was even more of a realist than the rest of us." He asserts that, "in the realist, faith is not born from miracles, but miracles from faith. Once the realist comes to believe, then, precisely because of his realism, he must allow for miracles" (Dostoevsky 26). Instead, Dostoevsky critiques empiricism and naturalism as only partially realist, and therefore incapable of disproving God's existence or overturning the traditional systems of value. Naturalism does not deal with the nonphysical, and thus can say nothing for or against it. In the words of Father Paissy: "they have examined parts and missed the whole" (Dostoevsky 171). So the modern believer—typified by Alyosha, who sees the "whole" and is therefore struck by the conviction that God exists—must pursue active love with a "thirst for an immediate deed" (Dostoevsky 25-26).

This active love is the only way one can be convinced of the existence of God; once convinced of the existence of God, the only way to act is in active love. This reciprocal and biconditional relationship between faith and obedience is Dostoevsky's answer to the modern intellectual's lack of faith:

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. And if you reach complete selflessness in the love of your neighbor, then undoubtedly you will believe, and no doubt will even be able to enter your soul.  
(Dostoevsky 56)

This relationship is the divine mystery enacted by all creation: "For each blade of grass, each little bug...knows its way amazingly; being without reason, they witness to the divine mystery..." (Dostoevsky 295).

This mystical view is directly extracted from the homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian. Isaac the Syrian (also known as Isaac of Nineveh) was a Syrian ascetic who lived in the seventh century and who is venerated by the Orthodox Church, which is the church Dostoevsky would have been most familiar with (Johnston 666). One of his most famous homilies, entitled *The Compassionate Heart*, elucidates his concept of how man can become godlike by acquiring perfect love and mercy towards all of creation:

It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons and for all that exists. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart...He even prays for the reptiles as a result of the great compassion which is poured out beyond measure—after the likeness of God—in his heart. (St. Isaac of Syria 29)

The attainment of this "compassionate heart...on fire for the whole of creation," is what is prescribed by Elder Zosima in his talks and homilies, and what is obtained by Alyosha following his vision of Cana of Galilee, when "the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars". Alyosha throws himself to the earth in tears



longing “so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss all of it” and vowing to “love it, to love it unto ages of ages<sup>3</sup>” (Dostoevsky 362). This symbolic union of the stars and the earth, the union of the heavenly with the earthly, is Isaac the Syrian’s formulation of theosis, or deification—mankind becoming like God in his heart, with the heart burning for the sake of all creation. The active love of the mystical compassionate heart, is prescribed by Dostoevsky as the step humanity must take to overcome modern nihilism. Consequently, at the conclusion of the novel, Alyosha is seen as the brother who changes the name of Karamazov from something despicable to something venerable, all through his engagement with others through active love (Dostoevsky 776).

In conclusion, as nineteenth-century intellectual thought was secularized in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, two voices stood out offering divergent solutions to the problem of nihilism caused by the supposed deaths of God, of metaphysics, and of all value. Friedrich Nietzsche suggested a reinstatement of humanistic value by the creative and strong *Übermensch*, as opposed to the will to nothingness of his teacher, Arthur Schopenhauer. Fyodor Dostoevsky, on the other hand, suggested a return to the values of the ancient mystics, particularly the active love entailed by the “compassionate heart” of St. Isaac the Syrian.

These two solutions to nihilism may ultimately represent the two opposing heritages of the West: the Greco-Roman tradition and the Judeo-Christian tradition. While Nietzsche asserts that the strength of the creative individual (a new Homeric hero, if you will) would provide new value for a post-Christian era, Dostoevsky asserts that this nihilism will only lead to unbridled sensualism and moral decadence. Through the characters of Ivan and Smerdyakov, Dostoevsky presents the psychological and ethical consequences of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, while through the characters of Dmitri and Fyodor he presents the inevitable deterioration of morality of the common man in a nihilistic, post-Christian world. Finally, in the characters of Zosima and Alyosha, Dostoevsky presents his solution to modern nihilism: the practice of an active love that in itself confirms which will confirm the existence



of God, and deify mankind, uniting the mysteries of heaven and earth in praise of all creation.

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*Alex Free*

"Moon"



*Asian Great Books*



