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Publication Date

2021

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Dostoevsky through the Lens of Orthodox Personalism: Synergetic Anthropology and Relational
Ontology as Poetic Foundations of Higher Realism

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

By

Peter Gregory Winsky

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dostoevsky through the Lens of Orthodox Personalism: Synergetic Anthropology and Relational
Ontology as Poetic Foundations of Higher Realism

by

Peter Gregory Winsky

Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Vadim Shneyder, Co-Chair

Professor Ronald W. Vroon, Co-Chair

Studying Dostoevsky’s poetics according to the principles of Orthodox Personalism—a school of thought that utilizes Anthropological and Ontological discourse to analyze contemporary philosophical and theological questions—frames a well-traversed area of scholarly interest within a novel literary, philosophical, theological, and historical perspective. This dissertation offers a unique interpretation of his work in relation to three areas of focus. The first area, Synergetic Anthropology and Relational Anthropology, serves to establish boundaries of realism as a genre for Dostoevsky according to his Christian, yet non-Western, worldview. Second, Personalist aesthetics operate at theoretical and practical levels within the novels to create dynamic motion between typological levels of fictional beings. The third area, Hesychastic tradition, an Orthodox monastic methodology that guides adherents toward a mode of authentic being-in-relation, is coded into the novels by Dostoevsky and opens his texts to a mode of higher

realism. As an author, Dostoevsky seeks to unravel the mystery of the human being, and in order to engage this mystery his poetics become innovative, attempting to rise up to a “higher” level of realism to faithfully depict the world according to Dostoevsky’s Orthodox Weltanschauung. The questions of whether and how Dostoevsky achieves this higher realism have been debated since before the author’s death in 1881. Investigating these still-disputed questions through the lens of Orthodox Personalism according to the writings of scholars such as Vladimir Solovyov, Sergei Horuzhy, Christos Yannaras, and John Zizioulas, all of whom have contributed to the development of a mode of discourse that has blossomed from Dostoevsky’s engagement with Orthodox philosophy, requires a new language of literary analysis in order to ascertain certain fundamental qualities of the author’s oeuvre that have been overlooked or misinterpreted. This analysis lays bare the foundations of Dostoevsky’s artistic output. It is essential to expose these foundations in order to shed light on Dostoevsky’s authorial intentions, but also, and more importantly, to express why his work continues to generate contemporary interest in academia, in interpretations across other mediums such as film, music, and graphic novels, and in the minds of young people who read him at the high school and university levels globally. Dostoevsky’s deep concern for the human person as an individual of infinite value stems from the particular Orthodox conceptions of human uniqueness, the capacity for self-emptying love, and freedom. But these concepts, as conveyed through his artistry, are universal. The dissertation investigates the particulars of Dostoevsky’s ideology from the tradition in which he works in order to promote further study on his artistic output from various perspectives based on these principles. The first chapter consists of an exposition of the Orthodox Personalist tenets of Anthropology and Ontology juxtaposed with Western views. The second chapter uses this exposition to set the boundaries of Dostoevsky’s realism and to create a typology of fictional being within his novels

and compares each of these four levels with other Russian authors. The third chapter investigates how Dostoevsky's theory of aesthetics within the Orthodox context functions within the novels, pushing his fictional beings into higher typological levels and disrupting narrative form. The fourth and final chapter discusses how principles of the Orthodox Hesychastic tradition are utilized by Dostoevsky to unify his views on being, the person, and beauty and how this synergy raises his artistic output to the realm of higher realism. In the conclusion I argue that although Orthodox Personalist literary analysis is uniquely suited for Dostoevsky studies, this novel mode of analysis is applicable to other genres and forms of fiction through the idea of *threshold art*.

The dissertation of Peter Gregory Winsky is approved.

Eleanor K. Kaufman

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University of California, Los Angeles

2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone in the Department of Slavic, East European & Eurasian Languages and Cultures of the University of California, Los Angeles for all their support, help, encouragement, and inspiration throughout the writing of this dissertation. You have been models of professionalism, integrity, and selfless service to the field. I would particularly like to thank my advisors and Co-Chairs Professors Ronald Vroon and Vadim Shneyder for their guidance, attention to detail, expertise, and aid. I am also grateful to Professors Eleanor Kaufman and Gail Lenhoff for their comments and help throughout the writing process. Drs. Susan Kresin and Anna Kudyma also deserve special recognition for their continued support. To my dear friends and colleagues Sean Griffin, Oleg Ivanov, Michael Lavery, Jesse O'Dell, and Dane Reighard; I could not ask for a greater circle of brilliant, kind, and inspired people with whom to work and travel through this program and into the future. Thank you. To my parents, Fr. Gregory and Mat. Dianne; there are not enough words to express my gratitude for the support you have given me throughout my life and in the process of writing this work. Your constant love, encouragement, and aid, as well as the foundations of inquisitiveness and rigor you fostered in me are responsible for forming the person I have become. God bless you both and keep you. To my sisters Alexandra and Kyra, your families, and the rest of our family, thank you for your love and support. To my dear friends Matthew, Brendon, Rachel, Kaitlyn, Dan, Monica, Abby, Ryan, Meghan, Pauline, Kate, Dan, Monica, Tyler, Peter, Mike, Tyler, Jamey, Polina, Akira, Charlotte, Hercules, Xavier, Samantha, Andrey, and Ziah; thank you all. To Fr. Nazari Polataiko; thank you for your guidance and patience, and for enabling me to experience some of the ideas in this dissertation first-hand on Mt. Athos. To John Golden, you taught me how to think for myself and to love aesthetics without losing myself

in the ephemeral, and for this I am eternally grateful. To the memory of my grandparents Valentina, John, John, and Margueritte for all their love. To my beloved wife, Katja; my muse, my support, my joy. If not for you, none of this would have been possible, and I wouldn't be the person I am today. Thank you for everything you've done for me and sticking by me on this incredible journey. I will love you until the poets run out of rhymes. And finally, glory to God for all things.

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VITA

Dr. Peter Gregory Winsky graduated from Lafayette College in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Law while minoring in Russian Studies, and was awarded a Master of Arts degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of California, Los Angeles. His primary area of research is grounded in an Orthodox Formalist approach to Russian literature of the nineteenth century, particularly the post-Siberian novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. His other areas of interest relate to Orthodox Personalist philosophy and theology, Ornamentalist prose of the twentieth century, and Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema of the 1960s. He has presented his work at conferences at Brown University, Stanford University, California State University Long Beach, the University of Saint Katherine, Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski, Chaminade University of Honolulu, and the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages Conference.

Introduction

An Orthodox Personalist analysis of the post-Siberian novels of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky is a critical addition to the vast field of Dostoevsky studies insofar as it attempts to unify theological and literary analyses of these works. Often, interpretations of Dostoevsky's oeuvre lean heavily in either one of these two directions. However, many recent studies have demonstrated a marked interest in an attempt to merge both in order to present more complete readings. What makes this dissertation unique is that it attempts a formal analysis of the fictional beings and poetic structures of Dostoevsky's novels through a strict fidelity to Orthodoxy theology, Patristic traditions, monastic methods, and every-day lived experiences—within the context of both Dostoevsky's era and in the developments since his writing to the present day. What makes this dissertation vital is its deep engagement with the Personalist aspects of Dostoevsky's works, which focus on the uniqueness, freedom, and capacity for self-emptying love and reject the isolating and decaying forces of egoism. His deep care for the person in his novels is so potent that it gives rise to a higher level of realism—one that grants a greater degree of freedom to the fictional being than previously encountered in Western literature. This level of realism simultaneously maintains a concrete and reasonable depiction of the material world-as-it-is when it enters into contact with the transcendent world-as-it-will be without breaching the limits of the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the novelistic world. To demonstrate these conclusions, I utilize an Orthodox Formalist analysis that engages theological, dogmatic, and experiential concepts in order to analyze Dostoevsky's literary output. Through this lens, I illuminate not only the idea that Dostoevsky reaches a higher state of realism but, more importantly, that his poetic forms are shaped by and inseparable from his deep-rooted Orthodox worldview.

Despite the depths of the torment, egoism, and suffering that Dostoevsky so powerfully illustrates in his post-Siberian novels, within his works there sits the pure joy that is embodied in the meeting of the person with the Divine, marked by freedom, beauty, and self-emptying love. This transcendental ecstasy, brought on by a dynamic synergy that elevates the person from material cares into an authentic mode of being-in-relation, is the heart of both Dostoevsky's *Weltanschauung* and his poetics. Relational being, and the access to a meeting of the higher world that accompanies it, is the driving force behind his creative process and the art to which that process gives birth. Dostoevsky's primary concern in his post-Siberian texts, therefore, is the movement away from authentic being that leads to the isolation of the person. In this sense, there is a soteriological telos of relationality in his novels. The narratives of the novels therefore chart the movement of the fictional beings either toward or away from this endpoint of communion with the other. Nearly all of his narratives and the ideological discourse within them function according to this paradigm, one which states that although fallen human nature tends toward self-destruction, the foundational and transcendental mode of being manifested as beauty continually creates tension within the individual which ultimately allows them to overcome that fallen state. The principles of Orthodox Personalism are the key that unlocks an understanding of these fictional beings not merely as voices or constrained and static characters, but as dynamic beings, as fictional Persons.

A Personalist analysis of Dostoevsky's work will allow for a deeper investigation into the author's unique ability to create fictional beings that are freer than fictional beings in other realist works of the nineteenth century. However, viewing Dostoevsky's fictional beings as Persons requires an introductory understanding of the ontological and anthropological theories of Orthodox Personalism. From this foundation I have created a typological structure of fictional

being within Dostoevsky's novelistic worlds—the highest level of which is the Person. This level of fictional being is the basis for Dostoevsky's unique poetics, which he himself called Realism in a higher sense.

The foundations for synthesizing the literary and philosophical questions arose from a reading of David Foster Wallace's review of Joseph Frank's seminal biography of Dostoevsky. Although Wallace does not write explicitly within the context of Orthodox Personalism, Wallace's view on the heart of Dostoevsky's work approaches a Personalist reading:

The thrust here is that Dostoevsky wrote fiction about the stuff that's really important. He wrote fiction about identity, moral value, death, will, sexual vs. spiritual love, greed, freedom, obsession, reason, faith, suicide. And he did it without ever reducing his characters to mouthpieces or his books to tracts. His concern was always what it is to be a human being—that is, how to be an actual *person*, someone whose life is informed by values and principles, instead of just an especially shrewd kind of self-preserving animal.¹

Wallace's views on Dostoevsky's work indicated that the idea of the person could provide a connection between the poetic and philosophical contents of the novels, a gap that had not yet undergone critical analyses. The solution this dissertation presents to address that lacuna is grounded in a synthesis of the works of Sergei Askol'dov and Pavel Florensky. Askol'dov's article "Psikhologiiia kharakterov u Dostoevskogo" provides the foundations of a typology of fictional beings that places the Person (*lichnost'*) above typical realist Characters. Florensky's *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* points toward a theological and philosophical system growing, in part, out of Dostoevsky's work—one that engages Western philosophical questions via Orthodox theological, dogmatic, and patristic thought. His work is now framed within the context of the theological and philosophical system known as Orthodox Personalism.

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev expresses the Personalist nature of Dostoevsky's work: "In [his works] Dostoevsky developed his religious and philosophical views, based on Christian

¹ David Foster Wallace, "Joseph Frank's Dostoevsky," in *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 2007), 265.

personalism. At the heart of his writings is always the human person in all its diversity and contradictions, and Dostoevsky examines the life of the person and the problems of human existence from a religious perspective that assumes faith in a personal God.”² In the same manner as Alfeyev’s description, Florensky and other Personalists often comment upon Dostoevsky’s work or even allude to the fundamental importance of him to their philosophic systems. In Orthodox Personalism, and its fidelity to Dostoevsky, lies a theological and philosophic lens through which I could express the foundations of the poetics in the novels. Synthesizing these literary and theological ideas has opened a vital discussion on Dostoevsky’s work and thought regarding the mystery of the Person and the creation of higher realism.

The first step of inquiry this dissertation takes to engage Personalist theory with literary analysis in Dostoevsky’s work is an investigation into how his fictional beings differ from those of his peers. What is particular and original in Dostoevsky’s ontology and anthropology that allows for the creation of fictional Persons and from them to a higher realism? The first chapter’s exposition of Orthodox theology provides the groundwork upon which the rest of the dissertation builds. The following three chapters investigate the following: first, what is particular to Orthodox anthropology and ontology that lead to this level of fictional being? Second, how does the creation of a state of higher fictional being affect the narratives in the novels? Finally, how does Dostoevsky achieve a positive depiction of his vision of higher reality that presents his views on the contact with the world-as-it-will-be without breaching the boundaries of realism and moving into the fantastic?

These questions of how Dostoevsky creates a sense of higher reality, of how he infuses his fictional beings with a greater amount of freedom and verisimilitude, and how he creates

² Hilarion Alfeyev, Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity: Volume I: The History and Canonical Structure of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Basil Bush, (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 226.

ontological and anthropological boundaries that have greater fidelity to reality within the confines of a realist text require an analysis that takes into consideration the roots of Dostoevsky's worldview and an informed understanding of the theology upon which it is based. What is particular to Dostoevsky that separates his poetics from Tolstoy, Hugo, Dickens, or Turgenev? The answer is Dostoevsky's deeply held and sincere belief in Christ. More specifically, it is Dostoevsky's experience with Orthodox Christianity that inherently shapes both his worldview and his artistic style. And while it is nearly impossible to read critical analyses of his work that do not at least make mention of his Christocentric Weltanschauung, there are significantly fewer critical works that attempt to analyze the impact his belief had on the poetic features of his writing.

One of the central tenets of Dostoevsky's belief is that the boundary between material reality (the world-as-it-is) and the transcendent (the world-as-it-will-be) is not only traversable but is constantly open to the person because the person is simultaneously bound by the material and also connected to the higher realm of being. However, Dostoevsky, and his fictional beings, struggle with their thoughts and actions because achieving a constant connection with the world-as-it-will-be requires an overcoming of the egocentric tendencies of natural desire. Although the original state of the person allows and longs for relation with others and the Divine, the struggle to transcend the self represents the common state of the person in reality. The tension between these two states opens the novels to a polyphony of theories, practices, and actions, and encourages a fidelity to reality that is based on free will and the call into, or conversely the rejection of, relation.

In maintaining fidelity to the Orthodox concept of the person Dostoevsky's work does not aim to be simply mimetic, but to allow its fictional beings to function in the same manner as

human beings. Through his labors to birth a fictional world that touches both the material and spiritual realms of reality he grants an unprecedented amount of freedom to his fictional beings. However, the attempt to depict a higher realism presents a problem. If his fictional beings contain some level of autonomy from their creator's desire—their freedom—then they might go against his desires. The desire of the created might spoil the intentions of the creator. Dostoevsky clearly struggles to unify the freedom of his fictional beings with his desire to come to a telos in the novel that expresses a positive depiction of his central belief—the certitude of a salvific path toward unification with Christ through freely offered actions and self-emptying love. In his attempt to achieve this goal Dostoevsky encounters multiple stumbling blocks. Throughout the post-Siberian novels, the endeavor to depict fictional beings as if they were real, flesh-and-blood humans, while also creating a narrative that will allow the author to unriddle the secrets of the person, such as the solution to the struggle between freedom and biological urges—hunger, sexual desire, etc.—causes fractures in the structures of the novels and disrupts Dostoevsky's ability to present his ideas.

The Idiot provides multiple examples of the problems caused by the freedom he grants to his fictional Persons. Rather than fictional Characters—such as those in the works of authors like Tolstoy or Turgenev—who can be manipulated to express authorial intent, Dostoevsky's protagonists spoil their creator's intent with their autonomy. In *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky wants to incarnate the “perfectly beautiful person” through the Person of Prince Myshkin so that he can depict the possibility of the a truly good human who, through beauty, can bring salvation to those around him.³ In Part I of the novel Dostoevsky's ideological trajectory is clear and the poetic

³ Dostoevsky expresses these desires in his letter dated December 31, 1867 to A.N. Maikov. A more thorough investigation into his ideas surrounding the “perfectly beautiful person” will occur in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. The letter can be found in Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tritsati tomakh*, vol. 28,

structure of the text is organized and precise: there is a clearly formed idea and direction, his fictional beings are allowed to grow and develop according to their personalities, and although they function freely, Dostoevsky is still able to create a coherent and structured narrative around them. However, the temporal, spatial, and ideological structures of the novel in the following Parts become chaotic and unstable, and as they decay the narrative becomes untenable for the completion of Dostoevsky's vision of the "perfectly beautiful person." After the scandal at Nastasia Filippovna's Name's Day Party, Dostoevsky finds that he is unable to write a satisfactory ending for his novel. The freedom she exudes in the final chapter of Part I overwhelms the ideal of Myshkin and prevents a literary instantiation of Dostoevsky's salvific ideal within the novel. By means of a Personalist analysis, I will show that the issues Dostoevsky encounters while writing the end of *The Idiot* are caused by the freedom he gives to his fictional beings, particularly in relation to the concept of beauty as a call to a mode of being-in-relation that opens a fictional being to the world-as-it-will-be.

Analyzing problems such as those presented in *The Idiot* requires a system that directly engages the ontological and anthropological perspectives of Dostoevsky and his epoch as well as contemporary philosophical and literary discourse. Orthodox Personalism is uniquely suited to this task insofar as it is grounded in the philosophical and theological tradition of which Dostoevsky himself was a part and also in that this system developed into its current form thanks, in part, to writers and thinkers who have read and appreciated Dostoevsky's work. Specifically, Orthodox Personalism is a philosophical and theological tradition that places special emphasis on the human person as a relational being, created in the image and likeness of

ed. V.G. Bazanov et. al. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-90), 239-245. Henceforth citations for volumes of these texts will be written as Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* _ (volume number).

their Creator. While its roots are in Orthodox Patristic writings it also engages with modern Western ontology and anthropology.

Thinkers such as Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Father Dumitriu Stăniloae, Father Pavel Florensky, Father Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Vladimir Solovyov, Paul Evdokimov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Christos Yannaras, and Sergei Horuzhy have cultivated Orthodox Patristic trends in order to investigate the nature of the person. Specifically, the manner in which these thinkers investigate personal relation and the capacity to transcend reality are the backbone of the philosophical discourse in this dissertation. The strong foundation in Patristic writings of these thinkers is also reflected in this dissertation, which relies heavily on the work of Sts. Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Palamas, John Chrysostom, John Climacus, Maximus the Confessor, Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Theofan Zatvornik, and Tikhon of Zadonsk. Orthodox Personalism furthers the Patristic concept that persons are inherently beings in-relation who are primarily attuned toward communion with the Divine, which is expressed by an inclination to moving into relation with other unique and irrepealable persons. The desire for relation is caused by the inherent reflection of the Divine that each person contains—a *logos*. This *logos* is also the foundation of beauty, which is the aspect of the person that acts as a call to being-in-relation. The Orthodox concepts of anthropology and ontology propose that existence and being are inherently dynamic and synergetic, that the person requires others of equal value and autonomy in order to exist. A movement toward others leads the person closer to a soteriological telos simultaneously brings the discrete person into communion with the other and with the Divine without sacrificing the individual's uniqueness and freedom.

For these reasons, Orthodox Personalism is uniquely equipped to answer the questions we as critical readers of Dostoevsky face about his poetics, as well as the philosophical and

theological ideas that he propounds within these works. One particular advantage that a Personalist analysis offers to the study of Dostoevsky is that rather than resisting propositions that seemingly contradict one another, particularly the oppositions of freedom and need, materialism and metaphysics, and logic and irrationality, Orthodox Personalism utilizes an Eastern philosophical and theological discourse and methodology that embraces such contradictions as antinomies. This approach does not reject formal logic or the necessity of rational discourse to systematically discuss contradiction, but rather unifies the Western developments in philosophical discourse with the irrational or, more appropriately, mystical contemplation of being and the person as presented in Orthodox thought. These theories, however, have only seen limited application to date in the realm of literary analysis, and tend to be either frequently misunderstood or unheard of in the Western academic tradition.

This project therefore requires several parts—an initial exposition of the foundational tenets of Orthodox Personalism with the first chapter laying the groundwork of these principles for those unfamiliar with them before the following three chapters utilize them as literary analysis. Throughout the study, additional specific concepts that expand the Personalist analysis will be explained. However, without the initial primer on the topics of being and the person—of relational ontology and synergetic anthropology—it would be exceedingly difficult for the reader to make the proposed connections between Dostoevsky’s work and Personalism.

Once these complex philosophical and theological principles are clarified and modified to serve as a framework for literary analysis, they unveil aspects of Dostoevsky’s poetics that have been either misinterpreted, overlooked, or underexamined heretofore in criticism. Of all the critical exploration on the question of the person from a literary perspective, Paul J Contino’s 2020 book *Dostoevsky’s Incarnational Realism: Finding Christ among the Karamazovs* is

perhaps the closest study to the questions that this dissertation addresses. In his exceptional monograph, Contino argues for the term *incarnational realism* as a descriptor for Dostoevsky's poetic structure and personalist depth. His contention that *incarnational realism* brings a new and more complete image of the person into the text is very similar to my view on higher realism. The two greatest differences between my analysis and Contino's are first, that my foundations for the analysis are Orthodox whereas Contino comes from a Catholic grounding, and second, that my analysis looks not only to the raising up of the person in the novels but also to the transcendent nature of time and space within the texts. *Incarnational realism*, as a term, is a wonderfully direct manner of conveying Dostoevsky's poetics. However, as my analysis moves away from the concept of the incarnation of an ideal and into a discourse on the manifestation of the beauty of the unique person and its connection to the meeting of the world-as-it-is and as-it-will-be, I have chosen not to utilize the term but to remain with Dostoevsky's phrasing of higher realism.

There are numerous other studies that either directly or indirectly investigate the concept of the person and the influence of Dostoevsky's worldview on the poetics of his novels. As mentioned, genesis of the literary criticism of this dissertation is the work of Bakhtin, and particularly his reading of Sergei Askol'dov. However, many other analyses have inspired the present work. In particular, regarding the question of the person, I most heavily engage with the work of Ksana Blank, Yuri Corrigan, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Robert Louis Jackson, Malcolm V Jones, Liza Knapp, Sven Linner, Diane Oenning Thompson, Vasily Rozanov, Lev Shestov, Boris Tikhomirov, and Alina Wyman. With regard to the question of Dostoevsky's poetics, I engage the works of Kate Holland, Yuri Lotman, Robin Feuer Miller, Gary Saul Morson, Nina Perlina, Victor Shklovsky, and Victor Terras. All of these works open the reader to the questions of the

person and realism, and have contributed to the development of my formal and theoretical analyses of Dostoevsky.

To conclude, this dissertation seeks to deepen, personalize, and unlock these new modes of analysis primarily in relation to Dostoevsky's work. And while the Personalist literary analysis employed here is extremely valuable for the study of Dostoevsky, is not limited to analysis of Realist, Russian, prose, or nineteenth century literature—in fact can be used for the analysis of not only written fiction but nearly any other artistic creation, as I show throughout my work. It is my hope that by utilizing Personalism for the study of Dostoevsky's incredibly unique and original contributions to literature and philosophy, this type of analysis can eventually be further applied in other mediums or genres. Dostoevsky's deep care for the person and belief in the foundational goodness and beauty of living in a loving and selfless relation is at the heart of both his writing and this analysis, and propagating these ideas through his literature and Personalism is a valuable task in and of itself.

Chapter I: Orthodox Theological Foundations for Personalist Discourse

“Und wenn dich das Irdische vergaß,/ zu der stillen Erde sag: Ich rinne./ Zu dem raschen Wasser sprich: Ich bin.”

“And if the earthly no longer knows your name,/ whisper to the silent earth: I’m flowing./ To the swift water say: I am.” -Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnet XXIX of the Second Part of *The Sonnets to Orpheus*⁴

“И, кажется, столько во мне этой силы теперь, что я всё поборю, все страдания, только чтобы сказать и говорить себе поминутно: я есмь! В тысяче мук — я есмь, в пытке корчусь—но есмь!”⁵

“And, it seems, there is so much of this strength in me, now, that I can overcome anything, all suffering, if only to declare and say to myself every minute: I am! Among a thousand torments—I am! Writhing in torture, but still I am!”⁶ -Dimitri Karamazov

§I: Introduction: Against a Purely Western, Rational Approach to Being as a Viable Lens Through Which to Analyze Dostoevsky’s Work

In order to analyze Dostoevsky’s poetics from the perspective of Orthodox Personalism a language needs to be established that allows for a more complete understanding of the ontological and anthropological foundations that shape the author’s worldview and art. To begin, then, it is critical to introduce the reader of Dostoevsky to the theological and philosophical context that both informed and sprouted from the author’s work. Having outlined these concepts, an exploration can commence into the poetic structures of a fictional being in the light of the person, as a being created in the image and likeness of their creator. Such an analysis will address the unexplored concept of ontological relationality that breathes life into literary figures and raises them up to a higher level of being. The ability to create fictional entities that seem to have the properties of real persons who not only engage with other fictional entities but with the reader as well, is that which elevates Dostoevsky’s work from mere literary Realism into a higher realism. This higher realism is what charms the reader into a higher mode of being and

⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Ahead of All Parting*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Modern Times, 1995), 518-9.

⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 31.

⁶ All translations of Dostoevsky are mine unless otherwise noted.

existence, in a similar mode as presented in Orthodox Personalism. Dostoevsky's realism is not merely a mimetic act but rather functions in accordance with and fulfilling the structures of reality as Dostoevsky see it.

Dostoevsky achieves a higher realism in his work because of his adherence to an Orthodox view of being and existence. The primacy of the Orthodox understanding of Christ for Dostoevsky is, from both his own admission and the testimony of countless scholarly works, a given. This Christological view implies a soteriological imperative within his writing. Dostoevsky is constantly concerned with the salvation or (self-) damnation of his characters, his readers, Russia, and the world. Ethical, epistemological, ontological, anthropological, scientific, and cultural questions are all addressed within the context of belief in a transcendent life, an Authentic Being⁷, with Christ. Just as atheists and sensualists within the texts must deal with the issue of God, so too do scholars who approach him from secular ideologies or who question the strength or 'orthodoxy' of his Orthodoxy. They cannot deny the unmovable foundation that the Person of Christ in a strictly Eastern sense constitutes in Dostoevsky's thoughts.

Liza Knapp, in her investigation of the metaphysics of inertia in Dostoevsky's work, points toward a sense of immobility and inescapability inherently linked to the human condition, insofar as she posits that "[for] Dostoevsky, the scientific morality offered as an alternative to Christian morality consisted above all in the 'struggle for survival.'"⁸ Her perspective presents a similar proposition to the study which I undertake, positing Dostoevsky's worldview proposes a dichotomy of human action in either an egocentric manner or a selfless one, the former caused

⁷ The term "Authentic Being" will serve to express the human striving toward union with Divine Being. This path to theosis, the goal of being according to Orthodox teachings, neither dissolves the human person nor sullies the Divine Being, and therefore requires a terminological expression that apophatically points towards the eschatological telos. It is also meant to express the closeness to the Heideggerian understanding of being.

⁸ Liza Knapp, "Realism" in *Dostoevsky in Context*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 112.

by a positivistic mentality and the latter by the Christian ethos. However, her analysis follows a typically “realist” critical analysis that views the movement in Dostoevsky’s worldview as one from the Newtonian Empiricism and materialism that dominated the Russian intelligentsia's thoughts in the mid-to-late nineteenth century toward a Christian metaphysics. This type of analysis follows a chronological approach, whereas a Personalist critical analysis traces the struggle of Dostoevsky’s Orthodox beliefs to surface in his works simultaneously. It is necessary to engage the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the material world together with the metaphysical ones in order to achieve a more thorough understanding of Dostoevsky’s poetics and worldview. And although Dostoevsky was indeed a creature of his own epoch one should not place the horse before the cart and relegate Dostoevsky’s Orthodoxy to a position dependent upon his understanding of the material world.

While the expression of his Orthodox beliefs in his novels and nonfiction are most certainly written in response to the prevalent positivism of Petersburg circles, his worldview begins with an Orthodox understanding of the inseparability of the metaphysical and physical world. Knapp’s chronological approach to Dostoevsky’s Christianity, beginning with the coffin-side confession after the death of Marya Dmitrievna, leads her to analyses of questions of free will and the intersection of the material and transcendent world that can be expanded upon through the use of a Personalist analysis. Because of his Orthodoxy, Dostoevsky has to depict the person within the material boundaries of the world in order to show that ontological and anthropological truths express a higher mode of being, one that is (paradoxically) possible within those material boundaries. If Dostoevsky began from the zeitgeist of his epoch, the expression of the reality of the transcendent as connected to and in synch with the material world would be impossible. An example of this is when she notes that “early in [*The Brothers Karamazov*],

Dostoevsky raises the question of whether certain aspects of human existence do not run contrary to the laws of nature and therefore qualify as miracles.”⁹ A miracle from the Personalist perspective is not, as Pynchon’s anarchist Jesus Arrabal aphorizes the Western perspective, “another world’s intrusion into this one. Most of the time we coexist peacefully, but when we do touch there’s cataclysm.”¹⁰ Rather the miraculous is the meeting point of the material world with the higher reality of the world-as-it-will-be—in essence it is the same world only transcendent, a moment of timelessness and spacelessness within time and space that is ever-present but hidden from the untrained eye. The moment only seems cataclysmic or transgressive to the material world when it is destructive to and isolates the person experiencing it; when it breaks and renders uncertain the natural laws of existence, those whose foundation are set therein are left adrift in a void of their own uncertainty. But within Dostoevsky’s text this incursion into, or rather opening up of, higher reality is completely within the boundaries of reality as a whole; it does not break natural law but rather reasserts itself as authentic being. This perspective is impossible without the foundations of Orthodox ontology and anthropology.

What’s more, analyzing Dostoevsky’s understanding of the material world beginning from an empirical position and moving toward an aesthetic or metaphysical one, which is common in contemporary and Soviet critical literature, leads to a misunderstanding of the most original and important quality of Dostoevsky’s poetics—his depiction of fictional beings as Persons rather than mere Characters. Dostoevsky imbues many of his fictional beings with the same qualities that the human person contains, according to the anthropology of Orthodox Personalism. One of these qualities, freedom from biological and egocentric necessity, is impossible to depict with a high degree of mimetic faithfulness when grounding the fictional

⁹ Ibid., 198.

¹⁰ Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1967), 120.

being within the anthropological boundaries of positivism. For example, from a realist critical standpoint it is certainly reasonable to conclude that because “Dostoevsky creates a world in which physical necessity manifests itself... many of his heroes believe they have a free will, but find themselves unable to exercise it, thus illustrating the perplexity described by John Stuart Mill.”¹¹ Within Dostoevsky’s Orthodox worldview the anxieties and struggles within the novels are not *caused by* the reality of material constraints that limits the freedom of fictional beings, but rather the material world and the struggles against its biological and physical demands are the *means by which* the foundational truth of free will can be seen. Through the succumbing to and defiance of these physical conditions Dostoevsky is able to depict the truth of being and existence.

Dostoevsky populates his novels with fictional beings who both advocate for push back against the positivism of the nineteenth century. Without the knowledge of his deep and committed faith in Orthodoxy as it defines the boundaries of ontology and anthropology in his novels, it can be difficult to delineate between his beliefs and those of his creations. However, if Dostoevsky truly did begin from a positivist perspective, as Knapp supposes, then it would be impossible for him to depict both the pro and contra of this philosophical discourse with the full force one sees in the novels, and which reflect reality so vigorously. The creation of fictional beings that are real enough to break from their creator’s desires in this manner is predicated on the Orthodox worldview Dostoevsky holds. He creates a world in which free will, selfless love, and personal uniqueness are manifest in literary beings who fight against their own and their creator’s desires, intentions, and wishes. The author does not argue with himself, but creates beings capable of philosophical discourse that is in opposition to his own. The equal footing

¹¹ Liza Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 11.

given to both sides of the philosophical discourse between positivism and Orthodoxy can only emerge within the context of a *weltanschauung* grounded in the latter.

However, when one attempts to explore the ideological — whether theological or philosophical — aspects of Dostoevsky’s work it is of paramount importance to remember that “philosophy does not save.”¹² This Orthodox axiom is true not only within the context of Dostoevsky’s worldview, but also insofar as these ideological arguments unfold and are actualized within the narrative. It is not the philosophies of the characters that move them toward salvation, but rather their existence, or mode of being. To reduce these novels to pure philosophical debate and to ignore the active expression of the personal qualities of freedom, self-emptying love, and absolute uniqueness in fictional beings in Dostoevsky’s work isolates the characters in a manner that is detrimental to a complete understanding of the works, rather than reifying the creation fictional beings capable of expressing a higher reality . Dostoevsky’s writing is never explicitly theological, nor does it attempt to create a working philosophical system; as Edith Clowes reminds us, although philosophy and poetry function towards the same goal, “clearly, in Dostoevsky’s mind, poetry [is] the more powerful of the two.”¹³ This is also true of the fictional beings within the novels. Although they engage in philosophizing, they are nearly always active beings. When they are not active beings—when they are presented as characters attempting to formulate a working, systematic philosophical structure without a connection to the reality of the narrative —they are dead, dying, or nonexistent as personal beings. Even if the ideology of a character is antithetical to Dostoevsky’s worldview, an active, synergetic life within the narrative maintains their status as personal beings. Raskolnikov’s and

¹² Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, trans. Nicholas Gregory (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 25.

¹³ Edith Clowes, *Fiction’s Overcoat, Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 85.

Ivan's illnesses during the novels are key examples of how philosophy is secondary to being. Characters like the Underground Man and Shigalyov, however, do not evolve into personal beings because of the overwhelming inertia of their egocentric ideologies. Ideologies within the texts are subordinate to the unified whole. Rather than a philosophical tract, Dostoevsky creates living novels.¹⁴

Essentially, the philosophical and theological ideas of either the author or characters are only known as they are actualized in the narrative. Such actualization is in keeping with the Personalist discourse on the conception of essence and being. In a Western philosophical milieu, the connection between essence and being is either relatively unknown or relegated to an insignificant position. This kind of dichotomizing is caused by the surgical separation of the realms of metaphysics and phenomenology from one another. The duality of thought and action, of Being and being, of God and human, while primary in Western humanist thought, is foreign to Orthodox theology and philosophy. There is no foundational duality present because these qualities are neither separate nor unified, but relationally connected and dependent. The Western need for analogical and ontic explanations of Divine Being, which is impossible in the Eastern context, has caused this compartmentalization of ontological thought.

While the Eastern Church was content from a very early stage with apophatic¹⁵ “definitions” of Divine Being (inexpressible, immortal, eternally unchanging, etc.), the West craved finite definitions of the question of essence that are both accessible to human experience

¹⁴ The opposite would be true of Chernyshevsky's *Что делать?* For Dostoevsky, philosophical discourse in the text always serves the aesthetic.

¹⁵ The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines apophaticism as the mode of theology that posits “that nothing positive can be said about objects or states of affairs which the mystic experiences,” and that it is a “typically negative theology... only saying what God is not.” Applying this to Dostoevsky's poetics it is implied that Dostoevsky typically utilizes examples that function in opposition to his worldview and how this mode of being leads to suffering and isolation. Jerome Gellman, “Mysticism” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/mysticism/> (accessed August 15, 2018).

and comprehensible to human logic. Christos Yannaras identifies the paradoxical intertwining of positive and negative thought in the West, and how this inexorably led to the deep crises of thought relating to being and existence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The West was also preoccupied with the *apophaticism* of Being, with the impossibility of the human intellect to exhaust the truth of Being by means of definition... It is characteristic [of Western thought's almost bipolar manner] that the two thinkers who did most to shape the positive-analogical approach to the knowledge of God, Anselm of Canterbury (d.1109) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), at the same time proclaim the apophatic nature of this knowledge, the essential unknowability of God, the inaccessibility of Being.¹⁶

This leads to the 'exile' of the West from an immediate, experiential knowledge of Divine Being.¹⁷ From this one can conclude that an examination of the ideological aspects of Dostoevsky from an Orthodox Personalist perspective must necessarily look at the poetic structure (being) of his art. One must also concede that any examination of his art must necessarily consider his philosophical concepts. Therefore, if at the heart of Dostoevsky's philosophical inquiry is the salvation of the person, then the investigation of the mystery of human being must originate from the exploration of the creative act (his characters and the narration of their existence) as it relates to salvation. His philosophy of salvation can only be evidenced through the mode by which his creation exists, the poetic structures that define the boundaries of character and narration. Having established that the grounds of Eastern Christian theological inquiry into the being of humanity lie in the experiential realm rather than the ontic, an analysis of the theological aspects of the person may commence, which in turn will lay the foundations for a discussion of Dostoevsky's literary texts.

¹⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 21.

¹⁷ Yannaras explains that this exile is that "of God from the world, his transference to 'heaven,' to a realm different from that which is accessible to human experience. This Being, which is God, is separated from the reality of the world by the boundary which distinguishes the known from the unknown, the experientially existent from the experientially non-existent, sensible reality from intellectual conception" (Ibid., 78).

§II: The Primacy of Being over Essence. The Theocentric Personological Paradigm

The person is the primary concern of Dostoevsky. He himself states that “the person is a mystery... I am studying that mystery because I want to become a person.”¹⁸ Everything that occurs within his works is centered on the mystery of human being. The obstacles with which Dostoevsky continually struggles are the self-imposed barriers to relation with an other. He expresses this struggle in terms of the anxiety of the person within his fiction. That anxiety is not, however, simply thoughts of existential dread in the face of a looming void of nonexistence, but rather a suffering caused by the spatial and temporal gap between two persons, representative of the distance between the person and Divine Being. To see how Dostoevsky addresses the problem of the meaning and function of the person and eventually identifies a solution one must work within an intelligible discourse between the literary and Orthodox understandings of the person. By doing so in a manner that engages both perspectives I will identify the poetics of his work in a way that is commensurate with Dostoevsky’s soteriological focus. Approaching the understanding of the person from the Orthodox perspective is necessary to a comprehensive view of both Dostoevsky and Realism as it relates to him. Such a discourse can only occur by tracing the footsteps of the author, who has based his poetics on his religious experience and knowledge. To begin, the examination of Orthodox Personalism commences not with the human person, but rather with the trihypostatic Persons of the Godhead.

An Orthodox Personological understanding of the person is grounded in what Sergei Horuzhy calls the Theocentric Personological Paradigm (henceforth “TPP”), according to which, “the principle of personality refers to uncreated Divine being, and not to empiric human being.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(I), 63.

¹⁹ Sergei Horuzhy, “Personalistic Dimensions of Neo-Patristic Synthesis and Modern Search for New Subjectivities” in the Institut Sinergiinoi Antropologii Digital Library, http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor_personal_dimensions.pdf, 1 (accessed 7 February 2020).

In this mode of thought the anthropological question is preceded by an ontological one: if the person is understood through the relation of *human – God*, then what is the foundation of Divine or Authentic Being that gives rise to and is mirrored in human being?²⁰ Although it is not the purpose of this study to answer this question at length, an awareness of the mode in which Divine Being exists is crucial to our understanding of the mode in which the person exists. This ontological question is addressed by the Orthodox concept of the creation of humanity in the image and likeness of Divine Being.²¹ This ontology, and the anthropological boundaries to which it gives birth, posit not only the limitations of being in philosophical terms but also set the groundwork for and limits of verisimilitude in Dostoevsky’s realism. Later, the philosophical parameters of Dostoevsky’s worldview will open the discussion of his search for a ‘higher realism,’ the path to the realization of which caused him so much grief.

How, then, can this ontological problem be addressed, and what, precisely does “ontological problem” even mean? For Yannaras the ontological problem is “the name we give to our endeavor to account for the being of existent things, the *logos* of beings... an answer to

²⁰ In Horuzhy’s work, as well as that of the other contemporary Orthodox Personalists such as Dumitriu Stăniloae, Yannaras, and John Zizioulas, there is a constant dialogue with the problem of the Western grounding of the person in, what Horuzhy calls, the Anthropocentric Personological Paradigm (APP). The Existentialist position of writers such as Camus or Sartre, who develop from the Western ontic tradition based in Scholastic teaching, is refuted insofar as it posits an apophaticism of essence that segregates the phenomenological from the noumenal, or the material from the metaphysical. The fear of the void that dominates early twentieth century philosophical writing in the West is caused by the physical gap between both two persons and between a person and the ‘unknowable’ realm beyond the sensible. The Eastern primacy of an experiential knowledge of essence, most vividly expressed in the Incarnation of Christ as God and Man, resolves the gap of this philosophical anxiety. While the human condition may suffer from a feeling of isolation from Divine Being due to the state of humanity after the Fall, the Eastern certainty of the existence of this Being and the promise of the unification with Him after death changes the perspective on human being. The first Part of Yannaras’s *Person and Eros* examines this phenomenon in great detail.

²¹ A profound and accessible treatment of the creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God is to be found in Vladimir Lossky’s *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978). He expands in depth on this topic in *The Mystical Theology of the Orthodox Church*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1957). Yannaras also explores it in more manageable terms in his *Elements of Faith: an Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1991).

questions about the *cause* and *purpose* of the existential fact.”²² The simplest and most direct answer to this question stems directly from the opening lines of the Gospel of John the Theologian. Here he provides, in a single paragraph, the basis for all questions of theological discourse on being:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.²³

The “*cause* and *purpose*” of life is the Word. But what or Who is the Word and what does it entail? The Greek word *logos*, which has lost philosophical weight in translation and caused theological confusion for many, is rendered here as Word. The Word is Christ, Who is the Logos (principle, or reason) of being.²⁴ All material existence is linked immediately to Divine Being, the principle from which all things receive not only their form but also their meaning (*logoi*). And therefore, if the Logos is the foundation of all that which exists, then to understand this mode of being would be to understand all modes of being. But how is the Being of Christ to be understood? That is to say, what is known of the existence of God?

§III: The Mode of Being of the Divine

The Orthodox Patristic teachings on the Being of God were effectively set in the fourth century by the Cappadocian Fathers, and particularly Basil the Great. The key to the paradox of the Being of one God in three Persons is the term *ὁμοούσιος* (*homoousia*) which entails consubstantiality, being of one essence. It was developed in order to explain the connection between the three Persons of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁵ However, to place the logical

²² Christos Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011), 4.

²³ John 1: 1-5 (New International Version unless otherwise noted).

²⁴ For a brief history of the use of *logos* in Christian theology see John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, (Crestwood, NJ: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1997) 72-8.

²⁵ For further reading on the Orthodox history of the triadic nature of God, see Lossky’s *Orthodox Theology*, 36-38.

foundations of knowledge of Divine Being on Essence is a Western innovation. The Godhead does not exist first as essence but rather principally as Persons who exist in relation to one another. This process of being-in-relation reveals the apophatic proofs of the essence. In short, the mode by which a being exists proves the essential nature of the existent. As John Zizioulas clarifies, “Outside the Trinity there is no God, that is, no divine substance, because the ontological ‘principle’ of God is the Father. The personal existence of God (the Father) constitutes His substance, makes it hypostases. The being of God is identified with the person.”²⁶ While Western theology and philosophy have continually posited that essence precedes the fact of existence, the East has always considered the hypostasis—the existential being—as primary. But what does it matter if essence or person is primary both from a philosophical and practical perspective? The answer to this question requires a brief description of the mode of being of Divine Being and the creation of human being.

From the Orthodox perspective God has existed, *is*, from before creation. Existence before creation, however, is illogical to human reason, and because of this God is most often referred to apophatically, in negative terms that are not fully comprehensible to human reason except through the negation of experiential knowledge. The eucharistic canon, or anaphora, recited during the Divine Liturgy of John Chrysostom in Orthodox churches, gives the most vibrant and beautiful expression of this type of discourse: “[F]or Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same; Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit.”²⁷ Human beings have experienced the communicable,

²⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 41.

²⁷ Hieromonk Herman and Vitaly Permiakov eds., *Hieratikon: volume two, Liturgy Book for Priest & Deacon*, (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2017), 129.

conceivable, visible, comprehensible, mortal, and mutable and so relate these experiences to the apophatic analogies.

The faculty for understanding Divine Being, however, is not limited to reason alone. Truth is not merely intellectual. Yannaras posits that for the West “truth is identified with intellectual definitions; it is objectivized and subordinated to usefulness... it comes to be translated into technological hype, into the tormenting and alienation of humanity. For the East, however, life is based on truth as *relation* and as existential experience... and life is justified as the identification of being true with being in communion.”²⁸ Therefore, by inverting the primacy of the person to the primacy of essence, the West has created a gap between human persons and God. This void then seeps into the human consciousness, producing the seemingly inevitable fear of non-relation and isolation between individual people. Proof that the experience of the Eastern view of truth is extant in the mode of being-in-relation, which defines Divine Being, is explicit in the historical documentation of this experience, which can be found in the New and Old Testaments.

In the Old Testament, God reveals himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM,” which in Slavonic is expressed with the now archaic “Азъ есмь сый” (az yesm’ syi).²⁹ This is a pure declaration of ontological being. Donald Sheehan, in reference to Mitya Karamazov’s use of nearly the same pronouncement, “я есмь!” (ya yesem’) claims that this type of statement represents an “affirmation of being [that] communicates ontological ecstasy to every living thing.”³⁰ While this ontological affirmation without further explanation is sufficient for someone

²⁸ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 23.

²⁹ Exodus 3: 14.

³⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 31, and Donald Sheehan, “‘A New Man Has Arisen in Me!’ Memory Eternal in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*,” in *The Grace of Incorruption: The Selected Essays of Donald Sheehan on Orthodox Faith and Poetics*, ed. Xenia Sheehan, (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2015), 27.

who has experienced the joy of Authentic Being, it requires still further investigation for the doubting, rational mind.

What does it mean ‘to Be’ in the sense of Divine Being? The problem encountered here is, as John of Damascus and other Fathers of the Church have expressed, what seems to be the impossibility of speaking positively about the nature of Divine being while still engaging in theological discourse. John of Damascus makes the difficulty in discussing Divine being perfectly clear:

However, as regards what God is, it is impossible to say what He is in his essence, so it is better to discuss Him by abstraction from all things whatsoever. For He does not belong to the number of beings, not because He does not exist, but because He transcends all beings and being itself. And, if knowledge respects beings, then that which transcends knowledge will certainly transcend essence, and, conversely, what transcends essence will transcend knowledge.³¹

The problem here, however, is that the Fathers of the Church have continually discussed Divine being. Their solution was to move beyond the impossibility of speaking positively about the nature of Divine being, and instead resorting to an apophatic, or negative, approach to this theological inquiry— one that restricts what human reason can posit about the Divine while still moving toward an understanding of it.

Pseudo-Dionysius raises his voice in favor of the possibility of an apophatic discourse despite the epistemological difficulties so that humanity may continue to praise and come closer to Divine being. He states:

We must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed. Since the unknowing of what is beyond being is something above and beyond speech, mind, or being itself, one should ascribe to it an understanding beyond being. Let us therefore look as far upward as the light of sacred scripture will allow, and, in our reverent awe of what is divine, let us be drawn together toward the divine splendor. For, if we may trust the superlative wisdom and truth of scripture, the things of God are revealed to each mind in proportion to its capacities; and the divine goodness is such that, out of concern for our salvation, it deals out of the immeasurable and infinite in limited measures.³²

³¹ John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith*, in *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc. 1958), 171-2

³² Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 49.

Through this trust in the revelation of the Divine and the human capacity to experience it, it is possible for humans to posit aspects of Divine being without circumscribing it. He continues to assert the necessity of human experience to the task of understanding the Divine when he says:

Hence, with regard to the supra-essential being of God—transcendent Goodness transcendentally there—no lover of the truth which is above all truth will seek to praise it as word or power or mind or life or being... And yet, since it is the underpinning of goodness, and by merely being there is the cause of everything, to praise this divinely beneficent Providence you must turn to all creation... All things long for it. The intelligent and rational long for it by way of knowledge, the lower strata by way of perception, the remainder by way of the stirrings of being alive and in whatever fashion befits their condition.³³

All creation seeks to come closer to the Divine by whatever means possible. Through rational thought the person gives order to the experiences of the Divine that “[are] the underpinning of goodness and... the cause of everything.” Pseudo-Dionysius provides a foundation for an apophatic discourse on Divine being insofar as it has been revealed and experienced by humans and then communicated through scripture.

In order to discuss and move toward Divine being some shared experience of the Logos, the Divine principle, is required. John the Theologian captures the mode of being of the fullness of the Divine Being in a very simple formulation: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”³⁴ Here, moving from the declaration to Moses that “God Is” to “God Is love” provides a simple formation that if God as three Persons existing in relation is equal to Being, and God is also equal to love, then Being, therefore, equals love. While both of these statements resist the temptation to name that which is beyond naming, they provide experiential predicates that discuss a known quality *after* it rises into the world. Being, therefore, is not tied to ontic fact. Rather it is tied to the experiences of Divine revelation, as recorded in scripture, that confirms the possibility of a knowledge of Divine being.

³³ Ibid., 54.

³⁴ 1 John 4: 8.

The apophaticism inherent in this type of experience is, as Vladimir Lossky phrases it, “where knowledge and love are one, in the secret experience, hidden from the eyes of the world,” which allows for ontological discourse.³⁵ What is critical to remember here is that Orthodox discourse on Divine being is *not* based on a knowledge of the essence of God, but rather on a knowledge of the uncreated energies of the Divine. Gregory Palamas, in his defense of hesychast practices that allow humans to participate in the Divine nature, upholds the necessity of this distinction, which he avers “is that between the essence of God, or His nature, properly co-called, which is inaccessible, unknowable and incommunicable; and the energies or divine operations, forces proper to and inseparable from God’s essence, in which He goes forth from Himself [... These] energies might be described as that mode of existence of the Trinity which is outside of its inaccessible essence.”³⁶ There is no implication here that the Divine essence and uncreated energies are distinct, but rather that the rational mind is compelled to accept the antinomy inherent in Divine being when meditating upon it. The mode of being of the Divine is antinomic in that it has both distinct features in essence and energy but also in that it does not allow for division or separation of the Divine.

Therefore, in discussing the energies of the Divine, the actions and functions revealed in the world, the person approaches an understanding of God constantly aware that that what is known about God’s Essence through His Energies is always inherently analogical. And “in fact, God is not determined by any of His attributes; all determinations are inferior to Him, logically posterior to His being in itself, in its essence. When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love—we understand the energies, which are subsequent to the essence and are its natural

³⁵ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 32.

³⁶ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 70, 73.

manifestations, but are external to the very being of the Trinity.”³⁷ This Palamite discourse on the uncreated energies confirms the logical discourse of patristic Orthodox theology through its understanding of how essence and being are inherently linked and inherently distinct. Orthodox theology, and subsequently our discourse on Divine, human, and fictional being, therefore prioritizes *Persons* over essence, based on experiential knowledge of their actions in time and space.

Love, as experienced within the boundaries of time and space, can therefore be utilized as foundations of the human understanding of the Divine. And it provides an inroad to the apophatic philosophical, and subsequently to the literary, discourse on the nature of all forms of being. With regard to being, let us look to John of Damascus’ explanation of how philosophical predicates are posed either *univocally or equivocally* insofar as the former is “when the subject admits of both the name and the definition of the name itself,” whereas the latter provides that “the subject admits indeed of the name, but not at all of the definition.”³⁸ In Western philosophical and theological discourse there is a tendency to frame Divine and human being within univocal predicates. John Duns Scotus’ *Natural Theology* and William of Ockham’s *Summa Logicae* are primary examples of the former. Scotus claims that there are perfections that are predicates of God, and that these predicates are not only possible but univocal. He first notes that it is impossible to determine “whether God can be known naturally by the intellect of the wayfarer.”³⁹ What is possible, in his opinion, is that “being” is univocally applicable as a predicate to humans and God. “God is not only conceived in a concept that is analogous to a concept of a creature—that is in a concept that is entirely different from one that is applied to a

³⁷ Ibid., 80-1.

³⁸ John of Damascus, 46-7.

³⁹ John Duns Scotus, *On Being and Cognition: Ordinatio 1.3*, trans. and ed. John van den Bercken, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 41.

creature—but also in a concept that is univocal to him and to a creature.”⁴⁰ He denies the knowability of the essence of God but maintains that Divine being is capable of predication in the same mode as human being.

A similar tendency with regard to human being is displayed in Martin Heidegger’s rebuttal of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*. He avers that the “certainty that ‘I myself am in that I will die,’ is *the basic certainty of Dasein itself*. It is a genuine statement of Dasein, while *cogito sum* is only the semblance of such a statement.”⁴¹ These Western propositions that either thought or morality can completely define being is impossible in the face of a Divine being that is “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing, and eternally the same,” as stated in the above-mentioned Orthodox anaphora. Human being can neither be defined by death if there is life after death, nor by thought if there is being beyond comprehension. These predicates, in their inability to fully define even human being, provide even more evidence that that univocal predication about Divine being is folly—if it is nearly impossible to speak univocally of human being, this type of predicate cannot possibly circumscribe the uncircumscribable. Yannaras sees this Western trend as one that posits an apophaticism of essence, which acknowledges “the essential unknowability of God, the inaccessibility of Being.”⁴² However, by positing otherness as a guarantee of love and freedom as foundational principles of human being, which function in the image and likeness of Divine being, it is possible to equivocally speak of that which is impossible to wholly know from a purely ontic position. And it is the human experience of otherness that allows for the discussion of love, and eventually freedom, as equivocal predicates.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, trans. Theodore Kisiel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 316-7.

⁴² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 21.

The Western tradition of speaking univocally of the qualities of the Divine never penetrated Eastern discourse. However, the discussion of the being, essence, and personal nature of the Divine flourished in Orthodox theology. Without seeking logical proofs that could be tested, measured, and repeated, the Patristic Fathers of the Orthodox East developed an equivocal mode of discourse based on the relational experiences with Divine, which they applied in a systematic manner through a combination of faith, rational thought, and conciliar agreement. Being, love, and freedom are the principle equivocal predicates spoken of in relation to the study of the Divine in Orthodoxy. These three topics of inquiry are targeted in order to provide a structure that gives breath to the conversation about that which humanity has experienced of the Divine, about what those direct experiences reveal concerning the Divine that have not or cannot be directly experienced, and about how the experiences and meditations upon them directly influence the mode of being as the person moves toward a more authentic mode of being.

It is possible, however, to speak univocally about the essential features of the person in relation to the Divine because of Divine Revelation and the Incarnation. Speaking of the person as a philosophical concept univocally, however, edges toward the slippery slope of generalization. This tendency to generalize is what Dostoevsky rejected in humanism, as Dostoevsky depicts in the conversation between Madame Khokhlakova and Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The foundation of Dostoevsky's ontology and anthropology is the realization of the transcendent world within the material world, to convey equivocal concepts as they are experienced in unique manifestations, which he expresses through his fictional beings. Dostoevsky, in his literature, reifies what Orthodox theology and praxis has demonstrated since at least the fourth century; that although the essential features of the Divine are inexpressible in human language, the experience of authentic being and the transcendent world is possible and

relatable through action and can be approached in language to an extent through the equivocal discussion of what has been experienced.

The Orthodox use of equivocal predicates from the Greek philosophical tradition synthesizes the main streams of metaphysical tradition while developing a unique understanding of the Divine and the human person as greater than its definition. To prove the idea that predicating Divine being does not circumscribe the entirety of its definition, let us consider the claims “God Is,” and “God is love” together. If God’s revelation that “He Is” is a sufficient definition for that which is undefinable to the rational mind, then the definition is based primarily on the relationship between God and Moses; knowledge of uncreated Being is revealed through the relationship of the Person of God to Moses. The revelation of the name Yahweh, the Hebrew name for the Lord taken from *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (I AM WHO I AM) is a refusal to provide a personal name. And in this resistance to being fully named, the relational nature of God in an equivocal mode is clear. Moses cannot fully see or know God, but he can relate to him personally; Moses “sees” God, or perhaps it is better to say he interacts with God, while not seeing the entirety of Him.⁴³ Human beings experience God only insofar as created being can participate in uncreated being; such participation, in turn, is commensurate with the human being’s purity of mind and heart. Such participation is governed by the absolute otherness of the Divine vis-a-vis the human

If Divine being is experienced before it can be posited ontically—Moses, after all experiences God before knowing who he is—then one can move a step further to the claim that

⁴³ For a summation of the history of the investigation into the name of God and its importance to the theological discourse on Divine being see Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity Volume II: Doctrine and Teachings of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Andrew Smith, (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012), Chapters 6-8.

being precedes knowledge and, therefore the experience of Personhood comes before the concept of being through relation—the existential fact of otherness. It is understood that;

In the ontological perspective that the priority of the person defines, the definition of beings as *phenomena* acquires a sense of pre-conscious cognition: beings *are disclosed* not simply as temporality in the distantiality of ontic individuality, but in the dynamic of a personal *fact*, which precedes any conscious-intellectual determination. And this fact is the *relation*, which is revelatory of the otherness of the person and of the mode by which beings *are*.⁴⁴

In light of this ontological perspective otherness becomes a primary feature of the understanding of being. John Zizioulas illuminates how apophatic Orthodox theology constructs a mode of discourse to express how reality is experienced by means of a connection between the created and uncreated.

Orthodox theology takes on relationality and experience as primary methods of discourse as a response to the Hellenistic necessity to philosophize univocally about creation. Zizioulas avers that:

*The absence.... of freedom in the act of creation would amount automatically to the loss of ontological otherness, for both the Creator and his creation. Otherness as an ontological category for both the Creator and his creation emerges as a logical imperative when creation is conceived as an act of freedom, that is, as an act that cannot be explained by being itself; it cannot be attributed axiomatically to being itself, but to a factor other than being itself which causes being to be.*⁴⁵

While Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides, and other Greek philosophers simultaneously rejected the ideas that some things come from nothing and that nothing comes from something, the innovations brought about in early Christian theology present a solution to the problem that there is more than one mode of being.

To the Greeks all creation, the gods included, is comprised of and formed from the same substance, which is why the gods and all creation were subject to the same fates and finitude, albeit on different scales. All creation shares the same mode of being. For the early Christians it was clear that their mode of being was fundamentally different from, yet similar to, their

⁴⁴ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 18.

⁴⁵ John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 16.

creators. Therefore, being entailed ontic otherness. This sort of otherness of being is antonymic to the Greeks. To them it is “foolishness,” yet it becomes “wiser than human wisdom” in the light of the personal otherness of Divine being.⁴⁶ It is only from the perspective of absolute otherness that one can philosophically posit the possibility that something with being could have formed a different form of being from nothing—*ex nihilo*. The understanding of creation and being in this manner is only possible if, returning to John of Damascus’ definitions of uni- and equivocal predicates, there is way to posit a mode of being that human reason can name, but cannot exhaust in its definition. The conditions of this discourse are fulfilled in the apophatic view of creation and being in the Orthodox perspective. Humans can speak of Divine being insofar as they have experienced it, in terms similar to our own mode of being and in relation to it because the relationship with the otherness of Divine being is similar to the relationship to being created in the image and likeness of the Divine.

Finally, the possibility to know or posit acceptable equivocal predicates of Divine being is revealed through its expression as love. John the Theologian’s predicate of this mode of being, in the concise, immediate, and intimate statement “God is love” expresses the inherently free quality of Divine Being in relationship to persons, both within the Godhead externally to human persons, as love. Love for the other expresses the essence of the Divine as an unconstrained existence— as freedom. As Zizioulas explains, “Thus, when we say that God ‘is,’ we do not bind the personal freedom of God – the being of God is not an ontological ‘necessity’ or a simple ‘reality’ for God – but we ascribe the being of God to His personal freedom. In a more analytical way this means that God, as Father and not as substance, perpetually confirms through ‘being’ His *free* will to exist.”⁴⁷ This definition of freedom provides a lubrication for the inquiring mind

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 1: 23, 26.

⁴⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 41.

when contemplating the relationship of Divine being, through communion with Him. In the Orthodox Personological perspective this direct discourse with the Divine is based in the Incarnation of Christ as the second Person of the Godhead.

Therefore, this investigation must now turn to the triadic experience of the Godhead—the human understanding that God exists in the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—in order to see how Divine being comes into time and space as other and how human being works in the mode (the image and likeness) of the Divine. The names of the three Persons approach an experiential definition for the relationship of a shared Essence (*homoousia*). The Persons are manifested and made known in their relationship to God the Father, the principle unity: the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The greatest expression of this is in the icon of the Old Testament Trinity by Andrei Rublev.⁴⁸ In this icon the truth of the mode of being-in-relation of the Divine Being is expressed in a manner that cannot be reasoned through logical or analogical formations.

Here, in the trihypostatic Godhead, the question of otherness returns. It is, however, crucial to see this otherness as completely different from the human experience of it. Although

⁴⁸ See Figure 1. Leonid Ouspensky writes that “a visible image of the divine Trinity, in whatever iconographic variant, according to whatever abstract concept, is impossible. Of the three Persons of the Divinity, only the second hypostasis can be represented in human form in the Son of God who became the Son of Man. The world knows only God in the Son through the Holy spirit” (Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 2, trans. Anthony Gythiel, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 398-9). The experiential knowledge of the Trinity is opened to human reason through the Incarnation (see below). The image of the Old Testament Trinity by Andrei Rublev opens reason to what was revealed through noetic understanding to Sergius of Rodonezh, who is called the ‘worshipper of the Most Holy Trinity’ in Orthodox hymnography. Pavel Florensky explains that “(Sergius) was the one who understood the heavenly azure – that unassailable, transworldly peace which is ceaselessly flowing into the immortal depths of perfect love... [in] the iconic image of this love in the canonic patterns of Abraham’s Epiphany at Mamre... For the Rublev icon shows in the most astonishing way this new vision of the Holy Trinity, a new revelation shining through the veils of what are now the old and clearly less significant forms” (Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan & Olga Andrejev, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 84). The significance of this revelation through iconography bears directly not only on the question of the knowledge of Divine Being, but on the connection between It and human being. Florensky continues “the more that spiritual comprehension becomes ontological, the more unshakably it is accepted as something long familiar” (Ibid., 85.). The expression of the Divine Being through art provides reassurance of its truth and invites the person to exist in a mode closer to that of Divine Being (see the question of the image and likeness of the Divine below).

humans understand the other standing across from them as inherently separated by time and space, no such distance exists in the Godhead. Although there is distinction there is no division. To clarify the illogicality of Divine otherness one must look to the formulation of what Orthodox theology understands as ‘procession’ or ‘begetting’ with regard to Divine being. Although unclear to human reason, these terms allow for a reasonable approximation of the concept of the Godhead being a trinity of hypostases that share one essence.

As Lossky so eloquently explains, “there is no interior process in the Godhead; no ‘dialectic’ of the three Persons; no becoming; no ‘tragedy in the Absolute.’ [...] It *is* the Trinity, and this fact can be deduced from no principle nor explained by any sufficient reason for there are neither principles nor causes anterior to the Trinity.”⁴⁹ The distinction of “procession” and “begetting,” as relational markers delineating the hypostases of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father, reveals the paradox of otherness for the Godhead.⁵⁰ Zizioulas outlines a model based on four propositions that link otherness and communion in the Trinity: that otherness is constitutive of unity, that otherness is absolute, that otherness is ontological (insofar as it is based on who someone is and not what), and that otherness is based on relationality.⁵¹ Otherness is therefore not a result, not a cause, as the post-Augustinian Western theological formulation “God *is* one and *relates* as three” might describe the Divine Being.⁵² Rather, otherness implies that

⁴⁹ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 45, 47.

⁵⁰ The terms “procession” and “begetting” are designated by the Orthodox Church as distinguishing marks of the Persons of the Godhead. Lossky writes “The only characteristic of the hypostases which we can state to be exclusively proper to each, and which is never found in the others, by reason of their consubstantiality, is thus the relation in origin. Nevertheless, this relation must be understood in an apophatic sense. It is above all a negation, showing us that the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; that the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Otherwise to regard it would be to submit the Trinity to a category of Aristotelian logic, that of relation.... These two persons are distinguished by different mode of their origin: the Son is begotten, the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father. This is sufficient to distinguish them” (Ibid., 54-5).

⁵¹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 5.

⁵² Ibid.

‘one’ and ‘three’ have the *same referent*. The otherness of the Godhead is based on the relation of three unified yet completely unconfused persons.

From a Western perspective, however, there is a natural and inherent fear of otherness and the other; from a materialistic or biological perspective, human existence becomes atomized, and any attempt at movement toward communion or unification is therefore predicated on changing the fundamental state of isolation in which human beings exists. And although Orthodoxy accepts that humans live in this manner after the Fall, it rejects the notion that this is our original or necessary condition. Therefore, Divine otherness must be engaged with the understanding that it is not divisive or impenetrable, in order to understand how human being might reflect this state.

The understanding that Divine contact with humanity is not only possible within the ontological boundaries of human existence but a common and necessary occurrence allows for the overcoming of the Western philosophical interpretation that posits a the dead-end to the discourse of knowledge of Being. The direct contact between the created and uncreated allows for an existential experience of Authentic Being and thereby provides the grounds by which it can be spoken of in an equivocal manner. In the Patristic writings of Maximus the Confessor, we find the instruction to look to the Incarnation of the Son in order to see how the Persons are distinguished “in an eternal movement of love.”⁵³ This ‘movement of love’ reveals the three basic tenets of the mode of Being: freedom, self-emptying love (kenosis), and personal ‘otherness’ as an existential fact. This instruction serves as our foundation for the connection between the transcendental and the real.

§IV: The Incarnation as the Relational Locus of the Knowledge of Being

⁵³ Lossky quotes this phrase from Maximus the Confessor’s *Scholia* on Pseudo-Dionysus’s *On the Divine Names*, in *Mystical Theology*, 60.

Freedom, the first of these tenets, is expressed through the act of creation *ex nihilo* by a creator. This free act of the Divine Being, beyond space and time, brings creation out of nothingness, which is a Judeo-Christian concept. How, though, does this lead to an understanding of the person? The summoning forth of the world out of nothingness by the trihypostatic God is the prime act of freedom and love, and therefore the first experiential contact between being and Being. However, there is no necessity in creation. Such is the most basic definition of freedom: a lack of necessity. God, Being that is boundless, has no necessity and is inherently free. This act of creation is, as Lossky expresses, therefore “a calling forth of newness. One might almost say: a risk of newness... Divine freedom is accomplished through creating this supreme risk: another freedom.”⁵⁴ Love and freedom are the foundation and meaning of being, and inherently contradict any idea that creation is necessary.

The latter was the predominant understanding of pre-Christian Greek philosophy. “This ontological monism which characterizes Greek philosophy,” Zizioulas explains, “leads Greek thought to the concept of the *cosmos*, that is, of the harmonious relation of existent things among themselves. Not even God can escape from this ontological unity and stand freely before the world.”⁵⁵ The Personalist nature of Christian ontology, by separating the personal Being of the Divine from the necessity of creation opens the human person to the first tenet of the mode of Being — true freedom. Before the freeing of creation from necessity by Christian thought, the Greeks understood the person and even the gods as subject to the constraints of the cosmos. The chains of this prison of ontological monism are broken by the realization of the free and loving acts of God.

⁵⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 54

⁵⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 29.

The self-emptying love expressed by the Person of the Son's Incarnation, the appearance of Christ on Earth as a man, is the second primary expression of the mode of Divine Being. Consequently, it is also the prime expression of human being because the kenotic act of the Incarnation unites Divine Being and human being. It expresses love as an experiential example comprehensible to human reason. "Being of divine nature, [Christ] is emptied, divested, humiliated (ἐκένωσεν) in taking the condition of servant," says Lossky. "The Son of God, by a prodigious humbling, by the mystery of His kenosis (κένωσις), descends into a self-annihilating condition (not in the sense of the original nothing, but of the meonic gulf opened by the fallen state of man); paradoxically, He unites to the integral fullness of His divine nature the unfullness no less integral to fallen nature."⁵⁶ This linking of the Divine with the fallen human being expresses the mode of Divine Being while also allowing for the participation of the human person in it.

§V: The Created Person, Image and Likeness

It is through the acts of creation and the Incarnation that the ontological question of how the mode of Divine Being is manifested in the world can be answered. And through this analysis, it is clear that the world exists, everything *is*, because of the free actions and love of Divine Being. Moving on, then, one must confront an anthropological question: what is the mode of being of the human person? To answer this question, the concepts of image and likeness of the Divine Being in the human person need to be clarified. The image, simply put, is the semblance of the Divine in a human. It entails that the quality of personal being that is relational, unique, and free. Persons are God-like in their form. This personal feature also implies that the person cannot be truly known except in relation, just as the Divine is only disclosed in the active and

⁵⁶ Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 100.

loving relationship between the three Persons. This perspective on the image also concretely establishes that the person is inherently free from necessity in their choice.

Nikolai Berdyaev clarifies this sense of freedom as he presents two various forms of it. “It is certain that there are two freedoms and not one only, the first to choose between good and evil, the last in the heart of the first — an irrational freedom and a freedom within reason. [The freedom of Christ] is the freedom that we have in view when it is said that man ought to free himself from his passions, to throw off enslavement to himself and to his environment, and the highest desire for freedom of spirit aims at it.” The first freedom, a choice between good and evil, however, seemingly works against the perspective on human existence as it relates to “freedom within reason.” If the person is free, they can not only choose between good and evil, but they are free to choose between the two despite the boundaries of nature. This supposes, therefore, that persons are not only free to do as they please for themselves, but more importantly they are free to be in communion with the other. What are we, as persons, free from?

If being unbound by necessity is a primary feature of the person, which necessities are the person free of? Since human freedom is only a likeness of the freedom of Divine Being, and not an equality of being, persons are not fully free. There are, of course, biological limitations and natural urges that are due to the Fall⁵⁷. According to the teachings of Orthodoxy, the free action of the first persons against the Divine mode of Being was egocentric. The transgression of the

⁵⁷ For a concise overview of the Fall and its consequences for human beings see Yannaras *Elements of Faith*, 75-88. There is a special importance in distinguishing postlapsarian natural being as a consequence of human freedom and such nature as a punishment imposed by the creator. The latter concept is the dominant understanding of the nature of sin, evil, and death in the West. The Eastern conception of the Fall confirms human freedom and the foundations of natural being. The first is expressed in the fact that the choice to turn away from the command of the Divine Being was not forced upon Adam and Eve. The second is revealed in the consequences of the action. Lossky writes “In [their] refusal to recognize that the unique origin of evil is in their own free will, men reject the possibility of freeing themselves from evil, and submit their freedom to external necessity” (Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 131). For a full discussion on the historical progression of perspectives on the relation between evil and the Fall see Christos Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011), 93-100.

mode of being of the Divine, an act devoid of selfless love, solipsized the human person from the Divine. The Fall therefore led to decay, sorrow, and death, and “human existence can only transcend some (not all) of the limitations imposed by the necessities or prescriptions of nature. It cannot transcend time, space, death, decay.”⁵⁸ Therefore, although persons are free according to their image, they are not capable of transcendence on their own.

“Freedom,” as Lossky posits, “is the ‘formal’ image, the necessary condition for the attainment of perfect assimilation to God.”⁵⁹ This formal image is the prototype in which humans are made, and will be the prototype from which Dostoevsky will create his characters. It is the likeness of the Divine by which a person chooses or chooses not to act, that expresses that person’s true being; how such a choice is made will drive the narrative of Dostoevsky’s novels. But something more than the likeness is required to move toward Authentic Being.

The concept of the likeness of the Divine in the person refers to the actions of the person, their ability to relate to an other. This freedom of both movement and choice is a gift, a mode of being that allows the person to move toward unity with Authentic Being. The movement toward and communication with an other is, therefore, another essential feature of being. And it is only through this mode of relation that persons gain the ability to freely overcome the limitations of their natural state, to move toward a soteriological goal in unity with the Divine and all other being: hence an ontology that is “relational” and an anthropology that is “synergetic.” Just as the Divine Being exists in relation to the others of one essence in the trihypostatic Godhead, so, too, do human persons exist in relation to other persons of like essence. And just as otherness for the Divine is absolute, relational, ontological, and constitutive of unity, so too does human otherness take root in these four principles.

⁵⁸Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 119-20.

However, human otherness has a relation to something that is existentially and essentially different from itself: created, finite being has a relationship with that which is uncreated and infinite. The person is continually called into relation with others and the Other (Divine Being) Otherness, for the person, is therefore the foundation of our mode of being. Yannaras elucidates this foundation and the connection to this mode in the following way:

The person, as absolute otherness, is differentiated from anything conceived of by the intellect as a genuine being, as a community of recognizable signs. That is why every person's mode of existence is objectively indeterminable, unique, dissimilar and unrepeatable, since every precise determination and every predication necessarily represents a community of recognizable signs. That which makes a person distinctive — *to idiazon*, his or her otherness — cannot be defined but can only be experienced as *fact*, that is, as unique, dissimilar and unrepeatable *relation*.⁶⁰

Otherness, therefore, also anticipates an outward movement, a call. In opposition to a Western perspective in which the movement out from the self is perceived as a negation, Orthodoxy sees this aspect of otherness as not only positive but necessary toward Authentic Being. One might consider this in the following way: “Western thought has never ceased to build itself and its culture on this basis. In our culture protection from the other is a fundamental necessity. We feel more and more threatened by the presence of the other. [...] Freedom as otherness, however, is not only a negative thing; its ontological character involves a positive aspect expressed as a drive toward *love* and *creativity*.”⁶¹ The drive and dynamism caused by otherness grounds human existence and helps define our mode of being as one of *being-in-relation*.

This being-in-relation is substantiated by the expression of the unique manifestation of one person to another, the ‘rising up’ of their beauty into the experience and knowledge of the other. Beauty is of crucial importance to this system. It implies difference, otherness, and

⁶⁰ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 17.

⁶¹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 5, 39-40. The Orthodox concept of hell is in complete opposition to the Sartrean (sic) idea of hell as other people, as depicted in the 1944 play *Huis clos*. C.S. Lewis' depiction of hell as a type of metaphysical urban sprawl in his 1946 novel *The Great Divorce* is a metaphorical depiction much closer to the Orthodox vision of the afterlife.

uniqueness while simultaneously inviting two subjects into a loving, self-emptying, and mutually fulfilling relational mode of being. “The truth of beings,” relates Yannaras, “is witnessed to as beauty, as the principle of a personal uniqueness and dissimilarity, which presupposes and discloses a personal creative presence and energy.”⁶² Robert L. Jackson reminds us that Dostoevsky’s ideal of beauty is inseparable from its incarnation.⁶³ The second chapter, this connection between the likeness of the Divine, the beauty of the Incarnation, and the human experience of beauty is crucial to our understanding of narrative developments in the novels. However, this connection between relationality and the movement toward Authentic Being needs further clarification.

Beauty, being the manner by which persons express their unique existence, also confirms relation as the primary mode of being of the person. And if a person ‘rises up’ into the presence of an other, then relational being must be inherently dynamic. This is made clear by the concept of the likeness of the Divine in the person. The person is free to fulfill their potential to be unified with the Divine, to shed the natural limitations of being and become (paradoxically) a unique person and simultaneously part of the infinite existence of Being. The person, being dynamic in relation to the Divine and to others, may also move away from Being and beings. In this negative motion, or what Dostoevsky calls going ‘heel’s up,’ is sin, ego-centricity, and death.

The dynamism of human choice discloses the connection between the image and likeness in the person. According to Dumitriu Stăniloae, the link is expressed in the process of deification, which “is a development by grace of a potential planted in man, especially since ‘the

⁶² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 81.

⁶³ Robert L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 56.

likeness' is nothing but a development of 'the image.'"⁶⁴ This implies that while the person is created in the mode of being-in-relation and requires it for both spiritual and material sustenance, the ability to act freely disposes one toward the fulfillment of natural/biological urges. This inclination almost inevitably leads to the neglect of the care for the spiritual, thanks once again to the Fall. The postlapsarian form of the person entails biological needs, which are in turn subject to perversion. This perversion of a biological necessity, the conscious movement away from Authentic Being and toward egocentric demand, is called spiritual passion. While biological, and otherwise 'created,' urges are not inherently detrimental to achievement of Authentic Being, the abuse of either earthly or spiritual things leads to sin, a falling way from the path to salvation, of becoming one with the Divine.

§VI: Sin and Death as the Cause of Isolation and Anxiety

The passions take persons away from the likeness of the Divine, pulling them away from the spiritual ladder of ascent and down toward isolation, individualism, suffering, and death.⁶⁵ Sin depersonalizes. The passions are connected to biological need as an urge for that which will either keep the person from pain or will provide the most physical comfort. Those material concerns that do not contribute to the spiritual development of the image are "the lowest level to which human nature can fall," and become the foundation for anxiety and destructive action.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Dumitriu Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Guide for the Scholar*, trans. Archimandrite Jerome (Newville) and Otilia Kloos (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2003), 366.

⁶⁵ The icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent (see Figure 2) is derived from the 7th century writings of John Climacus, one of the most influential Patristic writers on the topic of asceticism and soteriology. His work is so important to the understanding of spiritual labor that the fourth Sunday of the period of Great Lent is set aside to commemorate him and encourage the Orthodox person in their struggle toward the great feast of Pascha. The image of the ladder as a movement toward unification with God will be a common theme in the dissertation, and will help to engage the reader of Dostoevsky's text with the concept of movement toward and away from other persons and Authentic Being. For more on the image of the ladder and John Climacus see Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity: Volume I*, 81-92, Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 200-20, and Stăniloae, 120-3.

⁶⁶ Stăniloae, 77.

The personal struggle with the abyss of egocentric isolation, or anxiety, is expressed in the twofold nature of the passions: to enslave the person to the material — denying them the fullness of life which is both material and spiritual — and to pervert “man’s thirst for the infinite” by presenting finite objects and goals as substitutes for the infinite fullness of Divine Being.⁶⁷

By isolating oneself from the presence of other persons and the Divine through an egocentric turn inward, one loses a personal fullness and is pushed into individuality and egoism (*самость*, [*samost’*] in Russian) or the annihilation of one’s uniqueness. In doing so a person becomes a shadow or caricature of a person. Egoism is the absence of love. Self-love is not self-emptying. It is, in fact, self-consuming and therefore rejects and denies the source of its being. In an act of self-hating rage, it impotently attempts to nullify love and Divine Being. These states of being exist in a manner that is contrary to the mode of being-in-relation that Dostoevsky extols in his writing, and leads to the most arduous tribulations of human existence.

Suffering, the stumbling block to the egoistical and selfish, is caused by the denial of relationship with the Divine Being, and is the ultimate expression of the active disdain or rejection of relation with other persons. One of the great examples of this is the denials of the Apostle Peter during the Passion of Christ. His threefold rejection, “I do not know the man,”⁶⁸ is a direct renunciation of his personal, experiential knowledge of Divine Being and personal being. His sorrow and suffering are not permanent, however, and he is lead to repentance.⁶⁹ This act illuminates a microcosmic example of the dynamism inherent in the development of the person

⁶⁷ Ibid., 77-9.

⁶⁸ Matthew 26: 72.

⁶⁹ The iconographic representation of the complete isolation of the Apostle Peter following his denial of his experience of personal relation with Divine Being is most vividly captured in the icon of Peter’s denial of Christ in Figure 3. The utter personal sorrow and suffering, expressed and elevated by the deep blue background of the icon, is offset by the reminder of the rooster’s call, prophesied by Christ in lines 31-35 (Ibid.). The providence, forgiveness, and love of the Divine penetrates even the most profound sorrow and anguish, and appears not only in grand, overwhelming epiphanic moments but also in the most simplistic revelations of nature.

from the Personalist perspective. The dynamic drama of the human person is that which is played out in the artistic creations of Dostoevsky.

The struggle is constant in the person who attempts to move toward likeness of the Divine. The Divine image is stripped of its freedom through necessity and of love through egoism. The struggle to overcome this movement away from Divine Being is spiritual warfare waged through ascetic practices. The principle (*logos*) of human being, the reason for existence, is inherently linked to the Divine Logos, the Principle of Being, and is therefore constantly called back toward Divine Being. Persons are therefore fundamentally soteriological, seeking unification with the Divine Being—that is to say, theosis--without either losing their own personhood or sullyng the Persons that constitute Divine Being. Salvation is the reason or telos of human being. The mode by which union with the Divine is achieved is the concern of synergetic anthropology, and will be investigated further in the chapters to follow.

Chapter II: The Literary Figure According to the Divine Likeness

“What is the light/ that you have/ shining all around you,/ is it chemically derived?/ ‘Cause if it’s natural/ something glowing from inside/ shining all around you,/ its potential has arrived. Looking into space/ it surrounds you./ Love is the place/ that you’re drawn to.” – Wayne Coyne, “What is the Light.”⁷⁰

§I: Character as a Form of Being: the Literary and Ontological ‘Prosôpon,’ ‘Lichnost’, and ‘Chelovek’

Having considered the spiritual component of the person, I will now illustrate how the yeast of the spiritual leavens literary being and gives rise to the understanding of the full and substantial literary Person in the image of the real person. This is Dostoevsky’s foremost contribution to world literature: creating a fictional being that rises up above a character, or caricature, or sketch. The first step to understanding the creation of this type of literary figure is established in the three foundational features of a person according to the TPP: first, that persons are fundamentally created free in a way that resembles the mode of being of their creator; second, that the primary mode of being for persons is found in giving themselves wholly and freely to other persons through kenosis, or self-emptying love; and third, that persons are completely unique and unrepeatable despite their fundamental likeness to others of similar biological, sociopolitical, or historical sets. How is it that fictional beings lacked any of these qualities before Dostoevsky? And how does he invigorate his figures with these qualities?

Particular to Dostoevsky is the creation of literary figures who drive the reader toward an understanding of these creations as being-in-relation, in the likeness of the mode of being for the human person. This mode of fictional being occurs not only on the page, but Dostoevsky also encourages the reader to engage with his creations as if they existed in an image and mode similar to our own. He does so by granting them the particular image and likeness of their creator

⁷⁰ Wayne Coyne, “What is the Light,” *The Soft Bulletin*, The Flaming Lips, Warner Bros. Records 9 46876-2, 1999.

who, in turn, exists in the image and likeness of his Creator. To see how he accomplishes this feat, these Orthodox principles must be extrapolated to work with them in a literary context.

To do so let us begin with a brief etymology of the word *person*. The Greek term *prosôpon*, which generates the Latin *persona*, and which eventually gives birth to the English *person*, presumes a subject of essentially referential reality. Yannaras' deconstruction of the term reveals its grounding in relational ontology: "The proposition *pros* ('towards') together with the noun *ôps* (*ôpos* in the genitive), which means 'eye,' 'face,' 'countenance,' form the composite word *pros-ôpon*: I have my face turned toward someone or something; I am opposite someone or something."⁷¹ This relation, in the pre-Christian Greek sense, connected the person to the dominance and inescapability of the cosmos. The face of the person was always positioned toward harmony. But, as borne out by experience, and counter to the Greek perspective of universal harmony, Zizioulas proposes that the world is in fact inherently unharmonious.

The explanation of the inconsistency of experienced and idealized reality within the Greek worldview is found in the fictional codification of being at this time. Here, the first use of the idea of the person in a literary mode appears—specifically in Greek tragedy. The Greek word for the masks used in the performance of tragedies is *prosopêion*. One can infer from this terminology that the mask is seen, through the Greek perspective, as a striving for personhood through artistic creation. But why, one should ask, is the mask taking the place of the person? And why is it that the person appears inherently tragic or comic in a world bound by an ontological monism? Zizioulas posits that the inherent view of human existence as an ouroboric tragedy stems from the idea that:

It is precisely in the theater that man strives to become a 'person,' to rise up against this harmonious unity which oppresses him as rational and moral necessity. It is there that he fights with the gods and with his fate[...] but it is there too that he constantly learns—according to the

⁷¹ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 5.

stereotyped principle of ancient tragedy—that he can neither escape fate, nor continue to show *hubris* to the gods without punishment, nor sin without suffering the consequences. This he confirms the view, so typically expressed in Plato's *Laws*, that *the world does not exist for the sake of man, but man for its sake.*⁷²

The theater allows for the person in the Greek context to display the inherent freedom that is contrary to the ontic supposition of harmony. Classical tragedy therefore expresses human suffering, understood as submission to the ontological monism of cosmos. The person within the cosmos, however, struggles in vain because they are a part of the unchanging cosmos. Therefore, freedom is only mimetic. And it is merely mimetic thanks to the lack of depth of the personal ontological foundations, which are first expressed in the Christian understanding of the world.

Clearly, for the Greeks, both the real and fictional person is inherently tragic because of the reality of the human desire to be free, even in the darkness of the certitude of ontological bondage. The person's situation in the world becomes tragic, therefore, because the ingrained worldview that asserts the inescapability of cosmic harmony is incompatible with the reality of essential personal freedom.⁷³ To the Greeks freedom is only a mask, but to quote Zizioulas once again, "the mask is not unrelated to the person, but their relationship is tragic."⁷⁴ Only through the personal dimension added by the Christian ontological and anthropological positions of image and likeness has it been made possible for persons to reorient their position and experience the reality of freedom, rather than merely positing it ontically. From a Christian world view, the person is no longer bound to the unchanging and relentless harmony of cosmos, but rather is adrift in the sea of life, storm-tossed by the waves between the rock of biological necessity and the whirlpool of boundless freedom. And it is in this chaos that the person in Dostoevsky's novel arises.

⁷² Zizioulas, *Being*, 32.

⁷³ For an excellent analysis of Greek tragedy from the Personalist perspective see Stelios Ramfos, *Fate and Ambiguity in Oedipus the King*, trans. Norman Russel, (Boston: Somerset Hall Press, 2006).

⁷⁴ Zizioulas, *Being*, 33.

But how can this Greek etymological investigation be associated with a Russian understanding of the person? After all, Russian contains several terms for the person, running the gamut of philosophical, civil, religious, and vernacular styles and usages. Vladimir Dal's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*, first published at the beginning of Dostoevsky's work following his exile in 1863, defines the word *персона* (*persona*) only as *человек* (*chelovek*), *лицо* (*litso*), and *особа* (*osoba*).⁷⁵ These are synonyms and nothing more. The word *litso*, is of great value, however, because it also indicates the face of a person; it is that which communicates. Therefore, the predominant location of sensory input and output is that which stands at the root of the definition of personhood in this context.

However, the abstract noun formed from this root, *личность* (*lichnost'*), brings one a step closer to the Greek meaning, as it indicates the person as a substantiated, yet abstract, existence of "the independent, individual being."⁷⁶ The same root of *face*, or *countenance* is found in both the Greek and Russian abstract forms of the term for *person*, indicating a concrete connection between being and relation, a synergy between the ideal and material. To further solidify our understanding of this connection, Zizioulas adds that although the abstract understanding of the person begins in the theater "the term [*person*] is not absent from the vocabulary of ancient Greek outside the life of the theater. It seems to originally have meant specifically the part of the head that is 'below the cranium.'"⁷⁷ This connection between the face, which turns the being outward toward the o, and the ideal of the person, is rooted in a relational understanding of existence. The relational fact of being is thereby made explicit in both Greek

⁷⁵ Vladimir Dahl, *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago velikoruskago iazyka, Second Edition, vol. III*, (St. Petersburg: Izdanie knigoprodavtsa-tipografa M.O. Vol'fa, 1882), 102.

⁷⁶ Dahl, *Tolkovyi slovar'*, vol. II, 258-9.

⁷⁷ Zizioulas, *Being*, 31.

and Russian through the closeness between the face and the collective ontic definition of the person.

However, the Russian word most frequently used by Dostoevsky to describe the human being is *chelovek*. The meaning of the term has been maintained from its East Slavic roots and indicates the fullness of human being. This complexity is clearly seen in Dal's definition, wherein *chelovek* entails "every one of a group of people; the highest of earthly creatures, having been given wisdom, free will, and verbal speech... fleshy and mortal... worthy of that title, 'being.'"⁷⁸ This definition wholly illuminates how perfect this Russian term fits into Dostoevsky's worldview. As mentioned earlier, it is not merely philosophy and abstract ideas that imbue either life or literature with meaning, but rather the action and physicality of the beings that elevate and transcend form through uniqueness, kenosis, and freedom. Flesh and decay, verbal and nonverbal action and creation, wisdom and freedom combine to pour out beauty that calls others into relation. *Chelovek*, for Dostoevsky, therefore personifies this mode of being.

The grounding of Dostoevsky's *weltanschauung* in the Orthodox understanding of the Incarnation also lends credence to the use of *chelovek* to convey not only the theological weight of his ontology and anthropology, but also the material, sensual, mortal, and irrational aspects of his work. In the Slavonic translation of the Nicene Creed—the foundational proclamation of faith of the Orthodox Church—the term *vochelovechshasia*, which is the past active participle form of the verb *vochelovechitisia*, describes the Incarnation of Christ as *becoming man*. Within the context of the Creed, the term *man* certainly indicates that the second hypostasis of the Godhead has entered *into* — as the prefix *ε-* or here *εο-* indicate — the fullness of human being without

⁷⁸ Dahl, *Tolkovyi slovar'*, vol. IV, 588.

ceasing to be Divine being. As Paul's Epistle to the Philippians notes, the Son of God "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man."⁷⁹ The Slavonic text uses the terms *podobii* and *obrazom*''', indicating the "image of a servant" and "the likeness of the person," which only confirms the importance of the connection between human and Divine being. Here, the consistent use of the word *chelovek* reiterates that, precisely as the Slavonic usage in the Creed indicates, the mode of being of the human person that Christ puts on in the Incarnation is the same as the human mode of being. For Dostoevsky, then, to "become a person" and to solve the "mystery of the person," *chelovek* is the only reasonable term to utilize in relation to Christ, and therefore it is the only logical term on which to build a system for the study of Dostoevsky's works.

§II: The Typological Structure of the Russian Literary Tradition of Fictional Beings

To commence the investigation into the Personalist foundations of Dostoevsky's poetic construction of the fictional being must begin with an initial look into the development of the form and content of the literary being in Western prose literature as it grew in the cityscape of the mid-nineteenth century Russia. How did Western Romanticism and Realism present the fictional being to Dostoevsky? In the urban settings, among the bustle of Gogolian clerks, and in the bourgeois countryside filled with Turgenevan gentry and Tolstoian peasants lay the foundations for the brooding and impulsively reactive persons of Dostoevsky. What separates Dostoevsky's persons from his literary progenitors' and contemporaries' fictional beings? How can one delineate mere characters from persons? To answer these questions, the levels of literary subjects that are less anthropologically full than Dostoevsky's must be defined before unveiling how his Christology elevates the boundaries of fictional being his work.

⁷⁹ Philippians, 2.7.

A four-tiered structure of the different levels of subjects that exist in the realm of prose fiction will illuminate how Dostoevsky moves from a writer of rather commonplace realist prose at the beginning of his career to the forefront of the avant-garde at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Following Sergei Askol'dov's typology I label these levels the Temperament, Type, Character, and Person.⁸¹ The subjects of the first and most impersonal category, the Temperaments, can most closely be assigned to literature of the Natural School with its physiological sketches, biological descriptions, and other very basic and scientific presentations of human beings. They have no "existence" or active mode of being to speak of. They are akin to da Vinci anatomical sketches; as close as they may come to imitating or depicting the human body, they possess no life or soul.⁸² They are mere reflections of the natural, material functions of the human body. Such subjects may contain the image of their creator, but do not possess freedom or uniqueness.

The second level is that of Type. The subjects of this category have gained personality, but are mere reflections of character traits of people and hold no real substance beyond the fidelity to peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, stereotypes, or mannerisms of the real. Fittingly, Andrei Bely, a devotee and student of the poetics of the master of this level, Nikolai Gogol, expresses a subject of this level beautifully in his novel *Petersburg*:

When the stranger disappeared through the forest of that restaurant, we turned and spied two silhouettes cutting through the fog. One was both fat and tall and conspicuous for his build. But we could not make out his face (silhouettes, after all have no faces). And yet we did discern an open umbrella and galoshes and a hat. Half seal skin, with ear-flaps.

⁸⁰ I have purposefully limited the scope of this character typology to prose and will not discuss the types of subjects in poetry. The explicit artifice of lyrical works creates an entirely different set of features that distinguish the fictional subjects. A personalistic study of poetry is particularly difficult because of the distance, or, more often, lack thereof, between the poetic 'I' and the authorial 'I.' For an example of the latter, Donald Sheehan has developed a marvelous analysis of the personal in the lyrical subject in his article "Shall Thy Wonders Be Known in the Dark? Robert Frost and Personhood," in *The Grace of Incorruption*, 87-98.

⁸¹ Sergei Askol'dov, "Psikhologiiia kharakterov u Dostoevskogo," in *Dostoevskii: Stati i materialy*, ed. A. S. Dolinin, (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Mysl'," 1925), 32.

⁸² See Figure 4.

The mangy little figure of an undersized gentleman was what largely comprised the second silhouette. His face was visible: we did not manage to see his face, for we were astonished by the enormous size of a wart. Thus facial substance had been obscured by insolent accidentality (which is as it should be in the world of shadows).⁸³

This ‘world of shadows’ is the inky substrata from whence Types bubble to the surface of narrative and then silently slides back into the darkness. These Types are completely subservient to the artists whims. They exist only to expose particular aspects of the human condition to which they relate. And although they function perfectly and beautifully within satirical, parodic, or other types of didactic texts, they are not personal. Their being remains chained to the harmony of their fictive world. Notice how Bely explicitly draws the reader’s attention to the face, or rather, lack thereof. Types lack a face to turn. Instead, they have metonymic apparatuses or other symbolic devices that replace the personal in order to specify while universalizing the caricature.

Unlike the Temperament, the Type does not necessarily mirror the material aspects of the person. Rather there is a symbolic manifestation of human behaviors physically. Thanks to this physically immateriality, and just like the sketch of the Temperament, this level cannot be confused with a living person’s body, and therefore the Type does not rise to a realistic mode of personal being. Their physical traits are almost always defined by their qualities. Gogol’s landowners in *Dead Souls* are a prime example of this mode of depiction. While they explode in artistic flares of flashes and echoes of being, the Type lacks concreteness of life. Nozdrev is an exceptional illustration of the Type as a masquerade of real being.

At first, Gogol provides a deceptively descriptive figure of Nozdrev: “He was a tall man with a lean, or what is known as wasted, face, and a red little mustache. From his tanned face one

⁸³ Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 22.

could deduce he knew what smoke was – if not of the battlefield, then at least of tobacco.”⁸⁴ In this quote, and as evidenced by Boklevsky’s drawing of Nozdrev in an 1895 edition of the novel, the strength of Gogol’s artistry elicits powerful figures that, at first, appear realistic.⁸⁵ Looking deeper, however, this figure vanishes as Gogol expands Nozdrev with more and more general and stereotypical features. The “real” becomes blurred and the Type appears. He becomes like a familiar scent of flowers passed by every morning, whose scent perfumes the halls of the memory, but one can only know the type and not each particular flower from their bouquet.

Similarly, the Type provides only a whiff of reality, but not the unique person themselves. See how Gogol tricks the reader into breathing more life into his Type than what truly exists in a person:

The fair-haired man was one of those people in whose character there is at first sight a certain obstinacy. Before you can open your mouth, they are already prepared to argue and, it seems, will never agree to anything that is clearly contrary to their way of thinking, will never call a stupid thing smart, and in particular will never agree to dance to another man’s tune; but it always ends up that there is a certain softness in their character, that they will agree precisely to what they had rejected, will call a stupid thing smart, and will then go off dancing their best to another man’s tune – in short, starts out well, ends in hell. [...] The person of Nozdrev, surely, is already somewhat familiar to the reader. Everyone has met not a few such people.⁸⁶

While the reader has met ‘such people’ they have not met Nozdrev. A more explicit rendition of the Nozdrevian type, and one that is truer to the Types mode of literary being, is Marc Chagall’s depiction.⁸⁷ This sketch utilizes minimal linework and charcoal shading to convey the essence of the subject. Chagall’s symbolic drawing translates Gogol’s words more faithfully than any “realist” depiction might, due to the artist’s sympathy with the mode of the Types fictional being.

While you may meet a Janus-like Nozdrevian person in your daily life, you will most likely never encounter the embodiment of the empty space of vapidness and duplicity walking

⁸⁴ Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Soul*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (New York: Vintage Classics, 1997), 61.

⁸⁵ See Figure 5.

⁸⁶ Gogol, *Dead Souls.*, 67-8.

⁸⁷ See Figure 6.

down the street. The beauty of the Type is that it *does not exist* as an independent being in the world and therefore can express the ideal of its target in ontic terms. Forcing shades of realism onto the Type neuters it of its potency to mock, critique, expose, revel in, and so forth, the absurdities, pleasures, pains, and drudgeries of reality. Mimetic qualities stifle the Type's ability to exist across time and space. Being non-personal allows the Type greater poetic potential and force. And while the Type reveals great insight into the different modes of human being, it does not reveal the depths of the person as a unique manifestation. The Type will always have an aura of humanity in general and never the person in particular.

The third subject is the Character, the foundation of typical nineteenth century realist prose. These Characters step out of the murky depths of the Type and upward toward the light of the surface of true being. The Character contains an individualism that develops from biographical, sociological, historical, or psychological depth. At this level the author is first able to present a poetic 'I' in prose. There is a depth to the being of the Character that is concrete and yet vacillates across the spectrum of human emotion and action. Pierre Bezukhov in Lev Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is a model example of this level. He has motivations, a history, foibles and virtues, a concrete (if not flabby) material constitution, and the capacity for growth in the text.

The most important feature of the Character is, perhaps, that the reader is privy to this fictional being's motivations and inner workings. However, the Character is still objectified by its creator; it is not free. Nabokov, in his precise and illuminating perspective on Tolstoy's art, expresses this slavishness: "What obsessed Tolstoy, what obscured his genius... was that, somehow, the process of seeking the Truth seemed more important to him than the easy, vivid, brilliant discovery of the illusion of truth through the medium of his artistic genius." This

mastery of the art of the ‘illusion of truth’ evokes wonder in his readers; as Nabokov notes, “Elderly Russians at their evening tea talk of Tolstoy’s characters as of people who really exist, people to whom their friends may be likened.”⁸⁸ But the Character is merely memetic. There is no sudden dynamism or relational being in them. Despite the depths given to them, they remain bound to the higher principles and realms of their authors. Pierre is just another bee in the hive of Tolstoy’s apiary. He is unfree because he, unlike his creator, drifts along in the currents of the fictional cosmos that he inhabits.

The slavish nature of the Character is most apparent when the lines between this level and the Type are blurred. Nabokov forces his subjects to walk the boundaries of the Type and the Character in order to purposefully expose the artifice of his works. And like a master working pawns on a chess board, Nabokov continually strives to maintain the harmony of his fictional universe. For Nabokov, art springs up from the deep well of pathos that is irrigated by his Characters knowledge of their inescapable fate; they waltz through the wonderland of their lives only to trot head-first into the brick wall of their fate.

This is remarkably clear in the Character of Luzhin in *The Defense*. His destiny, to plunge from his window to the pavement below, is inescapable, a fact that becomes perfectly clear over the course of the novel to both the protagonist and the reader. There is no defense Luzhin can muster that can overcome the machinations of his world, crafted and meticulously sculpted like a miniature topiary, reflecting and beautifying reality.

Even the wordplay between his name and “illusion” shines like a neon billboard in Las Vegas, pointing any who approaches it away from unburnished reality and toward a world of

⁸⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 141-2.

byzantine artifice.⁸⁹ From the very opening line the reader is informed that the protagonist's main concern is that which "struck him most was the fact that from Monday on he would be Luzhin."⁹⁰ From the dreariness of Monday onward, the ill-Luzhin has germinated. And in the end, in the final lines, the illusion is revealed to have been a façade of a Character the entire time, nothing more than a Type in sheep's clothing:

The window reflections gathered together and leveled themselves out, the whole chasm was seen to divide into dark and pale squares, and at the instant when Luzhin unclenched his hand, at the instant when icy air gushed into his mouth, he saw exactly what kind of eternity was obligingly and inexorably spread out before him.
The door was burst in. "Aleksandr Ivanovich, Aleksandr Ivanovich," roared several voices.
But there was no Aleksandr Ivanovich.⁹¹

As the curtain is drawn back and the metaphor of his life is laid bare, Aleksandr Ivanovich greets his creator in the abyss of the "eternities of darkness," and the unyielding yet beautiful machinery of the artifice is revealed to the reader.⁹²

Luzhin is simply a cog in a watch, even if the watch and the cog are extraordinarily and meticulously crafted. For the Character, in keeping with the Greek tragic tradition of ontological freedom, is illusionary—just as Warren Zevon mourns in song, "Except in dreams you're never really free."⁹³ The Character is a slave to the ideological and aesthetic constraints of his creator. And, as Luzhin enacts for the reader, the only realm of true freedom for the Character is in the illusion, behind the mask, within dreams. The literary Person, however, is bound only by the natural confines of the artistic form, but is unbound in ways similar to the freedom understood through the lens of Orthodox Personalism.

⁸⁹ In the forward to the English edition novel, Nabokov goes so far as to explain this to the non-Russian speaker who may or may not lengthen the 'u' to an 'oo'. See Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*, trans. Michael Scammell in collaboration with the author, (New York: Vintage International, 1964), 7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹² Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, (New York: Vintage International, 1967), 19.

⁹³ Warren Zevon, "Desperadoes Under the Eaves," *Warren Zevon*, Asylum Records 7E-1060, 1976.

In the literary context the Person looks nearly identical to the Character. There is a deep ‘I,’ but this ‘I’ is bolstered by its connection to many other subjects with whom the subject enters into relation in the texts. And what is more, the Person grows or stagnates within the narrative according to their relation to those around them. The need for the opposing face of an other who holds an equal but unique personal existence is the mark of a new level of artistic depiction. And the relationality inherent in the Person allows them a certain degree of freedom even from their creator. There is no such freedom of movement, no such dynamism, in the Character. The novelty in the literary Person is grounded in freedom through relation, which occurs perhaps for the first time in world literature in Dostoevsky.

§III: The Bakhtinian Grounds for the Study of the Person in Dostoevsky

Bakhtin tells us that “Dostoevsky’s worldview was not the first to place high value on personality, but the artistic image of someone else’s personality. [...] The image of many unmerged personalities joined together in the unity of some spiritual event, was fully realized for the first time in his novels.”⁹⁴ At the poetic level, this unified spiritual event “reveals the connection to and the surpassing of the character by a paradox. This paradox is an antinomy, one which entails that the Person in its design “predestines the [subject] for freedom (a relative freedom, of course), and incorporates him as such into the strict and carefully calculated plan of the whole.”⁹⁵ The “calculated plan” is the aesthetic encoding of the Orthodox ontological framework, while the ‘freedom’ is the TPP—the anthropological mode of being at work within the encoded plan. Therefore, within this blueprint, if the Character is like a pawn confronting his creator in a fixed chess match, instead one can imagine that the Person exists between the chalk

⁹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

lines of a tennis court; the boundaries and rules of the match have been established by the game's creator, but within this confined set of boundaries and rules an infinity of possibility exists, regulated only by the persons engaged in the match, and expressed by the capabilities of the players in the match to move toward or away from one another.

The creator, like the chair umpire and line judges, is present to ensure that the players do not transgress the chalk—the ontological boundaries— or the rules—the anthropological constrictions. Freedom exists for the person within the fixed boundaries of the world they inhabit. In mathematical terms the person is like a mathematical countable infinite set; although bounded by strict parameters and contained within a group of similar discreet subjects, the person is an unrepeatable manifestation from a countless series. In short, the person is an abstract being that any attempt to circumscribe with universal definitions ends as a maddeningly difficult endeavor, unless one has a similar subject to which the subject can be compared.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The work of Georg Cantor on abstract set theory and transfinite math as well as logical paradoxes such as those of Zeno of Elea, presents superb parallels for a more concrete understanding of the concept of the infinite as a tangible and workable subject in ontological and anthropological terms. Consider this: in Zeno's famous paradox of the Dichotomy, Homer wants to walk to Troy, but must arrive half way there before he can arrive at the conclusion of his stroll. To accomplish this feat, however, he must always walk half the distance to this half distance point, resulting in an infinite regression of half way points, or an uncountable number of small numbers contained within a set of a very definite, finite distance. Homer, to the reasonable and realists among us, will reach the end of his journey at some non-infinite time over some non-infinite distance. According to the rules of mathematics, however, the infinity of points is just as real as the quantifiable distance to Troy. Similarly, the unrepeatability of the human person both contains an infinite capacity of being (by which we mean unlimited individual instances of personal existence) because of the freedom of choice in the likeness of the Divine, and also represents the possibility of the infinite manifestations (by which we mean the innumerable possibility of choice within the finite time of existence) within the boundaries of the laws of nature as a known quantity. There is a confirmation of this complex and irrational understanding of infinite possibility in reality within the Christology of the Orthodox Church. The understanding of Christ's appearance as both God and man in a knowable and relational sense, which has been more greatly preserved in the Orthodox East than the Catholic or Protestant West, deals explicitly with the concept of the infinite within the finite. A prime example of this Christology can be heard in the hymnography of the Orthodox Church for the Nativity of Christ. The first irmos of the ninth ode of the canon for the Nativity of Christ reads as follows: "A mystery! Strange and wonderful I see! Heaven is a cave on earth! The cherubic throne is the Virgin! The God Whom cannot be contained is placed in the manger, a noble place, O Christ our God. Him do we praise and magnify!" Both Heaven and the Divine being contained within obviously physically bounded objects defies the logic of the world, but expresses the fullness of the Incarnation, but only in a relational mode. This experience of the Divine, the transcendence of the natural world is either experienced or believed. The knowledge of it is not rational, but can be known through one of these two forms of experience. In a similar way, abstract set theory and logical paradoxes are a rational, and perhaps comprehensible, entry into the experience of the ontically undefinable. A

Therefore, to avoid this madness, it is necessary to qualify an epistemological principle of Orthodox personalism in the following way: the person, as a unique manifestation of being from a genus of infinite possibilities comprised of unrepeatable beauty, goodness, evil, and suffering, can only be known through relation, the disclosing of the logos of the self to an other. The literary Person takes on the image and likeness of their creator. However, unlike Divine creation *ex nihilo*, fiction—and with it the creation of fictional beings—is fashioned from historical, literary, and socio-political influences within time and space.

While these constraints imbue them with certain limitations of being, there is a greater level of freedom for the fictional beings insofar as they are not completely restrained by them, or even by biological necessity. There is the possibility of communicating being in time and space, not as it really is, but on either a higher- or lower-level reality, more absurd or more transcendent. This type of freedom, however, presents a problem. The author has the ability to move so far from reality that the relational mode of being that exists between persons becomes obfuscated. The author's will dominates the fictional world he creates. Unlike the created world, most fictional beings are not created by an act of self-emptying love. Dostoevsky does not write his novels as monologic, harmonic unities; rather, he attempts—and eventually does—open the world of his novels to the chaos of freedom and love that inheres in the world. He acts like his Creator by giving up control over his creations in order to depict the overcoming of solipsized egoism and sin and the movement toward a transcendent mode of being.

Therefore, returning to the Bakhtinian perspective, it becomes clear that the main difference between Character and Person in Dostoevsky's poetics is tantamount to the difference between monologic and dialogic ontological understandings, or as we have shown, between the

concise and accessible portal into the world of the mathematics of infinity can be found in David Foster Wallace, *Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity*, (New York: Atlas Books, 2003).

Greek and Orthodox constructs. The former is the harmonic world of cosmos structured within a fixed, isolated mode of memetic representation, presenting a gilded stage of life as art. The latter is the free world of the person unbound, fashioned in the image and likeness of their creator. And while it may be argued that Dostoevsky's authorial perspective dominates the narrative direction and thematic discourse, it never dominates his characters' freedom. This becomes clear in the relationships between Persons in the novels as well as in Dostoevsky's apparent inability to force his will on his creations—as will become evident in our analysis of Dostoevsky's notebooks and the novels themselves.

Bakhtin presents a compelling argument for the freedom of literary beings in Dostoevsky's work. Dostoevsky, Bakhtin claims, allows himself to be constrained and allows for the freedom of his fictional beings to flourish as Persons. Bakhtin rejects the concept of Person as presented by Askol'dov, insofar as the latter claims that the Person "is more monologic and shifts the center of gravity to a realization of one's own private personality." If this were indeed the case, writes Bakhtin, then it "would have led to a subjective romantic type of novelistic construction."⁹⁷ The romantic Type, of course, is unsatisfactory in the realm of the conventional Realist novel and for Bakhtin's conception of the polyphonic novel. And Bakhtin illuminates how Dostoevsky's poetics shift away from the romantic by branding the characters as dialogic beings who engage in verbal relationships.

For Bakhtin, the voice alone is sufficient to elevate Dostoevsky's creations to a higher stratum of artistic design. In light of the Orthodox Personalist perspective, Dostoevsky's "higher realism," however, is not lost by the realization of a unique personal being or the dynamic state of dialogic engagement if the characters are considered Persons. Their existence as dynamic

⁹⁷ Bakhtin, 14.

entities in a mode of being-in-relation rescues them from the typicality of the romantic Type while elevating them above the monologic bondage of the realist Character. The crucial difference between Bakhtin's understandings of the dialogic state of Dostoevsky's novels and the state of being-in-relation is that Dostoevsky's subjects, as will be shown in particular analyses of the literary figure as a Person, transcend the monologic boundaries not merely in voice but in both ontological and anthropological manners.

To achieve this artistic feat Dostoevsky does not deal solely in the highest category of fictional being. Likewise, he did not achieve perfection with the being as Person until his final novel. Therefore, by looking at different figures within each of the four classifications it will become clear that in Dostoevsky's attempts, failures, and successes within every category lead inevitably to the creation of the fictional Person. And tracing these beings through the great successes the mode by which he achieves the creation of a higher realism will become clear thanks to the concept of beauty as a call to being-in-relation.

§IV: The Dostoevskian Temperament

Climbing Dostoevsky's ladder of fictional beings from the bottom up is somewhat problematic, insofar as it is difficult to put one's foot on a first rung that only barely exists. Beginning chronologically, one finds that although the first fictional beings Dostoevsky births, Makar Devushkin and Varvara Dobroselova in *Poor Folk*, are steeped in the waters of the Natural School, they move well beyond the constraints of the Temperament—although is still difficult to call them either Types or Characters.

The penning of *Poor Folk* as an epistolary novel constrains these fictional beings into a fixed state, but they are not general enough for us to consider them Types. Due to the illusion of relational dialogue in the letters there is a push toward a deeper psychological state, but the

reader essentially only sees snapshots of Makar and Varvara. Although they may seem to evolve solipsized beings, but are not unique enough to be considered Characters and therefore do not move out of their station as Types. Casting them in the Temperament mode, therefore, maintains the genre boundaries of the zeitgeist of the late 1840s and the Natural School by confining the fictional beings within a mimetic existence that merely reflects being rather than investigating, satirizing, or freeing it. The Temperament, in the vein of the Natural School, therefore, simply presents beings within a simulacrum of reality, with no attempt to transcend it.

Consider the Temperament through the lens of the visual arts, as a sort of single point perspective. Considering this level from a perspectival aspect for the literary being, the words of Pavel Florensky provide a perfect framing for seeing how in this early work Dostoevsky is already pulling movement away from the Natural School's mode, but has not yet fully left its poetic register:

When the religious stability of a Weltanschauung disintegrates and the sacred metaphysics of the general popular consciousness is eroded by the individual judgement of a single person with his single point of view, and moreover with a single point of view precisely at this specific moment—then there also appears a perspective, which is characteristic of a fragmented consciousness. But besides, this initially happens not in pure art, which is essentially always more or less metaphysical, but in *applied* art, as an element of decoration, which has as its task *not the true essence of being, but verisimilitude to appearance*.⁹⁸

Florensky's description of single point perspective encompasses Belinsky's sentiments from the mid 1800s; art of the Natural School should be impartial, mimetic, and contemporary. Here, Belinsky's comments that *Poor Folk* is "a striking truth in the depiction of reality, a masterful portrayal of characters and positioning of the actors, and... a deep understanding and artistic, in the fullest sense of the word, the reproduction of the tragic side of life," perfectly encapsulates

⁹⁸ Pavel Florensky, "Reverse Perspective," in *Beyond Vision*, ed. Nicoletta Misler and trans. Wendy Salmond, (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 208-209.

Dostoevsky's first work as a work of the Natural School.⁹⁹ However, this description also sheds light on how Dostoevsky veers from the single perspectival nature of the Temperament.

Although he has not entered into the poetic polyphony of his later novels, in which the ideals of beauty and truth are aligned with the Orthodox perspective, he cannot escape from a connection to the unity of what Florensky calls 'pure art,' an art that engages with the metaphysical.

Dostoevsky raises the Temperament above the artistic boundaries of what Belinsky coined as "the exclusive appeal of art to reality, apart from any ideals."¹⁰⁰ However, his desire to break into and shine among the literati is a bridle that restrains his initial output from reaching the higher levels he would obtain in his subsequent novels. Here the paradox of the label of Temperament for Makar and Varvara comes into focus. Dostoevsky presents these beings as if they are being projected as two distinct images simultaneously overlain in a 3D film.¹⁰¹ They exist simultaneously, but without any real substance, almost ghost-like in being. Their relationship via letters is not enough to give them a palpable mode of being-in-relation.

Although Dostoevsky strives to push them across the barriers of distance into relation, he cannot. There is no confirmation of the reality of the other for either of these beings. As Yannaras posits:

⁹⁹ Vissarion Belinsky, "Bednye ludi. Roman Fedora Dostoevskogo,"

http://az.lib.ru/b/belinskij_w_g/text_1848_bednye_ludi.shtml (accessed February 26, 2020).

¹⁰⁰ Belinsky, "Vzglad na russkuiu literaturu 1847 goda," http://az.lib.ru/b/belinskij_w_g/text_1847.shtml (accessed February 26, 2020).

¹⁰¹ Jean-Luc Godard's play with this 3D technique in his 2014 film *Goodbye to Language* illuminates just how innovative, disorientating, and annoying this type of obfuscation can be with regard to the formal properties of a piece of art, particularly as it attempts to serve the message of the work. In the film Godard focuses two separate-yet-attached cameras on a single scene of two people in a single room in order to create the 3-dimensional effect. He then proceeds to follow one person out of the 3-dimensional frame with one camera while maintaining focus on the original shot with the other. The resulting image is processed by the brain as a breakdown in the barriers of space and perception, and the shock of the image creates an almost painful reorientation into a multi-point perspective. Matt Zoller Seitz in his review of the film claims that this provides "an added sense of presence, of 'you-are-there-ness,' to very long takes," but here, as in *Poor Folk* this intertwining of formal properties appears more of an artistic dalliance, with negative to painful results for the viewer. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/goodbye-to-language-2014>

The absence of the beloved person is not an experience of distanciality, but a confirmation of his existential reality, it is an experience of inaccessible immediacy—an experience of that which is outside personal relation. Within the context of the ontology defined by the truths of eros and the person, the definition of nothingness refers directly to erotic absence: the definition of nothingness is not an intellectual abstraction. Nothingness is not the void of ontic absence, or absolute non-existence, or the opposite of being, or non-being. . . . Consequently, the experience of nothingness confirms the existential reality of a second person; it is the experience of an erotic absence.¹⁰²

The distance created by the correspondence between Makar and Varvara does not confirm the existence of the other, either to themselves or the reader. Dostoevsky's artistic prowess has not yet developed to the point where these beings are able to confirm the Personhood of the other across such distances. Rather, they are left as shades of beings, and the reader feels the existential terror of cosmic loneliness in the distance between them, a distance caused by the formal epistolary qualities of this novella. However, through his genius and perseverance Dostoevsky will harness distance, particularly in the form of letters, and utilize it in order to confirm the reality of the Person in his later works.

The dread of isolation in *Poor Folk*, therefore, is a product of the Natural School's formal qualities. As a *chinovnik*, Makar undergoes and expresses the toils and torments of the urban life of Petersburg. But there is neither deep psychological pathos nor general satiric quality to this description. Makar stretches out his pen to fulfill his personhood on the page through his letters to Varvara, but rather through his writing he cements himself within the level of the Temperament. He creates his life on the page, sketching himself as another typical member of this literary stereotype, submitting himself to the unfeeling critical eye of the Natural School. In doing so, Makar traps himself within the ontologically monologic world, a tragically unfree being of Naturalism's laws.

¹⁰² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 247. In this case, and unless expressly stated, *erotic* does not necessarily pertain to sexual interaction or desire. Yannaras defines it as a reference "to the ecstatic character of cognitive experience, to the dynamic transcendence of atomic existence with a view to achieving an experiential knowledge of that which exists" (Ibid., XV).

Despite the meteoric success that Dostoevsky experienced following the publication of *Poor Folk*, he moved away from the Temperament toward the next level of the literary being in his subsequent work. These “appeals to reality” of the Natural School are not sufficient to generate an artistic being that stretch beyond the mimetic illusions and reproductions of life that Dostoevsky seeks to unravel. As Florensky posits:

It is a strange thing that the tendency which is always shouting about truthfulness is permeated with falsehood in its own tasks. These naturalists wanted to present unblemished reality... They mechanically combined studies from various locations, without taking into account the organic character of the landscape. They depicted sincere feelings according to roles that were performed, and falsified reality twice over—the first time with objects, models artificially imparted poses etc., the second by creating an illusory image of this ruffraff. And after this they dared to talk about life. They were only concerned in life with what was on show... There is nothing further from removed from realism than these tendencies and others like them that also, even exclusively, lay claims to realism.¹⁰³

Dostoevsky is unsatisfied by the Temperament because it merely “plays a role” and the reality of the literary being in this mode slips through his fingers, due to a lack of ontological fullness.

The Temperament does, however, maintain a minor role in the poetic structure of Dostoevsky’s later novels. It would be impossible to completely populate a novel with Characters and Persons. The text would go on endlessly in an attempt to give full breath to each being in their fullness. Therefore, beings such as Prince Shch.s of *The Idiot* or the Zametovs of *Crime and Punishment* persist as Temperaments in order to flesh out the verisimilitude of the world in a manner that will allow for a transcendence of reality. Temperaments are necessary to the process of artistic creation in the realist novel in order to properly reflect the way in which the reader, as a person in the world, perceives it.

What Dostoevsky pushes back against in his rejection of the Temperament but is incapable of overcoming—despite his desire to do so—is the egocentric erasure of the other through the “pure critical eye” of the Natural School. David Foster Wallace expresses the

¹⁰³ Florensky, “On Realism,” in *Beyond Realism*, 181-2.

difficulty of escaping this self-important solipsistic worldview in the following manner, and to consider the Temperament and the Natural School's utilitarian credo in light of his words aids orienting the reader in a parallel direction to Dostoevsky's thoughts on this subject:

Here is just one example of the total wrongness of something I tend to be automatically sure of: everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe; the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness because it's so socially repulsive. But it's pretty much the same for all of us. It is our default setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth. Think about it: there is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is there in front of YOU or behind YOU, to the left or right of YOU, on YOUR TV or YOUR monitor. And so on. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, *real*.

[...]

Except thinking this way tends to be so easy and automatic that it doesn't *have* to be a choice. It is my natural default setting. It's the automatic way that I experience the boring, frustrating, crowded parts of adult life when I'm operating on the automatic, unconscious belief that I am the center of the world, and that my immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities.¹⁰⁴

Even if one's heart is open to being-in-relation it is still impossible to see the interconnectedness and wholeness of being. One needs to work to make connections with others, to enter into relation with them, because of the fallenness of the world and individual human passions and sins. Unlike Divine Being, humans are limited by their existence.

Dostoevsky as a writer must therefore depict certain others as mere sketches or shades due to the common and real brain processes of the human being that deal with the immensity of existence. An attempt to do otherwise would fail because the novel required to contain this sort of information would be never ending, due to the sheer volume of information necessary to convey reality and also, more importantly, to convey the dynamism of being-in-relation; this universe (which others would call this Hypothetical Novel) would be composed of never-ending pages. The Temperament, therefore, acts as a foil against which the Person can develop and

¹⁰⁴ David Foster Wallace, *This is Water: Some Thoughts Delivered on a Significant Occasion, About Living a Compassionate Life*, (New York: Little, Brown, 2009), 35-41, 81-83.

sharpen, coming more clearly into the view of the reader, which will also occur in the Type. It provides respite for the author, and an end to his toil.

§V: The Dostoevskian Type

The phrase, ascribed to Dostoevsky, that “we have all come out from under Gogol’s overcoat,” has been axiomatically uttered countless times. A comparison of Dostoevsky’s use of the literary Type to Gogol’s, however, illuminates the author’s progression *away* from a sort of romantic realism toward the higher realism of the post-Siberian novels. Donald Fanger notes that “Gogol, who once signed a work of his ‘0000,’ does more than subordinate his characters: he debases and frequently de-features them... [his] characters all incline toward facelessness, toward an identity only nominal.”¹⁰⁵ The dead souls of Gogol’s Types are birthed not from a relationship between two people, but rather from the location in which they live, which can include but is not limited to an economic, social, ethnic, or topographical setting.

The Gogolian Type is limited by the law of their particular section of being, and “bound by law, the fantasized substitutes for life give us the illusion that we possess life itself, that we can control and master its dynamic indeterminacy.”¹⁰⁶ When a Gogolian Type transgresses the harmonic structure of their particular genus is met with punishment. The rules of Gogol’s world cannot be transgressed without the brutal resetting of the cosmos by an external, and typically supernatural, force. Because the Gogolian Type lacks the personal quality of kenosis, creations in this mold are incapable of transcending the specific constraints of social, economic, or biological need.

¹⁰⁵ Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) 115-6.

¹⁰⁶ Yannaras, *Variations on the Song of Songs*, trans. Norman Russell, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), 55-6.

Considering this from the Orthodox Personalist perspective, it is clear that the lack of kenosis stems from the fact that “particularly in love, the fantasized substitutes for the real form an unconscious dark place of guilt, of narcissistic self-defense, a fear of aging, an infantile resistance to taking risks, and the borders of the outline are always legalistic.”¹⁰⁷ There is a legalism that is tied to the Type, one which simultaneously elevates it above the Temperament and frees it from the particularity of the Character. This legalism sets the boundaries within Gogol’s world, much like the ontological monism of ancient Greece; just as the person was unable to rise up into freedom on the stage, so too do the Types remain below the level of freedom of the Person. While Characters are freed from the legalism of the Type, they are constrained by the necessities of their particular and individual existences, as investigated in the next section. Conversely, the Type is completely free within strict boundaries of their stereotypes. While the Type can surprise the reader by acting in a seemingly random manner, their action cannot step over the line of their particular genus. The Type is general enough to have a range of movement, but not enough to be considered free of their either their own or the authorial demands. This generalization excludes the freedom of these beings from raising them up to the level of the Person. The law of the Type is the borders of a literary monologic ontology.

In this way one can read the demise of Akakii Akakievich through the Greek context of the ontological unity of harmonious existence. Akakii Akakievich, examined in this light, is little more than a mask in a coat created to represent the tragedy of the “little person” and their struggle against oppression—be it economic, psychological, or social. Here, however, the struggle for freedom is an unfortunate act of impotence, insofar as there is nothing beyond the cold reality of the Petersburg winter and the table of ranks, both products of the physical and

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 55.

legal granite lain by Peter the Great. There are too many layers of systems and conditions in place in Gogol's Petersburg, and peregrination across them appears to be impossible.

When this world, however, is interrupted by the otherness of the tailor Petrovich, Akakii Akakievich begins to exhibit desire. His desire is born when, for the first time, he experiences freedom. Here, as in other situations in Gogol's oeuvre, the Type attempts to break free from the constraints of the cosmos. But as evidenced in Greek ontology and confirmed in Gogolian Petersburg, freedom is the greatest transgression. Daniel Rancour-Laferriere qualifies this type of transgression as an introduction of "the most dangerous internal realities (what a psychoanalyst would call 'ego-distonic') in 'The Overcoat.'"¹⁰⁸ Rancour-Laferriere posits that Petrovich is the devil, who in light of the Orthodox Personalist perspective is the purveyor of lies and the chief salesman of solipsism and ego-centric annihilation.

Satan does not cause the person to sin, but tempts them with the thoughts or feelings of egocentric desire, allowing for the possibility of the person on the path to the authentic mode of being-in-relation to miss their target, which leads toward salvation. As Stăniloae elucidates:

In all Orthodox spiritual writings we find the following sequence as the way in which the passions are aroused in every circumstance: Satan puts a sinful thought into our mind, the so-called attack (*prosboli*), which we think that we can also translate by the word *bait*... It isn't yet a sin, because we haven't yet taken a position in regard to it... So it has all the characteristics of a thought discarded by somebody else and therefore the holy Fathers attribute it to Satan... The bait, then, is the first appearance in our consciousness of an evil desire.¹⁰⁹

If, then, by giving Akakii Akakievich the bait of sin in the guise of the new coat, Petrovich reverses the expectations of the Christian worldview to one in which the devil tempts the fictional being toward the mode of being-in-relational rather than away from it. By pushing

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *Out from Under Gogol's Overcoat: A Psychoanalytic Study*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), 59.

¹⁰⁹ Stăniloae, 109, 111.

Akakii away from the Type and toward the Character he establishes the ontological grounding of being in the text as slavery to the harmony of the world, rather than freedom.

Desire for anything that is counter to the confines of the reality of one's social position in the text is an attempt at freedom. If the devil is a liar and the source of the motivation to sin, when he says "take this coat and be free" then the lie is "be free," just as the primary lie was "you will not certainly die."¹¹⁰ And furthermore, the sin, in the Gogolian world, is to be free. When Akakii Akakievich returns to the world and enjoys the fruits of an existence higher than that in which he is meant to be, according to his job, his class, and his personality, he is deceived into believing that there is more to life than being a shadow of a person, *something* more than a mere *chinovnik*.

In the end, just as within the Greek tragedy, fate catches up with Akakii Akakievich. He is stripped of his overcoat and condemned to die, wandering in the snow searching for the illusionary freedom he thought he had gained with it. And what's more, even in death his struggle against his existence as a Type continues. When his "ghost" returns to terrorize the citizens of St. Petersburg, Gogol once again depicts an impotent attempt to escape the stereotypical reality of the *chinovnik*. Gogol leaves the possibility a spectral reality to the reader. Whether or not the ghost is real, however, Akakii nonetheless becomes a symbol of the inescapability of the harmony of his society. Reading the ending within two possible contexts—of either the incursion of a spiritual being into the world or of some phantasmagoric illusion—one might still come to the conclusion that Akakii or his ghost is trapped as a Type. If he is truly a ghost, then it might be concluded that there is some harmonic justice that exists. But this justice does not entail freedom. In fact, it confirms the ontological monism of Gogol's world; Akakii

¹¹⁰ Genesis 3: 4

was confined to a slavish existence in life, and in death he is one again forced to exist as like a Greek Fury. If he was not truly a ghost but only a figment of the collective imagination of the city, then his continued existence in the minds of the Russian people is not as an individual or person, not as the free being experienced through his actions, desires, and love, but rather as a stereotype of an oppressed class, given new life by an alien and external force that rules over the order of the universe.

Akakii Akakievich struggles against his stereotypical existence and the temptations of an external force that presents him with a way out of his economic, social, and ontological modes of being. He is allowed to desire and to strive for transcendence because that desire is one of the key features of his Type. The *chinovnik* can either be completely unconcerned with his lot in life or completely enslaved by the need to transcend it. Gogol presents both in his protagonist. However, in those moments of desire, of embracing his otherness, he stumbles into a world rich in the illusion of freedom. For a shining moment he is a dying lightbulb, shaken one last time to produce a brilliant flash as the filament of his being casts a false light of freedom. This tragedy of being lost in this masquerade of freedom, striving for but never achieving the image and likeness of the creator, is the mode of being that the Dostoevskian Type expresses.

Dostoevsky, in fact, uses the term *Type* to describe Aleko from Pushkin's *Gypsies* in his speech at the unveiling of the Pushkin monument on 8 June 1880. In his description of the young man who has flown from the city to the wilderness Dostoevsky's relationship with and attitude toward this level of fictional being both in his own works and in those of his predecessors sharpens into focus. Dostoevsky describes Aleko as one of the first beings in a movement toward the birth of the Person in Russian literary works. "In the type of Aleko, the hero of the poem *Gypsies*, there is already revealed a strong and deep Russian concept, which was subsequently

expressed in such perfect harmony in *Onegin*, where the almost exact Aleko appears again, only not in a fantastic light, but realized in a real and clear form.”¹¹¹ Here, Dostoevsky corroborates the typological placement of the Type below the Character and the Person as well as its foundations in the fantastic elements of Romantic literature, both in the European context—particularly in Byron—as well as an established, native Russian tradition.

Surprisingly, Dostoevsky marks the Type, and particularly the Russian one, with an inherent desire to seek peace and harmony, or at least to alleviate their own suffering. However, the Type searches not for the image and likeness of their creator, but rather earthly utopian ideas.

He explains:

This type is true and unmistakably captured, a lasting type that has long been with us, sojourning in our Russian land. These homeless Russian rambles persist to this time, and it seems that they will continue to do so for a long time. And if in our time they do not visit the gypsy villages, looking for their universal ideals in the gypsy’s wild and peculiar way of life in order to seek refuge in the bosom of nature from the confused and incongruous life of our Russian, educated society — then all the same they are plunging into socialism, which did not exist in Aleko’s time, and with their new faith they go to a different field, eagerly tilling it, believing, even as Aleko, that through this fantastic labor they will attain their goal and happiness, not for themselves alone, but for all the world. A Russian wanderer needs precisely universal happiness to find peace, and with nothing less can he be content — of course—for the time being only in theory.¹¹²

And herein lies the foundations of suffering for the Type: the material world cannot bring joy and salvation. There is only the ideal, which always proves to be unobtainable. Even in Dostoevsky, the Type is condemned to living without freedom, and therefore suffers due to the chains of ontological determinism. He confirms this in the notebook to *Crime and Punishment* under a heading titled “The Orthodox Point of View, What Orthodoxy Consists of” when he writes “There is no happiness in comfort, happiness is bought with suffering. Suffering in this way is the law of our planet; but the immediate consciousness of suffering, felt within the process of life, in this there is such great joy.”¹¹³ Suffering is inevitable, but if there is no

¹¹¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 26, 137.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 137

¹¹³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.*, 7, 154-5.

foundation for that suffering in the grounds of being-in-relation, then the Type—that which is birthed out from it, the Alekos and Akakii Akakieviches—is merely a shade of true being.

Conversely, as elucidated in Akakii Akakievich, material desire leads to a material existence, but in the absence of spiritual growth and depth, the fictional being possesses no reality. Most frequently this lack is shown, in Dostoevsky, in beings who are either acolytes of or simply beholden to an ideal reality based on humanist, socialist, or materialist worldviews. This is not to say, however, that all characters who believe in the promises of socialism and utopias are Types. However, those whose existence within the novels is subservient to an ideal that reduces others to either faceless masses or who do not suffer from the awareness of the inherent problems of the fallen world, are generally confined to this level of fictional being. These Types in Dostoevsky are, therefore, confined to an ontological monism reminiscent of the pre-Christian Greek existence by their own volition. They are temporary, like Achilles in Zeno's paradox. Unable to break free from the constraints of their being, lacking personal freedom, they move at best incrementally across an existence of infinite possibility, unable to overtake the tortoise, their universal happiness in the earthly utopia, that crawls eternally yet painfully unreachable before them.

Dostoevsky provides the perfect example of these Types in *Demons*. Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky gathers around him a circle of Types that he uses in an attempt to achieve his goal of sowing chaos and destruction in order to raze Russian society and build a new utopia on its ashes. While not all members of the circles are Types (Verkhovensky, Shatov, Kirillov, and Stavrogin are most certainly Persons, however one might argue that they cannot truly be counted “within” the circle), the fact that control of the circle relies upon the idea that the members will give up their freedom for the sake of the cause reinforces their Typical nature.

The three foundational principles of the circle express the necessity to lose (or perhaps to never have had) a personal uniqueness in order to build utopia. Verkhovensky establishes first a “uniform” of rank and position, secondly a code of sentimentality by which “socialism predominantly spreads” through Russia, and finally “the cement that bonds it all — shame at one’s own opinion.” Through the description Dostoevsky expresses the depersonalization of the members of the circle by Verkhovensky via his Fourieristic mentality and praxis. It is clear that the Type represents the failure of human being to strive toward authentic existence, and how this results in a lower level of literary being. Verkhovensky, in order to destroy society, purposefully pilfers the personal and relational mode of being from those around him.

As parodies of the Nechayev circle nihilists of the late 1860s, the Types in *Demons* are birthed from the shadowy secrecy of clandestine activity. The members of this quintet had no relation to each other prior to their first meeting in the novel and, with the exception of Virginsky, Dostoevsky provides very little information about their histories, psyches, or uniqueness. They, like Nozdrev, exist metonymically, growing physically out from their names. In fact, they are so de-personalized that they do not even have first names or patronymics, with the exception of Liputin. Virginsky, Liputin, Shigalyov, Liamshin, and Tolkachenko exist only as caricatures of reality, mocking shades of actual being. When they are introduced, Dostoevsky describes them in a manner similar to Bely’s strangers in *Petersburg*:

These five elects were now seated at the general table and they all managed to skillfully feign the appearance of the most ordinary people, so that no one could recognize them. These five were— since it is no longer a secret — first, Liputin, then Virginsky himself, then the long-eared Shigalyov (the brother of Mrs. Virginsky), Liamshin, and, finally, a certain Tolkachenko—a strange character, already a man of forty, and famous for his vast study of the people, predominantly crooks and robbers, and frequently went to the taverns (not for studying the people, by the way), and who flaunted his bad clothing, tarred boots, squinty sly looks, and frilly folk expressions at us.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Ibid., 302.

The formlessness of the members of Verkhovensky's circle leaves a vacuum of being in which the reader can imagine these Types. The best example of this is in the bare minimum of information regarding Tolkachenko, from which the reader is left to derive impressions from his surname alone.

It is clear from what he has written in the notebooks for the novel that Dostoevsky marks the group with characteristics that would place them squarely on the level of the Type. He states that "in itself, the whole detached group is weak and insignificant— almost dead and completely left behind the times, for it fails to notice not only what is happening in Russia, but also the day-to-day, superficial mentalities within its own uprooted party."¹¹⁵ Dostoevsky is obviously attempting to express their mode of being as possessed-ness rather than relational. They are possessed by Verkhovensky, by their names, and by the reader's imagination. These Types adopt a being that is less than a Person. And Dostoevsky cements this idea for the reader when he has them join the circle in which they have volunteered to annihilate their uniqueness, to be possessed by the other rather than entering into a loving and relational mode of being.

It would be a mistake to conclude, however, that there is no originality within the level of the Type. Surely Shigalyov represents one of the most original fictional beings in Dostoevsky's oeuvre, despite his considerable typicality. However, his theory of ultimate freedom and ultimate despotism are not enough to lift him out of the shadows of the Type. An idea is not enough to make a fictional being a Person. And indeed, whatever historical and philosophical antecedents Dostoevsky utilizes in formulating Shigalyov's system of the division of humanity into two unequal portions are less important than the originality of the plan that lends such great artistic force to Shigalyov and the novel.

¹¹⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 279.

Furthermore, Dostoevsky develops this idealistic system as an apophatic proof of his belief in Orthodox ontology and anthropology. Shigalyov as a Type can represent Fourierist socialism as a whole in a way that no Person could. His utopian theory of gaining equality and happiness by murdering desire in others, however, gives birth to nothing but death, sin, and destruction. The central theme of the plan is more succinctly stated in the notebooks than the novel, but the message remains the same. According to the mentality of utopian socialism, love equals a need to maintain private property, because desire always leads toward ownership, as explicated within Shigalyov's plan:

With just a little bit of family or love there already exists a desire for property. The superfluous desire of an unsatisfied nature will lead directly (in the absence of guidance or education) to crime on the part of the person who desires. He will kill. But even this is better than education. (We shall kill desire. We shall let...) Drunkenness, pederasty, and masturbation are also desirable, as in Rousseau. All this tends to bring things down to a median level... Everything brought down to a common denominator, complete equality—but there must be a leader. There must be despotism—without despotism there has never been equality.¹¹⁶

This plan hinges on the idea that a person can be broken, can be turned into something less than human. But a person is not an animal, and therefore this is a failed system, which leads the reader to the understanding that Shigalyov is a failed Type.

The need to eradicate the desire of others represents everything Dostoevsky despises about utopian socialism; after all, the positive foundation of desire within the perspective of Orthodox Personalism is the free act to enter into relationship with someone outside of the self.

The Personalist definition encompasses

desire [as having] the character of a need, but more in the sense of a *demand*; that is to say, desire makes the satisfaction of the need depend on someone else, to whom the need is addressed as a demand... The need “passes over toward” the other opposite us; it is a demand for relation. It is not a demand for some partial operation of relation but rather a demand for universal relation through the natural need, a demand that life should be realized as relation. The desire is a “demande d’amour,” as Lacan, for example, would say... as *libido*.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 272. The odd ellipsis in this quote is Dostoevsky writing out his thoughts and leaving them unfinished as he contemplates how the circle would approach the question of desire.

¹¹⁷ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 19.

To kill desire is to set humanity on the path to being creatures of total animal or biological instinct. It is the ability to overcome the death of the personal through the image and likeness that sets humanity above the rest of creation. Dostoevsky makes it clear that the annihilation of the Person is the central theme of Pyotr Stepanovich's plan in the novel; he has imposed the idea that the destruction of the self is paramount to living an authentic life on the members of his circle.

Unlike Shigalyov, Pyotr Stepanovich is a prime example of how a being within Dostoevsky's novels can be in opposition to Dostoevsky's ideal both ideologically and in mode of being and yet still rise above the level of the Type. Investigating the notebooks for *Demons*, it is clear that Dostoevsky's original plan was to create Pyotr Stepanovich specifically as a caricature of Nechayev, a Type and nothing more. But when his relationship with Stavrogin becomes the principle axis around which the novel rotates, Pyotr Stepanovich transcends and becomes a more comprehensive fictional being. Relation brings the Type up to the level of Person. Dostoevsky illuminates the movement of Pyotr Stepanovich (whom he calls Nechayev in the notebooks) from Type to Person in his description of him before and after the revelation about Stavrogin (whom he calls the Prince). The foundations of Pyotr Stepanovich as a Type are described thusly:

Nechayev is not a socialist, but a rebel. His ideals are insurrection and destruction, and then "let be whatever will be"—based on the social principle according to which whatever might come would still be better than the present, and that the time has come to act, rather than preach.

FROM ALL OF THIS THERE FOLLOWS THE MOST IMPORTANT, *NOTA BENE*, that Nechayev, as such, is still a *fortuitous and isolated* individual. (He only thinks that everyone who resembles him is like him—and that is where he is wrong, to the point of vile naïveté "let me talk to them from my window for a quarter of an hour.") [...]

The personality of Nechayev: As already stated above, an abstract shrewdness, and an absolute ignorance of reality. But whenever he does understand reality he either takes advantage of it shrewdly and brilliantly, or as a result of his one-sided understanding of facts—his interpretation and orientation lead him toward the most foolish objectives.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 279.

Isolation and belief in the inherent sameness of all around him would leave him mired in the level of the Type. The miring at this level, however, was short-lived. Dostoevsky shortly thereafter modified his plan as explained in the notebooks:

The most important thing about the novel is: the relationship between Nechayev and the Prince. It all started when Nechayev made a mistake, when he allowed himself to be led by his heart, if such a tarantula can have a heart. Nechayev, from the very beginning, while still in Switzerland, is fascinated with the Prince and even falls in love with his intellect and character (“I’m telling you, you would be the person our cause needs”). The Prince entralls everyone, and that is what Nechayev likes.¹¹⁹

The charm that the Prince exudes causes a loving relation—although bastardized by its ego-centric one-sidedness—between the two men, raising Pyotr Stepanovich to the level of the Person. In a way, Prince Myshkin undergoes a transition similar to that of Pyotr Stepanovich, but this discussion shall be saved for a later chapter.

While it is necessary in *Demons* for Verkhovensky to evolve into a Person from a Type in order to raise the mode of being of Stavrogin, Shatov, and others, to raise a fictional being to the level of the Person it is not necessary for another fictional being to be a Person. One fictional Person can exist in a text without another present. However, Dostoevsky uses the Type to help raise other characters up to the level of the Person. This method of elevation is clear in *Notes from the Underground*. That the reader should regard the Underground Man as a Person is explicit insofar as Dostoevsky himself points toward this level of fictional being in the introductory note to the novella. When he tells the reader that “the author of these notes and these “Notes” themselves are, of course, fictitious. Nevertheless, not only is it possible for people like the author may exist, but they must actually exist in our society... I wanted to bring with more prominence one of the characters of the recent past before the face of the public.”¹²⁰ Dostoevsky needs to clarify both the fictive and personal qualities of the Underground Man

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 279-80.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 99.

because, unlike his later novels, in which Dostoevsky will allow his Persons to grow within the confines of the world of the novels, in *Notes from the Underground* he attempts to bring the Type up to the level of the Person through a dialogue between the fictional being and the reader. This latter task is much more difficult than the former and Dostoevsky feels compelled to push his reader away from an understanding of the Underground Man as a conventional romantic Type and toward an understanding of the Underground Man as one representing a deeper mode of being.

To achieve a deeper understanding of this mode of being, clearly the most compelling cause of the Underground Man's Personhood is not the relationship between reality and fiction (i.e. between either the reader and the Underground Man *or* between the Underground Man and his fictitious interlocutors), but between himself and his servant. Just as Pyotr Stepanovich's evolution into a Person is contingent on his relationship with Stavrogin, so too is the Underground Man's with respect to Apollon. And although Liza and Zverkov are similar—insofar as they are Types that contribute to the reader's engagement with the Underground Man—the most extraordinary moment of the Underground Man's rejection of Authentic Being, his rejection of a mode of being-in-relation, is not in the rejection of the sentimental literary discourse with the poor prostitute Liza, but rather it is displayed in his understanding of his relationship with Apollon.

In *Notes from the Underground* this quality particular to the Dostoevskian Type, which allows them to function as relational poles without themselves being Persons, is illuminated. The Underground Man's former servant Apollon, who is cut from a highly stereotypical cloth, serves as this kind of reflective surface against which his master can build up his own being. The Underground Man describes Apollon as nothing more than a loathsome, greedy, insufferable

shell of a human being; interested only in money and abusing his master. When he first mentions Apollon in the text, all the reader is allowed to learn is the fact that “it was impossible not to pay him, based on Apollon’s character. But about that rascal, about that plague of mine, I will say more later.”¹²¹ And indeed, what little information the reader is given by the Underground Man later in the text focuses solely on the two principles of abuse and money.

There is, however, one small detail that proves just how vital Apollon is to the Underground Man’s existence as a literary Person. While thinking about the prostitute Liza and being tormented by the “sentimentality” he employed in while speaking with her, the Underground Man distracts himself by engaging the reader with his relationship with Apollon. As readers, we are given neither enough insight into this servant by the narrator nor do we have sufficient access into Apollon’s thoughts or feelings to be able to call him anything other than a Type. There is, however, enough that slips from the Underground Man’s narration that allows us to understand his significance to elevating the narrator from an object of psychological analysis to a literary Person.

The Underground Man continually berates Apollon in the second half of the novella, excoriating him verbally, calling him the bane of his existence because of the despotic and cruel manner in which the servant comports himself. Why, then, does the Underground Man not cast this wretched being out into the nothingness of the world beyond his corner? If, as the Underground Man says, “my own apartment was my private residence, my shell, my case in which I could hide from all of humanity, but Apollon (the devil knows why) seemed to belong to this apartment, and for seven long years I could not be rid of him,” then why did “it [seem] as if

¹²¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 139.

he was chemically linked to my existence?”¹²² The Underground Man attempts to reason that this link is purely based on an economic relationship between the two men.

Apollon always demands his wages and the Underground Man always agrees to pay them. But, again, why? There is no *need* for The Underground Man to continue to pay this particular servant. It would be simple to attribute that need to the contradictory nature of the Underground Man. If logic dictates that hatred for someone in your employ should lead you to stop employing them, then “two times two is five is sometimes a very charming thing.”¹²³ However, the Underground Man also tells us that the person’s “primary defect is their perpetual misbehavior.”¹²⁴ This misbehavior, he tells us, leads to the downfall of beauty and love. In the Orthodox Personalist perspective, these elements of being are to be found neither in rationality nor misbehavior, but in relation. And this is a form of relation that the Underground Man inherently feels, but externally rejects.

Therefore, if their relation were merely an economic issue the Underground Man could easily have discarded Apollon as his servant. Any other typical Little Man of Petersburg could fill this role. But only Apollon could bury the Underground Man. During his tirade against Apollon, the following sentences slip from the Underground Man’s tongue:

He spoke quietly, mannered, with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on the ground. He particularly infuriated me when he would read the Psalter from behind his partition. I endured many battles because of this reading. But he loved terribly to read in the evening, quietly, dirge-like, in a flat voice, exactly as it is performed over the dead. It’s curious, but that’s how he ended up: he now hires himself out to recite the Psalter over those who have fallen asleep.¹²⁵

¹²² Ibid., 168.

¹²³ Ibid., 119.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 116.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 168. It is a custom in the Orthodox tradition to read the Psalter aloud over the body of the deceased, preferably from the moment the soul parts from the body until the funeral itself. Apollon is therefore enacting the traditions of the Church and fulfilling an Orthodox ritual that is an attempt to help bring the deceased person and those mourning into closer relation with the Divine.

The Underground Man cannot bear, at this juncture in his life, to reject the one connection he has to Authentic Being. Even in his living death—his self-imposed exile in the underworld—there is still the light of the possibility of salvation and regeneration through relation. Apollon, like the angel with the little onion which appears in *The Brothers Karamazov*, offers a way out of the lake of fire that the Underground Man has thrown himself into due to his solipsistic state and attempt at an ego-centrally driven “death.” There is a greater faithfulness to life in the Underground Man’s being when he is engaged with Apollon than with the imaginary interlocutor or the reader. His anger drives him toward being-in-relation, even if it causes him pain and suffering. Because the Underground Man cannot bear to dismiss Apollon despite his hatred for him, it is clear that the foundational need for relation exists in him, even while he is exiled in the darkness of isolation. And the Type is best suited to fulfill the role of relational being for the Underground Man, or others like him, because they are themselves incapable of free will within the text and therefore can be dominated by the solipsized ego of the Person.

In order to remain a Type they must react to others only in a manner that adheres to their stereotypical boundaries. Apollon does not leave the Underground Man because it is profitable to remain in his service, and there is no threat of disruption to his way of life by his master. And the Underground Man finds the exact amount of counterforce in Apollon’s behavior that suits his existence. And while he is able to express his desire for and simultaneous rejection of relationship, Apollon cannot. In this way the former is a Person and the latter remains a Type. Christos Yannaras provides a perfect description of the Underground Man’s rebellion against relation and love with Apollon, and in doing so illuminates how the Person, in their own egocentric perspective, categorizes an other as a Type:

As a rule we don’t see the blemishes within ourselves. Love is only betrayed by the Other... I begin to count, to calculate. And the calculation always shows me disadvantaged... And if the Other responds with his own calculations, then the break is ferocious... Hostility is always

irrational, but in this particular confrontation its weapon is always logic. Each one of us has our own perfect logic, flawless and inflexible in its certainties. [...] Suddenly the Other becomes remote, subject to space and time. He is aloof, altered. In relation to my own yearning for life he seems timid and miserly, and along with him everything begins to diminish, all things become objects again, prompting me to measure and calculate my emotional investment.¹²⁶

The Underground Man has rejected Apollon as an explicit relational being, but can only be measured as a Person against him and other beings like him. By setting his characters in such a way Dostoevsky is able to exhibit the novelty of his literary Person while, at least at this early point in his career, maintaining fidelity to the confines of the literary confession.

The impact of Apollon's "offering" of the Psalms to the Underground Man is central to the understanding of Dostoevsky's protagonists' poetic evolution vis-à-vis their ability to behave according to the principles of Authentic Being. What is clear at this juncture is that through this behavior the Type does draw another fictional being up to the level of Personhood through a relationship. While the Underground Man's discourse with his imaginary interlocutors (and simultaneously with the reader) provides deep and rich insight into a particular discourse on human being and existence, it is through his relationship with other fictional beings that Dostoevsky is able to draw him upwards into the higher realism for which the author strives. This type of discourse and relationship between two fictional beings is more potent in its ability to birth fully formed persons when it occurs two beings of the same level of fictional being. But it is this early experiment between the Underground Man and Apollon that displays the roots of Dostoevsky's later success with the literary Person and illuminates the value of literary beings in his works beyond the highest plane.

Clearly, then, Dostoevsky rejects the Temperament and the Type as adequate modes of being for protagonists in his later works. This rejection reflects his objection to the depersonalization of the human being that is inherent in Western humanist thought brought about

¹²⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Variations*, 10-11, 9.

by the annihilation of the unrepeatable person either through social/philosophical principles or instances of individualistic egocentrism, as Shigalyov and his utopian nihilism reveals. The most explicit refutation of the Temperament and the Type, however, occurs in the conversation between Madame Kokhlakova and the Elder Zosima in Chapter IV of Book II of *The Brothers Karamazov* entitled “A Lady of Little Faith.” In her supplications for the health of her chronically-ill daughter Lize, Kokhlakova bemoans her lack of faith not in the existence of God, but rather in the life of the world to come after death. On the one hand, her Bazarovian attitude toward humanity echoes the soul-crushing agony experienced by Ivan Fyodorovich later in the novel. On the other, her self-inflicted suffering is caused by her adherence to an “active love for humanity,” which annihilates her ability to love selflessly, to strive toward Authentic Being.¹²⁷

In a reversal of the Shigalyovian formula, Dostoevsky depicts the positive attempt at a humanistic approach to socialism in the conversation between the Elder and Kokhlakova. When Zosima anecdotally recounts an encounter with an intelligent elderly doctor, he presents the failure of the Temperament in parallel with the failure of this socialistic approach. He posits the idea that in this ideology, a person can be and is convinced of the thought that “the more I love humanity in general, the less I love people in particular, that is, separately, as individual persons.”¹²⁸ In this way he characterizes the views of a Western humanist engagement with the other, which, thanks to the depersonalization of relation, cannot help but fail to live up to a mode of being-in-relation. The Temperament and Type, therefore, promotes an ideology of humanism

¹²⁷ During this exchange Mme. Kokhlakova quotes directly from Ivan Turgenev’s 1862 novel *Fathers and Children*, Bazarov’s hyper-materialistic nihilism is representative of what Dostoevsky despised about mid-century Westernized intellectuals. In his letter to A.N. Maikov of August 16, 1867 he expresses his consternation of the rejection of a personalistic perspective on the person and beauty, writing “and what about these Turgenevs, Hertzens, Utins, Chernyshevskys? In the place of that loftiest divine beauty on which they spit, we see in them such ugly vanity, unashamed susceptibility, such ludicrous arrogance, that it is simply impossible to guess at that which they hope for, and who shall take them as guides” (Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(II), 210).

¹²⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 53.

that can only be a fantasy of utopianism—one based in mere objective examination rather than personal relation.

The fantasy of humanist utopianism is one that inevitably transforms into a nightmarish mindscape when the reality of the person is subjugated to the ideal of collective humanity. While Kokhlakova may dream of approaching a sketch of a child in the wards of a hospital from whom “no wounds, no festering sores could frighten [her],” the possibility of ingratitude, the irrational rejection of not only kindness but an act that is in one’s own self-interest, destroys her capacity for neighborly love.¹²⁹ Zosima’s response to Kokhlakova’s brush with humanism is to push her toward the path of self-sacrificial love in a profoundly personal mode by “striv[ing] to love your neighbor actively and untiringly.”¹³⁰ He pushes her to live without expecting, or demanding gratitude, as her temper and passions often demand.

To move away from a Temperamental or Typical existence is to move toward Authentic Being, to become more like a Person. This is the advice Zosima bestows not only to the woman of little faith, but to Alyosha as well. The rejection of the Temperament and Type as the primary mode of fictional being, as he begins with in *Poor Folk* and eventually rejects as a viable mode for protagonists in higher realism in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is predicated on their inability to express the foundational truth about the person, to accurately display the image and likeness of the creator.

Dostoevsky gives another specific refutation of the Naturalistic conception of the person in an argument between Verkhovensky and Ivan Pavlovich Shatov in *Demons*, when the latter expresses disdain for Belinsky. He says:

Belinsky is exactly like Krylov’s Inquisitive Man, who didn’t notice the elephant in the museum, but paid all his attention to the French Socialist bugs; and that’s where he ended up. And, if you’ll

¹²⁹ Ibid, 52.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

excuse me, he was more intelligent than all of you! Not only have you rejected the people, you have treated them with loathsome contempt, and which is to say that by the people you mean only the French people, and even then only the Parisians, and you were ashamed that the Russian people are not like them. And this is the naked truth: those who have no people have no God! You can be certain that those who cease to understand their people and lose their connection with them, at that very moment, at once, they also lose the faith of their fathers and become either atheists or indifferent.¹³¹

Although Shatov begins with a stereotypical view of the Russian *narod* (*people* in the sense of a *nationality, folk, or race*) which allows him to argue against the “French Socialist bugs,” his foundational understanding of the *person* is aligned with Dostoevsky’s through a naïve yet sincere believe in the Orthodox concept of the image and likeness of the Divine. For Shatov, and for Dostoevsky, to reject the fullness of the human being in a personal manner is to deny the image and likeness of Divine Being in them.

Dostoevsky’s rejection transpires due to his refusal to give precedence to utility, the ground of the French Socialist and Naturalist sensibilities, in his search for the creation of Authentic Being in his art. The Temperament is illusionary and cannot part the veil of the deeper architectonics of being because it is primarily static and seeks to replace the real, and Dostoevsky only employs this level later in his creative process in order to shed light on this problematic mode of thought. The philosophical tendency of depersonalization that the Temperament represents reinforces that an other can be separated from that which makes them unrepeatably unique; that the person can be reduced to a mere part of a whole. Zosima, through his embedded narrative while speaking with Kokhlakova, anecdotally expresses the temperamental depersonalization in practice. In doing so he extols Dostoevsky’s position in which the relational mode of being and expression, namely the understanding of the other as a person, is the only way by which one can strive toward and experience Authentic Being.

¹³¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 10, 34.

The Type, similarly, is presented in the later novels only to express the qualities of human nature against which the Person exists, i.e. in order to show the personal uniqueness, unrepeatability, and otherness in contrast to repetitive, tropic homogeneity. Compare Yannaras' understanding of the relationship between human nature or essence (the boundaries of being) and the person with the Type/Person relationship in Dostoevsky's oeuvre, the importance of the Type comes into focus. Yannaras writes:

The ecstatic otherness of the person is not defined by its nature, since it transcends (as otherness) the fixed boundaries of the common attributes that constitute the nature... The ontological difference between person and nature, the simultaneous existential identity and otherness, constitutes the single human existence as a specific existential fact of *freedom*: freedom of the person with regard to nature, freedom of the determination of the nature by personal otherness.¹³²

The Type is the literary embodiment of one element of human nature, of human essence, in a particular social, economic, political, religious, or other lens.

The freedom of the Person, being dependent on movement *beyond* the boundaries of nature/essence, therefore benefits from direct intercourse with the Type, but its relational qualities are limited. This supposition is confirmed by returning to Dostoevsky's views on Aleko as our source for his understanding of this level of fictional being:

Aleko, of course, is still unable to properly express his anguish, all of that which is within him is still an abstract mood: a longing for nature, complaining about secular society, lamenting for a truth lost somewhere and somehow, which he cannot find. In this there is something akin to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Wherein that truth is, in what form and where it can be found, and precisely when it was lost, this, of course, he cannot say; but he suffers sincerely. A fantastic and impatient human, he still preeminently awaits salvation from external things, as he must.¹³³

Aleko, Apollon, Madame Kokhlakova, and the others are beings of a specific nature. They are precisely the embodiment of the Rousseauian being, enslaved by the natural imposition of their existence. They may try to fool themselves into thinking they are above the monologic ontology that binds them to the natural world, by they cannot escape. They are unable to transcend their

¹³² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 232-3.

¹³³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 26, 138.

mode of being even if they wished to. They are the tragic masks which reveal the true faces of Dostoevsky's Persons. However, this level of being not only allows Dostoevsky to maintain a connection to his literary progenitors, particularly to Gogol' and Pushkin, but acts as a crucial element of his poetic structure that allows for fictional beings to ascend to the level of Person, raising his realism to a higher echelon than that of his forerunners and peers.

§VI: The Dostoevskian Character

The Character is used relatively infrequently in Dostoevsky's late novels. The reason for this scarcity stems from the fact that following the shorter works written after his Siberian exile, particularly *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, Dostoevsky realizes that his fictional beings need to have a higher degree of realism than what had been developed by his contemporaries. A deep, well defined literary being who is not imbued with a mode of being similar to the actual mode of human being, what I call a Character, is rejected by Dostoevsky as the primary level of fiction being in his work because it does not provide enough creative and artistic depth to elevate the work and the reader into the contemplation of thoughts beyond the material façade of the world, to the understanding of a higher realism.

Dostoevsky is drawn to the human freedom that Raskolnikov champions in *Crime and Punishment* because it pushes the fictional character into that greater realm of realism, even if this movement leads to moral decay and debauchery or the solipsism and ego-centrism of the fictional being. Raskolnikov is one of the first great examples of a literary Person in Dostoevsky's oeuvre. His elevation beyond the level of Character is only evidenced, however, toward the end of the novel. Raskolnikov reads like a typical realist Character of the nineteenth

century, and from the notebooks to the novel it is clear that Dostoevsky experienced difficulties writing Raskolnikov as something more than what his contemporaries were capable of.

While Raskolnikov fails in his attempt to overcome societal and moral shackles through an ostensible act of freedom involving the shedding of blood, his inherent freedom as a human being cannot be and is not erased. In his battle with the concept of freedom, Raskolnikov reveals to the reader the struggle Dostoevsky faces in imbuing his character with freedom, and raises the question of what freedom means not only in the material world, but spiritually and metaphysically. As evidenced by the notebooks, throughout the course of writing of the novel,

Dostoevsky struggles to pen an ending for his protagonist that remains both faithful to the uniqueness of the being he created and yet conveys the author's perspective on Authentic Being. The conflict within Raskolnikov's soul against the loving and selfless mode of being-in-relation prevents Dostoevsky from forcing his creation into an artificial ending, one that is not commiserate with the ontology and anthropology of the novel. The notebooks indicate that Dostoevsky's creative process is determined by his faithfulness to anthropological boundaries. He writes that "after the illness and so forth it is absolutely necessary to establish the course of things in a clear and firm manner and to explain what is vague, *that is*, to explain the whole murder and make his character and relations clear; pride, personality, and insolence. Only then begin the second part of the novel. The clash with reality and the logical solution to the laws of nature and duty."¹³⁴ If Raskolnikov were under the despotic control of his creator, if he were merely a Character, then there would be no difficulty resolving the plot in whatever way Dostoevsky saw. His difficulties in concluding the narrative belies the idea that Raskolnikov is more than a Character, and therefore he must while hinting at the difficulties in manipulating

¹³⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 7, 141-2.

the formal properties of the novel in order to express personhood as a literary quality.

Dostoevsky writes:

But the syuzhet is such *that the story must be narrated by the author*, and not from *him*. When it is a confession, then it must be made clear to the *utmost extreme*. Every instance of the story must be entirely clear. N.B. For consideration: A confession, at points, will not be chaste and it will be difficult to imagine why it was written. But from *the author*: too much naïveté and frankness are needed. It is necessary to presume an author who is *omniscient* and *infallible*, and completely exhibiting the appearance of a member of the new generation. A complete frankness, *wholly serious to the point of naïveté*, and one who only explains *that which is necessary*.

An omniscient yet naïve narrator allows for Raskolnikov to exist completely as he is, without challenging any of his emotional or logical thoughts or his actions.

The need for naïveté and frankness in the narration are an early sign of Dostoevsky's desire to leave his creations to their own devices, as much as he possibly can. He also notes that that the novel as mere confession, however, would not allow for Raskolnikov to grow. The movement from first-person to third- is the logical progression from the development of the Underground Man, to Raskolnikov. If either of these protagonists were Characters, Dostoevsky could have easily controlled them, pushing them over the cliff toward suicide or forcing them out of their self-afflicted isolation. The thought of doing either of these options is written about extensively in the final notebook for the *Crime and Punishment*.¹³⁵ However, Raskolnikov is allowed to make a decision based on what he has done, based on his actions and experiences: to move toward "Svidrigailov—despair, the most cynical," or to "Sonya—hope, the most unrealizable."¹³⁶ Raskolnikov's desire to live and be free pushes him toward the possibility of hope, even if it embitters him. Dostoevsky arrives at this conclusion for Raskolnikov and the novel because it is the only ending Raskolnikov could move toward of his own volition, even

¹³⁵ In fact, under the heading "THE END OF THE NOVEL" Dostoevsky has written "Raskolnikov goes to shoot himself." Ibid., 204.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

though a multitude of possibilities were open to him. Although escape, suicide, further murder, blind acquiescence to the whims of others, and any other number of actions are possible, only Raskolnikov could dictate his confession and resentful though self-chosen exile. The wishes of the creator are powerless over a Person. If he had been a Character then Dostoevsky could have easily pressed the pistol to Raskolnikov's temple.

Instead Raskolnikov becomes "passionately attached to both" Sonya and Svidrigailov's primary traits.¹³⁷ This is precisely why Dostoevsky leaves the unlimited happiness that Raskolnikov and Sonya could come to out of the novel. He allows Raskolnikov to remain himself, without forcing him into a happy ending. Raskolnikov is allowed to keep a part of Svidrigailov's sensualism within him because that is who he is as a Person. Thus, it is clear that Raskolnikov cannot be a mere pawn like Nabokov's Luzhin or Tolstoy's Bezukhov. Raskolnikov does, however, encounter Characters within the novel's borders. Once again, as with the Temperament and the Type, this level of fictional being serves as a sounding board against which the Person can build up their mode of being.

In order to shape Raskolnikov into a Person, however, Dostoevsky utilizes a few Characters in *Crime and Punishment* in order to flesh out the world that his heroes inhabit. This population of Characters is crucial to the creation of a realist world. Pyotr Petrovich Luzhin is a prime example of the Character's usefulness in Dostoevsky's novels. In the notebooks, Luzhin is described as "a man who comes from the seminarians, from a low class, and from routine life. Nevertheless, he is not an ordinary person."¹³⁸ While he may not be ordinary, his existence is purely at the level of Character. He acts merely as a foil for the other Persons in the novel, although with his own wants and personal history. Luzhin, like all Characters in Dostoevsky's

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 159.

oeuvre, lends a greater sense of verisimilitude to the novel because he reminds the reader of someone they might actually know. There is something real about him, but he does not penetrate into the closeness of personal relation or the uniqueness of being that the Person does. He functions precisely like a fictional being whom the nineteenth-century reader, and even contemporary readers, have encountered time and time again in realist works. And in the end, Luzhin has no autonomy. He functions according to the stereotypes of his rank, his cultural significance, and his masculinity. In him there is neither any “suddenness” – one of the most important traits of the Person – nor any other signs of an elevated level of being.

The lack of this “suddenness” as a mark of the Character is shown explicitly in Dostoevsky’s analysis of Evgenii Onegin. There is depth and originality to certain Characters like Onegin, but lacking the freedom to exist “on a sudden” or outside the stereotypes of their position in the world mires them in this fictional level. Viktor Shklovsky reminds us that “Dostoevsky loved the word ‘suddenly,’” and that “in art ‘suddenly’ is an important word, [...] it is an introduction of a new force, new qualities, and new proposals. ‘Suddenly’ is a discovery [...] and] should have been placed at the entrance of the temple of art – refuting the inscription above the Inferno.”¹³⁹ This “suddenness,” with relation to the literary Person, reveals the freedom, the uniqueness, and the absolute value of the Other as a subject: “‘Other’ (*вдругой, vdrugoi*) means someone who suddenly appears next to you.”¹⁴⁰ Shklovsky toys with the Russian words *вдруг* (*vdrug*, suddenly) and *другой* (*drugoi*, other) to create the perfect portmanteau for the purposes of studying Dostoevsky’s synergetic anthropology.

¹³⁹ Viktor Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion: A Book on Plot*, trans. Shushan Avagyan, (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), 33, 339.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 339.

The “suddenness of the other” (*vdrugoi*) couples the complete value of the other and uniqueness that unexpectedly appears, thereby providing the capability for the growth of the Person via the movement toward the ontological unlocking of their being. Herein lies the meaning of “suddenly” as the “refutation of the inscription above the Inferno”: death, decay, stasis, and suffering are inherently linked to the immobility of the egocentric mode of being insofar as it is a rejection of the immediate offering of dynamic synergia in the presence of the other. “Suddenly” is the refutation of stagnation and egoism. It is a dynamism that lifts the person up into communion with the other. It can express itself in either freedom, self-emptying love, or uniqueness, but it is essential to all of these qualities in human relation. However, the concept of “suddenness” will be further discussed in the following section on the Person.

To return to our discussion of the Type, for Dostoevsky, Onegin is both the pinnacle and the beginning of the fully formed Character in Russian literature. Pushkin provides, as Dostoevsky tells us, a “solution to the question [of finding the truth of the person. And yet that truth...] is expressed still more clearly in *Evgenii Onegin*, a poem that is already no longer fantastic but tangibly real, in which genuine Russian life is incarnated with such creative strength and completeness as has never been witnessed either before Pushkin, or perhaps even afterward.”¹⁴¹ Onegin is, like Luzhin, the hinge that allows the fullness of a higher realism to open out into the world by the force of a literary Person. But he is not this Person.

Rather, Onegin follows the path of the Character, a slave to the causality of his existence. Dostoevsky provides us with a perfect snapshot of the typical Character in Onegin:

Onegin arrives from Petersburg—necessarily from Petersburg... Pushkin could not miss such an important realistic trait in the biography of his hero. [...] He is still half a dandy and half a man of the world. [...] Of course, he has heard about [his country’s] ideals, but he does not believe in them. He merely believes in the complete impossibility of any kind of work in his native land, and on those who do believe in the possibility of it—and there were few then, as there remain now—

¹⁴¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 26, 139.

he looks with a sad smile. He killed Lensky merely out of spleen—perhaps an outgrowth of the spleen caused by a universal ideal.¹⁴²

Beyond the features of psychological motivation, biographical information, and a glimpse into the typicality of Onegin's being, in the statement on Onegin's killing of Lensky Dostoevsky illuminates how the Character remains within the confines of ontological monism. According to the Personalist reading, the monologic ontology of the poem dictates that Onegin *had* to kill Lensky in order to establish the harmony, ordered and constructed around this tragic death. And again, it is tragic precisely because it could not be avoided, *it had to happen*. However, the tragedy of Onegin, being confined within the boundaries of a set world, opens the poem to a realm of higher art. The embryo of Onegin gives birth to a new kind of tragedy, the tragedy of freedom and the ability of Persons to overcome tragedy and rise up into the joy of Authentic Being.

The Character, therefore, is useful for Dostoevsky in the same manner as the Temperament and the Type. Where this level of being separates itself from the two lower levels is that the Character provides a greater sense of verisimilitude in the novel. The fidelity to the reality of existence, to the epistemological and experiential qualities of actual being are exemplified in the Character insofar as they provide a concrete connection to being without the infinite depth of the Person. Unlike the Temperament and Type, who provide either pure decoration or general qualities of being, the Character peoples the novels with a realistic portrayal of the individuals with whom the reader has casual acquaintance. There is some minor degree of relation with the Character thanks to the biographical or psychological aspects of their being, but there is no immediacy and proper uniqueness to them. The average human experiences this type of relation most frequently in life. But the depth of the Person is opened rarely to us,

¹⁴² Ibid. 139-40.

and when it is revealed, the infinitude of existence and being expands the consciousness of those willing to open their hearts and minds to it.

§VII: The Dostoevskian Person

The Person, for Dostoevsky, represents the chief mystery and the telos of his quixotic literary journey. Recalling his statement that “the person is a mystery... I am studying that mystery because I want to become a person,”¹⁴³ it is our job as readers and critics to unwrap this enigma and penetrate its foundations in the same manner in which they were revealed to Dostoevsky. Although the Orthodox foundations of the ontological question have been established, the connection between these grounds and Dostoevsky’s innovative work on fictional beings has yet to be established. How, then, can the three concepts of the TPP—fundamental freedom, kenotic love, and complete uniqueness and unrepeatability—be fulfilled in a literary being? Vladimir Solovyov provides an excellent starting point for answering this question:

A definitive appraisal of all Dostoevsky’s activity depends on how we view the idea that inspired him, in what he believed and what he loved. And he loved before all else the living human soul everywhere and in everything, and he believed that we all are *of divine origin*; he believed in the infinite power of the human soul, triumphant over any external coercion and over any internal deprecation.¹⁴⁴

The ability to imbue a literary being with an image of and likeness to the divine origin of the human soul is precisely where Dostoevsky turns from his contemporaries and ascends into the realms of higher realism.

The concept of higher realism, insofar as Dostoevsky discussed it with regard to his art, is connected to what is known as the *supraconsciousness*, or *noetic understanding*, in Orthodox Personalism. For the Orthodox monastic, and also to a less

¹⁴³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(I), 63.

¹⁴⁴ Vladimir Solovyov, “Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky,” in *The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Woznik (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 2.

rigorous extent every Orthodox person, the path of ascent toward Divine being is achieved by living a spiritual life. This life, according to Maximus the Confessor, is divided into three steps “1) the active phase or that of doing; 2) the phase of the contemplation of nature; 3) the theological phase or the mystical contemplation of God.”¹⁴⁵ Once a person is able to cleanse themselves from the passions, they are able to achieve steps two and three, the former entailing the contemplation of material things and their inner *logoi* (the principle of a created thing that points toward the Creator), while the latter concentrates solely on Divine being, with God Himself. Stăniloae describes this mystical or theological knowledge as that which is directed toward “the object [which] is all holy and all blessed deification, supra-ineffable, supra-unknowable, and above all infinity. This knowledge of God is an ecstasy of love, which persists unmoved in a concentration on God.”¹⁴⁶ Neither the conscious nor the subconscious mind is capable of achieving this state of contemplation by itself. However, the person is equipped with another organ called the *nous*, by which one is capable of the active knowledge of Divine being and also the world in what will be its transcended state.

The word *nous* is relatively unknown in the West, and when it is translated outside the context of Orthodox theology it trends toward misinterpretation. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the *nous* as “good judgement and practical ability,” while Merriam-Webster notes both “mind, reason: such as a) an intelligent purposive principle in the world,” and “b) the divine reason regarded in Neoplatonism as the first emanation

¹⁴⁵ Stăniloae, 70.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 72.

of God.”¹⁴⁷ This is a far cry from the definition provided by John of Damascus, in which he describes this contemplative organ in the following manner: “It [the soul] does not have the [*nous*] as something distinct from itself, but as its purest part, for, as the eye is to the body, so is the [*nous*] to the soul.”¹⁴⁸ The *nous* is not judgement or reason—the Fathers of the Church use the term *logos* to describe the cognitive function to order and rationalize that which the persons experiences. Maximus the Confessor explains the connection between these two operations of the human consciousness insofar as, “[a] pure [*nous*] see things correctly. A trained intelligence [*logos*] puts them in order.”¹⁴⁹ Considering the soul to be the contemplative organ of the human being, rather than the mind alone, and that this organ has separate sections that function to process information in various modes allows for the idea that the *nous* is the section of the soul that, once purified of the passions, allows the person to contemplate higher, transfigured reality.

Dostoevsky presents in his novels a fiction that points towards, and at times displays, a contemplation of reality as it should be, as a higher reality in mode and form as intended at the beginning by its Creator. To unlock the potential of our minds as readers to see this concept in his works, and particularly to see the image and likeness in the literary Person, the reader must be willing to open the heart and eyes of their soul, our *nous*, to that which Dostoevsky has created. To better understand what this cleaned or

¹⁴⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “nous” accessed at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/nous>, and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “nous” accessed at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nous>, on January 30, 2020.

¹⁴⁸ John of Damascus, “Orthodox Faith: Book Two,” in *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1958), 236.

¹⁴⁹ Maximus the Confessor, “Texts on Love,” in *The Philokalia 2* trans. and ed. by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 82.

purified *nous* might look like, contrasting it with contemporary psychology's view of human consciousness might be a helpful experiment.

If there is a subconscious that processes that which the rational mind cannot or will not process, then one can also allow for something that is almost its opposite.

Stăniloae posits:

We can admit that there is a subconscious for the shadowy baggage which we carry with us; we consider it proper, however, for the region where the potential human energies of the soul are included and by which the divine energies enter it, to use the word *trans-conscious* or *supra-conscious*. The subconscious would be the room to the left or the cellar of the conscience, where all the bad things have accumulated, giving birth to the supports of the passions; it would be the starting point of desire and anger. The trans-conscious or supra-conscious would be the room to the right, or the room upstairs, where the superior powers are stored and function, ready to flood the conscious life and even the subconscious, with their cleansing power, when we offer them the conditions.

Thus the "spirit" of the soul, or of the mind, would be the uppermost part, or the innermost, because in spiritual order, the highest is the innermost, most intimate.

¹⁵⁰

The supraconscious, much like the subconscious, needs to be groomed and prepared so that the rational function of the brain is able to comprehend that which it receives and engages from the spark of the Divine—of which it is otherwise incapable of fully grasping—so that these direct engagements with the logoi in people and things can be put into order and utilized in everyday life. To water the garden of the *nous* a person only needs to open themselves to one of the foundational principles of being: kenosis.

The connection between the act of self-less love, which is an essential feature of being, with the relational knowledge of being, shows that "the heart or the loving state of the soul also has in Orthodox Christianity a gnosiological, a knowing function. The true understanding of the mind is at the same time too, love for that which is understood."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Stăniloae, 98.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 99-100.

In other words, in accordance with the Orthodox TPP, to truly know someone is to selflessly love that which is other.

Dostoevsky opens his literature to this concept by imbuing his Persons with the mode of being-in-relation. They function freely and in doing so draw both their fellow literary beings as well as the reader into a sort of loving relation. The reader becomes aware of this higher mode of reality in the Persons existence at first only as if through a glass, darkly. The truth of their being and their relation to a transcendent reality is clear only, as Solovyov phrased it, through understanding the “divine origin” of Dostoevsky’s work. Dostoevsky clears the mud from the reader’s eyes and presents reality in fiction more lucidly than what they perceive and process on a daily basis.

The literary achievement of revealing a higher reality, however, is not birthed fully formed, like Athena, out of Dostoevsky’s own head. Rather, it grew to flourish despite tremendous birth pangs, growing pains, and continual self-sabotage from its embryonic form thanks to Dostoevsky’s great love for and inspiration from Pushkin. Yes, the literary Person, founded on a concept of being-in-relation, dynamically ascends a ladder of being to achieve a form as close to Authentic Being as possible within the confines of its material existence because of the groundwork laid by Russia’s greatest poet. In Dostoevsky’s own work he follows the ladder that the human person ascends or descends in reality as they constantly attempt, despite continual failure, to ascend toward the reason for and goal of their existence and being as set by his predecessor. But his even most successful literary achievement comes from his love for the work of his literary forbearer’s greatest achievement.

Dostoevsky adopts a different perspective on *Evgeni Onegin*, centering its axis on a true Person: “[P]erhaps Pushkin might have done better if he had called his poem *Tatyana* instead of *Onegin*, since she is undoubtedly the main heroine of the poem. This is a positive type not a negative type, this is a type of positive beauty, the apotheosis of the Russian woman, and it is her that the poet has tasked with expressing the idea of the poem in the famous scene of the last encounter of Tatyana and Onegin.” and what’s more, “it is possible that this particular positive type of a Russian woman of such beauty has virtually never reappeared in our Russian literature with the possible exception of the image of Lisa in Turgenev’s *A Nest of Gentry*.”¹⁵² Although Dostoevsky repeats that this personhood is particularly expressed in Tatyana’s Russian womanhood it is clear that his admiration for Pushkin’s artistic creation reaches deeper than gender. Rather it is particularly clear that his respect and perspective is based on the entirety of her character. Her beauty is not necessarily one which appears exclusively in the person, but that which reveals the meeting point with the Divine within all creation. However, Dostoevsky discovers in her a beauty that, when engaged in loving relation with a fully formed and free other, is capable of displaying the apotheosis of literary being. When he notes within her “a type of positive and indubitable beauty in the **person** of a Russian woman”¹⁵³ he confirms Tatyana as a person (*litso* in the Russian text).

Onegin, in the text, continually fails to realize Tatyana’s being as a Person. This inability to enter into relation is what hampers him and keeps him at the level of Character. Dostoevsky remarks that “[Onegin] was unable to discern completion and perfection in the poor girl... Nor was he in the least able to come to know her: did he know the human soul? This abstract person,

¹⁵² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 26, 140.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 143. Bold faced emphasis is mine.

this restless dreamer for his entire life.”¹⁵⁴ Tatyana, however, being a Person, comprehends Onegin completely. Like Dostoevsky she “seeks, through [Onegin’s books and possessions], to divine his soul, to unriddle the **mystery**, and the so-called ‘moral embryo’ stops finally in reflection; with foresight into the solution of the **mystery**, with a strange smile she gently whispers ‘Isn’t he a parody of himself?’”¹⁵⁵ Tatyana looks at Onegin as another Person, to relate to, to love, and with whom she can share life, suffering, and joy. But in his eyes, she sees that he lives only as a parody of himself, constrained by the parameters of the reality assigned to him by his melancholic Weltschmerz.

Dostoevsky reveals how Pushkin has inverted our expectations with his fictional beings, how he brings them to life. The reader enters the poem expecting the heroic Onegin and the sentimental Poor Liza, but instead find a higher being in Tatyana and a shell of a person in Evgeni. Dostoevsky writes:

In this is her apotheosis. She expresses the truth of the poem... Happiness is not in mere pleasures of love, but it is in the higher harmony of the soul! What will assuage the spirit if in the past there is a dishonest, merciless, inhuman act?... A pure Russian heart decides “Let me, let me alone be deprived of happiness, let my unhappiness be immeasurably stronger than this old man’s; and finally let no one ever, even this old man, either know of my sacrifice or measure it, yet I refuse to be happy by ruining another!”¹⁵⁶

Every aspect of the TPP is present in his analysis of Tatyana. First, she has the inherent freedom to reject even her most basic desires— in this case, her love for Onegin. Second, she expresses self-emptying love both for Onegin and for her husband in her rejection of the sinful and ego-centric passionate lust for Evgeni. And finally, her sacrifice is a pure and unique act in the confines of her literary reality; there is a complete novelty and unexpected quality to her actions. She rejects the fantasy of Onegin’s illusionary personhood that has come crawling to worship her

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 140.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 141. Bold faced emphasis is mine.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 142.

beauty as a Person. She does this because she knows, having solved his riddle, that he cannot be more than the mask of the personhood that he presents.

For Pushkin, and for the reader, this rejection of Onegin is a tragedy. It is tragic because Onegin is unfree, he cannot transcend his mode of being. And Tatyana *knows* of his shackles, but will not succumb to her natural urges or his desires. She will not be drawn back down into the Greek world of the poem by a millstone of typicality or parody. She has transcended her reality, but no one notices. She enters back into the social norms and constructs of her existence as higher being masked in normalcy. What Dostoevsky discovers in Tatyana is a completed “ontological unlocking” of a literary being into a higher mode; he finds something more beautiful here than almost any fictional being before it.¹⁵⁷

Dostoevsky is enraptured by the beauty that Tatyana unlocks in her personhood because it is the lighthouse from whence his literary voyage has both set sail and to which he constantly returned, a monument impervious to the decay of time that laps with the waves of history against the immortal charm of the brined beacon. Tatyana, and others to lesser degrees in Pushkin’s oeuvre, express a “primary beauty of these characters [which] lies in their truth, their

¹⁵⁷ Sergei Horuzhy speaks of this “ontological unlocking” as the telos of the Theocentric Personological Paradigm. It is the *synergia* of human being with Divine being. “This union is termed deification (*theosis*) in Orthodox theology and, as Karsavin stressed, in its personalist aspect, deification is personification, *litsetvorenie*, in Russian. Now, from the anthropological viewpoint, *synergia* means the opening or unlocking of human being toward Divine being or ontological unlocking. The category of unlocking was used by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* as one of the basic categories (*Erschliessen, Erschliessung*) in the constitution of the being-presence, *Dasein*. Keeping in mind this patristic and Heideggerian history of the concept, we come to the idea that the unlocking of man can be interpreted as a universal paradigm of the constitution of human person. Realization of this idea leads to ‘anthropology of the unlocking’ or ‘synergetic anthropology’ developed in my works. In addition to the ontological unlocking, in which a human person unlocks him/herself toward another mode of being, this anthropology identifies and describes other kinds of the anthropological unlocking that define different types of the human constitution (such as the unlocking towards the unconscious realized in the phenomena studied in psychoanalysis or the virtual unlocking realized in virtual anthropological practices). In this way, we arrive at pluralistic Personology that presents human being as manifold of different modes of subjectivity, one of which (signaled out in certain respects) is the ontological mode constituted in the unlocking towards God” (Horuzhy, “Personalistic Dimensions,” 3-4). The work of Dostoevsky’s ontology and anthropology as a form of “literary ontological unlocking” continues Horuzhy’s work in the direction of the fictional being unlocking their mode of being toward their creator’s mode of being, paralleling the TPP and other Orthodox models. The three foundational principles of the person in the TPP are freedom, self-emptying love, and absolute uniqueness.

indisputable and palpable truth, so that it is impossible to refute them, as they stand there like statues.”¹⁵⁸ This static quality of Pushkin’s Characters and Tatyana’s personhood, however, is the main feature that distinguishes them from Dostoevsky’s dynamic, synergetic Persons. Dostoevsky grants to his fictional beings something else entirely foreign to Pushkin, an element that raises their fictional freedom to higher echelons.

As earlier noted, Dostoevsky’s Persons require a physical and/or dialogical point of relation in order to enter into their mode of fictional being. The Temperament, Type, and Character all serve the function of a relational sounding board. They are present in order to highlight the Person’s uniqueness, freedom, or capability for selflessness and to decorate the artistic world that surrounds the Person. The presence of only one fully rounded and formed Person in Dostoevsky’s earlier work, however, simultaneously calls attention to the higher level of the literary Person’s poetic composition compared to the other levels of fictional being while also providing a distinct trajectory of his creative process that finally arrives at the masterfully crafted higher realism of his later works. The best example of the Person mired alone as a Person within the text would be the Underground Man in *Notes from the Underground*. There is nowhere for him to go, no higher level for him to ascend, in part because he has rejected the validity of the personal nature of others. Since the novella is written from his perspective, and he considers that no other being is as conscious as he, no other being could therefore possibly be a literary Person, as the Underground Man is incapable of permitting that dignity to another.

Just as Tatyana chooses to isolate herself from Onegin—the wellspring that watered the soil of her literary Personhood—so too has the Underground Man retreats into a relation-less tomb. However, the stagnation of the Underground Man as a literary Person is attributable to the

¹⁵⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 26, 144.

absence of another Person with whom he might come into relation: Dostoevsky allows his protagonist the privileges of a first-person narrative, giving him a tyrannical grasp over every aspect of the novella. Neither Apollon nor Liza as Types provide enough dynamism for the Underground Man to wrench himself out of his self-imposed tomb because, as the narrator, the Underground Man strips them of their Personhood. He presents them to the reader as less-than Persons, as non-relational poles. Indeed, the Underground Man is unable to comprehend the foundational qualities of the Person in himself, let alone the other.

As discussed in the section of Dostoevskian Types, the most powerful depiction of the Underground Man as a Person arises in his relation with others. Before he falls back into his egoism and guardedness, while he is experiencing a measure of the fullness of Authentic Being through the dialogue with Liza, he expresses one of the greatest truths in Dostoevsky's worldview. He says that "a person only likes to count their troubles, but they don't calculate their happiness. If they figured as they should, they'd see that everyone gets their fair share."¹⁵⁹ For the egoist, everything in the world needs to be either balanced or tipped in their favor. When the self has more value than the other, then anything short of total equality, or more often dominance by the self over the other, is sorrowful. "Where isn't there sorrow?" he asks Liza.¹⁶⁰ But he is speaking more to himself than to her at this moment. He continues with a lamentation of his own inability to love selflessly and to be free.

Although the Underground Man understands that "[l]ove is God's mystery," he believes that to protect it he must horde it away, and "it should be hidden from all others' eyes no matter what happens."¹⁶¹ He continues to expound on the capacity for a Person to do anything for the

¹⁵⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 157.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

beloved, to shirk biological urge and need such as hunger, but in the end he claims that in order to truly live she must “from the start learn to live as [herself], and only then blame others [for sorrow],” and yet all of this grandiloquence, which approaches the Orthodox perspective on love and personhood, causes the Underground Man’s pride (*samoliubie* in the Russian text) to suffer because he thinks she will laugh in his face, reject his personhood.¹⁶²

Dostoevsky’s use of *samoliubie* expresses the self-love that overpowers the Underground Man even in the face of personal relation, the need to reject her before she can reject him. But it is he who is unwilling to accept her as a Person because she, in his mind, has rejected his offer of love, of an erotic outpouring of the self without, necessarily, sexual desire. Returning to an earlier quote from Yannaras, we see that he might as well be speaking directly to this encounter between the Underground Man and Liza

“I begin to count, to calculate. And the calculation always shows me disadvantaged. Therefore, I feel I have the right to resist, to be full of reproaches, become aggressive, change affection into hostility. [...] At the first awareness of a rift, love changes into disappointed hostility. It rakes up the past, reopens wounds, plunges the knife mercilessly into the memory. The Other is my failure to live fully; he confirms my loneliness, my hell.¹⁶³

While Tatyana is able to live with her misery because she has sacrificed herself for others, the Underground Man exists only in the form of his toothache, because he lives only for his own benefit. He has counted his sorrows and ignored his happiness, and in doing so he has embittered himself and cast himself away from relation and into hell. In his fidelity to the Underground Man as a Person, Dostoevsky cannot alleviate the sorrow of self-imposed exile. The only possible outcome of his relationships with others is pride, anger, and isolation. This is a shining example of how perfecting the literary Person is extraordinarily difficult. Dostoevsky continually

¹⁶² Ibid., 158.

¹⁶³ Yannaras, *Variations*, 10-11.

struggles to unlock a positive mastery of this kind of fictional ontology in the early works of his post-Siberian phase. In *Notes from the Underground*, it stems from not creating more than one Person in the work. However, the immensely difficult task of providing fertile ground for Dostoevsky to sow the literary Person in a positive manner does fertilize the roots of Dostoevsky's poetic development.

What the failure of the Underground Man's interaction with Liza underscores is a sense of the incompleteness of the Person, or at least of an unfulfilled creation of higher realism. There is a lack of "suddenness" in *Notes from the Underground* that is caused by the protagonists chosen isolation and dominance of the narrative. The dynamism of the immediacy of relation in the Person expresses itself, in Dostoevsky's works, as the word "suddenly," which becomes both one of the most frequent words and valuable tools in Dostoevsky's belt as he attempts to sculpt the higher level of literary being. Lacking another Person as a relational being can cause a monologic rigidity to the text. In the first Part of the novel, when the Underground Man is outside the realm of personal encounters, he is completely lacking the suddenness and vitality of life as presented in the uniqueness of relation.

As he extrapolates on why he has chosen to write his story and why it is necessary to create a fictitious audience to hear it, the reader clearly understands the isolation the Underground Man has created for himself: "[T]here are in the memories of every person such things that they will not reveal to anyone, except maybe their friends. There are also such things that they will not even open for their friends, and will keep them only to themselves, and, even then, in secret. And finally, there are those things that a person is even afraid to unlock for themselves."¹⁶⁴ These are the deep secrets, the egocentric passions, of the Underground Man.

¹⁶⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 122.

They are the problems of his existence that he would like to explore, to confess, in order to experience a form of Authentic Being, but he is unable to express them in any real form due to his lack of immediate, or “sudden” relation.

Although the Underground Man desires to expunge his own egoism and passions, the only way he can do so is textually; as he says, “Perhaps I’ll actually experience some relief from the process of writing it all down... For some reason I believe that if I write it down I can get rid of it.”¹⁶⁵ He expresses his desire to come into relation with an other—the foundation of repentance and its purifying fruits—but is in a state of insensibility and hardheartedness. According to the Orthodox tradition, repentance requires the presence of another person, and particularly a priest, for the burden of the passions to be forgiven and lifted:

The purpose of the Sacrament [of Confession] is the absolution of sin and the cure of the soul. Obviously the absolution of a sin cannot be granted by an icon, but by a priest, who possesses the grace of the Priesthood, with the prayer of forgiveness... Christ instructed His Disciples to celebrate holy Confession saying: *Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven* (Jn. 20:22-23). Through these words the holy Apostles, and by Apostolic succession the Priests, “received authority which God did not even bestow upon the Angels.”¹⁶⁶

And although he may be repentant (and yet perhaps he is not) he cries out for relation while simultaneously rejecting it. Either way, a written confession is not enough to either have one’s sins absolved or to enter back into relation. The literary confession is distinct from the Orthodox, as Liza Knapp elucidates, because of the immobility of the protagonist: “[T]he principle at work in the confessional hero, causing resistance to the change, is the spiritual equivalent of the mechanical principle of inertia.”¹⁶⁷ She rightly identifies the tragedy in the Underground Man’s life as his lack of dynamism. However, inertia, in her estimation, is linked purely to the ability to act or, as in the case of the Underground Man, the inability to do so.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

¹⁶⁶ Hieromonk Gregorios, *Repentance and Confession*, trans. Stelios Zarganes, ed. Rev. Fr. Michael Monos, (Columbia, MO: Newrome Press LLC, 2015), 28.

¹⁶⁷ Liza Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 16.

Through the lens of Orthodox Personalism this particular tragedy does not stem from an inability to move, but from the unwillingness to enter into relation. Characterizing the Underground Man's state of being inert "as understood in definitions of material bodies, [which] amounts to the property of matter whereby it asserts itself, not allowing other bodies to take its place," expresses the boundaries of anthropology through as a voluntary rejection of any and all relation.¹⁶⁸ However, a voluntary lapse into inertia does not and cannot annihilate his personhood.

The Underground Man's desire to communicate is a sign of his foundational desire to be-in-relation, even if it is sublimated into the novella as a fictional text of his own creation. Although he claims that he is better off in his mode of being-in-isolation, the act of creative speech or writing indicates a desire for communication, and therefore a desire for relation. The desire to offend, the desire to single up all lines and sail into the abyss of self-imposed isolate is overwhelmed by the desire to communicate. He still manages to express an erotic appeal to a mode of being-in-relation, even if his egoism and rationality sabotages him. It is clear that the potency of the inherent mode of being-in-relation, however, is lessened due to a lack of another Person with whom he can relate.

It is not that Liza or Apollon *could not* be Persons, according to the literary level, but rather that they *are not* Persons due to the Underground Man rejecting them. And because Dostoevsky has given control of the narrative, and not merely the actions within it, to the Underground Man, it is his will and not the author's that rejects the Person at the literary level. Herein lies the monologic tragedy of the narrator's ontology. And although Dostoevsky rejects the mode of being-in-isolation that the Underground Man plunges himself into he eagerly

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 32.

portrays the freedom of rejecting the authentic mode of being-in-relation as both an edifying tale about the state of the person in contemporary Russia and as an apophatic proof of the absolute value of freedom, self-emptying love, and uniqueness.

Let us consider the Underground Man's tragedy in light of the Personalist qualities that separate him from the inertia of Onegin, attempting to demonstrate how Dostoevsky creates one Person who strips Personhood from the others in the novella. The first is the Underground Man's freedom from the typical aspects of his personage. He is not bound by the dictums of the stereotypical "little man,"—in fact he is of the educated class— and he becomes extraordinarily unique because he rejects the stereotypical nature of his existence. This is most clearly asserted in the opening lines of the novella:

I am a sick person... I am an evil person. I am an unattractive person. I think that my liver is diseased. Though, I don't know a thing about my disease and I don't even really know what is wrong with me. I'm not being treated and I never have been treated, despite the fact that I respect medicine and doctors. (I'm sufficiently educated enough to not be superstitious, but I am superstitious.) No, gentlemen, it's out of spite that I don't wish to be treated.¹⁶⁹

Clearly, the primary feature of the Underground Man as a Person, at least as the novella opens, is freedom. This freedom from biological urges, if not urgency, captivated Nietzsche, Camus, and other thinkers from the turn of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. As Dostoevsky has shown us, *Evgenii Onegin* opened the door for this level of freedom in the fictional being, and the Underground Man sits in the doorframe shouting his freedom through bile-generated tears. In a letter to his brother Mikhail on April 13, 1864 Dostoevsky compares the first part of the novella to a transition in music: "That's exactly what we have here. In the first chapter it seems like chatter, but **suddenly** this chatter resolves itself in the last two chapters as unexpected catastrophe."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 99.

¹⁷⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(II), 85. Bold faced emphasis is mine.

Robert Louis Jackson utilizes this passage to compare *Notes from the Underground* to Aristotelian movement and design, casting the Underground Man as a product of causality due to his lack of “Christian love and self-sacrifice, [... which otherwise could] break the chain of an inwardly binding and blinding determinism.”¹⁷¹ But Jackson arrives at the conclusion that “[the Underground Man’s] reminiscences, like his philosophical discourse, are no more free from order or system than he is free from the laws of nature. We must not confuse the Underground Man’s subjective rejection of system, order, evolution, or historicism with the objective conditions of his enslavement to order.”¹⁷² Jackson asserts that within the novel the free rejection of relation by the Underground Man inevitably leads to the experience of the very monologic ontology that the Underground Man renounces.

Rather than becoming free by rejecting the systems and order of life he is rather, like the protagonist of a Greek tragedy, chained by his choice. If, on the one hand, freedom in the novel is only, as Jackson calls it, a “subjective rejection” of the world, then this might be true. If, on the other hand, freedom is an un-erasable quality of being for the literary Person, then it cannot be fate, an absolute telos crafted by his creator, that leads the Underground Man to develop in a manner that is closer to Authentic Being, closer to a being of a higher realism than to a classical tragic protagonist. Rather, in his purposeful and constant isolation from relation he actively rejects the possibility of being pulled out of his grave by the other. He chooses to be caught up in and float along in the flowing stream of time in isolation, and in doing so represents the fullness of the Person in Dostoevsky’s work.

¹⁷¹ Robert Louis Jackson, *The Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 172.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 185.

Time, however, is an ocean of relativity. While it may flow steadily, there are neaps and ebbs in its tides that are dictated, like the pull of the moon, by the appearance of the other. There is an immediacy in the Underground Man that is lacking in Onegin, one that comes from the second Personalist quality that Onegin lacks, which is selfless love. The Underground Man is imbued with a “suddenness” or impetuosity that sends him careening down cerebral corridors of philosophical diatribes and remembrances of physical extravagances. Although physically sedentary while writing the notes, the Underground Man is mentally shifting through little ideas, drifting between desires, and rebelling against natural and social urges. The suddenness of the Underground Man is what rescues him from the monotony of being a mere psychological Type, and that is what thrusts him up to a higher level of fictional being.

Although it appears that he lacks selflessness, it is clear in his exchange with Liza that he does have the capacity for kenosis through erotic relation. He desires to see her better herself because he is afraid that she will end her life unloved, just as he is. The Underground Man, it is true, constantly sabotages himself and, particularly in the end, treats Liza contemptibly. But knowing that Dostoevsky’s anthropology is grounded in the image and likeness of a Creator whose being is experienced through love, it would be cynical to think that rationality and isolation or satirical sentimentalism would be enough to encourage the thought that the image of Divine love is eradicated in even the worst person.

Before the Underground Man battles with himself in his speech about love quoted above he says to himself, “[S]omething **suddenly** caught fire within me, some kind of goal had ‘appeared.’”¹⁷³ While it may be argued what this “goal” was – either the humiliation of Liza or an actual desire to express true erotic kenosis –, what is inarguable is that the suddenness of the

¹⁷³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 155.

Underground Man's change of heart precludes the possibility that he lives in an ontologically monologic world, either of his own creation or Dostoevsky's. Because of the "suddenness" of relation that unchains the freedom within him, the Underground Man chooses the crushing weight of inertia, he chooses to strand himself between a Scylla of the monologic structures of the Crystal Palace—the socialist reinstatement of the Greek ontology and the death of freedom, and the Charybdis of irrational freedom—the chaos of personal responsibility to attempt to control one's own desires and needs toward a salvific or egocentric telos. His mode of being is not forced on him, but thanks to his mode of being he, throughout the novella, "suddenly" chooses it.

This "suddenly," as the crucible from which the literary Person is forged, appears in Dostoevsky's texts with such great frequency because of its power to open an infinite number of possibilities for the fictional beings to follow while still maintaining fidelity to their uniqueness. What are produced are literary scenes in which "everyday events develop... with the 'logic of scandals', [of which] the formal expression of the link between episodes is the little word 'suddenly.' [...] So the reader can construct the most probable next step in the plot. But in Dostoevsky what is least expected by the reader (both in terms of life and of literature) is the sole one possible for the writer."¹⁷⁴ What Yuri Lotman reveals is that "suddenly" both expresses the immediacy and personal quality of being in action as well as leading the person to egoism. He further contends that "scandal and miracle are the poles which mark, on the one hand, final ruin and, on the other, final salvation and they are both unmotivated and abnormal.

¹⁷⁴ Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 165.

The eschatological moment of instant and final solution to all the tragic contradictions in life is not brought into life from outside, from the domain of ideas, but is found in life itself.”¹⁷⁵ The entrance to the Temple of Art, therefore, unlocks paths to heaven just like the spiritual journey on. This simple word conveys to readers that the fictional being to whom the readers are giving life as each word travels from the page to their mind, is open to an infinitude of possibilities. However, Lotman’s contention that there is a “sole” possibility for Dostoevsky to conclude his work seems to contradict this idea of freedom. As he avers, the actions of Dostoevsky fictional beings are always resolved through a dénouement that is always the least expected by the reader but the only one possible based on the fictional beings’ behaviors. If Lotman’s model for Dostoevsky’s work is true, would not the Dostoevskian being therefore be merely a Character and not a Person, if their fate is monologic and determined by their author?

Fictional beings in a realist novel must, of course, come to some end that is determined by their creator. Dostoevsky’s Persons are no different in this respect, and yet they transcend it in a manner particular to Fyodor Mikhailovich. The cause of their transcendence is the manner in which Dostoevsky wrote. Studying the notebooks for the later novels, it is clear that Dostoevsky began with not only one but numerous themes, symbols, plots, and ideas around and through which the text would navigate. The seed for *The Idiot* began with ideas flowing from his visits to see *Acis and Galatea* and *Christ in the Tomb* while in Germany, his desperation over his gambling addiction, his increasingly problematic epileptic fits, and the death of his daughter.¹⁷⁶ In the “Introduction” to the English translation of the notebooks for *The Idiot*, Edward Wasiolek informs us that “[Dostoevsky] went through at least eight plans and many variations of each plan. Less than a month before submitting the first part to his publisher, he destroyed much that

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 167.

¹⁷⁶ See Figures 7 and 8.

he had written and virtually began writing the novel again.”¹⁷⁷ The idea of creating a “perfectly beautiful person,” of which will be spoken of in much greater detail in the following chapter, did not come into being until Dostoevsky began the final version of the first chapter.

Demons followed a similar creative struggle. Although his plans to write his “Life of a Great Sinner” and also a story about the Nechayev case flowed into the novel, a great deal of change set in throughout the course of writing. The single most important change to the novel was the rejection of the chapter “At Tikhon’s” due to its discussion of the rape of a twelve-year-old girl by Stavrogin with the elderly retired Bishop Tikhon. Its rejection by the publishers radically altered the end of the novel and forced Dostoevsky to create an ending that falls short of the mark he was aiming to hit.¹⁷⁸ While the original trajectory for the novel, in which Stavrogin kills himself, reaches its conclusion, the impact of Stavrogin’s struggle between egoism and kenosis is severely lessened. As Dostoevsky struggled to reformat the events in the novel surrounding an edited version of the chapter while awaiting the publisher’s acceptance or rejection of it, he was unable to rework the text to create a more concrete connection to this idea once the final version went to print. While these external forces pushed Dostoevsky’s artistic endeavors into the rocky shores of change, the polyphony of themes and symbols in his own head served to create narratives in which the fictional beings could “suddenly” move down the path of either salvation or damnation.

Dostoevsky worked feverously when taken up in the arms of inspiration. His notes for the novels contain images, sketches, and script that flows not only horizontally but also

¹⁷⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for The Idiot*, ed. Edward Wasiolek and trans. Katharine Strelsky, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 4.

¹⁷⁸ For further reading on the history of the writing of *Demons* and the removal of “At Tikhon’s” see Chapters 22 and 23 of Joseph Frank’s *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1866-1871*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

vertically.¹⁷⁹ There is an immediacy that reminds one of the walls of a Victorian madhouse, where the hand scrawls the contents of the mind in emotive linework of ink poured out unfiltered and unbound. As Dostoevsky planned and wrote, an unlimited number of possibilities flowed from his mind, and only a fraction was caught on paper. Lotman claims that “the creative process is an irreversible process... and hence the passage from one stage to another must involve elements of randomness and unpredictability.”¹⁸⁰ These chaotic elements tend to be tamed by the artist in order to present a unified whole in the text.

With Dostoevsky, however, the feeling of uncertainty and infinite possibility are actively conveyed in the text thanks to “the wealth of Dostoevsky’s imagination which allows him to ‘play over’ a vast quantity of possible story-lines... [and] the text in fact loses its linearity. It turns into a paradigmatic set of possible lines of development... The syntagmatic construction is replaced by a multidimensional space of plot potentialities.”¹⁸¹ Lotman considers the manifestation of this space of potentiality as being caused by Dostoevsky’s channeling of the symbolic world, which then gives way to the solid form of the text. The protean quality of the writing, however, must rather be linked to the inherent freedom he imbues in the Person. To Dostoevsky, the beings on the page are not merely chemicals to be poured together in some scientific laboratory. Alchemy is closer to the creative act that the author achieves on the page. The narrative does not flow randomly, but rather follows the precise motion determined by the unique being of the Persons living in it.

Fictional beings, as they develop under the pressure of Dostoevsky’s creative activity, rise into being like allotropes, elements that exist in the same physical state yet with different

¹⁷⁹ See Figure 9.

¹⁸⁰ Lotman, 74.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 75.

structures or forms. Under the greatest amount of loving pressure and heat the Person arises shining like a diamond, surrounded by the graphite, amorphous carbon and buckyballs of the lower levels of fictional being. And like a diamond, the outcome of the narrative has nearly infinite possibilities; as the light of the relationship between Persons and exterior factors—including the energies of other Persons, Characters, Types, and Temperaments—pass through them, the unique inner facets and imperfections emit an inimitable fire that could only have come from this precise being in this precise setting. In the loss of what Lotman calls “linearity,” Dostoevsky gains insight into the deepest intricacies and nuances of his fictional beings. And even in isolation his Persons still shine brightly because he has given so much care in investigating the many, many possibilities that only they could enact in the text. They are less forceful, however, when there is no exterior light to brighten them.

The strength of Dostoevsky’s ability to potently portray Persons develops with each subsequent novel. While *The Idiot* provides the greatest example of Dostoevsky’s failure to master this technique (which will be investigated in greater detail in the following chapter), in *Crime and Punishment* and *Demons* Dostoevsky builds upon the Personal strength of the Underground Man as he explores the way in which Persons fall away from their soteriological telos. The elevated degree of realism in these two novels is fueled by intra-personal moments, in deeply relational investigations. One notices that following *Notes from the Underground* Dostoevsky has switched the narrative structure from first- to third-person narration, while still allowing direct personal insight into the thoughts and desires of the protagonists. The movement in structure is a key to depicting being-in-relation in a manner that allows for a deep connection to any Person within the text by the reader, which was impossible before. As evidenced in the aforementioned Notes to the novel, Dostoevsky decides that an omniscient narrator must narrate

Crime and Punishment, rather than the protagonist, simultaneously making the narration more reliable than *Notes* and yet also maintaining a deep, personal, and relational connection to the reader. He moves away from the tendency to have an omniscient narrator and toward an insightful yet bounded third-person narrative style after *The Idiot*. This move creates an even more deeply personal connection between the fictional world and the reader, but this will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

An omniscient, third-person narrator is vital for *Crime and Punishment*, however, because of Raskolnikov's deep-rooted egoism and illness, which causes him to be facing completely inward. His care for his mother and sister is a buoy to which his soul clings, barely keeping his head above the waterline as the millstone of his ego and premeditation of murder rip and tug at his neck. It is his struggles throughout the first chapter with certain paradoxes that elevate him toward Personhood early in the novel; those of Marmeladov as drunkard and penitent, his admiration for Sonya's sacrifice for her family and his disgust at his sister's desire to do the same for him, and the death of the horse in his dream and the deaths of Alyona and Lizaveta. He vacillates between disgust with the amorality of transgression of law and ego and rapture caused by the transcendent beauty of the kenotic self-sacrifice of his sister and Sonya. Until the murders, these brief interactions with Marmeladov in the tavern and the young woman he rescues from the pervert on the bridge are not enough to pull him out from his own ego, nor does he rise above the level of the Underground Man.

Raskolnikov, like the Underground Man, is mired in his own corner because these brief, early encounters are not enough to stop him from retreating into his own passions. He remained, as he had been "resolutely withdrawn from everyone, like a turtle into its shell, and furthermore the face of his servant-girl, who was meant to attend him and look in on him from time to time in

his room, agitated bile and convulsions in him.”¹⁸² He has turned his face from everyone. He has chosen to cease living in relation, to fulfil his existence as a person who lives with his face toward the other. However, unlike the Underground Man, in this mode of being he is capable of transgression. If the Underground Man was stagnant in the waters of Husserlian intentionality, Raskolnikov is consumed by the anxiety of Heideggerian care; the former is frenzied by consciousness, the latter a victim of the need for *In-der-Welt-sein* (*Being-in-the-world*).¹⁸³ The shift from potentiality to action occurs when Raskolnikov hears his idea echoed by the youths in the bar. He understands this turn of fate to be permission to right the wrongs of society: that to kill a person who is no more than an insect for the betterment of all humanity is not only reasonable but necessary. He finds a relation to justify his actions. And under the influence of his stroked ego the passions take hold. Out of pride, avarice, and anger he kills Alyona. But he has neither reason nor primal urge to kill her sister.

Lizaveta’s un-premeditated and reflexive murder, ironically, begins Raskolnikov’s journey back to a more permanent state of being-in-relation with others. The suddenness of this

¹⁸² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 25-6.

¹⁸³ The concept of Husserlian intentionality entails a primary feature of consciousness, one that “stands for something familiar to us all: a characteristic feature of our mental states and experiences, especially evident in what we commonly call being ‘conscious’ or ‘aware’. As conscious beings, or persons, we are not merely affected by the things in our environment; we are also conscious of these things – of physical objects and events, of our own selves and other persons, of abstract objects such as numbers and propositions, and of anything else we bring before our minds” [Ronald McIntyre and David Woodruff Smith, “Theory of Intentionality,” in *Husserl’s Phenomenology: A Textbook*, eds. J. N. Mohanty and William R. McKenna, (Washington, D. C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1989), 148]. The Underground Man resides almost entirely in the realm of intentionality, from his toothache and bile to his constant remembrance of his interactions with Liza and Apollon. He chooses to shift his mode of being from action to contemplation. He transfers relation from action to consciousness of action. Heideggerian care is that which “throws” the person into a state of Authentic Being, moving from conscious intentionality toward *Dasein*. Dumitriu Stăniloae qualifies it as “that which still ties us to things... According to Heidegger, care is a structure which includes the whole of man’s constitution. By it, man is forever ‘ahead of himself’ (*Sichvorwegsein*). [The study of which] came to him when he was trying to do an interpretation of Augustinian anthropology, in other words of the Hellenic-Christian” (Stăniloae, 116). Care, in this sense, is motivated by fear and causes anxiety (*Angst*). When anxious, the world is defamiliarized and allows the person to act in novel and liberating ways. Raskolnikov embodies the fear and anxiety of Heideggerian care precisely in the novel. In the following chapters we will return to the concept of care in the light of Orthodox Personalism in order to show how Dostoevsky imbues his Persons first with Heideggerian, or earthy care, and later with care for the eternal.

personal relation shocks his system and jostles him back toward others. In this moment Dostoevsky even focuses on her face just before Raskolnikov brings down his axe one final time: “Having seen him run in, she trembled like a leaf in a small tremor, and her face convulsing spasmodically; she raised her hand as if to cover her mouth, but no scream came and she slowly backed away from him to the corner, gazing at him, still not screaming, as if she didn’t have enough air to shout.”¹⁸⁴ Raskolnikov loses his self-assured moral supremacy because of the face of the innocent. Even if he is correct about the death of Alyona serving the greater good of humanity, his faith in himself is shaken by the uniqueness of Lizaveta’s face.

The remainder of the novel examines how he comes back into personal relation with his sister, Sonya, Porphyry Petrovich, and even Svidrigailov. But it his relation with Lizaveta in that brief moment that leads him to think that “perhaps what he was doing was not what is meant to be done...”¹⁸⁵ The only possible outcome of Raskolnikov’s murder of Lizaveta is a path toward (possible) redemption. While Dostoevsky needed the murder to happen in order to unravel the mystery of his protagonist’s personhood in the course of the narration, it occurs because of the freedom Raskolnikov is given. There are opportunities to turn aside from his choice, but because of who he is as a Person, Raskolnikov chooses to murder. And because of it the sudden thought that what he has done is something he should *not* have done, lights his way out of the darkness of his corner, away from the lonely choice of the Underground Man, and into the light of day, to suffer because of his transgression and begin his walk back into being-in-relation.

The mode of being-in-relation for Dostoevsky’s fictional beings of all levels is the first layer that we as readers need to unwrap in order to follow the author’s quest to solve the mystery of the person and to understand how this enigma opens his work to a higher realism. However,

¹⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 65.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

this only scratches the surface of how his poetics generate such a degree of realism, a realism that is not merely mimetic, but approaches the image and likeness of the Divine in which humanity was created. While freedom, selfless love, and uniqueness are revealed in Persons, and mark both the beginning and end of the human path to Authentic Being and salvation, nearly every manifestation of these principles is met with an equally—if not more—compelling depiction of slavishness, egoism, and conformity as caused by the Person. Georges Florovsky avers that Dostoevsky purposefully presents such cases as negative proofs of his faith in the image and likeness in human beings and their capacity for salvation:

Unbelief can be overcome not by arguments but by internal evidence, by an encounter with the living God. It may seem that Dostoevsky presented the case of faith less convincingly than the case of unbelief: the arguments of Ivan Karamazov are not refuted in the novel. In fact, they can be dismissed only by the act of faith - they cannot be refuted in the 'nihilistic' universe of discourse. Experience itself must be widened; the proud man must humble himself.¹⁸⁶

More often than not, Florovsky is correct in this analysis. Dostoevsky's fictional world is filled with murderers, sensualists, rapists, and thieves, and yet he claims to constantly strive toward a Person not only capable of, but acting through, joy, selflessness, peace, love, and compassion. What can turn people who have committed such vileness back toward such transcendent actions? Raskolnikov humbles himself in the novel, and attempts to make a turn from his egocentrism, but whether he actually achieves the peace that comes with the cleansing of the nous and the movement toward Divine being is still unclear in the Epilogue. The key to his metanoic turn on the Haymarket is his relationship with Sonya, but why? He is more open to personal relation in the moments immediately following the suddenness of the murder of Lizaveta, even if he rejects this openness almost as quickly as it presents itself once he realizes that he must flee from the scene of the crime. The possibility of being open to the other that his brief experience with

¹⁸⁶ Georges Florovsky, "The Quest for Religion in Russian Literature," in *Theology and Literature*, in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* 11, (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Buechervertriebanstalt, 1987), 26.

Lizaveta ignited is then reignited by Sonya. But what aspect of Sonya's selflessness reaches out and pulls Raskolnikov from his egocentrism? Beauty, both physical and spiritual, is the both key to unlocking the narrative movements from passion to virtue in the texts, as well as the next layer of the mystery of the person that Dostoevsky attempts to solve. The following chapter will investigate how the beauty of the Person acts to encourage or reject the mode of being-in-relation and as the fuel that propels the narrative direction of the novels.

Chapter III: The Impact of Beauty as Invitation-to-Relation and the Problem of Evil (Non-Beauty)

“‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’—that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”¹⁸⁷ -John Keats

“Красоту трудно судить; я еще не приготовился. Красота — загадка.”¹⁸⁸

“Beauty is difficult to judge. I’m still not ready to do so. Beauty is a riddle.” -Prince Myshkin.

§I: The Foundations of Dostoevsky’s Perception of Beauty

Biological needs and constraints—hunger, thirst, decay, and death—limit the physical existence of the person within time and space. These limiting factors, however, are not untraversable boundaries, but only mark the physical substance of the Person. The ability to transcend these boundaries is a vital element of the mystery of the person.¹⁸⁹ Dostoevsky’s creation of the literary Person, his striving to achieve the most realistic and faithful depiction of the ontological and anthropological reality in the image and likeness of the person, requires a concept that bridges the material and transcendent, that allows for the dynamic and synergetic experience which occurs in reality to be expressed in fiction. Beauty, as an inherent feature of the image and likeness of the Divine in the person, is the foundation of goodness in Dostoevsky’s Weltanschauung and the vital element that opens the unique being up to the transcendence of time and space. Within the novels, beauty is that which aids in the raising up of the fictional being up from the typological level of Character to Person, and also that which opens the door for Dostoevsky to depict a moment of higher realism in his work. The first section of the chapter will provide an initial Orthodox Personalist analysis on questions and substantiations of aesthetics within Dostoevsky’s fictional and journalistic works. The rest of the chapter will build

¹⁸⁷ John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” in *Poems of John Keats*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964) 58.

¹⁸⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Note here that the capitalized term *Person* represents the fictional level of being within my typology, whereas *person* represents the human being in reality.

on this initial analysis, expanding and clarifying the connection between the foundations of beauty in Christ and the work of beauty in the novels.

Beauty, at its most foundational level in the Orthodox tradition, is the expression of the uniqueness of the person to the other. But beauty is not merely a passive or individual feature. The existence of beauty in the world invites relation through an erotic call, like a flower beckoning a bee, and can be actively utilized by the person to call the other and the self into a dynamic movement beyond the material telos and into synthesis with the transcendent. As Paul Evdokimov writes, “To be in the Light is to be in an illuminating communion which reveals the icons of persons and things. This communion allows us to grasp their *logoi* as contained in divine thought and thus initiates these persons and things into their perfect wholeness: in other words, persons and things are initiated into the beauty that God willed for them.”¹⁹⁰ We can therefore unreservedly say that beauty has an inherently soteriological quality.

This dynamic and synergetic movement toward higher being can be derailed, however, causing the person to move toward isolation and destruction. As beauty is an inherently relational expression of being it requires an interaction between two or more discreet beings. Although the person is capable of offering or responding to the call of beauty, they are equally free to reject, debase, devour, and destroy the other by depersonalizing beauty. Therefore, due to human freedom, the call of beauty can lead either to synergetic and relational communion, or to exploitation or consumption of the other, resulting in non-beauty, or evil. Dostoevsky investigates the nature, purpose and potentiality of beauty as a key to the hidden depth of uniqueness, freedom and kenosis within the person. It is these very questions that Prince

¹⁹⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. Fr. Steven Bigham, (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1990), 7. For the discussion on the *logoi* and *Logos* in the Orthodox context see Chapter I §II: The Primacy of Being over Essence. The Theocentric Personal Paradigm.

Myshkin explicitly elaborates upon and struggles with throughout *The Idiot*, and a problem that haunts the ontological boundaries of all of Dostoevsky's post-Siberian novels.

The connection between inherent movement of the Person toward or away from the Truth of Divine being and aesthetics is actualized in Myshkin's struggle to comprehend and actualize beauty. The narrative in *The Idiot* takes shape according to the battle between the inherent beauty of creation and the fallenness of the postlapsarian world as played out in the interaction between Myshkin, Rogozhin, Nastasia Filippovna, and Aglaya Ivanovna. By virtue of the ontologically grounded freedom of the Person, the structure of the novel is unique in that it is generated by the decisions of the protagonists. Rather than creating a plot which is then populated by fictional beings that fulfill functions in order to bring about a premeditated conclusion, the Persons shape the contours of the novel. And due to the tension created by the dynamic function of beauty Dostoevsky loses control of certain aspects of the narrative, such as the flow of time and the realistic depiction of distance and space. Placing beauty—as the fundamental expression of the freedom, uniqueness, and kenotic love of the Person—at the center of the novel reveals how Dostoevsky attempts to reach a satisfactory depiction of the world-as-it-is with the world-as-it-will-be. His struggles with imbuing his novels with this depiction represent his poetic progression toward a higher realism. This dynamism is particularly evident in *The Idiot*—thanks to the serialized nature of its writing and publication, Dostoevsky has no idea where the novel will turn at the conclusion of Part I and the freedom and beauty he gives to his Persons run wild in the remainder of the text, until he reaches a conclusion far different from what he imagined when penning the opening salvo.

In the Orthodox Personalist perspective, beauty, through its function to call the other into relation, is capable of coxing out both the best and worst aspects of the person. On the one hand,

beauty pervades every aspect of the person's being, insofar as it is the expression of the *logos* within all things. By acting as charm—the call of desire to move into being-in-relation that streams forth from the uniqueness of one person to another—beauty promotes the development of the kenotic aspect of being. This call is the spark that sets the forge ablaze and brings two persons into relation with one another. On the other hand, beauty challenges the person to open themselves in direct, loving relation with the other, which does not always lead to an erotic meeting of two persons.

Unfortunately, biological need, which may lead to direct confrontation with other humans, is inevitable in the postlapsarian world; it pushes the egocentric self to consume beauty out of fear. Beauty is therefore fraught with peril, because, like love and freedom, the foundational principle of human freedom allows it to be turned inward; beauty is misused and becomes non-beauty. As a perversion of beauty, non-beauty inherently moves the person away from the telos of authentic being. It does, however, play a pedagogical role in Dostoevsky's oeuvre. The opposition of beauty and non-beauty presents a choice for the Person: either to engage and open themselves to the Other or to turn in on themselves and reject relation.

The first task before us, then, is to define beauty and, concomitantly, non-beauty. Beauty and non-beauty are not merely forms, ideals, or concepts but rather dynamic influences that inspire action, functioning respectively as an invitation-to-authentic-being or to an egocentric self-annihilation. Just as beauty draws the self and the other(s) into relation, non-beauty draws them apart, leading ultimately to their annihilation. The analysis of Dostoevsky's texts according to this paradigm will underscore that his inherent awareness of these concepts dictates the poetics and trajectories of the narrative structures of his texts. The model of being-in-relation that serves as the ontological grounding for his Persons is grounded in beauty, and the potential stored in the

tension between Persons experiencing beauty and non-beauty propels his fiction into the regions of higher realism.

What is beauty, to Dostoevsky? Before making a definite claim about his view on aesthetics, let us look at a very particular example of how Dostoevsky wrote about beauty in his novels. In *The Idiot*, the nihilist Ippolit accuses Myshkin of uttering the phrase “beauty will save the world” and demands to know, according to the Orthodox faith, “which beauty [Myshkin believes] will save [it]”¹⁹¹? The Prince neither gives an answer nor does he take ownership of these words. His inability and unwillingness are caused by the fact that, earlier in the novel, he has already confessed to being unable to judge beauty, as I note in the epigraph to this chapter. The text revolves around this question of engaging with beauty and how that engagement either destroys or saves the other. Myshkin is envisioned by Dostoevsky as “the perfectly beautiful person,” as the author wrote to His friend A.I. Maikov on December 31, 1867.¹⁹² There seems to be a problem in the text if the “perfectly beautiful person” is incapable of defending or judging beauty. Does Dostoevsky have a poor handle on beauty as a whole, or is there something flawed in this idea of a person representing or embodying perfect or ideal beauty.

In Part I of the novel, however, Dostoevsky illuminates how vital the relational quality of beauty is within his worldview. When Myshkin first visits the Epanchin’s, the General’s recognition that “suddenly, the Prince came along so opportunely; ‘as if sent by God!’”¹⁹³ Myshkin’s “sudden” arrival is a godsend to the General because it provides a distraction to his wife and daughters—allowing his secret dealings to go by unnoticed— but it also sets up

¹⁹¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 317.

¹⁹² Dostoevsky, [*P.S.S.* 28\(II\), 239-245](#)

¹⁹³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 44.

Myshkin to begin his function as the “perfectly beautiful person.”¹⁹⁴ Like Paris, he is forced to serve as judge in a beauty contest of the three Epanchin women. The judgement begins following a request for Myshkin to provide a subject for a painting. In his philosophizing, Myshkin recounts his experience viewing an execution, and describes in detail the face of the condemned. This leads to a discussion of faces in general, and the young Epanchin women ask the Prince to read their faces. In the course of this discussion Lizaveta Prokofevna lets slip what seems to be a banal, motherly phrase, saying “They are certainly up to no good, but they already love you. **I know [my daughters’] faces,**” to which the Prince replies “I know their faces, too.”¹⁹⁵ Despite his claim that he is unable to judge beauty, Myshkin engages in aesthetic philosophizing in his description of the condemned person. This leads the young women to express the connection between the face and beauty indicates the inherent relational quality of beauty. The sisters, through their demand for knowledge, mark the face as the primary communicator of the uniqueness of the person, while the “ideal” of beauty—Myshkin—sits before them, judging how close each of their own individual substantiations of beauty comes to perfection.

The connection between beauty and relation is made even more clear shortly thereafter when, pressuring him to continue entertaining them, the young women demand of Myshkin to know what secrets their physical appearance reveals. Although Myshkin refuses to immediately reveal what he reads in their countenances he encourages them to continue to think about beauty in a relational mode. When Adelaida Ivanovna comments that “if you’re such an expert in faces, then surely you were also in love,” she unveils a deeper connection between beauty and the Person.¹⁹⁶ In this statement, Adelaida suggests that love and beauty are united, indicating that

¹⁹⁴ For the discussion on “suddenly” and its importance to the make-up of the typological Person in Dostoevsky’s works see Chapter II §V: The Dostoevskian Type and §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

¹⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 57.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

they are the expression of the uniqueness of the Person. The Prince confirms this unity by recounting his telling of the relationship he shared with the woman named Marie in Switzerland.

The face, love and beauty are all brought together when he claims:

Listen, when I came in here earlier and saw your dear faces—I am now very attentive to faces—and heard your first words, it seemed to me, like for the very first time since [being in Switzerland] that my heart was light. I thought that maybe I really am one of the lucky ones: I know very well that one does not often meet those whom you can immediately love, and yet I immediately met you when I stepped off the train.¹⁹⁷

Here, in Part I, Myshkin serves as the mouthpiece for Dostoevsky's archetypal expression of the connection between beauty, relational ontology, and anthropology. He is the philosopher of relational beauty and, at this point in Dostoevsky's artistic journey toward higher realism, exemplifies beauty enhypostatized.

However, Myshkin's descriptions of the Epanchin women is an encyclopedic categorization of relational beauty. If beauty requires an active engagement of the other to propel the person towards the soteriological telos then what Myshkin does in his judgements is to strip each person down to an ideal, depersonalizing them and moving toward non-beauty. Looking at his Typification—depersonalizing a fictional being and lowering their typological level to that of a Type—of the Epanchin women illuminates exactly how the unique and active beauty of the individual person is commodified when it is not actively engaged with. Christos Yannaras explains how this type of ontic classification goes against the Christian ideal of beauty and truth:

It is with the same aim—namely the transcendence of individualism—that the Christian Church also refuses *to objectify its truth*: there is no objective source of truth for the Church, no authentic formulation, no dogmatic code, no system of principles. The Church's truth cannot be transformed into an epistemic object accessible only to individual understanding, subject to being possessed and mastered by the individual intellect.¹⁹⁸

Myshkin turns the women from beings to static images: he tells Adelaida that she is happy and pretty, and he tells Alexandra that she is like Holbein's *Madonna* in Dresden in her kindness and

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹⁹⁸ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 82.

sorrow. Instead of speaking to Aglaya, he praises the childlike beauty of Lizaveta Prokofevna.¹⁹⁹ When pushed to discuss Aglaya, he declares her a riddle, saying “You are so good-looking that one is afraid to look at you, [...] almost like Nastasia Filippovna, although her face is completely different!”²⁰⁰ Relating Aglaya to Nastasia begins the novel’s discourse on the dichotomy of beauty and non-beauty, but Myshkin has already begun to swing toward the pole of non-beauty in the novel. And, like Paris, the Prince judges and rules for beauty. This philosophical engagement with ideals, rather than a lived and relational approach to beauty beings to express why Ippolit’s query regarding the soteriological aspect of beauty remains unanswered in the novel.

From this short analysis of beauty from the beginning of *The Idiot*, it is clear that the Orthodox Personalist understanding regarding the relational quality of beauty is at play in Dostoevsky’s work. However, a clearer picture of what exactly beauty is within the context of Dostoevsky’s understanding still needs to be developed. Fortunately, Dostoevsky explicitly comments on beauty, and particularly its soteriological quality, in the notebooks to the novel. Here, having marked the following phrase as specifically his own and not attributed to one of the characters, he scrawls: “The world will be saved by beauty. Two specimens of beauty.”²⁰¹ If we juxtapose this with the final text, which reads “beauty will save the world,” a fascinating change has occurred from the preliminary declaration to the charge Ippolit hurls at Myshkin in the final version of the novel. Dostoevsky’s clarity in the notebooks becomes muddled in the hands Ippolit who attributes this sentiment to Myshkin, and by comparing the two expressions of the

¹⁹⁹ See Figure 10.

²⁰⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 66.

²⁰¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 9, 222.

soteriological phrase will further solidify Dostoevsky's fidelity to the Orthodox Personalist position.

In the notebooks Dostoevsky writes "*mir krasotoi spasëtsia*." He writes that "*mir* (the world)," as the subject of the sentence, "*krasotoi* (through beauty)," the instrumental form of "beauty" indicating the means by which something is accomplished, "will save itself," using the reflexive verb *spasëtsia*. For Dostoevsky "The world will be saved by beauty." He immediately follows this declaration with the phrase "Two instantiations of beauty."²⁰² *Krasota*, however, is the subject of Ippolit's question: "*Kakaia krasota spasët mir* (What kind of beauty will save the world)?" uses the transitive verb *spacët* and "world" is the direct object.²⁰³ There are two important implications in this shift: the first indicates that beauty acts in a soteriological way within the world, but that there are two instantiations of beauty, whereas the second indicates that because there is more than one instantiation of beauty, only one—or perhaps none—has a soteriological function.

Critical analyses of the soteriological aspect of Dostoevsky's beauty often overlook the antinomy of dynamic and ideal qualities it contains. Of Dostoevsky's phrasing in the notebooks for *The Idiot*, Robert Louis Jackson says: "The first phrase—'Beauty will save the world'—is a model of syntactic precision and order' it promises direct, unimpeded action. But the second phrase is ominous and disruptive; it shatters the integrity of the beauty-savior and bogs down the action in ambiguity and enigma."²⁰⁴ Jackson raises the all-important issue of the human capacity to disrupt the "direct, unimpeded action," of beauty working in the world. But at the same time he overstates beauty's agency, both in Dostoevsky's phrasing and worldview. Beauty is inherent

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 317.

²⁰⁴ Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 40.

within the person, and its expression and reception must be dynamically engaged with in order for the soteriological telos to be reached. Beauty functions to save by bringing the person into relation with the other—and eventually with the Divine.

Jackson then proceeds to fill in the answer Myshkin leaves blank in the face of Ippolit's interrogation, relating that Dostoevsky believes that Christ is the beauty that the world will become. Jackson notes, however, "That when Dostoevsky, as critic or journalist, and speaking for himself, uses the word 'beauty,' it is invariably in the antique or neo-Platonist and Christian sense of ideal beauty."²⁰⁵ Here Jackson presents a skewed vision of the Christian aesthetic principles to which Dostoevsky adheres. A beauty that forces change upon the world is not the Orthodox view of Beauty. But rather the inherent beauty, the *logoi* of all things that point back toward the Creator, inclines the whole of creation and particularly humanity to move back into a mode of being-in-relation. The soteriological quality of beauty that Dostoevsky sees as the Beauty of Christ requires a synergetic activity that requires action from both Creator and created. In both Dostoevsky and Ippolit's phrases the soteriological aspect, and therefore relational, rings forth, only in line with Orthodox aesthetics. It is Dostoevsky allowance of freedom to his fictional beings that permits a debate that probes this issue and seems to acknowledge that the encroachment of non-beauty is also possible.

Investigating these two phrasings of the same idea further, the connection to Orthodox aesthetics shifts further into alignment. The first implication of Dostoevsky's meditation on beauty lies within the Orthodox tradition, beauty is inherently linked to Christ, and therefore for Dostoevsky beauty not only acts and exists, but it can cause a person to move toward authentic being and the Divine. This is the soteriological aspect of beauty, which implies that "saving the

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

world” requires a movement into communion with the Divine. The telos of the movement initiated by beauty, therefore, is salvation. The second implication, however, confirms that a personal reaction to beauty can act in either the positive or the negative direction. If the former brings one into communion, the latter pushes the Person away from salvation. The movement away from authentic being is possible only if beauty is an expression of the person and not an immutable or ideal form, such as one would understand were they dealing with the neo-Platonic ideal of beauty. Within Jackson’s vision of Dostoevsky’s aesthetics, such a movement would be impossible due to the overwhelming force of Divine beauty. Looking more closely at the two utterances of the telos of beauty, it is clear that Ippolit implies that some impersonal and grand form will save the world, whereas Dostoevsky professes that it is a function of the person that transforms the earthly and moves the person toward salvation. What Dostoevsky reveals by manipulating his perspective to fit into Ippolit’s antagonistic mentality is the connection between beauty and non-beauty born from human freedom—the Person in the novel, just as the person in reality, is capable of lashing out against beauty no matter how lovingly it is given or potent its charm.

It follows that there are two main areas of investigation into the mysteries of Dostoevsky’s beauty: its relational/soteriological component and its ability to be received in two different modes by the Person in the texts. Thankfully, it is not difficult to investigate in order to piece together Dostoevsky’s perspective on beauty and aesthetics. In both his fiction and his journalistic writing, his views on aesthetics are abundantly clear. Although there is a practical side of beauty, Dostoevsky unquestionably rejects utilitarianism, escapism, or “ars gratia artis” as the foundation of his work and thought. Rather, beauty, and therefore art, is inherently linked to earthly truth (the *logoi* of individual things or persons), and earthly truth to a greater Truth

(that the *logoi* point toward the *Logos* Whose image and likeness in which they were was created), and that greater Truth is embodied in the incarnate Christ. Dostoevsky himself said to A.S. Ivanova that “the Gospel according to St. John identifies the miracle of the Incarnation with the revelation of Beauty.”²⁰⁶ Clearly, Dostoevsky's fidelity to the Orthodox conception of Beauty is grounded in the Incarnational theology.

Felix Balonov, along with other Dostoevsky scholars, confirms Dostoevsky's connection of Christ and beauty due to of the author's fidelity to the Gospels and the Orthodox understanding of Christ as beauty. He writes that “it becomes clear that Dostoevsky, when thinking about the only means of salvation of the Earth, uses the word beauty as a euphemism for the word Christ. For him these words—Christ and beauty—were clearly inseparable from one another. At the same time, internal, moral, and spiritual beauty prevailed over external, bodily beauty.”²⁰⁷ Robert Louis Jackson and Ksana Blank also investigate the connection between Christ and beauty in studies that will be addressed at a later point in this chapter. However, these and other critical assessments of Dostoevsky's understanding of Christ and beauty tend to turn toward a metaphysical understanding, like Jackson's neo-Platonist tendencies above, that cut off beauty from reality.

Conversely, many critics of Dostoevsky's aesthetics, such as Nikolai Dobroliubov, push back from a utilitarian perspective. Dobroliubov and those who think like him, cannot see the usefulness of Christian aesthetics. However, as Evdokimov writes, “In the light of activist philosophy, it is certainly true that a saint is absolutely ‘useless,’ as Beauty is and its icons are useless, in the fictions and dreams of this world, and yet God saves and a saint enlightens and

²⁰⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28 (II), 251.

²⁰⁷ Felix Balonov, “Ellinskaya ‘ruletkā’ Dostoevskogo,” in *Sbornik statei*, Vologodskaya oblastnaya universal'naya nauchnaya biblioteka, https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/dos/toj/evs/kii/dostojevskii_f/sbor_stat/8.htm (accessed January 11, 2021).

explains!”²⁰⁸ Both the metaphysical and utilitarian critical analyses of Dostoevsky’s aesthetics misinterpret the viability of Beauty in the Orthodox context in the world.

According to the Orthodox Personalist perspective, beauty is not merely some ideal that cannot be reached in the world, but rather that its existence and efficacy in the material world is immanent and efficacious. Vladimir Solovyov, Dostoevsky’s dear friend and Orthodox philosopher, wrote “[Utilitarians, who are opponents of pure art,] reject [realized beauty] not because it is too elevated, but because it is not sufficiently real; i.e., it is not in a condition to command our entire reality, to transform it, to make it thoroughly beautiful.”²⁰⁹ If beauty is defined as the active reflection of the image of Christ in the person or thing, then it is useful for greater purposes than, although not incapable of inspiring, acts of socio-political reform or justice. Just as he rejects the idea of the Grand Inquisitor, who has promoted the anti-Christ through the subjugation of humanity to perfection in the name of the utilitarian “good,” so too does Dostoevsky reject the subjugation of the person to beauty. In his letter of June 7, 1876 to V.A. Alekseev Dostoevsky makes this point abundantly clear:

But Christ knew that bread alone could not revitalize a person. If at the same time there is no spiritual life, the ideal of Beauty, then a person will become bored, die, go mad, kill themselves or indulge in pagan fantasies. And since Christ in Himself and in His Word carried the ideal of Beauty, He decided: it is better to instill in the souls the ideal of Beauty; having it in the soul, all will become one another’s brothers and then, of course, working for each other, they will also be rich. Then give them bread, and they will probably become enemies of each other out of boredom. But if you give both Beauty and bread together? Then it will take away from the person *labor, identity, the sacrifice of their own good for the sake of a neighbor*—in a word, robbed of all life, the ideal of life. And therefore, it is better to proclaim one spiritual light.²¹⁰

To “instill in the soul the ideal of Beauty” or, as Balonov noted Christ, is not to subjugate the soul to a fixed and necessary position for material gains, but rather to turn it toward uniqueness, relation, and love for the transformation of reality into that which it should, and will, be.

²⁰⁸ Evdokimov, 43.

²⁰⁹ Solovyov. “The Heart of Beauty,” in *The Heart of Reality*, 30.

²¹⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S. 29 (II)*, 85.

The foundation for this understanding of Dostoevsky's concept of beauty lies in his refutation of the critique of Dobroliubov, whose adherence to socially responsible utilitarian art, fashionable throughout the nineteenth century in Russia, serves as a perfect foil to Dostoevsky's insistence that art must serve the higher purpose of the salvation of humanity, the unification with the Divine. I must quote from Dostoevsky's article, from his journal *Vremia (Time)* in 1861, "Mr. —bov and the Question of Art" at length here in order to provide a complete view of Dostoevsky's assessment of the necessity to view art independently of utilitarianism, to which I will return multiple times over the course of this chapter:

The need for beauty and the creation which embodies it is inseparable from the person, and with it the person, perhaps, would not want to live in the world. The person thirsts for it, finds it and accepts beauty *unconditionally* and just because it is beauty; and he bows before it with reverence, without asking what it is useful for and what one can buy for it. And, perhaps, precisely in this consists the greatest secret of art, that the image of beauty created by it immediately becomes an idol, *unconditionally*. And why does it become an idol? Because the need for beauty develops most at the moment man is in discord with reality, in disharmony, in struggle, that is, when *he is living most of all*, because the person lives most of all when he is seeking something and striving; at such a time he feels within himself a most natural desire for everything harmonious, for tranquility, and in beauty there is both harmony and tranquility. But when the person finds what he has been striving for, then for a time life as it was slows up for him, and we have seen examples in which the person, having achieved the ideal of his desires, not knowing what further to strive for, being satiated, would fall into a kind of anguish, would even foment in himself this anguish, seek out another ideal in his life and, out of extreme surfeit of pleasure, not only would not value what he had enjoyed, but consciously would even turn from the direct path, exciting in himself alien tastes, unhealthy, sharp, disharmonic, sometimes monstrous ones, losing measure and aesthetic feeling for healthy beauty and demanding instead of it exceptions. And therefore, beauty is immanent in everything healthy, that is, to that which is most alive, and is a necessary need of the human organism. It is harmony; in it lies that guarantee of tranquility; it is incarnate in the person and embodies its ideals to the person.²¹¹

Four points in this extended quotation will serve as the foundations for the continued investigation in the following sections of beauty through the Orthodox Personalist perspective, conceding at the outset that Dostoevsky does not mention Christ by name in his letter to Dobroliubov. However, without the link between beauty and Truth, and a deeper understanding of what that Truth entails, it is impossible to come to a reading of the novels that will align with

²¹¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

Dostoevsky's intentions. What's more, it is certain that, as Balonov demonstrated, beauty is always at least connected to if not a euphemism for, Christ in Dostoevsky's discourse. He clearly speaks about the "ideal" of beauty within the context of the Orthodox understanding of the Truth of the Incarnation, as we will see in his notebooks and novels. Therefore the following analysis of beauty in relation to Personalist theory can continue without hesitation, insofar as Dostoevsky himself confirms his ideal is indeed Christ, and will continue to develop and investigate the roots of Dostoevsky's aesthetics and their manifestations within the novels.

§II: The Relational Grounds of Beauty According to Orthodox Personalist Concepts

In his response to Dobroliubov, Dostoevsky is clearly attempting to unearth the foundations of the purpose or telos of beauty in his fight against utilitarian demands on art. When Dostoevsky writes, "The need for beauty and the creation which embodies it is inseparable from the person, and with it the person, perhaps, would not want to live in the world. The person thirsts for it, finds it and accepts beauty *unconditionally* and just because it is beauty," he unifies the pursuit of beauty to the personal and relational quality of being.²¹² Furthermore, in his notebooks for *Demons*, Dostoevsky comments that "the world will become the beauty of Christ," and that "the Holy Spirit in an immediate comprehension of beauty, the prophetic awareness of harmony, and therefore, a steadfast striving for it."²¹³ If, as Balonov argues, Dostoevsky's use of beauty is synonymous with Christ, then a direct connection to the relational mode of being is clear. Evocations of health, harmony, and tranquility in Dostoevsky's works therefore all point back to the image and likeness in which the person was formed—back to Divine being and the

²¹² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

²¹³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 188, 154.

person of Christ through the inherent link between the Orthodox understanding of the Incarnation and the creation of the person in the image and likeness of Divine Being.²¹⁴

If union with the beauty of Christ is the telos of human existence, then it is necessary to keep in mind that the Incarnation does not entail a materialization of an unachievable ideal. Rather, the Divine experienced all that the person experiences so that all people could become one with the Divine. The personification of perfection has already been achieved, but it comes along with human experience. There is no dimension of the human person that was not experienced in the Incarnation. Though Christ did not sin, He was tempted and so experienced that part of human being that is foreign to Divine being—and, conversely, humanity was created to take part in being-in-relation with the Godhead. If, Christ's beauty, for Dostoevsky is that which humanity strives for, then we can therefore aver that for Dostoevsky the beauty of the Divine is inherent within all people, but requires an erotic and voluntary act of the self that calls out to the other in the same manner that the beauty of the Divine calls out to the person. There is a model to achieve deification, the perfection of human being, through being-in-relation.

Continuing on this train of thought, if the telos of beauty is Christ, then therefore, using Dostoevsky's phrase that "[beauty] embodies the ideals of the person and humankind," then in Dostoevsky's perspective one can conclude that beauty created or radiated by unique persons is an active expression in the world of Christ as an ideal. This idea coincides directly with the Orthodox idea regarding the unique *logoi* within all things.²¹⁵ If the *logoi* within all things is the connection that the material world maintains with the Divine, and beauty is the activation of the *logoi* then in Dostoevsky's world we can consider acts of beauty to be expressions not only of

²¹⁴ For the connections between the Incarnation and created beings see Chapter I §IV: The Incarnation as the Relational Locus of the Knowledge of Being, and §V: The Created Person, Image and Likeness.

²¹⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

the unique Person but also of Christ. In this way beauty brings about perfection in all persons when given freely and lovingly. Vladimir Lossky locates the *logoi* in the person's relation to the Divine via the act of creation:

We only know the will of God insofar as it is His relationship to the world which is already created; it is the point of contact between the infinite and the finite, and in this sense the divine 'willings' are the creative ideas of things, the *logoi*, the 'words.' [...] Every created thing has its point of contact with the Godhead; and this point of contact is its idea, reason, or *logos* which is at the same time the end toward which it trends.²¹⁶

Dostoevsky's perspective on beauty is consistent with the Orthodox conception of the *logoi* of created things insofar as the "embodiment of the ideal" is directly related to the *logoi*.

Beauty is the "meeting point" that connects the Divine and the human in Dostoevsky's work—that point being the reflection of the Divine. As the Incarnation revealed the Divine in human flesh so too does beauty that radiates out from the person express the synthesis of fullness of the transcendent world—the world-as-it-will-be—and all the world-as-it-is. The *logoi* of each person are the source of their beauty and that which contains the potential for what the person can become. Yannaras presents the issue of the created world with regard to *logoi* through the metaphor of the poet:

The world in its entirety and in its every detail is an effected *word* (*lógos*), a personal activity of God. According to the account of Genesis, God created everything only by his word. [...] The poet's poem is a coincidence and union of words. In order for the poem to exist, the simple assembling of words is not enough, without their concurrence, their 'shaping' or formation, their composition and structure. This concurrence of words which constitute the poem is a new reality of another 'essence' from the 'essence' of the poet, but nevertheless always revealing his own personal distinctiveness, and also unceasingly creative of new realizations of life.²¹⁷

The beauty of the poem, that which sets it apart from a non-creative act of speech or an act lacking in beauty, represents that which connects the person who experiences it to the creator. Therefore, in Dostoevsky's work, I propose that beauty embodies the mediator, the point of contact, between the Divine and the human.

²¹⁶ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 98.

²¹⁷ Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 40.

This concept of beauty as a mediator, working as charm to call the person into relation with the other, is most apparent in Dostoevsky's work through the conception of the literary Person as a unique being, one which discloses the unrepeatably manifestation of its existence within a fictive context. With this proposition in mind, let's return briefly to the juxtaposition posited by both Dostoevsky and Ippolit in the context of *The Idiot*. The soteriological aspect of beauty, as proposed by both creator and created, requires a subject and an other. There needs to be a relational axis around which beauty can function. Yannaras contextualizes the foundation of beauty in a relational manner:

The truth of beings is witnessed to as beauty, as the principle of a personal uniqueness and dissimilarity, which presupposes and discloses a personal creative energy. This cosmopoeic personal energy, the principle of the world's decorum (*kosmiotês*), beauty as the truth of beings is not exhausted cognitively by a 'semantic' definition (arithmetical and quantitative) arising from human reason, but is encountered by human reason (*logos*) within the context of a personal dialogue (*dia-logos*), a fact of personal relation."²¹⁸

Beauty, first and foremost, confirms the truth of freedom, selfless love, and uniqueness in humans, but only if it is grounded in a relational mode. Because of beauty's presence as existential fact, rather than as a simple, intangible intellection of aesthetic ideals, it creates the capacity for relation between two or more persons, as fueled by dialogic experience.

The poetic structures of Dostoevsky's texts reflect the synergetic activity of beauty insofar as they help to reveal the necessity of the mode of being-in-relation to the narrative. Furthermore, these structures are built on and can only exist because of the foundations of interpersonal discourse and experience that stem from this aesthetic worldview. In light of this foundation, beauty serves as the launch pad for ideological discourse (either mono- or dialogic) in the texts, and is also the impetus for the physical actions of the fictional beings; it creates both the static and dynamic structures of the novels. Without beauty as a mediator between fictional

²¹⁸ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 81.

beings or between the person and the Divine, the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's texts would crumble due to the monologic tyranny of the authorial voice.²¹⁹

Although the relational foundations of beauty have been established, there is still no clear-cut definition of what beauty is in Dostoevsky's worldview. In his work, Dostoevsky portrays beauty as an imminent aspect of life in the form of natural, passive splendor. However, beauty also rises up into being, in a more potent relational manner, through creative and active displays. Solovyov echoes this sentiment when he writes:

The final result of natural process is man in a two-fold sense: first, as the most beautiful, and second as the most conscious natural creature. In this latter capacity, man *himself*, rising out of the result, becomes an *agent* of the universal process and with this more perfectly corresponds to his ideal goal—a complete, mutual permeation and liberated solidarity of the spiritual and the material, the ideal and the real, the subjective and the objective factors and elements of the universe.²²⁰

There is natural beauty—the *logoi*—that inspires the person to attempt to make all creation shine in accordance with its natural state. What's more, there is a need for the most beautiful being in creation—the person who contains both the image and likeness of the Divine—to take what is already beautiful and add to it. Solovyov extrapolates upon this idea, writing that:

In the physical world [i.e., without the aid of the likeness of the Divine in human action-*P. G. W.*], the universal Idea (positive unity, the life of all for one another within One), Is realized only in a reflected sense: all objects and phenomena obtain the potentiality to exist one for another (are revealed one to another) in mutual reflections through a common weightless medium. In a similar way, all that exists is reflected in reason by means of general abstract conceptions which do not convey the intrinsic essence of things but only their superficial logical outlines. Consequently, in rational knowledge we find only a reflection of the universal Idea, and not its real presence in the known and knowable. For its actual realization, truth and the good must become the creative force in an object, transforming, and not just reflecting reality.²²¹

Solovyov focuses on the fact that the person should become an agent that seeks to "transform, and not just reflect reality," and this focus confirms the fact that not only are there two expressions of beauty in creation, but they are inherently linked. Furthermore, he indicates that

²¹⁹ I discuss Dostoevsky's pushback against monologic dominance of narration in Chapter II §III: The Bakhtinian Grounds for the Study of the Person in Dostoevsky.

²²⁰ Solovyov, "The Universal Meaning of Art," in *The Heart of Reality*, 68.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 70-1.

the achievement of a higher mode of being requires a relational context, inspired by the *logoi* and communicated—requiring relation—through the likeness of the Divine in the person.

Natural beauty is, in Orthodox terms, a mode of natural revelation of the Divine to the person. It confirms the existence of and allows for an initial but passive relation with the Godhead through contemplation of sensual experience. Natural revelation and beauty confirm that the source of beauty, Christ, and concomitantly, the beauty of the Incarnation, is not an ideal inaccessible to the physical world. Nature does not strive to become the ideal, it contains a connection to the Divine and the potential for development into an aspect of the world-as-it-will-be. This potential is like a seed that, when watered through the engagement of the person and active beauty, blossoms into the garden of the deified world. The natural revelation of the Divine reflects the potential harmony inherent in the *logoi* through beauty, and this harmony is apparent in the unrepeatability of the aesthetic value of the sensual experience of a sunset, of the blanket of stars shimmering in the night sky, or of the physical form of an animal or person. Evdokimov draws the connection between natural beauty and the beauty of the person in relation:

Like a living person, the world turns toward us, speaks to us, sings to us, shows us its secret colors, and fills us with an overwhelming joy; our solitude is thus broken. We commune with the beauty of a countryside, with a face or with poetry in the same way we commune with a friend. We feel a strange relation with a reality that seems to be our soul's homeland, once lost and now found. Art "dephenomenalizes" present reality, and as a result the whole world opens up to mystery.²²²

These scenes of nature, that are abundant in Dostoevsky and filled with the joy of interpersonal communion, express Dostoevsky's understanding of the inherent relational quality of all existence. And Dostoevsky himself is not unfamiliar with this connection between natural beauty and the Divine: "the Holy Spirit in an immediate comprehension of beauty, the prophetic awareness of harmony, and therefore, a steadfast striving for it."²²³ However, outside of the

²²² Evdokimov, 21.

²²³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 154.

Orthodox understanding of natural revelation, purely sensual engagement with natural beauty is the foundation for the humanistic or sentimental love for ‘beauty and the sublime,’ in the “dephenomenalized” mode of art.

The dephenomenalization of beauty, however, reveals the possibility of non-beauty. Non-beauty, in relation to natural beauty, would be the reaction to the *logoi* of things or persons that seeks to consume what is unique in the world. Without the desire for the transcendent movement toward authentic being, as conveyed in Orthodox teaching, it becomes easier to consume natural beauty. As Evdokimov notes:

Beauty is not only an aesthetical reality but also metaphysical. A purely aesthetical vision, one that recognizes only aesthetical values, is certainly the furthest removed from beauty. Such a vision, being autonomous and thereby defenseless, opens itself very easily to demonic perversions. Beauty can deceive, and its charms can hide moral depravity and a shocking indifference toward truth. It is obvious, as St. Paul stated, that natural beauty is fragile; it suffers and is waiting for its liberation from the *religious* man.²²⁴

“Liberated from the religious man,” beauty morphs from a dynamic invitation to being-in-relation to a tranquilizer, soma for a newly experienced pain of existence taken not as a pill but as easily achieved as withdrawing into the self. Natural beauty does not require the active interpersonal relation and therefore, when confronted by the egocentric desires of the other, cannot push back against this selfish longing. The lack of an explicit push back against egoism from a rational other leaves natural beauty as a less effective soteriological force insofar as it only invites to relation in general and cannot engage in a dialogic pursuit of the transcendent.

The Underground Man provides fertile ground to investigate the, comparative, weakness of the invitational quality of natural beauty and the ease with which freedom can dismiss the charm. He claims that “I would have seized every opportunity to shed a tear into my glass and then drink a toast to everything beautiful and sublime. Then I would have turned everything into the beautiful and sublime; I would have sought out the beautiful and sublime in the nastiest, most

²²⁴ Evdokimov, 23.

indisputable trash.”²²⁵ But he does not and cannot seek out either natural or personal beauty. He rejects the sublime taste of being-in-relation because he does not want to, his freedom allows him to reject being-in-relation. And that is enough. He is free to reject beauty, but it isolates him. David Goldfarb asks whether there is in this rant “despite the Underground Man’s frequent jibes at Kant’s theory of ‘the sublime and the beautiful’... a more profound sense in which Dostoevsky affirms Kant’s theory?”²²⁶ But Kant’s theory of the sublime and beautiful is precisely that against which Evdokimov protests and Dostoevsky, through his mocking tones in the Underground Man, rejects.²²⁷ Lev Shestov rejects any shred of fidelity to Kant’s Idealism in the Underground Man:

If there are those who are unwilling to repudiate "effect without cause," and who, rather than seek traces of randomness in spheres inaccessible to and of no concern to us, try to discover the absence of regularity right here on earth, in their immediate environment, then how can we count on their readiness to subject their will, which they know is free, to universal norms, solely for the triumph of the scientific order, which they detest more than anything else? Isn't it natural that they would behave quite differently, and like the gentleman with the retrograde physiognomy in *Notes from the Underground*, would violate the rules merely to destroy every law? Neither the profundity of Kant's thought, nor the clarity and persuasiveness of Mill's arguments would make any impression on them. The insight of these people will not surprise you, and as for dialectics, even Hegel himself would throw up his hands before Dostoevsky's underground philosopher.²²⁸

Shestov articulates Dostoevsky’s general attitude toward free will and the groundedness of his fictional beings in reality while still longing for the charm of beauty and its call to being in relation. Here the Underground Man violates the “rules” of beauty, its invitation-to-being, for the simple reason that “the profundity of Kant’s thought” makes such an impression on him that he willingly sticks his tongue out at anything related to the “beautiful and sublime.”

²²⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 109.

²²⁶ David A. Goldfarb, “Kant’s Aesthetics in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*,” in *Newsletter of the Society for Russian Religious Philosophy*, 1, Spring, 1995, 11-19, <http://mosaic.echonyc.com/~goldfarb/u-ground.htm> (accessed April 21, 2021).

²²⁷ Kant’s aesthetic theory is set forth in his *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987. For a lengthy, but thorough engagement with his theory see Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology", ed. Edward N. Zalta *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Winter 2019 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/kant-aesthetics/> (accessed April 21, 2021).

²²⁸ Lev Shestov, *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy*, in *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Bernard Martin and Spencer E. Roberts, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 297.

Using the language of Kant, the Underground Man not only mocks Idealism, but this voice also allows Dostoevsky to engage the reader unfamiliar with Orthodox concepts through an apophatic denial of and an encoded cataphatic support for the Orthodox conception of beauty. Solovyov's defense of Dostoevsky's Orthodoxy against the post-mortem critiques of Konstantin Leontiev expresses this simultaneously apophatic and cataphatic engagement with Orthodoxy in his work:

Dostoevsky had to address people who had not read the Bible and had forgotten the catechesis. Therefore, in order to be understood, he had to utilize against his will such expressions as "universal harmony" when he wanted to speak about the triumphant, or orthodox church. And Mr. Leontiev points out in vain that triumph and glorification of the church must take place in the other world; but Dostoevsky believed in universal harmony here, on earth. For no such absolute boundary between "here" and "there" is supposed in the church.²²⁹

The Underground Man, through an excess of rationality and consciousness, rejects the absolute boundary "between 'here' and 'there'" to such an extent that he can no longer stand the sight of beauty in anyone or anything. Dostoevsky depicts, as he notes in the footnote to the opening of the novella, a person who "must exist" in contemporary society because he sees the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Idealism to such an extent that the person suffers the anxiety of isolation from it.²³⁰

The Underground Man easily rejects the sunsets and the stars and lives in squalor, and even though the sublime exists in the trash he is not searching for it. Rather, the trash—and any natural beauty that might be hiding therein—is lauded and consumed as self-justification for his rejection of beauty. Dostoevsky presents us with a complex image of rejection of the call to being-in-relation in the Underground Man's rejection of natural beauty, but also through a spiteful attitude toward active personal beauty. The former justifies his rejection of the later, yet contradictions arise from the logic of this justification. Because passive beauty is easy to ignore,

²²⁹ Vladimir Solovyov, "A Note in Defense of Dostoevsky against the Charge of a 'New' Christianity ('Our New Christians,' and so forth, K. Leontiev, Moscow: 1882)," in *The Heart of Reality*, 202-3.

²³⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 4.

the Underground Man considers it worthless. He therefore also rationalizes his rejection of the personal because the difficulty of opening oneself to the kenotic beauty of the other is exponentially more difficult. Although I will return to the singular moment in which natural beauty succeeds, to a small degree, in charming the Underground Man into relation with another person, I now turn to a necessary explanation of active beauty.

Active personal beauty, which emanates from and reveals the person, either magnifies physical splendor or deflects attention from the so-called aesthetic deficiencies of the person from whom it shines. The creative act of art is the most obvious and easily accessible transmission of personal beauty. The Personalist perspective avers that creative outpourings of the self in art are the manifestation of the Image of Divine in a unique person. What's more, Solovyov qualifies creative charm as a force that impacts not only the material world, but the spiritual as well:

We know, however, that beauty has an objective significance, that it acts outside the human world, and that nature herself is not indifferent to beauty. And if nature has not succeeded in realizing perfect beauty in the domain of physical life, it is with good reason that through great labors and efforts, terrible catastrophes and monstrous creations – necessary, however, for the final end – she rises from that lower realm into the sphere of conscious human life. The task that cannot be fulfilled by means of physical life must be fulfilled through human creativeness.²³¹

Because “beauty has an objective significance, that it acts outside the human world,” it can be averred that true art *always* involves spiritual activity insofar as it represents the unique image of the person entering into the physical world, which therefore opens the subject who puts them self forward by their art into communion with the other who receives it. Art therefore inherently develops as an erotic movement against solipsism.

²³¹ Vladimir Solovyov, “Beauty, Sexuality, and Love,” in *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Alexander Schmemmann, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1965), 95.

Even if the intention of the creative act is egocentric the work inherently contains a part of the uniqueness of the soul of its creator and therefore reaches the sensory organ of the other in an erotic manner.

Beauty may be internalized as an invitation to individualistic pleasure, as a desire to appropriate and possess that which it charms, but it may also be internalized on the infinity of intermediate levels leading up to the attainment of freedom from the necessity of egocentric urges. [...] The more *erotic* the *logos* of the artist is (that is, the more it manifests transcendence and invites to relationship) the more fully it formulates personal otherness.²³²

When the Underground Man writes his confessions in the novella he erotically opens himself, even if it is against his own will. In a similar manner, Ivan's *poema* of the Grand Inquisitor also erotically opens himself to his brother, but this latter bit of kenosis will be discussed later.

Art is therefore defined by the personal beauty contained within, as a fundamentally active event, relational, and beyond simple sensual²³³ arousal. Even when the creator of art refuses relation, even if their creation is spawned in an effort to negate or reject relation, beauty inherently fights against "the necessity of egocentric urges," which is to say, against the postlapsarian biological needs for physical survival, sustenance, reproduction, or avoidance of pain.

When beauty is experienced only sensually, only received in a naturalistic or egocentric manner, it is perverted by the recipient, solipsized and on guard like a dragon perched atop piles of gold. The perverse pleasure of interiorizing or consuming beauty, and therefore what is unique and personal of the other, leads to the destruction of the relational bonds between two persons: Therefore, the experience of the world and the world's beauty, which the senses provide us with, corresponds not to the truth of the world and its beauty, but to the senses' demand for pleasure. The World's beauty is changed into a delectable object of the individual's senses, serving individual self-containedness. The senses do not constitute and do not recognize the true beauty of the world; they constitute and recognize merely a phantasm of this beauty, the distorted image of a beauty subjected to individualistic demand.²³⁴

In opposition to the relational quality of personal beauty, non-beauty and evil mark a rushing of the individual away from pain toward pleasure, a movement marked by no regard for the

²³² Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 70.

²³³ Unless otherwise noted, *sensual* relates to *the senses* rather than to *sexual pleasure*.

²³⁴ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 84.

material or spiritual cost to the self or the other. But there is a distinct connection between natural and creative beauty.

One instance in which Dostoevsky articulates these two expressions of beauty, the natural and the creative, arises in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Markel, the elder Zosima's older brother, greets natural beauty on his deathbed in a manner that confounds his doctor and family. Markel notes that "Yes, there was so much of God's glory around me: birds, trees, meadows, sky, but I alone lived in disgrace, I alone who disgraced everything and did not notice the beauty and glory at all."²³⁵ In his awareness of the inherent beauty of the natural world Markel also reifies the need to act on it in order to perfect, or at least illuminate, the *logoi* in nature. His actions communicate not only the inherent beauty of the world, but he also activates it, bringing Zosima into closer relation with himself, thereby leading to Zosima's transformation into a person who lives authentically in the mode of being-in-relation. Here Dostoevsky illustrates the dual nature of beauty. Clearly the natural world, through the individual *logoi* in all things, reflects the beauty of Christ. Markel ignores this fact until it is opened to him upon partaking of the Eucharistic Communion on his sickbed during Holy Week. In Markel's description of the natural beauty in the world there is obviously a positive and relational aspect. However, Dostoevsky also explicitly connects the beauty of the world, the union of the person with Christ, and the self-less love for the other.

Beauty is not merely the manifestation of the image of Divine in the world, but it inspires an active creation of beauty and relationality through interpersonal deeds. In this instance, the recognition of the passive beauty and joy in all things begins with an act of selflessness. The change in Markel occurs only after he enters into the liturgical traditions of Orthodoxy through

²³⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 262.

the Eucharist. And yet communing with the Divine was not a moment of devoutness, belief, or strict adherence to dogma, but rather an act of kindness toward another person. Markel only partakes of the Eucharistic Communion out of love for his mother. In fact, he actively speaks of his disbelief in Orthodox traditions before this point. Yet despite his disbelief, the act of selfless love, coupled with the sacrament, brings him into relation not only with her, but with all the cosmos and the Divine. Most people within Dostoevsky's fiction are blind to the beauty and joy of the world because of egocentric choice, just as Markel was before communing with the other. But the meeting with the Divine through both the sacramental act and the active love for his mother opens up the shining nature of creation bejeweled by the *logoi* of all things.

Critical analyses of this scene points toward the two modes of beauty in Dostoevsky's work, but often devalue the explicit connection to Orthodoxy that allows him to depict this aesthetic mode of thought. Malcolm Jones presents one such view, indicating that "The image of Christ as such is still absent from his discourse, but Markel seems to have stepped over the perilous threshold onto the side of angels."²³⁶ Although he admits that Markel experiences a real change, he denies the explicit connection to Christ, pressing for an experience of God's energies as a more isolated and individual process. While it might be easy to overlook the beauty of Christ in nature, the image of Christ present in the Eucharist and Markel's selfless outpouring of love for his mother which leads to the active beauty of the person is clearly grounded in the beauty of the Divine. Markel provides an example of a person who experiences both passive and active beauty, whose attunement to the former is only possible through receiving and reacting to the latter, and that this change is marked by relation and the image of the Divine. Within Dostoevsky's novels, fictional beings tend to ignore the inherent beauty surrounding them—or

²³⁶ Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 81.

outright reject it, like Ivan, because of the decay and suffering inflicted on creation due to human freedom—but even still, thirst for the active form of beauty that emanates from the person, through a creative act, which is not limited to plastic arts but includes oral discourse and writing but also acts of love and kindness such as Markel’s, is inherent in all beings.

The closeness of Dostoevsky’s perspective on natural and active beauty to the Orthodox perspective, can be confirmed through a brief scriptural analysis. The Russian Synodal Translation of the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, the Church reads: “Da budet ukrasheniem vashim ne vneshnee pletenie volos, ne zoloty ubory ili nariadnost’ v odezhde, no sokrovennyi serdsta **chelovek** v netlennoi **krasote** krotkogo i molchalivogo dukha, chto dragotsenno pred Bogom.”²³⁷ The New International translation renders these verses as: Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”²³⁷ The Synodal Translation contains the word *chelovek* (*person*) to convey that beauty is within “the secret person of the heart,”—perhaps referring to the *nous*.²³⁸ Although the King James and other English translations of the Bible maintain the term *person*, the New International version chooses “inner self” and distances our understanding of the Church’s teaching on the connection of beauty and the anthropological foundations of the person. Within the Russian and King James versions, beauty is inexorably connected to the person. More than gold and fashionable dress, the beauty of the person as expressed by an interior tranquility and harmony is host to the mode of Divine Being. The

²³⁷ 1 Peter: 3 3-4. I have provided the Russian text in order to once again connect Dostoevsky and the Church’s use of *chelovek* and to introduce the Church’s view on beauty in parallel with Dostoevsky’s. For the complete analysis of this see Chapter II §I: Character as a Form of Being: the Literary and Ontological ‘Prosôpon,’ ‘lichnost,’ and ‘Chelovek’.

²³⁸ For the discussion of the *nous* see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

connection to Divine being is made abundantly clear through the use of the Slavonic word *netlennoi* (*imperishable*, or *incorruptible*), a term which is only used in connection with Divine Being. Although both passive and active forms of beauty are recognized to bring the person into communion with others, it is the active beauty of the person that is most desirable.

Clearly, Dostoevsky's view of beauty aligns with this scriptural understanding. According to both perspectives there are two forms of beauty, the physical (natural) and spiritual (personal), both of which have encoded within them the soteriological call to relation with Divine being. However, despite the fact that physical beauty is often an expression of the metaphysical qualities of the person, this should not lead to a rejection or deemphasizing of outward beauty. Rather, as the example of Markel in *The Brothers Karamazov* illuminates, the beautification of the soul in turn beautifies the entire human being and opens the eyes of the beholder to the inherent beauty in all physical creation. Evdokimov states that "Natural beauty is real but fragile. This is why the personalized beauty of a saint is the summit of being. The saint, as 'microcosm' and 'microtheos,' thus becomes nature's center, but grounded in a person. Nature trembles and waits to be saved by man become holy."²³⁹ The beauty of the soul reifies the inherent and omnipresent passive beauty of creation.

Therefore, if the *logos* within every facet of created being points back toward the Divine Logos, then the disclosure of the personal aspect of one being (the *logos*) to another through beauty (artistic creation or acts of spiritual goodness) clearly indicates that beauty is an act that initiates or the inherent spark that points toward the Logos. In other words, spiritual beauty made manifest in the world, in the Orthodox sense, always turns a person toward the other, and therefore toward the relational principle of authentic being. Yannaras defines this experience of

²³⁹ Evdokimov, 41.

beauty more clearly, as “an invitational *logos*, or principle, calling us to a vital relationship, and this *logos* is signified by the language of art of religion—of culture as a whole.”²⁴⁰ Undoubtedly then, within the Personalist construct, beauty is imminent and soteriological, however it requires an active engagement in order to reach its full potential, just as Dostoevsky implies when he states “The person thirsts for it, finds it and accepts beauty *unconditionally* and just because it is beauty; and he bows before it with reverence, without asking what it is useful for and what one can buy for it.”²⁴¹ But is beauty as the revelation of the image and likeness within the Person something that is biologically craved by humanity, as Dostoevsky posits, like food and drink?

Evidence that will answer this question can be found in the Old Testament, which bears witness to the close relation between the Divine and beauty as a creative and longed for act. King Solomon’s *Song of Songs* is a mystical contemplation of the movement towards the Godhead through the relationship between the lover and the beloved, between those who are adorned and adorn creation around them with beauty as they long and strive for one another. The *Song* is a prototype of Dostoevsky’s higher realism, owing to its poetic foundations being grounded in the relational mode of being. Like Dostoevsky’s work, it presents the world both as it is and as it will be.

The dialogue between the lover and beloved in the *Song* is fertile ground for exploring the relational quality of being as it relates to beauty. The woman in the *Song* recounts how “my beloved spoke and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come; the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with

²⁴⁰ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 36.

²⁴¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

me.” To this her beloved replies, “My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”²⁴² The praises of beauty in the *Song* are inherently relational in their calls one to another and the direct connections of the face and voice to unique, personal beauty. They also serve to indicate how the adornment of the earth and the person are an expression of the person moving into the authentic mode of being-in-relation. The unification of the two in the song is expressed by both its content and structure.

The text, written as a dialogue between lover and beloved, reveals an act of beauty that draws the two together and toward Divine being. Gregory of Nyssa, in his exegesis of the *Song*, confirms the presence of the Divine in the relationship between the lover and the beloved by explaining the symbolic structure of the text. The lover attends to the beloved as if he were himself Christ, and this symbolic interpretation can be extrapolated to all relationships. The erotic draw of the beauty impels the lover to acknowledge and tend to the image and likeness of the Creator in the beloved. As this state of being-in-relation through love continues, the soul is purified and moves closer to both the beloved and the Divine. Gregory writes:

How, then, can we find here the text’s spiritual sense as we had done with regard to other passages? We saw that each of the bride’s earlier ascents had a meaning: she always made progress and never remained in the good attained... The bride was compared to chains and a necklace, an ornament round the neck. Not being satisfied with these, she presses on to what is still higher. Through sweet nard she recognizes the divine fragrance; she does not stop here, but takes what she desires and suspends it between her spiritual breasts like a fragrant satchel. Placed in the space of her heart, it issues divine teachings. [...] In her growth through these ascents [inspired by her relationship with her beloved], the bride is called beautiful; she becomes the bridegroom’s companion, and the beauty of her eye’s is compared to a dove’s. The bride goes even further; her vision is clearer, and she carefully considers the Word’s beauty; she marvels how he descended in a shadowy form upon the bed of this life here below, and has been shaded over by the material nature of a human body. [...] It is right for the soul to be glad since she has reached in her lofty ascent the summit of her desires. For what greater happiness can be conceived of than to see God?... The bride says, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his who feeds among the lilies,’ the same one who has transformed human life from shadowy phantasms to the supreme truth.²⁴³

²⁴² Song of Solomon: 2 10-14.

²⁴³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* trans. Casimir McCambley, (Cambridge: Hellenic College Press, 1987), 128-9.

Just as the lover/bride ascends toward Christ in her relationship with the beloved/bridegroom, so too does Gregory claim that the reader experiences this communion with the Divine through a symbolic reading and contemplation of the *Song*: “Let no one be bound up in his own thoughts, or drag the pure words of the bridegroom and bride down into earthly, irrational passions... Through the words of the *Song* the soul is escorted to an incorporeal, spiritual, and pure union with God.”²⁴⁴ The *Song* draws the reader into the fictional relationship, and opens this communication with the Divine to them as well. While the voice and the face of the beloved are vastly grander than the beauty of creation, their love becomes an active expression of the beauty of all creation, a symbol of the synergetic unification of movement and growth thanks to direct and selfless love.²⁴⁵

Both Dostoevsky and Solomon depict within their texts a deep longing and a drive for beauty, as if life cannot be lived without it. When the bride in the *Song* cannot find her beloved, she not only weeps, but violence ensues. As the face of the beloved becomes distanced from her, she laments: “I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. They beat me, they bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls!”²⁴⁶ The relational quality of beauty not only calls the person into relation, when absent or rejected the person might fall into non-beauty. As shown in Myshkin’s Typification of the Epanchin women, Dostoevsky’s view of beauty aligns with the Personalist understanding in another way. The nature of active beauty, in the light of human freedom, also permits for the isolation and decay of the person.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

²⁴⁵ An exegesis that engages the synergetic unification through love in the *Song* can be found in Christos Yannaras *Variations on the Song of Songs*.

²⁴⁶ Song of Solomon: 5 6-7.

Although beauty's primary function is to call unique persons into relation, when neglected or consumed in an egocentric manner it can lead to violence, decay, and death. In the example of the lover being beaten, it is clear how the *Song* expresses beauty's calls to relation as well as the possibility of passionate sinfulness caused by egocentric urge. These moments occur particularly when beauty is neglected and relations are broken. Although passions arise because of the abuse or disregard of beauty, it is not beauty that causes strife and suffering, but rather an individual decision to reject the experience of relation proffered by the other. Because this is not a second form of beauty but rather a second manner of reacting to it, beauty's function to bring to persons into the mode of being-in-relation continues to work, but requires an active participation in its fullness.

Despite the violence and suffering caused by the lover's inability to completely contain the beloved, she still reaches out to find his beauty once again. By enquiring into the uniqueness of her beloved, she elicits a response that articulates the relational bond between the lover and beloved while extending this bond to others around them. The woman's words are so beautiful that her friends demand to know, "Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may look for him with you?"²⁴⁷ Beauty draws not only the lover and beloved into relation, but those around them as well. Caught up in the relational and active beauty, these people are also opened to the beauty of all creation through kenotic and selfless love, just as Markel experienced in his loving self-emptying for this mother. For those who experience the beauty of the lover's quest for the beloved, including the symbolically attuned reader, the lover and beloved become the gardens and the trees, the pomegranates and the grapes, the wine and the silver, the tower of Lebanon and Mount Carmel.

²⁴⁷ Song of Solomon: 6 1.

All of creation is in harmony with the beloved; the beauty of the *logos* of each piece of creation as harmonized in participatory chorus with the Divine is opened to the one who actively seeks it through a personal, relational act.

These passages from the *Song* lay bare the grounds of creation, represented by and illuminating the beauty of love between persons as a creative act. What's more, this movement and harmony are not only beautiful, but good. As Fr. John Breck notes:

According to the Hexameron, the account of creation given in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, after each "day" in which God brought elements of the world from non-being into being, "God saw that it was good." At the close of the sixth day God surveyed everything that he had made, "and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). The word rendered here is again the term *kallos*, and it can be translated "beautiful." Creation, reflecting the beauty of the Creator, is itself beautiful as well as good.²⁴⁸

Truth, goodness, and beauty are unified to the extent that they reflect Divine Being. The expression of these forces is therefore a point of contact with the Divine as well as an expression of the person as a unique manifestation of being in the world. The synergetic meeting of the self with the other is considered good because it reflects the Divine mode of being, an instance in which humanity expresses the fullness of the relational mode of being. Pseudo-Dionysius confirms beauty's need for relation to fulfill its goodness:

We call "beautiful" (*kalon*) that which has a share in beauty (*kallos*), and we give the name of "beauty" to that which is the cause of beauty in everything. But the suprasubstantially beautiful (*kalon*) is called "beauty" (*kallos*) because of the beauty (*kallonên*) which is bestowed by it on all things, each in accordance with what it is, and because it is the cause of harmony and splendor... and because beauty summons (*kaloun*) all things to itself (hence it is called "beauty" [*kallos*]) and gathers all things to itself. [...] The Beautiful is therefore the same as the Good, for everything looks to the beautiful and the Good as the cause of being, and there is nothing in the world without a share of the Beautiful and the Good.²⁴⁹

Once again Dostoevsky's view on beauty coincides with Orthodox teachings. The point of connection with the Good for humanity is beauty, and beauty is centered in the cause and

²⁴⁸ John Breck, "Divine Beauty (1)," in *Reflections on Christ*, <https://oca.org/reflections/fr.-john-breck/divine-beauty-1> (accessed May 3, 2021).

²⁴⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, "On the Divine Names," in *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 76-7.

relation of all things—the Godhead. And it is to Him who “gathers all things” to Himself that the salvific aspect of beauty points in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre.

The soteriological aspect of beauty defines what Orthodox Personalists term *invitation-to-being*. “Beauty charms,” according to Yannaras, “it attracts, it stimulates the desire for relation, for participation, for communion, for intercourse... This dynamic of the *invitation-to-relation* also preserves the absolute otherness by which beauty is internalized as a subjective experience.”²⁵⁰ The “subjective experience” of beauty can be the most complete engagement of one person with another, a returning to the natural state of being-in-relation. Consciously acknowledging beauty in the other opens the self to the mode of being-in-relation with a person.

This opening is the first movement toward what Sergei Horuzhy calls the “ontological unlocking of anthropological reality,” a necessary initial step toward salvation because it acknowledges the image and likeness of the Divine in an immediate and efficacious manner.²⁵¹ In order to open the path toward Authentic being, however, the reaction to beauty must be grounded in self-emptying love. Therefore, we understand beauty, in both the Orthodox and Dostoevskian sense, as an opening or disclosing of the self that fulfills all three aspects of the Theocentric Personological Paradigm (TPP)—freedom, kenosis, and unrepeatable uniqueness. Acts of beauty centered on self-emptying love are the first signs of the unfettered disclosure of the self, an integral practice that moves the person closer to the authentic mode of being-in-relation.

Kenosis begins the path that leads the egocentric individual into communion with another person. Consider the kenotic and relational aspect of beauty in light of Dostoevsky’s

²⁵⁰ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 69-70.

²⁵¹ Sergei Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov* in the Prism of Hesychast Anthropology,” in The Institut Sinergiinoi Antropologii Digital Library, http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/hor_karamazov_boston_2008_eng.pdf 3-4 (accessed April 19, 2021).

aforementioned statement that “the need for beauty and the creation which embodies it is inseparable from the person, and with it the person, perhaps, would not want to live in the world. The person thirsts for it, finds it and accepts beauty *unconditionally* and just because it is beauty; and he bows before it with reverence.”²⁵² Dostoevsky is keenly aware that the *need* for beauty is stronger than physical thirst or hunger. The greatest desire of the soul is for the infinite, a hunger to be filled by the immeasurable fullness of transcendent reality. And where does Dostoevsky display the thirst for infinite beauty and reverence toward it as forcefully or clearly as in the relationship between Raskolnikov and Sonia, particularly during the reading of the story of Christ and Lazarus?

Beauty as charm, as a call to being-in-relation, erupts most forcefully from passages in Dostoevsky’s texts where a suffering Person rises up above their own desires and needs to pour themselves out upon others around them. When Raskolnikov sees the New Testament on Sonia’s desk, he is brought back to the most heinous aspect of his crime—the un-premeditated murder of Liza—and in the torment of the recurrence of the moment he is made aware of Sonia as a Person, perhaps for the first time:

Raskolnikov partly understood why Sonia could not make herself read to him, and the more he understood this the more roughly and petulantly he insisted on the reading. He knew very well how difficult it was for her now to expose and betray everything that was *her own*. He understood that those feelings in fact constituted, perhaps, her already real and lingering *secret*, perhaps held even from childhood, while in her family, while near her unhappy father and stepmother crazed by grief and hungry children, around frightful shrieks and reproaches. But at the same time he knew now, and knew for certain, that although she was saddened and afraid that something terrible would occur if she were to now begin reading, at the same time she had an agonizing desire to read, despite all her sorrows and fears, and specifically to read for *him*, so that he would hear, and to read *now*—“whatever happens next...” He read this in her eyes, understood it in her ecstatic agitation...²⁵³

The beauty that Raskolnikov senses within Sonia is created by her self-sacrifice to her parents, her love for Liza, and her compassionate response to him. The beauty of these actions reduces

²⁵² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

²⁵³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 250.

the space between Sonia and Raskolnikov, and in turn begins the unveiling of their uniqueness to each other.

The opening of Sonia to Raskolnikov is clear in the way he perceives a gradual transformation in her from a Type to a Person. He at first sees her as a symbol for all human suffering, a Type in the idealized, humanist sense and nothing more. Her faith in God then leads him to believe her to be a holy fool, but still continuing the Typification of her being.²⁵⁴ It is her reading, however, that completes, in his perspective, her rising up out of this realm and into the typological level of the Person. Although Raskolnikov's recognition of her Personhood is not primarily based on the depth of her faith, it is the strength of her reading and conviction that brings him to say:

You'll understand later. Didn't you do the same thing? You stepped over it, too... I was able to step over it. You killed yourself, you ruined your life... your own (it doesn't matter!). You could live in spirit and reason, and you'd end up in the Haymarket... But you can't stand it, and if you're left alone, you'll go crazy, just like me. You are already like a madwoman; so we must go together, on the same road! Come on!²⁵⁵

Raskolnikov recognizes Sonia's suffering, despite overlooking her faith and joy, and finally meets the other as a Person. No longer capable of the kind of complete depersonalization that led to the killing of Alyona, Raskolnikov's journey toward redemption is initiated by this moment of recognition of the uniqueness and value of the other. Although he is still torn by the harshness of reality that brings children to suffer and harbors the desire to overcome human fallenness through "freedom and power," he is at last able to see the image of the Divine in the other once again.²⁵⁶

Raskolnikov's ability to make this turn is only possible, however, based on Sonya's selfless and loving gesture in reading the Gospel to him, thus allowing her to overcome fear and

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 248.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 252.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

move into communion with him. Much has been written by scholars on this scene between Raskolnikov and Sonya. However, Boris Tikhomirov points toward a Personalist reading of this scene when he writes:

It is generally accepted that Sonechka's reading of the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus from the Gospel of John at Raskolnikov's request is the symbolic "focus" of the entire novel. More often, researchers point out that the gospel episode symbolically forms the possibility of the coming resurrection of the main character, and write about Raskolnikov as "the new Lazarus." And much less often they emphasize the deeply personal nature of the reading of the heroine, who through the Gospel word expresses her "real and already lingering secret [...] revealing and exposing all his own." This "mystery" is most clearly articulated in the draft sketch for the episode where Sonechka exclaims: "I myself was Lazarus who died, and Christ raised me up," a remark, apparently removed because "the complete resurrection into a new life" (Epilogue, 2) and the heroine is still ahead.²⁵⁷

This "deeply personal nature of the reading" displays the connection they have made, and their "complete resurrection into a new life" is dependent upon Sonia's identification of the personal uniqueness in Raskolnikov that is being oppressed by his egocentric isolation.

Although Raskolnikov's resurrection comes later—if at all—in the novel, Sonia's spiritual resurrection occurs precisely while she reads the Gospel narrative of Lazarus to Raskolnikov. Her transformation is possible only through this explicit moment of authentic being-in-relation. Sonia, overcoming her fear of Raskolnikov as something less than a Person, transcends her own egocentric desires to remain hidden within herself by pushing herself to express the beauty of the Divine in her reading to Raskolnikov. The narrator indicates that her reading is a response to his inner and suffering beauty when he writes about her "agonizing desire to read, despite all her sorrows and fears, and specifically to read for *him*, so that he would hear, and to read *now*."²⁵⁸ The suddenness with which her heart changes, conceived in her by his presence, and the meeting of their eyes. Her fear and egocentric desire to keep that which was "her own" is turned to a longing to bring him into communion through the revelation of the Incarnation. This transformation occurs

²⁵⁷ Boris Tikhomirov, "Lazar'! gradi von." *Roman F.M. Dostoevskogo "Prestuplenie i nakazanie" v sovremennom prochtenii. Kniga-kommentarji*, (St. Petersburg: Serebrianyi ved, 2005), 31.

²⁵⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 250.

only when she recognizes the inherent image of the Divine within him that is suffering. That suffering opens a call to relation, to which she responds by reciting the passage of Lazarus with such power and openness that it moves him back toward the inherent goodness within him: “her voice became like a bell, like metal; triumph and joy rang in it and strengthened it.”²⁵⁹ Sonia finds an immediate communion with the Divine thanks to his presence, she has become united to him and stands by him throughout the rest of the novel. But it is through her self-sacrifice, prayers, and humility that cleanse her heart and opens the both of them to the possibility of a loving synergy that leads to authentic being.

One might ask, however, what beauty does Sonia see in Raskolnikov? There is little physical allure in him thanks to the sickness and starvation his economic situation causes. And there is even less spiritual beauty because of the bloody stains of murder and his deep-rooted egoism. Most critical analyses of this scene place the connection between the two as generated from a mystical source. Sonia is often compared to Mary Magdalene, who stood at a short distance from the crucifixion and was the first person to witness the Resurrection.²⁶⁰ They claim that Sonia following Raskolnikov to Siberia is akin to Mary’s following Christ to the Cross. Ksana Blank calls attention to an even stronger Orthodox parallel, one between Sonia and St. Mary of Egypt, but does not elaborate on the connection beyond Dostoevsky’s mentioning of it *The Adolescent*.²⁶¹

Dostoevsky, however, lays an answer immediately before the reader’s eyes by illuminating the image and likeness of Christ in Sonia. It only requires a proper understanding of

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 251.

²⁶⁰ John 19: 25, 20: 11-16. For Critical analysis in this vein see footnote 4 on page 81 in Tikhomirov, and S. Leonard Rubenstein, “Dostoevsky: The Identity of Crime and Punishment,” in *The Journal of General Education*, Summer 1974, vol. 26, no. 2, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/27796421> (accessed April 19, 2020), 145.

²⁶¹ Ksana Blank, *Dostoevsky’s Dialectics and the Problem of Sin*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 35.

the passage about Christ and Lazarus to clearly see it. If we read Raskolnikov as spiritually dead and buried in the tomb of his Petersburg corner, then Sonia is obviously a parallel for Christ. Diane Oenning writes, “In *Crime and Punishment* the Word never enters Raskolnikov’s consciousness as revealed truth through an open dialogic exchange. We may infer its influence when he asks Sonia to read the Lazarus miracle. But it is Sonya’s love and not the Word *per se* which is most decisive.”²⁶² I disagree with Oenning here, insofar as the action that opens Raskolnikov precisely conveys the fullness of the Word through a kenotic self-offering that brings the other into relation. This is as close to an incursion of the Divine into the text that happens within this novel. Perhaps the realness of Divine presence in the loving act of reading the Gospel is unclear because this scene has not been connected to the Orthodox understanding of beauty and unpacked in connection to repentance. The key to doing so is found in the words of the Gospel “He groaned in the spirit... Jesus wept.”²⁶³

Why does Christ, Who knew that his friend would live again as soon as He beckoned him, weep and groan in the spirit? He does this because, according to the exegesis of Archbishop Theophylact of Ochrid and Bulgaria: “Jesus was grieved by the death of His friend—for He was truly human, and to confirm this He permitted His human nature to act accordingly—He chastises the flesh and rebukes it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The flesh, unable to endure the rebuke, *was troubled*, meaning that it trembled and was agitated at being compelled to restrain its grief.”²⁶⁴ In the stinking and rotting corpse of Lazarus, Jesus sees the beauty, the Image of the

²⁶² Diane Oenning, “Problems of the biblical word in Dostoevsky’s poetics,” in *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, n *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, ed. George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 95.

²⁶³ John 11: 33, 35

²⁶⁴ Theophylact Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to John*, trans. Fr. Christopher Stade, (House Springs, MO: Chrysostom Press, 2007), 183.

Divine, of not only His friend but of all humanity, corrupted and decayed by sin and death. So too does humanity weep when faced with sin, decay, and death.

The Orthodox church displays this lamentation of the postlapsarian human condition in the Penitential Canon of Andrew Archbishop of Crete, read during the first and fifth week of Great Lent. In the verses, about which Dostoevsky write in his *Writer's Diary*, the following is sung:

With my lustful desires I have formed within myself the deformity of the passions and disfigured the beauty of my mind. I am surrounded by the storm of sin, O compassionate Lord. But stretch out Thine hand to me as Thou once hast to Peter. I have stained the garment of my flesh, O Saviour, and defiled that which was made in Thine image and likeness. With the lusts of passion I have darkened the beauty of my soul, and turned my whole mind entirely to dust. I have torn the first garment that the Creator wove for me in the beginning and now I lie naked.²⁶⁵

Here, the Slavonic word for *beauty* is *dobrota* which is derived from the Greek *kallos*, indicating both goodness and beauty. These penitential verses confirm the connection between human lamentation, the defilement of spiritual beauty and the Image of God, and the initial form of beauty and goodness. Knowing Dostoevsky's intimate knowledge of this service provides fertile ground from which to make the connection between beauty and repentance in Dostoevsky's poetics.

Another Orthodox exegesis confirms the connection of Christ's grief with the passions and death, and therefore to beauty. Vladimir Berzonsky writes: "He cried that day over their and our own helplessness, for the tight grip with which death fastens onto us, frightens us, intimidating and terrorizing us so that we can be easy prey for Satan."²⁶⁶ He weeps because He sees how humanity suffers and defaces the beauty we have been give because we have turned

²⁶⁵ Andrew Archbishop of Crete, *Great Penitential Canon*, in *The Lenten Triodion: translated from the Original Greek*, trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002), 200. Dostoevsky mentions the Penitential Canon in the notes to the *Writer's Diary*, see Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 24, 195.

²⁶⁶ Vladimir Berzonsky, "When Jesus Wept," in *Orthodox Great Lent: Reflections & Meditations*, eds. Margarita Berzonsky, Theda Diachuk, Julius Klym, and Mike Bazil, (North Royalton, Ohio: Royalton Printing Co., 1977), 77.

from the Creator to our own needs and urges. Humanity weeps because its faith in salvation is weak, but it is strengthened by the comfort of the same Spirit that allows Christ to rebuke His flesh. Sonia expresses both human weakness and Divine strength. At first, she is terrified of the mortification of the beauty of the flesh and spirit of Raskolnikov. Before the reading, when he tells her that her little sister will also probably fall into prostitution and laughingly states “Perhaps God does not exist.” Here Sonia sees the depths of his depravity through tormenting her, blaspheming and besmirching her beloved sister. In the narrator’s description of her response she physically reacts just as Christ does to the decay of the spirit and flesh of humanity: “Sonya’s face suddenly changed terribly: convulsing rapidly. She looked at him with unutterable reproach, was about to say something, but could not utter anything, and only suddenly sobbed bitterly, covering her face with her hands.”²⁶⁷ She hides her face from his self-willed non-beauty and weeps.

The moment of deprivation leads, however, to a shocking moment of kenotic love and attempted repentance. Raskolnikov, walks to her, stares deeply into her eyes, and drops to his knees and kisses her feet. Although he continues in his egocentric humanist Typification of her being, this moment reminds her of the inner beauty, the *logos* within him. Dostoevsky masterfully parallels the Gospel reading here by also drawing a parallel between Sonia and Mary, Lazarus’ sister. Although she is struck by grief she overcomes her fear and reads “Yea Lord! I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Who is come into the world.”²⁶⁸ She takes strength in her faith and calls out, like Christ called out to Lazarus, to bring Raskolnikov out of the tomb.

²⁶⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 246.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

But in a superb stroke of the pen Dostoevsky also presents the image of Christ in Raskolnikov, who in turn calls Sonia into relation. She is both Mary and Christ, as a sister weeping and longing for relation, and in the likeness of Christ granting it. This moment strengthens her, and Sonia displays the *thirst* for beauty in her resounding and powerful reading. Her desire for beauty and relation through spiritual resurrection is confirmed when, during her enraptured moments of reading, she thinks to herself, “And *he, he*—also blind and unbelieving—he will also hear, he will also believe, yes, yes! Here and now!”²⁶⁹ Despite his self-willed egoism, despite vileness he peacocks before her, through the eye of her heart, she sees the beauty of the image of God awaiting restoration in Raskolnikov.

Raskolnikov, however, has only begun to open the eye of his heart. He is not ready to completely open himself to her. While he has made the first step toward a metanoic repentance, he remains skeptical, both of her and of the Divine. He sees her as a Person, but he cannot reciprocate with a self-emptying love because he is still tied to his egocentric demand for “freedom and power.” When he storms out of her room, he rejects the call of the infinite and instead prepares himself to do whatever might be necessary for their physical survival. Although he is unprepared at this point to move toward the mode of authentic being, later in the novel, during his second attempt at metanoic repentance on the Haymarket Square, Raskolnikov returns to the feeling he experienced while Sonia read the story of Lazarus. His act of contrition, his bowing in the Haymarket is an acceptance of her call to being-in-relation. Vyacheslav Ivanov notes that “The hero of *Crime and Punishment* is guilty in the sight of Earth, and receives absolution through his expiation made unto Earth.”²⁷⁰ But it is Sonia who tells him to commit

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 251

²⁷⁰ Vyacheslav I. Ivanov, *Freedom and the Tragic Life: A Study in Dostoevsky*, trans. Norman Cameron, (New York, NY: The Noonday Press, 1957) 77.

this act of contrition, it is the uncertain feeling he experiences in her presence that leads him to this ending.

When he first rebuffs her insistence that he repent and turns himself in, he also rejects the physical and spiritual cross she offers. She takes out her and Lizaveta's crosses, offering hers to him, and says "We go, together, to suffer, and together we will bear the Cross!"²⁷¹ Although he does not take the Cross here, he returns to it before bowing in the Haymarket. By coming back to claim the Cross he rejected the first time and then submitting to her loving command he confirms what he experienced in her room that first time. It is only through the entrance into the personal mode of being-in-relation through the image and likeness in her that he can endure the humbling of his raging ego. What's more, this scene also verifies our reading of Dostoevsky's understanding of beauty, insofar as the Person "accepts beauty *unconditionally*... [and] bows before it in reverence."²⁷² Dostoevsky makes the reader wait to see Raskolnikov's submission to the beauty of the other, but he does not leave us in the dark regarding the human response to beauty.

Before the positive depiction of acceptance and submission to the charm of beauty on the Haymarket, Dostoevsky allows the personal reaction to beauty in an isolated mode to unfold in his egocentric protagonist. When Raskolnikov leaves Sonia's room after the reading of the Gospel he has experienced her beauty and its call to relation, but he is unable to react authentically, and his movement engages in the negative direction, back toward that which he has established as his mode of being. He moves away from salvation, seeking finite material solutions to his infinite spiritual crisis. "What must we do?" he shrieks, "Destroy that which must be destroyed once and for all, and that is all. And take the suffering upon ourselves! Don't you

²⁷¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 324.

²⁷² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

understand? Afterwards you will understand... Freedom and power, and most importantly power! Over all trembling creatures and over the whole anthill!"²⁷³ He has moved toward her—responded to beauty— but only in order to consume everything around them. He reacts in order to bring her closer to him, but in a manner that will allow him to continue a lifestyle that led to the murder of Alyona the pawnbroker. When he returns, he is still not ready to completely turn toward authentic being-in-relation, but by taking Sonia's cross and bowing on the Haymarket he begins to move closer into relation with her through an act of repentance as beauty.

If we compare the interaction between Sonia and Raskolnikov to the meeting between the Underground Man and Liza in the light of Personalist aesthetics, the thread of Dostoevsky's use of beauty as a call to the authentic mode of being-in-relation is seen to clearly run throughout his oeuvre, although it matures and strengthens over time. Like Raskolnikov, the Underground Man rejects the beauty of the other initially because of his deep-rooted egoism and his current state of anger and pride. When he enters the brothel, he notes:

Suddenly I noticed beside me two wide open eyes, curiously and tenaciously examining me. The gaze was cold—impassive, sullen, and completely other. It was difficult for me to bear. A dismal thought was formed in my brain and spread throughout my entire body like the sort of nasty sensation which one feels upon entering a damp and moldy underground room. It was unnatural how it was only now that these two eyes decided to examine me. I recalled also that for the past two hours I had not spoken a single word with this **creature**, and that I had completely decided that it was unnecessary to do so; it had even given me pleasure for some reason. Now, I **suddenly** vividly realized how absurd, how abhorrent—like a spider— is the idea of debauchery, which, without love, crudely and shamelessly begins precisely at the moment when actual love is consummated.²⁷⁴

The physical and sexual erotic beauty of Liza beckons the Underground Man toward physical relation and yet repulses him. But his spiritual desire to enter into relation is stimulated once he notices her face. Her eyes pull him into her being, not as a mere sexual object to physically engage in the absurd and grotesque manner of the brothel patron—which to the rational mind

²⁷³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 253.

²⁷⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 152. Bold faced emphasis is mine.

deforms the beauty of the image and likeness—but rather as a Person. His disgust at the abhorrent nature of the brothel, coupled with the piercing gaze of the other, opens to him the reality of the other as more than a depersonalized unit of pleasure. Although it is not explicit, and the Underground Man is unable to vocalize it, the moment in which he engages with her eyes he is aware of the ability to utilize beauty for egocentric desire. But it is not the squalor and horror that opens him to this, but her natural beauty, the appearance of her *logos* in her eyes.

The natural beauty of her eyes opens the Underground Man to being-in-relation, even if he actively rejects it. The most profound aspect of Dostoevsky’s poetics as they relate to beauty at this moment is that beauty is disclosed to the Underground Man *suddenly*. Although the situation is ripe with non-beauty, that which makes him aware of the capacity to create such a “nasty sensation which one feels upon entering a damp and moldy underground room” is Dostoevsky’s ability to connect the suddenness of human being with the suddenness of the allure of beauty.²⁷⁵ According to the Personalist mode of thought, as Yannaras indicates, “love is born when ‘suddenly’ the futility of meretricious exchange becomes evident. The futility of merits, of our virtues, our good name, treasures laid up which prove incapable of destroying death. Love is born when ‘suddenly’ the unique hope of life shines forth: ‘he who raises the dead.’ You must pass through death to arrive at love.”²⁷⁶ Liza’s eyes may be “impassive, sullen, and completely other,” but in the suddenness of her otherness rest the foundations of love and beauty, thus allowing the Underground Man to realize not only the horrors of non-beauty in the depersonalizing actions of prostitution but also the call of beauty as well. Although this is, perhaps, an apophatic awareness of beauty, his realization that “Now, I **suddenly** vividly realized how absurd, how abhorrent—like a spider— is the idea of debauchery, which, without love,

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Yannaras, *Variations*, 72.

crudely and shamelessly begins precisely at the moment when actual love is consummated.”²⁷⁷
There is “hope for life,” by “passing through death to arrive at love.”

The Underground Man has been opened, in a different manner to Raskolnikov, to love and beauty. But the root of suffering opens them both to the experience of the inherent beauty of the image within the person. Both, however, react to it in a negative direction, with a fierce drive toward the self-created abyss of egoism. In a manner similar to Raskolnikov’s overcoming of his Typification of Sonia, the Underground Man responds to Liza’s beauty as the scales, at least momentarily, drop from his eyes. He begins by asking her “what is your name?”²⁷⁸ Although this may not seem that great of a step, he is overcoming his own view that this prostitute is nothing more than a shade of human being. Even though the Underground Man immediately falls back into a mode rejecting being-in-relation, and will abuse her because he views her as less than a Person, this moment is a sudden appearance of the other as something more than a Type. The step may be microscopic, but her natural beauty and her *logos*, allows the Underground Man to pull himself out of the egocentric and depersonalizing pleasure of denying her existence, which he had sought to achieve by “not [speaking] a single word with this **creature**” for over two hours.²⁷⁹

When the Underground Man asks for her name he is expressing a desire to enter into some form of relation with her as a unique human being. Just as God is love in His being, in relationship, and (in a way) in name, so too is “the name of the beloved person...the realistic and fulfilling, knowledge of erotic love.”²⁸⁰ Dostoevsky places the Underground Man into a situation in which the author can tie beauty to the Divine in subtle ways. Even in the grotesque

²⁷⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 152.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 64.

and horrifying depths of the underground and the brothels of St. Petersburg the path back to authentic being arises suddenly in the face of the other. The Underground Man gnashes his teeth and berates himself for falling prey to what he calls sentimental feelings when he speaks to Liza about love, freedom, and the slavery of sex work. But he is, as previously noted, only lying to himself in order to keep him from falling up the ladder of salvation because he chooses to claw downward into his self-created abyss.²⁸¹

The response to the spark of beauty either lifts the person out of the mire of self-imposed non-being or to further casts them down into its darkness. This movement requires, however, a willingness to respond to the *sudden* apprehension of beauty, to act and not to philosophize or rationalize. We see the willingness of the Person and *suddenness* of beauty in both Sonia and Raskolnikov's reactions to the logoi in each other and the reluctance to do so in the Underground Man. Although the Underground Man *suddenly* becomes aware of the charm of beauty and the reality of the Person he cannot respond. It transforms his vision of the world, allowing him to see the inherent beauty in creation even in the absurd and grotesque, such as they are presented in the brothel, but his heart is not prepared, not cleansed, to maintain that vision or open himself up to the invitation-to-being of beauty.

The *suddenness* of apprehension is just as important to our interpretation of beauty as it is to the ontology and anthropology of the Person. As we have seen, the Personalist discourse on beauty is inexorably tied to the grounds of being and existence. *Suddenness* gives life and excitement to creation. **It is the mark of beauty and quite plausible of Divine Intervention like the Emmaus disciples suddenly recognizing Jesus after he broke Bread with them after the Resurrection,** but it is not enough to simply experience it, it must be engaged and brought up into

²⁸¹ See the section on the Underground Man in Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

higher stages to bring Persons closer to an authentic experience of being-in-relation. Yannaras explains that beauty “can function ‘on a sudden’ as an immediate personal sense of a gift, an immediacy of perception that someone offers this gift to reveal an invitation-to-relation or even his ‘manic love’ for the recipient;” but it is not just this *suddenness* of the apprehension of beauty that must be at work but also the active acceptance of the recipient:

This readiness could be described as *erotic*, if by *eros* we mean assent to the struggle to attain self-abandonment and self-offering. At any rate, for the experience of physical beauty to function referentially, to refer to the personal immediacy of God the Creator, to be ‘read’ as an erotic summons from God the Lover and Bridegroom of humankind, the decisive factor cannot be some rational proof of the significance of beauty, nor the deceptive persuasion of emotional excitement.²⁸²

Recalling the connection between being and love (God Is = God is Love = One God in Three Persons) it is clear that the active giving and receiving of beauty, of the good, must be self-emptying if it is to fulfill its soteriological goal.

However, as Raskolnikov and the Underground Man’s reactions clearly indicate, the exploitation of beauty by the person for egocentric gains inevitably leads to evil ends. Although beauty itself cannot be evil, the person can manipulate something beautiful to evil ends because of their personal freedom. If, therefore, the cause of evil—as the manipulation of beauty—is grounded in human freedom, as the discourse on the Fall exposes, then beauty, which is expressed as a free act of the Person, must also have a hand in the expression of sin.²⁸³ From here, it is necessary to investigate the source of evil through and its connection to beauty.

Non-beauty and evil are a form of individualistic gluttony that seeks to consume beauty and good in the world for their own satisfaction. The lust that attempts to contain the infinite of the other is spurred on by the desire have communion with the infinite replaced by consumption. This appetite rejects Divine Being and seeks to supplant the crown of existence with itself. The

²⁸² Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 71

²⁸³ For the discussion of the Fall see Chapter I §V: The Created Person, Image and Likeness.

egocentric devouring of beauty represents the danger that the pure aesthete poses to the true goal of art—the invitation to communion with the Divine. The mode of rejection through non-beauty indicates what Dostoevsky refers to in his letter to Dobroliubov regarding the unconditional idol worship of beauty. “The person thirsts for it, finds it and accepts beauty *unconditionally* and just because it is beauty; and he bows before it with reverence, without asking what it is useful for and what one can buy for it. And, perhaps, precisely in this consists the greatest secret of art, that the image of beauty created by it immediately becomes an idol, *unconditionally*.”²⁸⁴ When beauty is cast into the furnace of the ego’s own selfishness it melts away the uniqueness of form and leaves a gilded idol that yields death and separation. As Evdokimov notes, “Dostoevsky states it this way: ‘There is not and cannot be anything more beautiful and more perfect than Christ.’ Nevertheless, contemplation of beauty which is strictly *aesthetic*, even a strictly aesthetic contemplation of Christ, is not at all sufficient and requires a religious act of faith, an active participation and an incorporation into the transforming beauty of the Lord.”²⁸⁵ The search for beauty is not enough for Dostoevsky, but it requires an active participation with a soteriological telos.

If there is non-beauty in the purely aesthetic drive for beauty, there can be no doubt that the utilitarian desire for functionality also acts in the direction of non-beauty. The Personalist and Orthodox underpinnings of Dostoevsky’s view of beauty and non-beauty stand in stark contrast to nineteenth and twentieth century materialist aesthetic philosophies such as Dobroliubov’s. While the desire to actively improve the material world through creative work is celebrated, the relational and mystical foundations are actively rejected. As Solovyov notes in his first speech in honor of Dostoevsky, “However, in preaching the Church as a social ideal, he expressed an

²⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

²⁸⁵ Evdokimov, 24.

absolutely clear and definite requirement, just as clear and definite as the requirement declared by European socialism—although in direct contrast to it.”²⁸⁶ The clear delineation between Dostoevsky’s art and the aesthetic and utilitarian views of nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetes and materialists lies in the beauty of Christ and the rejection of non-beauty as a path to salvation.

Other twentieth-century readers of Dostoevsky returned to a more ontologically grounded examination of existence and beauty. As opposed to the relational foundations of the Personalist view of being and the utilitarian views of the Dobroliubovs and Belinskys, Existential philosophy expresses an ontological and metaphysical aesthetic approach that shuns utilitarianism, pure aesthetics, and also relational ontology. This Western perspective regards the void of non-existence that exists between the phenomenal and the noumenal, and therefore also between the subject and the object, as non-traversable. The essential fact of the existence of the person is isolation.

Existing alone in *reality* renders relation, if at all possible, only physical and never complete. An abyss surrounds each and every living being, and the lack of relation causes anxiety and suffering: “Consequently, ‘Ek-sistenz’ [ecstasy or the rising up of truth into being] differs essentially from ‘Existenz’ (‘existentia’), the term established by Western existentialists for distinguishing reality from essence, that is, from possibility.”²⁸⁷ Distinguishing of reality from essence entails, for the existentialist aesthetic view, entails that every physical aspect of the artistic creation is merely an analogue of the ideal. There is no real connection between the ideal and the physical because the two exist in impermeable states. Through art, the immaterial is

²⁸⁶ Solovyov, “Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky,” in *The Heart of Reality*, 11.

²⁸⁷ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 32.

made manifest but it is derealised because it expresses something that is ontologically nothing.²⁸⁸ Beauty, then, exists merely as a siren song, a call to relation that mocks the recipient insofar as it leads them to the edge of a void which they can never cross. Its invitatory quality burns like a light house, but instead of drawing the other near it sets ablaze a fire of jealousy and lust in the egocentric and solipsized heart and points toward domination and consumption.

The abuse of beauty, in this Existential context, poses no danger to the self, because its relational quality is a façade at best and an intellectual danger at worst. To the existentially oriented eye beauty and non-beauty are not oppositions but rather two faces on the same coin. Non-beauty conveys an essential disgusting or absurd quality of being and existence. There is neither a Logos toward which the creative act of art points nor any inherent *logoi* that confirm unity, wholeness, or goodness. Beauty and non-beauty confirm the freedom of the person, but that freedom is rudderless and sails not toward active and synergetic telos, except perhaps the telos created by the individual for the individual.

In the Personalist paradigm, non-beauty confirms the truth of the mode of being-in-relation when it expresses the danger of isolation, of the view that the world is comprised of non-traversable distances. But in this mindset non-beauty cannot be understood as a mirror image of beauty, but rather a use of beauty toward egocentric ends. Non-beauty does not have its own existence, it is either mistaken for or is presented as beauty. In the Existential perspective the equating of beauty and non-beauty leads to a sense that evil—nausea, tragedy, and absurdity—is

²⁸⁸ Sartre, Mikel Dufrenne, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote the most rounded and expressive texts on the ontological qualities of Existential aesthetics. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy provides a fantastic and concise overview of their writing: Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Existentialist Aesthetics", ed. Edward N. Zalta *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/aesthetics-existentialist/> (accessed June 9, 2020). For further reading see Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward Casey, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1968) and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Aesthetics*, trans. Wade Baskin, (London: Peter Owen, 1963).

a foundational feature of existence. And when non-beauty incites desire for relation with the other, it crashes against the invisible and omnipresent coastline of the abyss and leaves the subject in a state of deep anxiety.

Non-beauty, according to the Personalist conception, only masquerades as beauty. When persons enter into the thrall of the passions they are not confirming non-beauty as essential but rather they are victimized by the state of the fallen world. The Personalist perspective claims with certainty that beauty and non-beauty are inherently separated as established by the fact that beauty contains the ability to lead persons into communion, even across time and space. Existential aesthetics posits that the existence of non-beauty confirms the totality of isolation. Orthodox and Personalist aesthetics avers that non-beauty has no independent existence, and is only a consequence of human freedom. Dostoevsky said that for a person experiencing beauty “for a time life as it was slows up for him.”²⁸⁹ Here Dostoevsky’s view aligns with the Orthodox and Personalist. If time is not a river, if it can be overcome by human acts of beauty and love, then the certitude of the abyss and isolation as expressed in the Existentialist perspective is false.

Dostoevsky and the Personalist thinkers explicitly argue against the primacy and immutability of time. The mode by which beauty allows for the transcendence of time, in their worldview, is most easily comprehensible through the creative act, and art objects. Consider how:

A painting by van Gogh is, at the same time, something essentially different from the dimensional-qualitative objectivity of the materials which compose it. It is a *thing*, a *pragma*, a personal act. It testifies to the person of van Gogh. It *is* van Gogh. When we have “recognized” the unlike, unique, and unrepeatable character of the extraordinary creative genius of van Gogh and meet with another expression of this genius which is new to us – when we find ourselves in front of another of his paintings – then we say: this *is* van Gogh.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

²⁹⁰ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 36.

Recognition of the person through beauty transcends time and space, death and decay. One listening to the “Ode to Joy” for the first time they experiences coming face to face with Beethoven. And when they find the poem upon which it was based the immediate connection to Ludwig stretches across time to induce a new experience of being-in-relation with Friedrich. And when Schiller points toward the Succession Temple of the Eternal Spring in Vienna and the *Beethoven Frieze*, Klimt and Wagner rise up into being across time and space for the person through art.²⁹¹ Art and beauty open the world to timeless time and deathlessness by destroying the void with which the person attempts to surround and isolate themselves. It erotically presents the face of the other across the “void” of time and space and annuls it.

Orthodoxy expresses the transcendence of time through beauty, not only in its icons, vestments, and singing, but in its liturgical cycle—particularly at the Eucharistic celebration. The incursion of the Divine into the world occurs surrounded by beauty in its churches and temples and adorns all of creation and the people with Divine beauty. It is understood that:

The existential change which is completed by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist refers neither to objects in themselves nor to individuals in themselves, but to the relationship of individuals with the objects, a relationship of reference and offering of creation to God by man, a relationship which transfigures the mode of life changing the existence of both individuals and of things in the eucharistic communion with God into participation in the triadic fullness of life.²⁹²

²⁹¹ See Figures 11, 12, 13, and 14. Klimt’s work, created in 1901-2 for the celebration of the life and work of Beethoven and conceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* through synthesizing painting, sculpture, architecture, and music by Klimt and other members of the Secession Group, traces the allegorical history of humankind’s journey toward peace, unity, and joy through beauty and compassion. The allegorical Types in the frieze represent both the highest qualities of the person (beauty, courage, compassion) as well as the terrors that plague us and isolate us (lasciviousness, unchastity, excess) as well as the gorgons representing fate. In the end the arts bring humanity to the joy of the “spark of divinity” as Schiller phrases in his *Ode to Joy*, which is represented by the choirs of angels singing around a couple kissing. Their embrace unites the entire world through love and beauty, as represented by the flowering rose garden, the unity of the sun and moon, and the winds encircling the lovers’ feet. Klimt visually represents the Personalist concept of beauty as being-in-relation while simultaneously bridging the distances of time and space in his work to open himself, Schiller, and Beethoven to the other by bridging music, poetry, and visual art. For more on the *Frieze* see Christoph Grunenberg “‘Sacred Spring’ and the dawn of a new era: the Vienna Secession,” in *Gustav Klimt: the Complete Paintings*, ed. Tobias G Natter, (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 40-99 and 524-6.

²⁹² Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 129.

One who participates in the Divine mysteries of the Church experiences the ‘higher reality,’ which is most thoroughly and potently contemplated through the *nous*. The *logoi* shine with heavenly resplendence and the presence of the Logos is intensified. Beauty, we can therefore say, ignites a joy that opens the heart and ignites the *nous* by focusing the attention of the human heart and mind on the presence of the Logos.

Timothy Ware identifies the particularly Russian perspective on the central role of beauty and how it advances into the material world through the liturgical life of the Church. From the establishment of Orthodoxy during baptism of Rus under the Grand Prince Vladimir beauty played a primary role in bringing the Church to the region. Vladimir’s emissaries to Constantinople famously note that in the Orthodox temple “we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty and we are at a loss at how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men... For we cannot forget that beauty.”²⁹³ If the legend is to be trusted, the concentration on and call relayed by beauty are instrumental. But this account also expresses the idea that even to the then-pre-Christian Slavs “the Holy Liturgy is something that embraces two worlds at once, for both in heaven and on earth the Liturgy is one and the same.”²⁹⁴ Dostoevsky’s attention to beauty and its relation to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world also expresses the transcendence of time and space according to Orthodox mindset.²⁹⁵ Time and space are overcome through the expression of the *logoi* of things and persons through beauty.

Dostoevsky’s attempt to depict the victory of the eternal over the decay inherent in time and space within the novel, however, continually fails—at least until *The Brothers Karamazov*.

²⁹³ Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed., “Vladimir Christianizes Rus,” in *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, (New York: Meridian Book, 1963), 67-8.

²⁹⁴ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 265.

²⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 188, 154.

In his work, as in everyday life, the reality of existence and being within time and space takes precedence over the higher reality of transcendent being. There are fragments and flashes of the “light darkness” of authentic being, but to glimpse it one must be of a purified heart and an open *nous*. The average reader, or at least one unfamiliar with the nuances of Orthodox theology, and literary Person either cannot comprehend these moments—which already exist in a manner beyond normal comprehension—or Dostoevsky is incapable of producing such moments in any realistic way within the novels. His depiction of beauty, and its call to being-in-relation, misses the mark because he cannot and will not force the reader or his Persons into relation. Just as beauty can only call, so too does Dostoevsky’s art require personal response. I will return to the decay of poetic time and space in the structure of *The Idiot* in the following section and the successful depiction of the Orthodox view of the unity of time and space with timelessness and spacelessness in *the Brothers Karamazov* in the following chapter.

However, the discussion of the foundations of beauty and non-beauty as active engagements with the *logoi* and Logos now leads to the next unique aspect of Dostoevsky’s poetics as related to aesthetics. The freedom and uniqueness of the literary Person as created by Dostoevsky provides the most powerful depiction of the constant struggle between beauty and non-beauty as it relates to the anxiety of being in the person. To analyze how this influences the characterizations and narrative structures in the novels requires a discussion of beauty and non-beauty as an antinomy. This principle will allow Dostoevsky to build toward the truth of Christ’s central position as the idealized and incarnate locus about which humanity plays out its struggle. The antinomy will also allow for a Personalist analysis of Dostoevsky’s work through a synthesis of oppositions in light of the concept of two forms of beauty.

§III: Dostoevsky’s Beauty as an Antinomy, Rather than a Dialectic

Literary Persons in Dostoevsky's work cannot rise up to salvation on their own, but require a relational nexus to propel them toward authentic being. Dostoevsky utilizes beauty in his work to initiate the movement up the ladder of salvation for his Persons. The discussion of beauty, however, inevitably leads to the problem of non-beauty—the reaction of the person toward natural or creative beauty that leads them away from authentic being and toward evil. One often hears the idea that without sin there can be no salvation in critical literature on Dostoevsky's oeuvre, in fact the first chapter of Ksana Blank's monograph is entitled "If you Don't Sin, You Can't Repent; If You Don't Repent, You Can't Achieve Salvation."²⁹⁶ This idea that Dostoevsky considered evil and non-beauty as a path to salvation is not unfamiliar in criticism of his work, however within the Orthodox and Personalist discourse non-beauty as evil is not necessary to authentic being, but it remains an unescapable fact of being in the world-as-it-is. While it can point toward the Truth of unity with Divine being or be a pedagogical force for the Person, apophatically indicating the source of authentic being, it is not an active mode of achieving these ends.

In order to express both the positive aspect of beauty and the pedagogical aspect of non-beauty it is necessary to address Dostoevsky's understanding of the opposition of the two. Looking back to his response to Dobroliubov, Dostoevsky speaks of beauty neither as a monad nor as a dialectic, but rather in a way that must be understood as an antinomy. Dostoevsky writes:

But when the person finds what he has been striving for, then for a time life as it was slows up for him, and we have seen examples in which the person, having achieved the ideal of his desires, not knowing what further to strive for, being satiated, would fall into a kind of anguish, would even foment in himself this anguish, seek out another ideal in his life and, out of extreme surfeit of pleasure, not only would not value what he had enjoyed, but consciously would even turn from the direct path, exciting in himself alien tastes, unhealthy, sharp, inharmonic, sometimes monstrous

²⁹⁶ Blank, *Dostoevsky's Dialectics*, 27-39.

ones, losing measure and aesthetic feeling for healthy beauty and demanding instead of it exceptions.²⁹⁷

Dostoevsky indicates a distinct split between the reception of beauty and non-beauty—healthy and unhealthy forms of engagement with them. From his perspective they are inherently connected as they express the Truth of being as it relates to the Godhead.

In proposing the connection of beauty to Truth and authentic being, however, Dostoevsky deploys a paradox: how can something that cannot lead toward salvation still point toward soteriological truth? To the reader unfamiliar with Orthodox or Personalist thought, the method by which these contradictions come to a resolution may be unknown. For the person familiar with the Eastern perspective, however, contradiction is not only natural but an inherent aspect of the synergetic dynamics of relational ontology. Irresolvable propositions confirm the existence of the transcendent or higher reality and its engagement with the material world.

The problem of contradictions in Dostoevsky has been approached from a variety of angles in scholarship, and most seek to find logical resolution to the “problem” of contradiction, i.e., the fact of their existence needs logical resolution. A contemporary example of the need to resolve contradiction is Ksana Blank’s model of dialectic discourse based on the prototype of the Chinese diagram of the yin-yang. She posits that:

The Chinese model of change helps us see that contradictions as Dostoevsky presents them are not random, arbitrary, or perverse, but internally structured and balanced. [...] There is a particular reason the yin-yang model is appropriate for the discussion of Dostoevsky’s dialectics. In traditional Christianity, good and evil, virtue and sin, faith a disbelief, are clearly separated and diametrically opposed. In Dostoevsky’s treatment of these binary pairs, counterparts are contrasted but presented as interdependent. Thus, Dostoevsky’s religious philosophy is built on the idea that man’s way to God may lie through sin and crime.²⁹⁸

While she considers the Orthodox model of antinomic discourse, there are several problems in the manner in which she engages them by unifying Orthodox philosophical traditions with

²⁹⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

²⁹⁸ Blank, 10.

Chinese ones. This Chinese model for tracing the upward movement of human being, in the tradition of Hegel and Kant, through dialectics uncovers fascinating evaluations of Dostoevsky's work.²⁹⁹ However, there is more at play within Dostoevsky's texts, and it comes to light through a deeper engagement with Orthodox philosophy.

A dialectic analysis of the type Blank explores, however much it might claim to incorporate the Orthodox perspective into its work, cannot express the fullness of the soteriological telos of beauty toward which Dostoevsky works. His search for the truth of the person in the Truth of Divine being becomes secondary to a fidelity to the world-as-it-is and not to the unity with the world-as-it-will-be. Where Blank's analysis diverges most concretely from the Orthodox traditions is in her analysis of sin as a necessary step toward salvation. In the previous section, I analyzed how the rejection or deformation of beauty and being-in-relation may be an unavoidable fact of reality and, therefore, is useful as a potent negative argument for the mode of authentic being. But sin, and therefore non-beauty, is not "man's way to God" in the Orthodox perspective.

Within the Orthodox tradition, sin leads only to the willful separation of the person from the Divine. It is not the natural state of being and therefore it is "unnatural" for the person. It is "natural" insofar as it is a part of the created, material world after the Fall. And as the person is free, sin is neither a necessity in life nor for salvation, but an active choice that isolates the person and sends them into a state of anxiety.³⁰⁰ Dostoevsky's novels are filled with scenes of seemingly "necessary" sins—such as Sonia's life as a prostitute—as well as egocentric sins—

²⁹⁹ The Soviet scholar Golosovker's book on the subject of Kant and Dostoevsky lays out the similarities between the two as thinkers within the framework of Kant's antinomies. However, there is no discussion on the antinomy of beauty or aesthetics in this work. See Ia. E. Golosovker, *Dostoevskiy i Kant: Razmyshlenie chitatelia nad romanom "Brat'ia Karamazovy" I traktatom Kanta "Kritika chistogo razuma,"* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1963).

³⁰⁰ For the extended discussion on the nature of sin in the Orthodox perspective see Chapter I §VI: Sin and Death as the Cause of Isolation and Anxiety.

such as Raskolnikov's murder—that lead to repentance and a positive depiction of beauty and authentic being-in-relation. However, abundant scenes also indicate that sin is incapable of bringing the person into communion with the other and with the Divine. Communion with the other in Dostoevsky's oeuvre is predicated upon a rejection of the passions and movement initiated by beauty. Undertaking an examination of the contradictions inherent in the reception of beauty as invitation-to-relation through the Personalist perspective will clarify the persistence of the presence of paradox of beauty and non-beauty in Dostoevsky's works as it relates to good and evil without abandoning the author's faithfulness to Orthodox theology.

To begin this analysis requires a brief explanation of the formal logic of the antinomy and why it is most productive lens through which we might parse Dostoevsky's view on the contradictions inherent in the reception of beauty. An antinomy is defined as a proposition that is true, and its truth is guaranteed because it contains within it a thesis and antithesis, both of which are true despite being mutually negating.³⁰¹ More succinctly, as Steven Cassedy frames antinomy “Simply put, it's merely an example of paradoxical thinking.”³⁰² In the logic of an antinomy, we understand beauty as thesis—which is the relational engagement with the *logos* in either the person or creation—and non-beauty as antithesis—which is the either the egocentric consumption of the other's beauty or the abuse of the *logos* to seduce the other. These two truths

³⁰¹ An example would be the Truth of the being of the Godhead in the Orthodox understanding of it. This truth is proved by the contradiction of the two truths A and B which constitute it. In this antinomy: A is the *homoousia* or single essence of God that shows Him undivided, and B is the trihypostatic nature of God in the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Logic does not permit 1 to equal three, but the Truth of the being of God entails both the propositions of A and B. The rejection of this type of logic after antiquity throughout much of Western philosophy, only to return in the work of Emmanuel Kant, was caused by rejection of and disdain for contradiction in mathematical and philosophical discourse. The rise of theoretical maths and a return to metaphysical discourse in philosophy brought philosophers and mathematicians alike back to the work of antiquity to explain non-logical features of existence and thought. Pavel Florensky explains this phenomenon in great detail in the chapter “Contradictions” in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in 12 Letters*, trans. Boris Jakim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 106-123.

³⁰² Steven Cassedy, *Dostoevsky's Religion*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 93. Cassedy's chapter “Belief is Expressed in Antinomies,” (87-113) explores paradoxical elements in Dostoevsky's work through the lens of antinomy, but does not discuss the question of beauty and non-beauty with the same depth as my work.

point toward the greater Truth of the reality of the mode of being-in-relation in the likeness of the Divine in the person. Both these propositions are true despite inherently contradicting one another, and because of this contradiction they point toward a higher truth of being. Ksana Blank also presents the antinomy of beauty in Dostoevsky but her logical formulation entails “Thesis: *The only source of positive beauty is the moral ideal of Christ. Antithesis: Sinning (falling) may bring a person closer to God.*”³⁰³ She does not indicate, however what precisely the higher truth of beauty is that is being pointed toward in this antinomy.

In opposition to her formula, the Personalist perspective does not posit two forms of beauty, but rather two modes by which the person interacts with it. Here, the logic of contradiction does not posit a positive ideal against sin but rather the source of beauty—the image and likeness of the Divine as embodied in the incarnate Christ—is the synthesis of the thesis and antithesis. The thesis is therefore not the ideal, but the manifestation of the image of the higher mode of being that, through relation, points toward the Truth. The antithesis does not entail that sin as an active rejection of the charm of beauty leads to the Truth, but rather that it turns the subject away from the Truth. It is an antithesis insofar as the person, in mistaking non-beauty for beauty, lusts after this masquerade without comprehension of its telos in isolation. Charm functions to either lead to salvation or damnation. In this schema, the antithesis can work pedagogically to teach others how to work toward salvation, but the sinful act itself cannot itself be soteriologically informed.

The function of the antinomy of beauty in the Personalist mode is best analyzed in the context of charm, or invitation-to-being. In Ksana Blank’s analysis she also identifies the

³⁰³ Blank, 14.

problem of charm within the context of beauty's antinomy. She engages a brief analysis of the word *prelest'* in conjunction with beauty. She defines *prelest'* in the following manner:

[There is] a twofold notion of *prelest'* (charm). In Russian secular culture, this word has a positive meaning, associated with elegance, refinement, and grace—elements of feminine fashion that were imported into Russia from France in the late eighteenth century. In the Russian religious context, however, the idea of enchantment has always had negative connotations. For this reason the Orthodox ascetic tradition understands *prelest'* as spiritual captivity.³⁰⁴

While her definition of the secular aspect of *prelest'* is correct, Blank misinterprets it within the Orthodox tradition. *Prelest'* is not merely “spiritual captivity,” but spiritual delusion. In Greek *prelest'* is *πλάνη* (*plani*), which serves as the foundation for the Orthodox meaning. In the non-Orthodox context, the Greek term indicates general erroneous belief or opinion, which is very close to the religious and ascetic understanding of the term.

It is not merely being a captive, but a captive to one's own delusion. It is easy to see how she ends at her antinomy of sin leading to spiritual union can come from this misinterpretation of the term. She quotes Pavel Florensky's *Iconostasis* for her analysis of the negative aspects of *prelest'* and if one fills in the more proper “spiritual delusion” instead of “spiritual captivity” there is a marked difference. Her quote, with “spiritual delusion” replacing *prelest'*, would read:

[Spiritual delusion], of course, brings images that stir passions in us... For we may, if caught in [spiritual delusion], take the passions as something directly opposite to what they really are.... In [spiritually deluded]-stirred passions, however, we see [our passions] as attained spirituality, as sacred energy, salvation and holiness... An ordinary sinner knows he is falling away from God; a soul in [spiritual delusion] thinks it is drawing ever closer to Him.³⁰⁵

While “spiritual captivity” may work here, the nuance of willfully deceiving oneself into believing that sin is salvific is lost using that translation. In fact, the idea of *prelest'* in and of itself rejects Blank's proposition that sin can lead to salvation; for an Orthodox Christian it

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 75.

³⁰⁵ Blank quotes this passage from Florensky in *Dostoevsky's Dialectics*, 75.

would be a sin of *prelest*' to believe that sin can save the person by mistaking sin for goodness, or non-beauty for beauty.³⁰⁶

The danger of spiritual delusion lies in its isolation of the person from the Truth. An individual becomes assured that their opinions, actions, or thoughts are of a truthfulness greater than the teachings of the Church. Ignatius Brianchaninov, a Russian Orthodox saint and prolific writer of the 19th century, provides the best and most detailed description of *prelest*' for our purposes:

Spiritual deception [*prelest*] is the wounding of human nature by falsehood. Spiritual deception is the state of all men without exception, and it has been made possible by the fall of our original parents. All of us are subject to spiritual deception. Awareness of this fact is the greatest protection against it. Likewise, the greatest spiritual deception of all is to consider oneself free from it. We are all deceived, all deluded; we all find ourselves in a condition of falsehood; we all need to be liberated by the Truth.³⁰⁷

Spiritual delusion is only possible in the fallen state of human being, which is our state “without exception” insofar as it is a function of the distortion of the image and likeness of the Divine. However, it is not a necessary state and it is not an inherent feature of the person, only a possibility predicated on free will. Breaking down the term will further illuminate how it is connected to the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty. The Slavic root of the word *lest*' does indicate *charm*. However, the type of charm that spiritual delusion manifests would be more appropriately termed *seduction* based on the coupling of the root with the prefix *pre-*, which indicates movement across or over. In this way *pre-lest*' as spiritual delusion indicates the seduction of the subject across from and over the Truth, into a belief in the subject's own self-sufficiency.

³⁰⁶ For further information on the etymological roots of *prelest*' see the entry on it in the *Etimologicheskie onlain-solvari russkogo iazika* <https://lexicography.online/etymology/%D0%BF/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C> (accessed May 35, 2021).

³⁰⁷ Ignatius Brianchaninov, “On Spiritual Deception,” <http://orthodoxleader.paradosis.com/articles/on-spiritual-deception/> (accessed May 3, 2021).

If beauty charms, non-beauty and *prelest'* seduce. If beauty calls the other and self into relation and toward salvation, then non-beauty calls the other and self toward solipsism and ego-centric annihilation. The antinomy reveals that the same principle in beauty can lead to one of two end-points based on the individual's reaction to it. One is authentic being, one is riddled with earthly care, anxiety, and death. These theses and antitheses all point to the Truth of Christ as the *Logos* toward which the beauty of all *logoi* point. Understanding that non-beauty and *prelest'* are aspects of the state of the person after the Fall but not the natural state of humanity, then the religious context of a deep need for the salvific quality of beauty as charm becomes an inevitable truth.

The contradiction in the idea that beauty can both lead the person to salvation or damnation does not logically entail that either side of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty leads to salvation. *Prelest'* inherently stifles the kenotic outpouring of the self to the other, and there is no positive quality to it within discourse on beauty. Blank's uncovering of the importance of *prelest'* in relation to Dostoevskian beauty reveals an extremely valuable vehicle for our analysis, but without the Orthodox understanding of the term, however, she arrives at the conclusion that there is an ambivalence toward beauty in Dostoevsky's work. She says that "it is important to note that the ambivalence of *prelest'*, positive in a secular sense and negative in a religious context, contributes to the distressing ambivalence of beauty in [*The Idiot*]." ³⁰⁸ But with the knowledge that *prelest'* in the Orthodox context elicits seduction rather than charm—the proper movement toward beauty is sabotaged by the seduction of the egocentric self-assurance of *prelest'*—the idea that the religious response to beauty is ambivalence fades away.

By erasing the ambivalence that arises from inherent contradiction in the logic of beauty we also eradicate any apparent ambivalence toward beauty in Dostoevsky's novels. The dichotomy of beauty and non-beauty should not be taken as a barrier to a unified reading of Dostoevsky's worldview but rather that these contradictions should lead the reader to deeper comprehension of the author's desire to expound and reify the mode of authentic being-in-relation. In the same way that the freedom given to his Persons always points toward the foundation of their being in the image and likeness of their creator, so too does non-beauty point toward the mode of being-in-relation in Persons. It does not lead one there, but warns against the path to anxiety and isolation. Non-beauty is not problematic for the Truth of being, but rather directs the illuminated mind to an experience of Truth. Pavel Florensky clarifies how antinomies unearth the depths of greater truths:

In heaven there is only the one Truth. But, here, on earth, we have a multitude of truths, fragments of the Truth, noncongruent to one another. [...] Reason itself is fragmented and split, and only the purified God-bearing mind of saintly ascetics is *somewhat* more whole. [...] Contradictions are eliminated in the mind only at moments of illuminations by grace. But they are eliminated not by rationality but suprarationally.³⁰⁹

The problem of non-beauty as part of an antinomy is that logic alone cannot confirm its support of the Truth. The positive nature of the negative proof of the antithesis can only be experienced, and if it can be reasonably explained this can only occur after the fact.

The interpretation of non-beauty as a movement away yet simultaneous confirmation of the goal requires an Orthodox mindset. It is only within this paradigm that one can approach Dostoevsky's conception that beauty, to quote Florensky, is like "the mysteries of religion [that] are not secrets that one must not reveal. They are not passwords of conspirators, but inexpressible, unutterable, indescribable *experiences*, which cannot be put into words except in

³⁰⁹ Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, 117-8.

the form of contradictions, which are ‘yes’ and ‘no’ at the same time.”³¹⁰ In Dostoevsky’s novelistic world, the experience of non-beauty functions in the same, although opposite direction: the attempt at a desecration of the image and likeness is like speaking the word “no” to Truth. In saying “no” the speaker does not deny Truth but rather freely rejects it, chooses not to participate in what they have been given. In this context the focus of inquiry into non-beauty is not a denial but an affirmation through rejection.

The experience of beauty can be sublime or horrifying. It brings the person closer to the other or it attempts to swallow them whole. While the previous chapters provide foundations for the thesis of beauty pointing toward Dostoevsky’s Truth, it is more difficult to prove that non-beauty also illuminates Dostoevsky’s soteriological belief without falling into the trap of thinking that evil and sin may lead to salvation in and of themselves. If, as we have posited, non-beauty is an output of the passionate quality of the person’s state after the Fall, then it must be part of what we call evil. How can evil participate in something that is, supposedly, the point of contact with the Divine? Can beauty exist without non-beauty, goodness without evil? Does Dostoevsky believe in the idea that evil is a necessary good, that “if I exorcise my devils, well my angels might leave, too?”³¹¹ A further clarification of the Personalist perspective on evil in relation to the Dostoevskian discourse on beauty and non-beauty will demystify the contradictions presented in the novels by views on beauty and non-beauty.

Nikolai Berdyaev posits the paradoxical thesis that “the existence of evil is a proof of the existence of God. If the world consisted wholly and uniquely of goodness and righteousness there would be no need for God, for the world itself would be god. God is, because evil is. And

³¹⁰ Ibid., 117.

³¹¹ Tom Waits, “Please Call Me, Baby,” *The Heart of Saturday Night*, Asylum Records, 7E-1015, 1974.

that means that God is because freedom is.”³¹² According to Berdyaev’s analysis, Dostoevsky believes that “freedom degenerates into arbitrary self-will, this leads to evil, and evil to criminal wrongdoing [and therefore] evil shows that man has an inner profundity and it is associated with personality, which alone can create evil and answer for it.”³¹³ This explanation of the origin of evil or sin as a product of the freedom of the person is harmonious with the Orthodox perspective, which fundamentally entails that “sinfulness, even though it is, is something that does not have being [...] destro[ies] (as every parasitic existence does) its host, sin destroys itself at the same time [...] it] is the element of disharmony, decay, and decomposition.”³¹⁴ If sinfulness is a missing of the mark on the path toward theosis, and that which brings a person toward theosis is the charm of beauty, then one can logically posit that the person drawn to sin is seduced by non-beauty as an expression of egocentric desire. Freedom is the condition which allows the subject to head toward either beauty or non-beauty, salvation or evil.

Modifying Berdyaev’s antinomy by substituting beauty for freedom and non-beauty for evil the connections become even more apparent. The predicate would then read: “the existence of non-beauty is a proof of the existence of God. If the world consisted wholly and uniquely of goodness and righteousness there would be no need for God, for the world itself would be god. God is, because non-beauty is. And that means that God is because beauty is.” However, claiming that “God is, because non-beauty is,” is just as problematic statement as “God is,

³¹² Nikolai Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky: An Interpretation*, trans. Donald Attwater, (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), 87.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 89-92.

³¹⁴ Orthodoxy teaches that the first sin of disobedience acted out by Adam and Eve developed from the prideful desire to revolt against God, which was first found in Satan and other angels in a spiritual manner. This pride is the desire to be outside of God by eating the forbidden fruit. The outbreak of sin spreads, therefore, because of the freedom of human will and the desire to be unlike God. Death is a consequence of sin insofar as it is the ultimate separation from Divine Being. The Incarnation is an attempt to reunite humanity with God thanks to the Divine taking part in every aspect of human being. For a brief overview of the foundations of sin see Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 79-94. Quotation is from Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, 125, 127, 129.

because evil is,” unless we keep in mind the apophatic nature of Orthodox “proofs.”³¹⁵ Evil is not a part of Divine being, but rather a product of human freedom. Non-beauty, likewise, has no origin in the Divine, but is a product of human freedom, and it is freedom that points toward the existence of the Divine because it confirms the Divine likeness in the person. These claims need to be taken apophatically; evil and non-beauty’s existence allows one to express the notion that God is beyond evil and non-beauty—their existence in the fallen world allows us to analogically speak of what God is not. Finally, if evil is the free expression of human uniqueness in a manner that isolates the subject and consumes the other, it is still a free expression and therefore it points toward the Truth in Dostoevsky’s worldview. Although evil is foreign to the foundations of human being in the image and likeness it is still a product of free human activity.

The prime example of Dostoevsky’s adherence to the freedom in the discourse on beauty, leading to a failure to achieve a depiction of higher reality due to the antinomic illogicality and contradictions, lies in the relationship between Prince Myshkin, Aglaya Ivanovna, Nastasia Filippovna, and Rogozhin in *The Idiot*. In the creation of the novel Dostoevsky is aware of the necessity of a mode of being-in-relation for his Persons that is predicated of the charm of beauty. In his letter to A.N. Maikov on December 31, 1867 Dostoevsky explains that there is not one but four heroes of this novel, and although two are already well formed—Nastasia Filippovna and Rogozhin—two still require deeper treatment. Particularly it is the “main hero,” Myshkin, who is still weak.³¹⁶ In the letter, Dostoevsky alludes to the relational grounds of these four heroes while indicating that Myshkin is somehow deficient, revealing that Dostoevsky himself at the beginning of writing to novel had not worked out how to make this primary Person relate to the

³¹⁵ For the discussion of apophatic philosophy in the Orthodox context see Chapter I §I: Introduction: Against a Purely Western, Rational Approach to Being as a Viable Lens Through Which to Analyze Dostoevsky’s Work.

³¹⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(II), 241.

others. Dostoevsky's creative weakness, or at least uncertainty, in creating his "perfectly beautiful person" sets the stage for the catastrophe in which these four Persons find themselves in the text. They are unable or unwilling to come into a loving and selfless relationship with each other and with those around because Dostoevsky did not know how to depict this within the novelistic world without stripping them of their typological status as Persons.

Dostoevsky's initial structural conception of the novel, in which the mutual call of beauty between the four protagonists summons the others around them and themselves into loving, salvific relation is predicated upon Myshkin's status as "the perfectly beautiful person." However, framing Myshkin as perfection and the enhypostatization of the beauty of Christ is untenable due to Myshkin's inherent freedom as a Person. He remains in flux, between being cast as a Type of either the holy fool, the poor knight, or Christ by others and his own inherent freedom as a Person. Dostoevsky fails to depict the salvation of fallen humanity because of his inability to create Persons who of their own volition are capable of pulling not only themselves but others as well out of isolation and egocentric death and toward the higher reality of authentic being. Each of the protagonists, as Persons, are always compelled by some outer force to commit a beautiful or non-beautiful act. There is also, however non-beauty functioning to override the free will of the Person in Myshkin due to the author's desire to make him perfect. The world Dostoevsky creates is prepared to accommodate and fuel the sacrifice and love necessary to create higher realism, but his Persons are not ready to accept a decree that "the perfectly beautiful person" *must* save them. They see beauty, but are turned from it by a willing submission to non-beauty.

A deeper analysis of Dostoevsky's failure must start with Myshkin. Despite the author's attempts and wishes to depict the ideal in the reality of the novel, Myshkin turns out to be the

principle point of decay in the text. Vyacheslav Ivanov characterizes the problematic elements of Myshkin's conception:

In fact, the positive type [that, despite the law of life that separates and isolates men, nevertheless gives living reality to the principle of all-embracing community and unity] that Dostoevsky sought must either present a countenance of perfect holiness, amazingly transcending the limitations of humanity—but such a countenance would be the subject of a mystery, not of a realistic story; or it must produce a tragi-comic effect—by reason of its discordance or, one might say, its incommensurability with its human environment, combined with its inward oneness with this environment in virtue of the common law of life that governs both.³¹⁷

Ivanov speaks of Myshkin and his similarities as being linked to Platonism and Platonic Eros, asserting an overdependence on the ideal and a rejection of the synthesis of the metaphysical and material. Myshkin is forced to be “tragi-comic” and Quixotic so that he does not break the ontological or anthropological boundaries of the novel, but his status as a Person pushes back against the Typification inherent in the Quixotic mode.

As a Person, Myshkin represents a deformation of the Truth of being-in-relation toward which beauty leads and non-beauty points. This statement may seem counterintuitive insofar as it contradicts not only scholarship on Myshkin similar to Ivanov's, but also what Dostoevsky wrote about his protagonist at his creation. According to the notebooks for the novel it is clear that Dostoevsky always planned to write about the creation of a perfectly beautiful Person, but the original idea came in the form of a deeply morally flawed persons suffering from “idiocy” who would eventually climb up to perfection rather than the Myshkin presented in the final text. Edward Wasioleck, in the introduction to the English translation of the notebooks, discusses Myshkin's progression as a beautiful person in the following manner:

Dostoevsky looks for his “beautiful Idiot from the very first plan and in the seventh he finds him. The Idiot of the first six plans is a “double” character. Dostoevsky makes this explicit in plan five when he talks of “The Dualism of a deep nature,” of an Idiot who feels contempt for others and for himself, hate and love for the same people, a desire to make others suffer and himself to suffer on the cross for them. It is clear, I think, that Dostoevsky hope to wrench the good Idiot from this dual nature, as he had budged Raskolnikov into God's camp.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Ivanov, 87-8.

³¹⁸ *The Notebooks for The Idiot*, ed. Edward Wasiolek and trans. Katharine Strelsky, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 13.

Less than a month before the publication of the first chapter, in a flurry of creative inspiration during the seventh plan, Dostoevsky changes his mind and decides that the Prince will be physically unwell but spiritually perfect. This change immediately annihilates Dostoevsky's attempt to positively depict a "fully beautiful" person.

It seems contradictory to say that Dostoevsky doomed his own fictional being to imperfection and abject failure as a Person because he sought to create "the perfectly beautiful person." As Alina Wyman notes, there is a trend in modern scholarship "to conclude that Myshkin's failure demonstrates that he is not meant as a Christlike figure from the start, but rather as a familiar Dostoevskian imposter who 'blocks' the real Christ from the rest of the characters, so direly in need of Christian redemption."³¹⁹ She argues that Myshkin's failure and his nearly immaterial physical nature in the novel is due to him "follow[ing Christ] in the most personal way, the only kind of imitation Dostoevsky deemed adequate to an authentic understanding of Christ."³²⁰ But if one must remember that while Dostoevsky sees the ideal in the Godhead, beauty in its perfection shines into the world through the Incarnation and through the actions of the Holy Spirit in synergetic cooperation with the person. Therefore the dynamism of this ontological boundary uncovers the impossibility of a perfect Person existing within the reality of Dostoevsky's novelistic world without some active union with the Divine. Dostoevsky learns through Myshkin that if his novels are truly able to reflect reality both as-it-is and as-it-will-be, no Person can be perfect except for Christ. The beauty of Christ as reflected in the novels is a momentary experience of closeness to the Divine, but it cannot last in the Person.

³¹⁹ Alina Wyman, *The Gift of Active Empathy: Scheler, Bakhtin, and Dostoevsky* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 174.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

The logos in a person only reflects the image and likeness of the Creator, it does not replicate it or create it—to do so would cost the person, made *in* the image and likeness in order to become one with the Creator, to forfeit their freedom and uniqueness. A person climbs the never-ending ladder of spiritual ascent toward Divine being, but there is no static telos of perfection. Dumitriu Stăniloae expresses the impossibility of perfection within creation before the eschatological telos in the following manner: “So the goal of Christian Orthodox spirituality is the union of the believer with God, in Christ. But as God is unending, the goal of our union with Him, or of our perfection, has no point from which we can no longer progress. So all the Eastern Fathers say that perfection is unlimited.”³²¹ While the upward movement toward authentic being-in-relation permits moments of transcendence in reality that approach the perfection of the world-as-it-will-be, neither the person/Person nor the real/literary world can maintain a state of perfection.

Myshkin, unlike Alyosha and Zosima, is placed high upon the ladder of spiritual purity and beauty without cleansing himself spiritually. And therefore he falls off this ladder because he is not actively attuned to his struggle. He exhibits a ghostlike quality in his physical existence, due to the mask of perfection Dostoevsky attempts to write into him—a mask of non-beauty presenting itself as beauty. His earthly existence and cares prevent him from climbing higher and, more importantly, elevating those around him. But these material qualities also abandon him in a liminal space between the ideal and the real, making him, essentially, useless to reality either physically or spiritually.

Dostoevsky considered presenting the Prince as the Sphinx.³²² In my estimation, in the light of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty, the so-called perfection of Myshkin is more

³²¹ Stăniloae, 21.

³²² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 9, 242.

appropriately likened to the Chimera, a beast that perfectly represents the failed Western desire to resolve the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty as something logical. One head of the beast is the relational charm of beauty as kenotic love, the other the non-beauty driven by egocentric freedom, and the tail Dostoevsky's desire to save his fictional beings from themselves. From the eighth plan in the notebooks for the novel, Dostoevsky seems to be struggling with this antinomy in Myshkin as well, and notes that the Prince is aware of his own liminal nature: "The Idiot does not consider himself capable of lofty things, but he longs for lofty actions. In saving N[astasia].F[ilippovna]. and devoting himself to her, he does it not to console himself through a lofty deed, but as an act out of a sense of pure Christian love."³²³ When Myshkin's endeavor fails, it does not fulfill the act of "pure Christian love," but rather in its non-beauty pedagogically points toward the Truth of being-in-relation.

In many ways Myshkin is beautiful—the first head of the Chimera. The first half of the antinomy is expressed in his pity and kenosis. Dostoevsky creates a literary being who exemplifies the beauty and charm of the person who offers themselves loving and fully for the other. He simultaneously does so in a unique manner within the context of the literary world up to the point of this creation. These qualities are apparent in the immediate reactions of other Persons or Characters upon meeting the Prince. They are always struck by the novelty of what seems to be a complete lack of self-interest and an overabundance of selfless love. Yuri Corrigan expresses the original and ideal aspects of Myshkin through Aglaya's articulation that "the Prince's desire to anchor his existence through allegiance to an 'image of pure beauty' in Myshkin's attraction to the 'enormous concept of some pure and lofty knight's medieval knightly platonic love,' an 'ideal' which Myshkin has 'taken to the very final degree, to the point

³²³ Ibid., 220.

of asceticism.”³²⁴ Myshkin’s beauty, unlike Alyosha’s (as I shall examine in the next chapter), is exceptionally non-ascetic. His ideal form is based in literary and cultural forms, not strictly Orthodox ones. These ideal forms, however, act both to redemptive and destructive ends.

Take for example the meeting at Lebedev’s Pavlosk dacha with the young nihilists. In his total love for others Myshkin apologizes to them for having done nothing wrong, going so far as to offer friendship and money even after the writing of their slanderous letter, the in-person confrontation, and their shaming at the hands of Lizaveta Prokofevna in Part II of the novel. But in the end, even Ippolit, the most hardened of the nihilists and strongest Person of their group, comes into closer relation with Myshkin, the Epanchin’s, and their friends. Neither Lizaveta Prokofevna’s exposing their ruse to extort the Prince nor the truth of their scheme as brought to light by Gavrila Adralionovich opens them to love and compassion. Myshkin’s selflessness is so strong it softens the hardest heart, even if only momentarily. Even the rugged Type of the boxer in Keller melts away, going so far as to compel him to stand in as Myshkin’s second during the proposed duel in Part III. Dostoevsky succeeds in creating a beautiful Person who calls others to him, not merely in a sexually erotic manner but in a deep, kenotic expression of eros.

Alina Wyman grounds the erotic bridging between the self and the other in Dostoevsky through the model of Christ-like examples. She notes particularly Myshkin’s ability to peer into the depths of the other in *The Idiot* as a representation of the imitation of Christ: “Because the ultimate prototype of the better other, Christ, also posits a model of bridging the natural ontological gulf between persons, an entry into another’s inner world is always possible in Dostoevsky.”³²⁵ Although the gift of *noetic vision* actively and successfully leads to redemption

³²⁴ Corrigan, 77.

³²⁵ Wyman, 70. For her analysis on Myshkin’s depth of vision see “Myshkin’s Curse of Lucidity: *Vzhivanie* in *The Idiot*,” 113-121.

in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Myshkin's inability to utilize this gift is a sign of his failure as a perfect Person. In Myshkin's perfect beauty we can grasp Dostoevsky's transgression of his own anthropology by burlesquing the Prince's words regarding the Holbein Christ, "a Person of Myshkin's likeness is enough for one to lose their faith in the perfectly beautiful." Beauty can only call a fictional Person toward Perfection, it cannot maintain an ideal state of perfection or manifest it in reality.

Besides being beautiful Myshkin is also free—his second Chimeric head. Freedom, coupled with the infinite capacity of the perfection of the Divine, inherently precludes a Person from obtaining a lasting and "ideal" or complete perfection while living, as Stăniloae describes above. Literary freedom therefore always invites the possibility of the second half of the antinomy, invoking non-beauty. Because of his freedom Myshkin struggles against the millstone of perfection that Dostoevsky places around his neck, and exerting himself against beauty drags him into the briny depths of egoism. From the very beginning of the novel there is a clear and present danger of his freedom leading him away from, rather than toward, authentic being.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Myshkin tells the Epanchin's and the reader of his inability to judge beauty. His words reveal the fatal flaw in his Person; because of his physical illness he has decided that he is incapable of answering the call of beauty in word or action and instead must be its judge. Even before the scene of judgement, however, Myshkin confirms his inability to act when, in response to Ganya's inquiry into Myshkin's desire to marry Nastasia Filippovna, the Prince responds, "I can't marry anybody, I'm not healthy."³²⁶ His excuse for avoiding engagement in worldly affairs is always his illness, but his excuse belies the greater issue—a lack of will to respond to the call of beauty experientially. Ivanov characterizes

³²⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 32.

him in this manner, noting that “Prince Myshkin is, above all, the type of spirituality that descends, that seeks the Earth: a spirit that assumes flesh rather than a man who rises to the spiritual.”³²⁷ As one who is not of the Earth, Myshkin decides that he should not interfere with the internal lives of others in action, but continually goes back against this decision in his words, and in this way propagates non-beauty.

Myshkin’s Parisian judgement of the Epanchin women fits this role of non-beauty to a tee. His decision concludes in a desire to direct and control the beauty of the other rather than to attend to its charm. Even if it is a playful jest, the Epanchin women desire to come into closer relation with Myshkin, but his rejection and subsequent comparison of Aglaya Ivanova to Nastasia Filippovna actively declines the invitation-to-being they offer him. Thus, Myshkin embarks into a conscious abuse of beauty, an act of egoism masked in the allure of beauty. His actions against beauty conjure non-beauty into the world of the novel as he uses his own *logos* to reject the revealing of the other and to isolate himself. In doing so, he becomes the primary push against the beauty of the other toward egocentric gluttony.

Alina Wyman notes the hypocrisy of Myshkin’s actions based on his inner vision. She writes: “Myshkin’s resolution not to peer into the collective soul of the Russian people in search of the ultimately insufficient socio-political explanations of their often puzzling behavior but to believe in their spiritual potential by virtue of the absurd is consistent with his ethical stance [to not do so with the soul of the other] in the novel.” However, he engages in this type of behavior with multiple people, particularly Ippolit: “A secondhand discussion of Ippolit’s inner personality is unfair, because it finalizes his consciousness, making into a passive element of study.”³²⁸ In Wyman’s analysis the process of depersonalization and Typification inherent in the

³²⁷ Ivanov, 90.

³²⁸ Wyman, 113-4.

activities of non-beauty are clear. Through his judgements and active non-beauty Myshkin principally creates the hell of nothingness into which he, Nastasia Filippovna, Aglaya Ivanovna, and Rogozhin fall by refusing to accept the erotic call of beauty and instead forcing it into an inaccessible intellectualized realm—they imagine that beauty is only an ideal form and not attainable in life. In his attempt to name and judge beauty its charm is translated to seduction.

If one pulls the analysis even further back, to the very beginning of the novel, the moment when Myshkin is presented with oral and pictorial (*sic*) representation of beauty, his inability to properly react to or call others to beauty is apparent. In the first section of the first chapter of the novel Rogozhin enters a furious state recalling his tribulations with Nastasia Filippovna. The tale leads him to claim that “Prince, I’m not sure what the reason is, but I’ve come to love you. Perhaps it is because I met you in such a moment, yes, although I also met him (he pointed at Lebedev), and I haven’t come to love him.”³²⁹ Whatever natural or personal beauty Nastasia Filippovna emanates, her charm reflects off Myshkin via his silent selfless listening. Myshkin’s natural beauty in this scene is made all the more potent by the contrast of Lebedev’s raucous, sycophantic drivel as a representation of non-beauty in his desire to be consumed by Rogozhin for money. At first it seems that Myshkin is a silent receptor and mirror for the beauty of the other.

Due to this silent and reflective beauty, Rogozhin sees within Myshkin the image and likeness of the Divine. But something in Myshkin is not quite personal, it is too Typical. Thus, in a manner similar to Raskolnikov’s view of Sonya during the reading of the resurrection of Lazarus in *Crime and Punishment*, Rogozhin sees him as a Type, as a holy fool. The misinterpretation of authentic being for mania—earthly idiocy instead of a “foolishness to the

³²⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 13.

Greeks”—is the first sign of Rogozhin’s egocentric response to the call of beauty, but also proof of Myshkin’s powerlessness to achieve real communion through beauty.

Conversely, this is also the beginning of Myshkin’s decent from the ideal to the material. He is deeply struck by the impression Rogozhin has made through his lustful depiction of Nastasia Filippovna, so much so that when he finally sees her portrait at the Epanchin’s house his reaction is tainted and egocentric, like Rogozhin’s. Although Myshkin’s desire is still lofty and spiritually attuned, it is more like the aesthetic desire Evdokimov elucidates in his Personalist work. In a bizarre way, Myshkin is like a spiritual Don Juan. The worldly aesthete is a member of “the kingdom of intoxication [who] incarnates the aesthetic principle of a life totally given over to desire and the enjoyment of life. However, ‘woman inspires man only as long as he does not possess her;’ she can open him up to the infinite but then must disappear.”³³⁰ Myshkin is the aesthete of the spiritual world of the Quixotic knight, totally given over to desire and the ideal’s manifestation in reality. His ego inflates in the material world because of the pressure of those around him to fulfill his role as savior. But Nastasia Filippovna does not disappear. Nor does Myshkin want her to, because he feeds on her beauty like a black hole, growing larger and warping the reality of the text around him in his lust for beauty.

“All of one day in Russia and I already know such a great beauty,” Myshkin exclaims when first seeing Nastasia Filippovna’s face in the portrait.³³¹ From the combined image of her created by her picture and Rogozhin’s and Gavrila’s passionate verbal portraits, the Prince judges her. He says “An astonishing face!... And I’m convinced that her fate is not an ordinary one. A joyful face, but she has suffered terribly, no? Her eyes tell about it, from these little two bones, these two points under her eyes where the cheeks begin. It’s a proud face, terribly proud,

³³⁰ Evdokimov, 21.

³³¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 27.

but I don't know whether or not she is kind. Ah, if only she were kind [dobra]! Everything would be saved!"³³² In this section, Dostoevsky uses the Russian word *dobra* which is frequently translated as "kind." If we consider the word according to its Slavonic root and understand Myshkin's words as "if only she were good!" This latter translation is far more accurate and conveys Dostoevsky's connection to the Orthodox conception of beauty and Myshkin's betrayal of it.³³³ When Myshkin speaks of her beauty he does not hope for sensual pleasure, but for goodness. Hidden within his words he reveals goodness and beauty have charmed him, but his reaction is very much lacking. His first act is not to move into relation but to move into judgement.

This judgement reeks of non-beauty. Myshkin immediately laments "*if only* she were good!" and herein is the beginning of Myshkin's failure. "If only" has doomed Nastasia Filippovna to fate. Myshkin *sees too much* and, more importantly, *knows too much*, as Wyman points out. Nastasia Filippovna has no chance, in Myshkin's eyes or the readers, to *be* good as she is. She can only *become* good according to Myshkin will. Myshkin places those around him not in relation but into ontic categories. He is unable to accept the personal because he blinds himself by his perfection, by standing above beauty rather than living through it. He is too good. He is too beautiful. He is doomed to become not "the perfectly beautiful person" but rather to stagnate as "the caricature of the perfectly beautiful person." His end is a return to the typical world of the physically ill sentimental dreamer in a hospital in Switzerland.

³³² Ibid., 31-2.

³³³ In fact, in the Slavonic translation of Genesis, the Divine Council, when looking upon the work of creation says "И видѣ Богъ свѣтъ яко добро." "And God saw that the light was good." (Gen 1:4). What's more, *dobra* is a direct translation of *kallon*, which again marks the connection between beauty and goodness (see footnote 247). As Evdokimov notes "After each one of his creative acts, he 'saw that it was *beautiful*'" (Evdokimov, 2). Myshkin, in a way, also misjudges her beauty and her goodness.

Myshkin returns to this Typical state because he is seduced by the non-beauty of his own actions. Ksana Blank adeptly discusses seduction as a primary element in *The Idiot*. And seduction leads to the fact that, as many other scholars have noted, beauty not only does not save the world in the novel, but it cannot even save its heroes. Blank claims that “the enchantment with the Madonna’s beauty leads the poor knight in Pushkin’s poem [and also, therefore, Myshkin] to insanity. Nastasia Filippovna’s beauty leads Rogozhin to crime.”³³⁴ Her assessment of Myshkin’s responsibility for his own demise is spot on. But her condemnation of Nastasia Filippovna as the singular cause of Rogozhin actions is too harsh. Rather, it is Myshkin, in his role as the perfectly beautiful person, who judges her beauty as fatalistic.

Furthermore, Myshkin’s judgement of Nastasia Filippovna moves the novel back toward a Greek monologic ontology. Rather than reacting and relating to her as a Person, Myshkin Typifies her. Her beauty appears tragic to him because being blinded by the yoke of perfection he does not experience authentic being or the fullness of beauty’s invitation-to-being. He tells the Epanchin women both “perhaps I really am a philosopher,” and “I know myself that I have lived less than others and I understand less than anyone about life.”³³⁵ The truthfulness in Myshkin’s words points to Gregory Palamas’ statement that “philosophy does not save.”³³⁶ Myshkin is a philosopher and his pontification does not save but condemns the others in the novel. While Blank engages her analysis of the seduction of Myshkin by Nastasia Filippovna through the lens of *prelest*, as I have shown, her misunderstanding of the Orthodox context creates a view in opposition to a Personalist reading of the novel.

³³⁴ Blank, 75.

³³⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 51, 53.

³³⁶ Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 25.

Myshkin's *prelest*, his spiritual delusion, grows from the initial belief that Nastasia Filippovna is inherently and essentially passionate—both sinfully and sexually. “If only she were good,” is Myshkin's subconscious aggrandizement of his ego above that which would bring him closer into relation with the other and the Divine. His delusion grows through the assurance that the only way for her to escape her fate is via his subjugation to her passions. Much like Dostoevsky, the Prince wants to unravel the secret of a Person by wading through the swamp of sensualism. But Myshkin exposes the artificiality of “perfect beauty” that Dostoevsky attempts to paint onto him through his attempt to solve the mystery. In Myshkin's reaction to Nastasia Filippovna's portrait, Dostoevsky presents the longing of the Person for the other and also the failure to live up to that level of higher fictional being:

He wanted to solve the riddle hidden in [Nastasia Filippovna's] face which had struck him earlier. The earlier impression had scarcely left him and currently it was as if he were hurrying to once again verify something. This face, extraordinary for its beauty and also for something else, struck him now even more. As if there were a boundless pride and contempt, almost hatred, in that face, and at the same time something trusting, something truly surprisingly simplehearted; the **contrast** even seemed to awaken some sort of compassion as one looked on these features. The dazzling beauty was even unbearable, the beauty of the pale face, the nearly hollow cheeks and burning eyes—strange beauty! The Prince gazed for a moment, and then **suddenly** came back to himself, looked around, and swiftly brought the portrait to his lips and kissed it.³³⁷

The struggle between being a Person and a Type is abundantly clear in this passage. Myshkin reacts *suddenly* to the charm of the other and clearly pursues and longs for relation. He fails, however, to commune because he is captive to his first impression. Myshkin is simultaneously filled with the absolute belief that he can save Nastasia Filippovna with his own beauty and also totally certain of his inability to react dynamically to the call of the beauty of the other. He is equally deluded in these two beliefs: that a single person's beauty can dominate the other and force them to submit to the call of beauty, and that because he is physically ill he is incapable of reciprocal love.

³³⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 68. Bold face type is mine.

Spiritual delusion leads Myshkin to believe he can save Nastasia Filippovna by annihilating himself for her. While he imagines his “kenosis” would be enough to lift her out of solipsism, he is unable to see the reality of her plight. The conclusion of Part I of the novel is, exactly as Yuri Lotman avers, a logical conclusion of the scandal.³³⁸ The scandal is the only possible outcome of Myshkin’s *prelest*’ and his desire to overwhelm all with his love if Nastasia Filippovna is truly a Person imbued with freedom. Her rejection is the only reasonable outcome of a million possible outcomes to this section of the novel because of that freedom pushing back against the dictatorial idealism of the Prince’s imagination. I call this *dénouement* a scandal rather than a tragedy because it does not give a cathartic relief for the desire of the reader or the fictional beings in the novel as defined by Ivanov’s concept of tragedy.³³⁹

The reader wants Nastasia Filippovna to be saved by Myshkin, but the scandal arises, for both the reader and other fictional beings in the text, when she rejects his domineering salvation. The reader comes to believe the idea that only the “pure kenotic” love of Myshkin can lead her to salvation—after all, he was fixated on the idea himself. But by allowing Nastasia Filippovna her freedom to reject the tyranny of Myshkin’s delusion he creates a stunning *dénouement* and an active rejection of non-beauty. In her actions Nastasia Filippovna commits an act of great beauty. She prevents Myshkin from entering into a life of subjugation to an ideal rather than the reality of freedom.

The revelation of the Prince’s millions adds to the burden of his oppression, intensifying the vastly novelty of the situation. Dostoevsky, in presenting two explicit aspects of the Theocentric Personological Paradigm (TPP) in Myshkin, teases his readers and tricks them into

³³⁸ For the discussion on Lotman’s idea of the logic of scandals in conjunction with the fictional Person see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

³³⁹ See the chapter “The Novel-Tragedy,” in Ivanov, 7-22.

thinking that he is in fact perfection.³⁴⁰ The millions in inheritance makes the choice to follow him even easier. But Myshkin's love, uniqueness, and money are nothing because he lacks freedom. Myshkin is an earthly prince and yet everyone thinks of him like a heavenly one. Dostoevsky's brilliance in providing Myshkin with an earthly fortune only reinforces the fact that his hero is imperfect. The reader and the others within the text imagine that Nastasia Filippovna is unkind in general and that her rejection of Myshkin is completely unkind.

But is she really unkind? Upon closer inspection, it is not the Prince who pours himself out in loving kindness to Nastasia Filippovna, but she who is kind to him in her realization that she would destroy him with her non-beauty. His pity cannot raise her up from her spite. Yet Myshkin, in his pride, rejects Nastasia Filippovna's desire to not ruin him. He inadvertently tries to control her and he, along with the crowd at the party, and the reader is crestfallen. Nastasia Filippovna is the hero who truly expresses three principles of the TPP She freely, lovingly, and uniquely rejects what is not love, what does not provide freedom from necessity, but rather forces her into reliance and subjugation.

While his offer seems beautiful, in reality it would strangle that which is most personal and unique in Nastasia Filippovna. Yuri Corrigan has also analyzed the depersonalization that occurs in the novel. He claims that "After the six months that [Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Nastasia Filippovna] spend together in Moscow between the novel's first and second parts, the three characters return to Petersburg as reduced, simplified beings."³⁴¹ However, this reduction of being commences from the moment Myshkin Typifies Nastasia Filippovna, and she is the only

³⁴⁰ For the discussion of the TPP see §II: The Primacy of Being over Essence. The Theocentric Personological Paradigm. The three foundational principles of the person in the TPP are freedom, self-emptying love, and absolute uniqueness.

³⁴¹ Corrigan, 74.

one capable of rejecting his seductive call to depersonalization. Everyone has bought into Myshkin's *prelest*' except for the one he claims he truly loves.

Dostoevsky's attempt at creating perfect beauty inadvertently summons a Fury, one who hounds the freedom of the other throughout the text. Myshkin attempts to correct what he perceives to be the chaos in the world—caused by Totsky's rape and molestation of Nastasia Filippovna—to create a harmony. Specifically, a harmony in the style of that peace which he found in the isolation of Switzerland. At Nastasia Filippovna's Name's Day party the desire to annihilate chaos is revealed when Myshkin says to her:

You wanted to ruin yourself just now, irrevocably, because you would never forgive yourself for it; but you aren't guilty for anything. [...] You're proud, Nastasia Filippovna, and perhaps you are already so completely unhappy that you actually consider yourself guilty. You need someone to care for you Nastasia Filippovna. I will take care of you. I saw your portrait today, and I saw a familiar face. It immediately seemed to me that you had been **calling me**... I... I will respect you all my life.³⁴²

He claims to be unrelenting in his ability to forgive, to respect, and to love, but in fact is unrelenting in his need to eradicate her freedom. While these qualities are positive in theory and as acts of beauty would invite the other to being-in-relation, this speech to Nastasia Filippovna mimics the idea presented in the guise of the Crystal Palace from the Underground Man.

Life with Myshkin would be an inescapable world of perfection that she, knowing her own will to freedom, can never escape: "You believe in the crystal palace, eternally indestructible, that is, one at which you can never even stick a furtive tongue at or to make a rude gesture at with a hidden hand. Well, perhaps I'm so afraid of this palace precisely because it is crystalline and eternally indestructible and because it will be forbidden to even stick out a furtive tongue at it."³⁴³ Nastasia Filippovna knows she will abuse him but can't bear to harm him. Yet she lashes out, even if it is against her own will. "You're not afraid," she tells Myshkin, "but I'd

³⁴² Ibid., 142. Bold face type mine.

³⁴³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 120.

be afraid that I'd ruin you and you'd reproach me later."³⁴⁴ In these words she echoes the Underground Man's rejection of even that which is proven to be good for him and humanity. What's more, she also realizes that his love is less than real self-emptying love, and rather only pity, hence her statement that "you'll reproach me later." She can see through his delusion. He believes that he loves her, but in truth he does not want to love her, he wants to care for her, to pity her. By equating physical love with a fullness of relational being, he deludes himself into believing that he cannot love her. The excuse of his illness hides the fact that he would rather philosophize than live.

Rather than having been charmed by her beauty, Myshkin treats Nastasia Filippovna like Marie, the invalid he cared for in Switzerland. What he meant when he said "I saw your portrait today and I saw a familiar face" I infer that meant not only that she reminded him of Aglaya Ivanovna—which indicates his inability to differentiate the personal uniqueness of their beauty—but more importantly that she reminded him of Marie.³⁴⁵ He synthesizes all sorrowing women into a single Type: a woman downtrodden by the accusations and physical abuses of humanity. In this Type he recognizes only complete dependency on others, needing constant care and a limit on her freedom. Myshkin truly believes that this is the only loving way to act. Is this truly the realization of a Person Dostoevsky intended to depict in Nastasia Filippovna? As a free being, could she truly allow him—Myshkin or Dostoevsky—to confine her in a crystal palace that attempts to reconstruct the sentimental world of the Alps?

This utopian dream-world Myshkin creates for her would be destroyed by the freedom of Nastasia Filippovna, and it is no better than the fantasies of Gavrilla Adralionovich or Rogozhin, who bartered for her like an object. "Earlier you called me perfection," Nastasia Filippovna tells

³⁴⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 143.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

Myshkin, “some fine perfection that just for the sake a single boast to say I’ve trampled down a million and a princesshood to go off to a thief’s den!”³⁴⁶ She rejects Myshkin and Dostoevsky’s concept of perfection for the sake of love and freedom. Myshkin says he felt her calling him and, indeed, she was: “As if I haven’t dreamed of you myself? You’re right about that, I dreamed it for a long time [...] I imaging someone precisely like you, kind, honest, good and completely silly, who would **suddenly** appear and say ‘You are not guilty, Nastasia Filippovna, and I respect you.’”³⁴⁷ Her beauty called out to him across time and space, but he egocentrically began to consume it. Then, seeing his face and knowing her love would destroy him, she reacts with a moment of active personal love. Myshkin cannot fathom this rejection, and in the end, he becomes like a Fury, and hounds her to her death. Like Pushkin and Aglaya’s Poor Knight, he cannot cease his folly.

Perhaps some nobility exists in his desire to raise Nastasia Filippovna up from the guilt she harbors. And indeed, she confirms the strength of his out-pouring of love in seeking his beauty throughout the novel. But Myshkin’s pride, his spiritual delusion that tells him that only he can save her, is the primarily and direct cause of her death. Dostoevsky loses control of the “perfectly beautiful person” because he tries too hard to control him. Myshkin is not enough of a Person to achieve an active and salvific image and likeness. What’s more, even if it is only a subconscious recognition, Myshkin knows it. He expresses this knowledge shortly before Rogozhin attempts to kill him when the narrator informs the reader that “he was loath to resolve the overflowing questions in his soul and heart. ‘What, am I to blame for all this?’ he murmured to himself, almost unaware of his words.”³⁴⁸ He knows without knowing that he is to blame,

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 143.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. 144. Bold face type mine.

³⁴⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 186.

because the beauty of his personal existence is consciously abused by the attempts control the other. Therefore, under the light of the Personalist perspective, clearly Myshkin makes a turn toward non-beauty, albeit under the mask of a beautiful and selfless action, represents a movement back toward a more pre-Christian Greek worldview rather than any sort of *imitatio Christi*.

Within the boarder of the reality of Dostoevsky's novels, however, there is no such thing as fate, and this is particularly true of *The Idiot*. The absence of a monologic ontology is the primary reason why the text becomes so disjointed. Even though it seems guaranteed, Nastasia Filippovna's death is not inevitable. Her death, like her rejection of Myshkin, is the logical conclusion, but it follows a completely illogical path before this end. On the one hand, her and Rogozhin's freedom as fully developed Persons cause the "tragic" end of the novel. On the other hand, Myshkin's consuming desire to "free" Nastasia Filippovna from her guilt causes aberrations in time and space that result in her death. From a Personalist perspective it is clear that Myshkin's love is not really love and his beauty is not really beauty, but rather they are pride and non-beauty.

Even Nastasia Filippovna is aware of the impossibility for self-emptying love for or from perfection, and the non-beauty that stems from the pretense that a person is perfect. In one of her letters to Aglaya she writes:

For me you are—perfection! I saw you, and I see you every day. But *I* don't judge *you*; it is not by reason that I have concluded that you are perfection, I simply believe it. But I have within me a sin I have made before you: I love you. Perfection cannot be loved, perfection can only be looked upon as perfection, isn't that so? And yet I have fallen in love with you. But love equalizes people, and don't worry, I've never equalized myself with you, even in my most secret thoughts.³⁴⁹

Although this is written about Aglaya, it also expresses her thoughts about Myshkin. Reading the text as a transference of her perspective on Myshkin to Aglaya, clarifies that Nastasia is capable

³⁴⁹Ibid., 379, italics mine.

of seeing an other, and in particular Aglaya and the Prince, as both Person and Type. However, she is incapable of unifying these two modes of being, because only a Person can be equal to a Person, or a Type to a Type. What's more, she feels the pressure of the non-beauty and idealized love that Myshkin forces upon her, and this causes her to depersonalize herself in feeling lesser than Myshkin. It strips her of her freedom and agency. George Florovsky wrote about the bastardization of love as it occurs in Dostoevsky's novels, saying:

Freedom is only *just* through love, but love is only possible in freedom—through love for the freedom of one's neighbor. *Unfree love* inevitably grows into passion, becomes coercion for the loved one, and is fatal for the one who imagines he is loving. In this idea lies the key to Dostoevsky's synthesis. With frightening penetration he portrays the dialectical antinomy of *unfree love*. [...] A love that exists in unfreedom and through unfreedom can only exhaust the enflamed heart and consume the imagined loved one: it murders them with deceit and spite.³⁵⁰

Myshkin striving to be kind, noble, and good toward her, is still selfishly motivated. While he may be good, kind, and noble to others, with Nastasia Filippovna he transgresses the Orthodox teachings and warps his own image and likeness.

By comparing Myshkin to the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18: 9-14) in, what might seem, a bizarre or inverted analysis, the unfree nature of Myshkin's love becomes clearer. The tax collector, although sinful in the eyes of Jewish people for collaborating with the Roman law, humbles himself before God and is exonerated by Christ for his humility.³⁵¹

Myshkin, in his spiritual pride and refusing to humble himself, continues to pursue Nastasia at the expense of his humility. Perhaps if he had not been made an earthly Prince with the money he inherited he might have been able to act in the likeness of Christ, whose "kingdom is not of

³⁵⁰ Georges Florovsky, "The Evolution of the Dostoevskian Concept of Human Freedom," in *Theology and Literature in The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* 11, trans. Robert L. Nichols, (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Büchervertriebanstalt, 1987), 83.

³⁵¹ The image of the repentant tax collector as a path to living a Christian life is seen repeatedly throughout the New Testament, especially considering the fact that the Evangelist Matthew was himself a tax collector before following Christ. The humility of the Publican and the faith of Zacchaeus are examples of those seen as greedy and ego-centric returning to an authentic mode of being through faith. These examples are some important, in fact, that in the Orthodox Church the first Sunday of preparation for Great Lent is called Zacchaeus Sunday, and the following is dedicated to the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee.

this world.”³⁵² Instead, he continues to chase the sentimental dream in which his beauty overcomes the freedom of the other and saves them from the world. Myshkin’s unwillingness to let go of what he perceives as her helplessness turns out to be the greatest factor contributing to her death. His pride tells him, “if only she were good,” and not “she is good, but cannot see it.” In his mind, for her to be saved, for harmony to come back to the world, she *must* be made good. But what kind of harmony is this, from Myshkin’s, is it the harmony of the beauty of the Holy Spirit that Dostoevsky professes?

A non-Personalist harmony prevails after Nastasia Filippovna’s death and Myshkin’s decent back into illness at the end of the novel; it is nothing more than a resetting of the status quo, a return to the pre-Myshkinian beginning of the text. And while one could perhaps claim that those who violated the harmonious sphere of the cosmos presented at the beginning of the novel are punished by some unrelenting force of nature, Nastasia Filippovna’s demise seems anything but cathartic—a sensation required by the classical tragic context. Vyacheslav Ivanov sees a tendency toward the harmonic and cathartic dénouement of tragedy at the heart of Dostoevsky’s antinomic struggles:

Since Dostoevsky’s artistic conventions—which are likewise predominantly those of the stage, and to which he adheres strictly—demand that every spiritual development shall reveal itself in action, he seeks, under the guidance of his tragic view of life, to express the basic antinomy of tragedy in antinomic action. This is invariably presented as an infringement: an infringement—according as we choose to regard it—either upon the cosmic order (compare to the divine tragedy of the ancients, dealing with the guilt of a Prometheus, a Pentheus, or a Hippolytus), or upon the rules of society (compare *Antigone*); in which latter case the most aggravated form of infringement is what we call crime.³⁵³

In Ivanov’s perspective—one heavily reliant on the monologic ontology of the Greeks—the result of the inherent struggle of humanity with beauty and non-beauty (good and evil) is crime and catharsis leading to the truth of spiritual development. Crime, in this schema, allows for the

³⁵² John 18: 36.

³⁵³ Ivanov, *Freedom and the Tragic Life*, 14-5.

person to experience catharsis by which the individual soul makes the choice toward salvation or damnation. In the same way as Blank and other scholars have posited that non-beauty and evil lead to salvation, so too does Ivanov infer that without crime one cannot return to the ideal state.

The implication that sin leads to salvation is driven by the Greek conception that the world contains an inherent harmony that is disrupted by free acts, rather than the Personalist view in which reality is inherently disharmonious due to free actions but requires those free acts to build forward toward a meeting with transcendent reality. Although Dostoevsky attempts to move away from the strict guidelines of classical tragedy, rejecting the immutable fetters of both “the cosmic order” and “the rules of society” in favor of the care for the higher reality, in *The Idiot* he fails to portray this ontological wholeness, and falls back into the tragic mode.

The tragedy of *The Idiot* does not spring forth from an infringement of the regulations imposed on life, but rather by the rejection of the call to being-in-relation by its four heroes. Even the structure of the novel itself supports the idea that tragedy arises from a rejection of relation. The decay of the boundaries of reality in favor of the ideal leads to death. Liza Knapp writes that “*The Idiot* asks what we know about death and how we narrate about death.”³⁵⁴ Just as Myshkin cannot survive in the world of the novel as perfection, so too the narrative structure, built on the sandy foundation of idealized and perfect beauty, decays and dies. As Dostoevsky’s Persons lose the ability to exist in a mode of being-in-relation the structures of time and space disintegrate in direct proportion to the rejection of the charm of beauty and the rise of seduction. Due to this disintegration, *The Idiot* simultaneously falls back toward classical tragedy while hinting at the possibility and structure of a novel of higher realism. The promise of a Person capable of achieving authentic being-in-relation shines out of Myshkin’s failed perfection like a

³⁵⁴ Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 68.

nearly-spent tungsten filament being shaken before it dies. A more potent, albeit it erratic, glow of the potential of the Person shimmers in Rogozhin, who exhibits a vastly more intriguing depiction of the antinomy of beauty and of a literary Person.

The nuances of Dostoevsky's soteriological view of beauty shift into focus by scrutinizing Rogozhin's reaction to Nastasia Filippovna in the context of the antinomy. Rogozhin presents a negative proof of the concept—a fulfillment of the idea that the antithesis of beauty does not lead to salvation but its failure can instruct others and points them toward the Truth. Oddly enough, even in his predilection toward solipsistic non-beauty, Rogozhin's desire to enter into relation with Nastasia Filippovna is far less demanding than Myshkin's. Most critical analysis of Rogozhin views him as primarily “seized by carnal passions, [and] striv[ing] to possess [beauty as a spark of light in the darkness].”³⁵⁵ Unlike Myshkin, Rogozhin is driven by lust for the beauty of the other, and if he cannot have all of that beauty to himself no one else can have any either. Like Myshkin, he offers her whatever she desires. Rogozhin, however, explicitly demands her obedience.

There are two chief differences between the expression of non-beauty of the two men. Ivanov eloquently elaborates on the strange paradox of Myshkin and Rogozhin's similarities and differences:

Even allowing for the crudity of the material shell that encases the soul, and for the soul's capacity for deep and desperate immersion in the dark chaos of unruly passions that daemonically overshadow its falling inner light and make it greedy and ruthless—even allowing for these, who could imagine a spiritual sisterhood between these two characters? The one has not attained full incarnation; the other can scarcely carry his earthly load. The one descends to Earth; the other by his faith (tried by doubt) in Christ's victory, and by the joyfully expiation, walks toward the light. Yet in a mysterious way they need and complete each other.³⁵⁶

Despite their similarities, there are two differences, based in their understanding of themselves and of the expression of beauty, that cause friction which hastens the burning down of the

³⁵⁵ Blank, 93.

³⁵⁶ Ivanov, 102-3.

narrative and poetic structures. The first difference is Rogozhin's complete openness regarding his passions. There is no delusion in Rogozhin about the lurking and gluttonous desire to consume her beauty. For this reason, Rogozhin's moments of active personal beauty are more potent than Myshkin's. The second difference entails Myshkin's reaction to Nastasia Filippovna's call to being-in-relation as entirely spiritual, perhaps even gnostic, whereas Rogozhin swells and throbs with physical eroticism. In the end, however, both reject the bodily and earthly aspects of beauty's call to salvation in favor of their own ego.

These differences and similarities are revealed in their encounter at Rogozhin's family home, in front of the replica of Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. Prophetically, Myshkin cries out "anyone could lose their faith from that painting!"³⁵⁷ The two men's faith in beauty is intrinsically linked to their faith in Christ. Myshkin, unlike the Apostle Thomas whose faith was confirmed by his physical senses, actively rejects physical confirmation of the Divinity and humanity of the Incarnation.³⁵⁸ His fear of losing faith because of the fact of the human reality of the Divine is the same fear of this own inability to physically embody beauty and love, and for this reason the physical suffering that Christ experienced in His passion mortifies him.

³⁵⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 182. See Figure 7.

³⁵⁸ The concept of "Doubting Thomas" does not hold the same negative connotations in the Orthodox perspective that it does in the contemporary English parlance. Merriam-Webster defines a "Doubting Thomas" as "an incredulous or habitually doubtful person." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Doubting Thomas" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doubting%20Thomas> (accessed March 30, 2020). Christ's words to Thomas begin with "Peace be with you," and then "because you have seen Me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and believe" (John 20: 24-29). Thomas' faith is no less strong than the other disciples who did not believe in the Resurrection until they beheld Christ in His triumphant form. Thomas' faith was grounded in and confirms the fact that not only the soul will be resurrected but the body as well. Myshkin is horrified by the effect of sin on the image and likeness of the Divine in humanity. Myshkin is unlike Christ—Who because of the fullness of His human nature groaned in the flesh before raising Lazarus and who asked that the cup of death may be taken away (Matthew 26: 39)—insofar as he cannot see past his own natural desires and fear of death and decay. The triumph of Life over death entails death, but also a faith that despite death's continued existence in time and space it leads to the unification of person and God. Accepting the charm of beauty despite decay is necessary to a complete and free emptying of the self to the other, of which Myshkin is incapable.

Myshkin lacks a personal and physical connection to the transcendent in the same way the Existentialist aesthetic theory cuts off the art object from its ideal. When Myshkin concludes that “the essence of religious feeling is not experienced neither through any reasoning, nor through any crimes or transgressions, nor any atheisms; there is something else here that isn’t that and will eternally never be that; there is something there that atheism will forever skim over and will speak eternally *not about it*,” he also skims over and rejects the necessary fact of being-in-relation.³⁵⁹ Myshkin perpetually stares past the sinfulness and decay of the Person in an attempt to find the source of beauty within them. When he does engage with it he cannot bear to look, lest it break his ideal vision of humanity and, therefore his own perfection.

Alina Wyman poses the following questions about a Christ-like being in Dostoevsky’s novels: “*how does one responsibly acknowledge the reality of evil and take an active stance toward it? Can one lucidly recognize an act of evil without condemning the evildoer and brutally finalizing his spiritual self in the process?*”³⁶⁰ Her answer to these questions is an emphatic “no,” because empathy, as she views the foundations of the Christ-like aspects of Myshkin, is not enough to transcend the boundaries of space and time and bring the Person into being-in-relation with the other. And she is correct in her analysis of Myshkin’s particular spiritual impotency. However, there is, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, a manner of transcending the boundaries of the world-as-it-is and to enter into relational being through the invitation of beauty in Dostoevsky’s novels. But to achieve this, to reach the soteriological telos in the novel, requires voluntarily self-purification based on awareness of one’s own weakness. Myshkin fails, therefore, because he is not only unaware of his own passions, but doesn’t care about others

³⁵⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 184.

³⁶⁰ Wyman, 167.

overcoming their own. He disregards, or is unaware of, the hesychastic method that Dostoevsky will utilize in *The Brothers Karamazov* that can bring the Person into relational being.

Unlike Myshkin, Rogozhin is immediately and explicitly aware of the evil in his desire for Nastasia Filippovna, caused by both her goodness and fallenness. He is charmed and seduced simultaneously by her beauty and her non-beauty, whereas Myshkin rejects the latter completely. Rogozhin's desire for her reflects reality in a manner that is greater than Myshkin's because it is grounded in both of their anthropological fullness and not in intellection. In this way, Rogozhin is better equipped to save Nastasia Filippovna than Myshkin, but his sensual passions are so great that without a spiritual guide his moments of relational being fail. Although Myshkin tries to aid his spiritual brother, he is clearly not a fit spiritual guide for anyone.

Rogozhin is acutely aware of the erotic, both spiritual and sexual, groundings of his relational pull toward Nastasia Filippovna. During his first meeting with Myshkin, Rogozhin tells him, "it's true I really provoked my father then, on account of Nastasia Filippovna. I did that on my own. Sin snared me."³⁶¹ Rogozhin falls prey to his own passion and the seductive quality of Nastasia Filippovna's beauty as non-beauty. Caught up in the violent storm of the antinomy he is tossed between an authentic desire to be-in-relation with her, and also with Myshkin, and a natural urge to kill his "brother" and to consume his beloved. As a fully developed Person Rogozhin motivations for these urges are based in his freedom within the text, but also grounded in his deep family history. Although he is not confined by the boundaries of his familial ties and relationships, they clearly play into the formation of Rogozhin's uniqueness and influence his choices in a realistic manner. Yuri Corrigan views Rogozhin as being characterized by "an absence of memory," and that his motivations lie in his familial connection and turn him into a

³⁶¹ Ibid., 10-1.

burial ground.”³⁶² In his view, Rogozhin’s actions can be defined by the void which blurs everything around him. Through the lens of the Personalist analysis these buried images shed further light on Rogozhin’s role in the novel’s disintegration.

Rogozhin’s hatred for his father and deep love for his mother reveal a great deal about how he reacts to beauty and its call to being-in-relation, just as Myshkin’s relation with Swiss Marie betrays a great deal about his. The Personalist view of the bond between mother and child stems directly from Freudian analysis but, like the connection between the sub- and supraconsciousness, it requires a working knowledge of the relational grounds of being to completely comprehend how it moves away from psychoanalysis.³⁶³ Yannaras tells us that:

This Freudian connection has helped us see in love the summons to life. Beyond the signifiers of pleasure. The first experience of love is the infant’s relationship with its mother’s body, the first contact of the infant with objective reality. A formatively life-giving relationship, since in the infant’s perspective it is tied to the provision of food and the power of life.

Touch and privation of the mother’s body: a dialectic of life or destruction, all or nothing. When the infant takes nourishment from its mother’s body it has *everything* it needs; it has the immediacy of the relationship which is life. Conversely, crying because of hunger is a cry of despair from a being which feels itself to be perishing, it loses the touch of life. It expresses in its cry the taste of non-relation, of *nothing*.³⁶⁴

Rogozhin’s connection to his mother inspires the best in him because of the power of the “formative life-giving” quality of their relationship. Dostoevsky masterfully crafts the mother/son connection into the novel and in doing so allows for this sort of Personalist reading of Rogozhin.

In Part II Chapter IV, after hearing Myshkin’s anecdote about a mother rejoicing over her child’s smile in the same way God rejoices, Rogozhin demands that he and Myshkin exchange crosses and become spiritual brothers. He then leads his brother in to receive the blessing of his mother, thereby bringing Myshkin into the same sphere of motherly love and its relation via both

³⁶² Corrigan, 75.

³⁶³ For the analysis of the supraconsciousness see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

³⁶⁴ Yannaras, *Variations*, 24.

signifier and action. Myshkin enters Rogozhin's home, heart, and family because he feels the immediacy of the charm and beauty of the other, and because there is no sexually erotic element to his relationship with Rogozhin and he is able to move beyond intellection and into reciprocity. In these moments, Dostoevsky allows for the greatest development of goodness in both Myshkin and Rogozhin through beauty—the “summons to life” is at its strongest here. Although their parting is less than loving, the connection Dostoevsky draws between Myshkin's story of a mother's joy being “the same as God rejoicing each time he looks down as sees a sinner standing before him and praying with all his heart,” and Rogozhin bringing his new brother to be blessed by his mother reasserts the differences in these two Persons despite their spiritual affinity.³⁶⁵ Rogozhin is touched by the perfection of spiritual beauty that Myshkin depicts and he responds to it with a physical action, sharing the “natural” beauty of maternal love.

But as soon as they exit the space of the mother and lose the symbolic comfort of the womb, Rogozhin returns to an ego-centric state. The perfection of Myshkin's love cannot survive long in the world or bridge the existential gap they create between one another. Rogozhin returns to the nothingness of non-relation as soon as the “brothers” leave this symbolic space. Dostoevsky confirms the difficulty in overcoming isolation when, even before exchanging crosses, Rogozhin tells Myshkin, “when you are not in my presence, I immediately feel spite for you, Lev Nikolayevich. [...] Now that you've been sitting with me for a quarter of an hour all my spite is gone and I love you again just like before.”³⁶⁶ In his presence, Rogozhin feels the immediacy and potential for goodness from Myshkin's perfect beauty. This presence is even enough to balance the symbolic space of Rogozhin's home in which the relationality of the

³⁶⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 184.

³⁶⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 174.

mother is felt. But still, the shadow of anxiety emanating from the father lingers on its walls and the open air outside the Rogozhin home triggers his anxiety and isolation.

Rogozhin requires the immediacy of the other—manifested in his desire for Nastasia Filippovna, his brotherly love/hate for Myshkin, and his closeness to his mother—because of the constant subconscious symbolic castration he experiences, based on his relationship with his father. Let us consider Daniel Rancour-Laferriere’s short explanation of the psychoanalytical approach to authority and its connection to parents:

According to psychoanalysis, an authority figure in the life of a full-grown person is a reflection of either the mother or father from that person’s childhood. That is, insofar as an adult invests another person with power to control and direct, that adult is making an identification of the person with one of two dominant figures of the child’s early years. [...] According to Freud, in Judeo-Christian culture it is ordinarily the religious figure of “God” who personifies the loved father, while it is “the Devil” who personifies the hated father.³⁶⁷

According to this psychoanalytic perspective, Rogozhin’s anger, hatred, and solipsism is grounded in the fear of castration by the father as an act of revenge for an incestuous union with the mother. Within this context, one might conclude that Rogozhin struggles in his relationship with Myshkin because he projects both the “loved father” and “hated father” to his “spiritual brother.” He wants to kill this simulacrum father/brother because the latter interferes with his relationship with his “mother,” Nastasia Filippovna.

This psychoanalytic reading obtains even greater value when we recall that the specter of Rogozhin’s father, and the symbolic castration, looms even more menacingly because of his father’s interest not only in the (then schismatic) Orthodox Old Believers, but also in the heretical “Castrates” as well.³⁶⁸ The portrait of the *pater familias* in the Rogozhin household, before which Myshkin and Rogozhin discuss their relationships with Nastasia Filippovna, looms

³⁶⁷ Rancour-Laferriere, 174.0

³⁶⁸ For an in-depth study of Rogozhin and the Castrates see William J. Comer, “Rogozhin and the ‘Castrates’: Russian Religious Traditions in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*,” in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 1, 1996, 85-99, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/308498> (accessed April 22, 2021).

large, as if a specter in the text. All these images and words lend credence toward this psychoanalytic reading of Rogozhin's relationship with Myshkin and the eruption of non-beauty between the two.

If, however, we reorient the psychoanalytical view within the Personalist perspective, a far more valuable and novel evaluation, one more closely aligned with Dostoevsky's own interests, emerges. Rogozhin is charmed by Myshkin's spiritual perfection and material weakness. He loves him when they are together in a manner that produces an erotic call to being-in-relation. Myshkin represents the possibility for greater love and a deeper erotic experience of being-in-relation than Rogozhin experienced in his childhood. Myshkin fills a gap in Rogozhin's being, or to use Yuri Corrigan's paradigm, Myshkin quiets the moaning from the graveyard that Rogozhin could not bury deeply enough. From the Personalist perspective, the importance of the relationship between child and parent, according to Yannaras, develops in a similar yet distinct manner to the psychoanalytic one:

In the infant's relationship with its mother the father progressively intervenes. This is decisive for the child's developing consciousness of subjectivity. For its growing out of imaginary identification with its mother's body—a broadening out and opening up of the live-giving relation to the social dimension. The persons of the father and the mother impress on the infant's soul the models of psychosomatic difference which make possible the life-giving relation, the state of fulfillment, the creative power of live. Father and mother, "archetypes" of the difference in the live-giving relation, are indelible signifiers of our person coordination with the dynamic of the distinction between sexes.³⁶⁹

Myshkin is both inviting Rogozhin to relation and intervening in that relation. In the prohibition of the "father," Rogozhin cannot handle the intervening quality that limits the desire for the other. To him, there is nothing loving in maintaining boundaries for one's desire. There is a loving and relational aspect to this insofar as recognizing the otherness and autonomy of the other is necessary to living authentically in relation.

³⁶⁹ Yannaras, *Variations*, 30-1.

Although Myshkin attempts to intervene in Rogozhin's passionate desires in a loving manner, Rogozhin sees the beauty only in the "mother archetype" that confirms being-in-relation through physical communion. If there was ever any love in Rogozhin's relationship with his father, the son never felt it and therefore the loving and beautiful quality of the fullness of the other never manifests in Rogozhin. Therefore, the ability to learn to bear the "burden" of obedience, a necessary loving privation, as handed down by a beloved other, has not developed within Rogozhin. Myshkin, under the auspices of perfect beauty, or the holy fool as Rogozhin sees him, overwhelms Rogozhin's total and unbridled freedom and desire to love whom he pleases how he pleases. In the presence of the Prince, he *must be good*; the gaze of this perfect father unbearably penetrates and eviscerates natural desire because, to Rogozhin Myshkin is again like the Crystal Palace, at which one cannot even stick out one's tongue. In their relationship, from Rogozhin's perspective, there is no room for imperfection. On the one hand, Myshkin provides a much-needed sense of calm in being-in-relation with the full awareness of and respect for the otherness of the other. On the other, Myshkin embodies the perverted love of the hated father, forcing his will on Rogozhin and enslaving him with non-beauty.

Beyond his engagement with Myshkin, Rogozhin presents an apophatic confirmation of the truth, fulfilling the role of the antithesis of non-beauty to enlighten the truth of being-in-relation, as well as providing cataphatic proofs, confirming the thesis of beauty. His positive depictions of beauty come, in a masterfully paradoxical manner, in his revolts against the rigidity of perfection. The greatest depictions of his active engagement with the charm of beauty come when he transgresses against Myshkin or Nastasia Filippovna through an act of free will.

The most striking example of freedom leading to an act of kenotic love is his physical assault of Nastasia Filippovna in Moscow. In Rogozhin's house, between the parental extremities

of the brief conversation about his father and the exchanging crosses and maternal blessing of Myshkin, Rogozhin explains his face-to-face relationship with Nastasia Filippovna and its violent, passionate reality. Myshkin's pity, the source of his *prelest*, prevents him from believing the unfortunate reality of violence, and rejects Rogozhin's capacity to beat her. However perverse it may seem, Rogozhin achieves a higher degree of being-in-relation than Myshkin, not because of his violence but through his act of immediate and genuine repentance. In an act of incredible contrition, Rogozhin stays on his knees for a day and a half awaiting Nastasia Filippovna's forgiveness. This is a true moment of *metanoia* in the novel. Although this *metanoia* may seem to confirm the antinomy that posits that sin leads to being-in-relation, one must remember that it is not the sinful act that leads to repentance, but rather that it illuminates every aspect of Rogozhin's heart and opens him to the beauty of repentance—the act of sin is pedagogical rather than causal.

Across the span of these actions Rogozhin moves from an imitation of his psychoanalytical “hated father” to the image of his Personalist “life-bearing mother.” He assaults her for everything that she has done to torment him, reenacting his own castration, yet in his metanoic turn toward repentance he has forgotten all earthly cares and lives only to experience her in relation. The “fatherly” reaction is his enslavement to non-beauty, both his own egocentric desire to consume her and his reaction to the seductive abuse of her inherent beauty. The “motherly” outpouring is his attempt to move into being-in-relation with her thanks to the true image of beauty within her. Dostoevsky makes this abundantly clear in Rogozhin's recounting of the dialogue. To the horror of the physical abuse he relates: “‘What would you do with me,’ she said, ‘if you saw me cheating?’ I couldn't stand it, and said to her, ‘You very well know.’”³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 175.

There is no hesitation in him regarding his domination and violence. His egocentric need to consumer her beauty stems from his knowledge that she seeks to control him through a façade of beauty (non-beauty). Liza Knapp reminds us that Rogozhin is aware of the fact that “Nastasia does indeed regard Rogozhin as the embodiment of a death sentence.”³⁷¹ In the “death sentence” of his being the reader sees the “hated father” who corrupts relation erupts from him and assaults her in an attempt to destroy her freedom and keep her from the other—particularly another lover, and more specifically the Prince.

As soon as this discharge of violent onanism manifests itself through Rogozhin’s fists, however, that very maternal compassion overtakes his passion and drops him to his knees. He moves beyond all earthly cares, refusing drink and food, mortifying his own flesh by kneeling without movement for hours. He even subjects himself to his own worst fears, watching as she takes other men out of her room, in an attempt to find forgiveness, to enter into loving relation with her. Rogozhin, if only for a brief moment, flashes with the light of pure love, a moment of the hope for transcendence of reality and sinfulness moving toward authentic being.

This moment of goodness is captured in his response to Nastasia Filippovna’s reasonable question as to whether or not Rogozhin will remember all these things and take revenge. The action of beauty as a call to being-in-relation is perfectly captured by Dostoevsky in Rogozhin’s recounting of his dialogue with Nastasia Filippovna:

“I just don’t know [if I will take revenge],” I say, “that’s not what I’m thinking about now.” “And what exactly are you thinking about now?” “About how you get up from your place, going close by me, and I look to you and watch you; your dress rustles and my heart sinks, and when you leave the room I remember every little word of yours and in what voice and what was said; and all night I didn’t think of anything, but listened to everything, how you breathed in your sleep and how you stirred once or twice...”³⁷²

³⁷¹ Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 79

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 176.

For all of his hatred, all the passions that arise in him, there is still the image and likeness within Rogozhin that, rarely, responds to the call of Nastasia Filippovna's beauty. In the mode of being-in-relation through repentance, like Solomon's lover in the *Song of Songs*, all Rogozhin needs is the presence of the beloved to enter into joy.

Unfortunately, immediately following this entrance into an authentic mode of being-in-relation, Rogozhin falls prey to the natural desires within him. While still on his knees he demands that Nastasia Filippovna marry him. While this desire might be read as a continuation of the mode of being-in-relation, he craves marriage not to maintain the love and authentic being but to control and confine her. And this lustful urge is so strong that without its fulfillment he vows to drown himself after murdering her. First, Rogozhin acts beautifully in the face of the beauty of the other, then he returns to domination.

The struggle between beauty and non-beauty is once again depicted by Dostoevsky here, this time through the Personalist understanding of the opposition of love and marriage. Yannaras describes this struggle in the following way:

If love is the mode of life, then marriage is the mode of nature. Nature means: law, necessity. And the mode of the law is institution. [...] Marriage and love are two rival realities – a fixed institution and a free dynamic of life. The institution cannot take account of otherness, experience, or taste of the particular. It defines and defends the general, the impersonal, the objective. [...] It is the demand of nature which is institutionalized through marriage. A demand to possess the Other, to appropriate him, to make him our own.³⁷³

Rogozhin is so free, so unique as a Person, that the charm of beauty is not enough to release him from the bondage of his ego. His demand to marry Nastasia Filippovna encapsulates “the general, the impersonal the objective,” and propagates non-beauty in the text.

For Rogozhin marriage is not the sacramental and transcendent act of the fulfillment of a spiritual promise to live a life devoted to being-in-relation as it acts in the Orthodox tradition, the

³⁷³ Yannaras, *Variations*, 33-4.

desire of becoming one from two. As an institution based on the urges of biological natural, marriage becomes an eternal law that binds one person's freedom via the other. Myshkin is able to read the objectification of the desire to marry in Rogozhin's demand, and for this reason he tells Rogozhin "you cannot tell your love from spite."³⁷⁴ Myshkin can see into Rogozhin's soul, but he cannot help but make this situation worse by speaking of it. Although fully free, and even twice proving himself capable of true kenotic love, Rogozhin cannot save Myshkin or Nastasia, and in fact becomes the active hand that both writes their doom on the wall and enacts it. Beauty inspires moments of authentic being in him, but non-beauty consumes him, and his passions rush headlong like a tidal wave through the novel.

It is not merely the protagonists who fall prey to non-beauty in the novel. The existential loneliness expressed by Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Nastasia Filippovna displays the reality of the struggle between the call to being-in-relation and the seduction of non-beauty and this struggle affects the entire structure of the novel. Non-beauty is ultimately victorious in the text, and its force keeps Dostoevsky from penning his desired outcome and warps the poetic structure of the novel. The chaotic movement of the narrative expresses the struggle against non-beauty by means of abrupt shifts in both time and space, as if the novelistic world has been lost in chaos. Like the Persons within it, searching desperately for the lighthouse of beauty to lead it away from the shores of existential dread, the narrative of the novel degenerates in its pursuit of perfect beauty.

The foundations for this disruption lie in the tempestuous nature of the battle between beauty and non-beauty as it rages within Nastasia Filippovna's soul and the victory of freedom over the ideal. In an attempt to harness that struggle and steer it toward a positive ending,

³⁷⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 177,

Dostoevsky writes her presence as one that continually rises into and out of the consciousness of every other fictional being in the novel, particularly when she is physically distanced from them. Dostoevsky highlights her ability to transcend space and time through her charm and seductiveness.

Nastasia Filippovna warps reality for others in the text in the same manner as the “Ode to Joy” does in the Personalist analysis of beauty. Sitting at the heart of the narrative, her fluctuation between an image of beauty and non-beauty simultaneously degrades the realist structure of the novel while also hinting at the poetics of a higher realism. Part I of the novel particularly shines with the brilliance of the transgression of time and space through beauty and goodness. However Dostoevsky’s lack of poetic endurance dooms the rest of the novel to suffer from a disjointed narrative sequence caused by non-beauty. His betrayal of the Personal features of fictional beings—particularly the Typification of Myshkin—leads to an overwhelmingly unsatisfying mediocre ending to the novel.

Paradoxically, the mediocre ending is predicated on Dostoevsky’s masterful creation of Nastasia Filippovna as a fully realized Person. She is an example of extraordinarily potent and overwhelming active and natural beauty, coupled with an unparalleled wealth of freedom. But her extraordinary abundance of Personhood allows her to slip beyond his control. Unbridled, she fragments the text by the sheer force of her seductive non-beauty and her rejection of Myshkin’s pretensions to perfection. The disintegration of the movement of time and the consistency of space can be clearly traced through the novel to her being.

In Part I, Dostoevsky finds a rhythm and pace for the novel that leads to one of the greatest crescendos in his oeuvre. There is a unity of time and action in this portion of the novel that leads Myshkin directly to his confrontation with Nastasia and Rogozhin. Following the

“logical conclusion of the scandal” that is generated by Nastasia Filippovna’s decision to reject perfect beauty, this unity is shattered. She conveys all the principles of the Personalist concept of non-beauty as seduction, but she also stands as the most potent image of beauty as charm, particularly in the manner in which it projects her across the existential boundaries of time and space. Myshkin’s total belief in his knowledge of her inner being, gathered only from secondhand information, is the prime example of this quality of her beauty. From the first chapter of the novel the reader is aware of her capacity to reach into the hearts and souls of others, as I have previously alluded to in Myshkin’s egocentric reception of her charm. Myshkin is able to construct a nearly flawless reflection of her in his mind thanks to her natural and personal beauty. However, her non-beauty is an equally potent, if not greater, force that crosses the thresholds of time and space. Instead of being utilized to reify these thresholds and bringing them up into a higher mode of being, however, time and space decay into chaos.

Despite the forcefulness of Nastasia Filippovna’s beauty, time continues to flow in a manner proper to its earthly constraints, and space remains familiar to the reader throughout Part I. Beauty in this way crosses these thresholds but does not transgress them. It is only when Myshkin’s princely title is revealed toward the end of Part I that time and space begin to decay, rather than become traversable. As we have established, Nastasia Filippovna’s fear of her own ego and subsequent rejection of Myshkin is a perfect act of beauty. She does not think that she either deserves or is capable of salvation and so she, ironically, act in a beautiful manner by rejecting the seduction of non-beauty masquerading as “perfect beauty.” However, other fictional beings are not prepared to accept such a beautiful act and, in shock because of their own egoism, react with non-beauty. General Epanchin even cries out that this rejection is “Sodom!

Sodom!”³⁷⁵ Ksana Blank interprets this cry as a verbal fulfillment of “a frenzy of scandals and frustrated passions [...] Dazzled by [Nastasia’s] unconventional behavior, Rogozhin screams in a frenzy, ‘she’s mine! It’s all mine! A Queen! The end!’” and although she admits that Nastasia’s “beauty has some saintly features,” Blank does not describe these positive qualities in this scene.³⁷⁶ Often, the general’s shout will be rendered in English translations as “It’s bedlam!” or “This is too horrible.” But the idea of Sodom, as I will discuss in the next chapter, completely qualifies the ideal of non-beauty as perceived by those at the party.³⁷⁷ However, the beauty of her loving refusal to consume innocence is present, but overwhelmed by the crowd around her—and most likely the reader—who mistake beauty for perversion, for non-beauty. Nastasia Filippovna is unable to bear her goodness and, like everyone around her, falls into the decay of non-beauty.

Dostoevsky is overwhelmed by his own ability to depict a Persona and beauty so contradictory that he continues to write the novel, but being awed by its power he loses his grasp on his ideal perfectly beautiful person. Based on the continual and chaotic changes that he makes to narrative aspects in the notebooks for Part II it is clear that Dostoevsky lost the clarity of vision that he had during the final stages of writing Part I.³⁷⁸ The wild instability of time is one of the most notable issues of the rest of the novel, and most notably in the transition between Parts I and II. Throughout the notes Dostoevsky marks the passage of anywhere from one day to any number of weeks to upward of six months between the events of the conclusion of Part I and the beginning of Part II. Although the final text confirms that Myshkin left Petersburg for Moscow two days after the scandal and that he “was away for exactly six months,”—juxtapose this with

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 143.

³⁷⁶ Blank, 81.

³⁷⁷ The first translation is from *The Idiot* translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky on page 169 while the second is from the Eva Martin translation. Constance Garnett maintained the cry of “It’s Sodom!” on page 170 of her translation.

³⁷⁸ Dostoevsky complains to Apollon Maikov in a letter dated April 21, 1868 that the writing of the novel is in shambles. See Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 28(II), 296.

the “three weeks” Dostoevsky initially conceives for the duration of his absence in the notebooks—there is still uncertainty based on the fact that “even those who had particular reasons to be interested in his fate could find out very little about him at the time.”³⁷⁹ In particular it is the reader who is left with no real indication of what has occurred or why, and is left scrambling to place a coherent timeline of events.

To say that the result of this first temporal is jarring is an understatement. The disintegration of the walls of time is so potent that it disrupts the lives of the fictional beings as well as the reader and author. Of particular interest here is Dostoevsky’s realization of the disjointedness of narrative and that his confusion enters into the text. His narrator informs us that there can no longer be someone involved with this story that might be considered an outside observer; as if because of some temporal and spatial collapse everyone has been sucked into a different world in which the rules of time and space are governed by Nastasia Filippovna’s actions rather than an objective set of laws.³⁸⁰

The structures of everyday reality within the novel begins to crumble rather than elevate into a realm of higher being, and it becomes evident that Dostoevsky’s lost control stems from an ideal of beauty expressing signs of its own impossibility. Instead of embracing imperfection as a pathway toward perfection and transcendent, higher reality, as he did in Part I, Dostoevsky struggles to force a narrative onto his Persons. Nastasia must be saved, and it must be Myshkin and his beauty who saves her. Parts II, III, and IV become particularly jarring thanks to an attempt to force a cathartic ending on the novel, in which Myshkin successfully overcomes Nastasia Filippovna’s freedom. Thankfully, Dostoevsky fails to achieve such an ending. Success

³⁷⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 149. *P.S.S.* 9, 216

³⁸⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 150.

here would amount to a retreat into the Greek ontological monism.³⁸¹ Inevitably such a regression fails because Dostoevsky has set and adheres to the rules of the novel according to the higher, Personalist mode, allowing for a deformation of time and space, even if that disruption is unsettling for the reader and results in the unbridled passions of the fictional beings.

The antinomy of beauty and non-beauty is the best possible lens through which to conduct an analysis of the disruption of the poetic structure of *The Idiot* in the final two-thirds of the novel. Doing so will illuminate how the triumph of non-beauty over “perfect beauty” does not lead to salvation but rather pedagogically turns the reader toward the Truth of the soteriological quality of beauty, thereby undermining the idea of salvation through sin and underscoring the triumph of Dostoevsky’s vision of truth and beauty. Nastasia Filippovna appears in the flesh for less than an entire page in Part II—not including recollections such as Rogozhin’s metanoic kneeling episode. Her specter sporadically haunts this section of the novel and yet it still drives the entirety of the narrative. Although physically and temporally distanced, Nastasia Filippovna’s cruel expression of her non-beauty toward Rogozhin incites him to lift his hand against his brother Myshkin. If beauty is able to lift the person up across the boundaries of space and time into the higher reality of being-in-relation and allows for access to existence as transfigured, then non-beauty’s incursion across time and space that engulfs the seduced lover with the passions causes the breakdowns in reality that lead to anxiety, isolation, and death. She does not cause the Cain-like transgression, but she inspires the act in Rogozhin.

But Rogozhin is not the only fictional being affected by her seductive non-beauty. Myshkin is also subjected to the temporal warping Nastasia Filippovna generates. His encounter

³⁸¹ For the discussion of the Greek ontological monism see Chapter I §IV: The Incarnation as the Relational Locus of the Knowledge of Being and Chapter II §I: Character as a Form of Being: the Literary and Ontological ‘Prosôpon,’ ‘lichnost’ ,’ and ‘Chelovek’.

with her reawakens the isolation and physical illness he experienced in Switzerland. Once he leaves Rogozhin's home in Part II, Myshkin becomes obsessed with the moments of ecstasy he experiences at the onset of a fit. Both Rogozhin and Nastasia Filippovna's transgressive actions and desires cause Myshkin to debate whether his visions are for "beauty and prayer," or if "all the flashes and glimpses of a higher self-sense and self-awareness, and therefore of the 'highest being,' were nothing but an illness, a violation of the normal state, and if so, then this was not the highest being at all but, on the contrary, should be considered the very lowest."³⁸² Myshkin's description points to a direct interaction of the supraconsciousness with the rational mind, a *noetic* understanding of the world and the creeping interference of the subconscious mind on the upper rooms of the supraconsciousness. However, he is incapable of transmitting what he sees or learns into the world because, as Ivanov posits, "The fact is that all the secret suffering of this soul, which does not receive incarnation, arises from the incompleteness of this incarnation."³⁸³ This struggle within him is brought on by the intertwining of relation and isolation, a battle in which the latter has the upper hand and the former never incarnates. Through her spectral presence, Nastasia Filippovna's non-beauty triggers a pedagogical experience of pushing Myshkin toward the Truth of Christ. But his interiorization of it bastardizes the beauty he experiences.

Nastasia Filippovna and Rogozhin's manipulation of the other, which manifests non-beauty, seduces Myshkin into a passionate state. He is sent into "an extraordinary, irrepressible desire, almost a temptation," which compels him to return to Rogozhin despite knowing the Cain-like envy Rogozhin developed.³⁸⁴ When the moment of fraternal bloodletting arrives

³⁸² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 188.

³⁸³ Ivanov, 91.

³⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 189.

Myshkin is “saved” by his falling fit. The fit is brought on, however, not by the action of murderous intent, but rather by Myshkin’s contact with his brother’s eyes. Liza Knapp similarly notes that “Although his attacks transfigure him momentarily, Myshkin soon plunges into darkness, associated with spiritual agony, from which he eventually returns to his normal state.”³⁸⁵ He “returns to his normal state rather than moving forward in his mode of relational being. Instead of finding love and communion he sees nothingness lurking about in the guise of soul-corrupting non-beauty.

Dostoevsky portrays Myshkin and Rogozhin in an embrace, locked face-to-face in a manner that could open them both to each other’s most personal and unique nature. The narrator reveals that Myshkin not only stared intently into Rogozhin’s eyes, but even brought him into the light of the corridor to gaze more intently into them. As he predicted while walking through the streets, the fit that these corrupted eyes inspire does not propel Myshkin into relation, but only into an internal experience of the transcendent world. Rather the darkness of non-beauty, Rogozhin’s jealousy toward Myshkin, his hatred and adulterous coveting of for Nastasia Filippovna moves time and space into a negative direction, making even the metaphysical world more horrifying, and materially corrupt in a reflection not of the Divine but of death and anxiety.

Myshkin’s scream is the howl of the person losing faith upon having seen the Holbein “Christ in the Tomb;” a scream of succumbing to a purely materialistic understanding of the world, riddled with the decay of non-beauty and death present in the human body of the Divine. Nastasia Filippovna’s beauty tears space and time apart for the brothers, but because they receive her invitation-to-being with egocentric delusions instead of meeting transfiguration Myshkin and

³⁸⁵ Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 82.

Rogozhin encounter the pure egocentric subjectivity of a naturalistic and materialistic ontological monism.

“Time is out of joint,” laments Hamlet to his friends after hearing the injunction of the specter of his father.³⁸⁶ And indeed, throughout the play the princely Dane’s awareness of the breach in the moral and physical order of his universe grows a sense of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) into a world that is not quite as it should be. So too does Nastasia Filippovna’s spectral presence induce not only a brokenness but a hyper-egocentrism in her fellow protagonists. Rather than a movement toward authentic being through the relational beauty that Dostoevsky seeks to illuminate through a perfectly beautiful person in his novel, Nastasia Filippovna’s freedom introduces an ontology not quite opposed to being-in-relation, but rather a phantasmagoric and grotesque one that confirms the relational quality of beauty and the seductive essence of non-beauty. In this mode of being, time and space are deconstructed and folded against themselves, and Persons never reveal themselves fully and with self-emptying love, but rather reappear to the others around them as reminders of the failure to respond to beauty with selflessness.

Nastasia Filippovna, despite her status as the most complete and free Person in the novel, is treated as less than a Person by others in the text. Constantly Typified and misunderstood, she is a ghost haunting the text. She (re)appears at the beginning of the novel through the incantation of Rogozhin and Lebedev’s discourse. She is subsequently (re)summoned before Myshkin by Ganya and Ivan Fyodorovich in her photograph. Her mere image is enough to wreak havoc in both the Epanchin and Ivolgin households. Her physical presence causes scandals to break out,

³⁸⁶ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Folger Shakespeare. Ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, <https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/hamlet/> (accessed May 3, 2021), 1.5.188.

and her absence causes physical violence and sinfulness. The reaction to Nastasia Filippovna's disjuncting (non-)presence can best be described not as an ontology but as an hauntology, a rejection of relational ontology inspired by her complete freedom.³⁸⁷

Her mode of being is reduced by those around her to a grotesque shade of existence. To Rogozhin she is an injunction against the prohibitive and loveless relationship with his father. By consuming her and stealing her away from all others he seeks to overcome the threat of violence and death that his father represented. His inability to respond to her charm, however, dooms him to repeat the sins of his father. Similarly, she represents freedom from the perceived tyranny he suffers from his family as well as from societal and economic laws. For Ganya, what could have blossomed into an authentic relation to Aglaya Ivanovna is spoiled by his greed, a passion that pushes him to lust after Nastasia Filippovna. Even Aglaya Ivanovna is not untouched by Nastasia Filippovna's spectral presence. Her envy of Nastasia Filippovna not only taints her love of Myshkin, but is the primary cause for her running into the arms of madness when she marries the false Polish prince in the novel's epilogue.

Myshkin however, like Hamlet, is the Person most potently affected by Nastasia Filippovna's hauntological (non-)presence. Nastasia Filippovna's (re)appearance to him at the Ivolgin's household is not only the manifestation of someone who both is and is not there. For Myshkin she is also a reappearance of Marie. He typifies Nastasia Filippovna and encloses her in a sentimental mode of being that prevents him from seeing her as a Person. The dual reappearance of Nastasia as herself and as Marie confirms Myshkin's inability to respond to the

³⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida coined this term to discuss the influence of Marx and communism on the socio-economic movement of history. He invokes Hamlet's father as a metaphor for a spectral presence whose reappearance for the first time in the world causes a disjuncture that reveals the injustices of the past and demands a fulfillment of debts. For more information see Jacques Derrida, *Specter of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006).

charm of beauty because he does not recognize the fullness of the other as a Person, but rather only as a potentiality—an object at rest awaiting momentum to break its inertia and reach an ideal state.

Yuri Corrigan describes the Typification as “The abrupt degeneration that characterizes Nastasia Filippovna under Myshkin’s influence... into a weeping woman, an iconic *anima*,” underscores Myshkin’s view of these women as merely injunctions against the cruelty of people toward beauty—they are an ideal of femininity as an offended being. But a person cannot have a direct, erotic, and salvific relationship with an ideal or a ghost. Time and space in the novel become disjointed in a negative direction because Myshkin and all the others around Nastasia Filippovna consume themselves through egocentric demands forced upon her. This causality between egocentric consumption and the decay of time and space is the product of the entry of sin into the world through human action. The Personalist perspective understands this in direct correlation to the Fall—as humanity sins, creation falls into decay, and as persons moves into relation with one another and the Divine, that decay is overcome. Therefore, in the end Dostoevsky’s fictional Personals all share a mutual responsibility for the collapse of the world of the novel and Nastasia’s eventual death, even as Dostoevsky attempted to contain and prevent it, just as the Orthodox perspective holds that all persons share in the mutual responsibility for attempting to act in a manner that will lead to communion with others and the Divine.

But Nastasia Filippovna also suffers from a haunting of a specter in the novel. As always, Dostoevsky creates a fearful symmetry of symbolic forms in his novels. The “perfectly beautiful person” is an apparition that reappears to her in the form of Myshkin. Recall, that she tells Myshkin at her Name’s Day party that she dreamed of him and imagined him.³⁸⁸ His perfection

³⁸⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 144.

is just as much a product of the battle within her sub- and supraconsciousness as her beauty is in his. She Typifies him just as he Typifies her. Unlike Myshkin, however, she rejects him because she becomes aware of his goodness and naivety. He is more of a Type, a poor Quixotic knight, a holy fool, or a “perfectly beautiful person” than she is a “weeping woman.” What’s more, she knows an active mode of being-in-relation with him would only bring him sorrow because she, like all free Persons, always sticks out her tongue at the false utopian promise of perfect, just like the Underground Man—“perfection cannot be loved,” she wrote knowingly in her letters to Aglaya.³⁸⁹ Myshkin sees Nastasia Filippovna’s interjection into the world as a philosophical cause to be defended, and her being as an ideal form.

Nastasia Filippovna sees his injection as an ideal in the form of a Divine injunction that, if accepted, would cost her her freedom. His spectral presence as “perfection” disrupts in space and time, speeding up the decay and death of her being. As Thomas Pynchon writes, “[W]hat are any of these ‘utopian dreams’ of ours but defective forms of time travel?”³⁹⁰ Nastasia Filippovna and Myshkin’s utopian dreams are indeed defective forms of time travel and the world around them pays for their egocentric need to fulfill or deconstruct an ideal of beauty. The consequences of decaying time are crushing not only for the transgressors but also for their relations. For Nastasia Filippovna, submission to his perfection is an intolerable cruelty, and her reaction—to violently push back against her creator—creates a fallen world from Dostoevsky’s initial dream of salvation.

Dostoevsky could not prepare for dissent against the “perfectly beautiful person” because he did not see that Myshkin’s “perfection” would cause the same loss of freedom as the Crystal Palace. And because his heart was closed to Nastasia Filippovna’s Personhood and freedom,

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 379.

³⁹⁰ Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 942.

placing greater value on a Typified ideal of feminine perfection, a disjointedness develops in the novel, appearing like blemishes of corruption on film stock. Dostoevsky's inability to ink time and space properly around the Persons whom he has borne into the fictional world is a product of Nastasia Filippovna's flight, both physically and spiritually, between Rogozhin, Myshkin, and various other men within the text.

The pureness of her freedom mocks Dostoevsky's ability to contain it. His artistic ability to create freedom, beauty, and non-beauty outstripped his ability to utilize them to come to a positive depiction of the Truth of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty. No one—within, reading, or writing the text—can rationally comprehend what Nastasia Filippovna does because she is not functioning on a rational plane but rather an experiential one. She is a living paradox, spectrally haunting and destroying the structure of the novel. When she is permitted a glimpse into the higher realm of being-in-relation through Myshkin's attempt at kenotic love, she flies heels up into Rogozhin's arms, into depravity, into a totality of sensual desire and seduction. And when Rogozhin opens the door back to relational being when he is on his knees, she again flees from it as wax melting away from a flame. All of this is not to blame or shame her, but to reveal how her terrible and pure freedom breaks the rules of the conventional realism that should govern her, but the higher ontology permitted thanks to the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty allows her to flourish and leap from the pages.

Nastasia Filippovna exposes the weakness of Dostoevsky's realism as he attempted to depict both the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-will-be in *The Idiot*. Instead of elevating the novel to a higher realism through perfection and beauty, freedom and non-beauty paradoxically deconstruct the boundaries of the text and obliterates the constraints of the monologic ideal of beauty—the attempt to force the uncircumscribable truth of Divine beauty onto a contain Person.

Rogozhin murdering Nastasia Filippovna frees her from the torment of the monologic millstone which with Myshkin continually seeks to yoke her. The haunting of the novel by perfections of beauty—in both Nastasia Filippovna and Myshkin—bring the poetic structure down into the cellar of the subconscious, where the line between the physical and metaphysical is weakened, but the urge to sensualism and materialism are stronger than the kenotic washing of the *nous* in the upper chamber of the supraconsciousness. Although the light of beauty shines into the novel through the cracked door to the higher rooms, this novel dwells in the underground of the subconscious, where its ghosts cry out for the salvific relief of relation but cannot stretch out their hands and take it.

In terms of Dostoevsky's presentation of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty, *The Idiot* allows both the thesis and antithesis to point toward the Truth of Christ as Beauty, but the apophatic proofs are significantly stronger. Therefore, insofar as I have posited that the transcendence of time and space in a positive direction is a result of responding to the charm of beauty and the movements of transcendence in and the poetic structure of the novel are clearly not trending toward being-in-relation, non-beauty is the key force in the novel and plunges it into chaotic anxiety and death. While it may teach the reader about the salvific quality of beauty, non-beauty cannot set one on the path to the soteriological theosis of the person. Myshkin reveals how the willful rejection of the freedom of the other undoes the knot of relation tied together by beauty and love. The antithesis of non-beauty that presupposes the subjugation of either the lover or the beloved therefore does not lead the person to salvation, but rather serves to point toward the Truth apophatically; it reveals the Truth through the abuse of the other through non-beauty. While non-beauty masquerading as beauty that causes poetic and moral decay of the Person is at its strongest in *The Idiot*, the relationship between beauty and non-beauty is engaged in greater

and more concrete detail in Dostoevsky's representation of the antinomy within the framework of the "Beauty of the Madonna" and the "Beauty of Sodom."

§IV: Dostoevsky's Discourse on the Antinomy of Beauty and Non-beauty as the "Beauty of the Madonna" and the "Beauty of Sodom"

Working from the position that Dostoevsky's view on beauty should be read as an antinomy, from the Orthodox Personalist perspective, and moving from the context of its development of fictional beings and structure in *The Idiot*, I now turn to the clearest illustration of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty in *The Brothers Karamazov*. While there has been a multitude of readings of the antinomy of the beauty of the Madonna and the beauty of Sodom, my analysis through the Orthodox Personalist lens will refine the typical mode of critical analysis, reassert the novelty and importance of the creation of the Person in the novel, and orient the reader toward the final, and most valuable, stage of Personalist literary analysis.

Returning to Dostoevsky's response to Dobroliubov, there is no explicit discourse on the difference between beauty and non-beauty. However, when he speaks of the person "exciting in himself alien tastes, unhealthy, sharp, inharmonic, sometimes monstrous ones, losing measure and aesthetic feeling for healthy beauty and demanding instead of it exceptions," he hints at that which he refers to in *The Brothers Karamazov* as the beauty of Sodom.³⁹¹ Viewing the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty within the context of Mitya Karamazov's poetic demarcation of the beauty of the Madonna and the beauty of Sodom provides concrete evidence of the Orthodox Personalist perspective on the revelation of Truth through beauty and its inherent connection to the anthropology of the Person in Dostoevsky's prose.

³⁹¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

To formulate the antinomy in this manner further reveals the ability of Persons to transcend time and space through beauty as well as investigating how isolation caused by non-beauty cuts the Person off from the erotic call to being. What's more, in a manner similar to the investigation of non-beauty's pedagogical rather than direct soteriological capacity from the previous chapter, the beauty of Sodom reveals how the image of Divine Being *cannot* be erased or completely defaced in the person, as some prominent scholars have argued. In this manner, I will analyze how movement toward the beauty of Sodom may point toward the Truth of Christ, but does not lead to it. By investigating the image and the human propensity to abuse its visage in the light of Orthodox Personalist anthropology within the narrative of *The Brother Karamazov*, I show that the beauty of Sodom as a mode of being-as-formlessness, as scholars such as Robert Louis Jackson have supposed, is impossible in Dostoevsky's concept of the Person. Non-beauty does not and cannot entail the destruction of the image resulting in formlessness, but is rather a free, self-harming propensity to reject the personal beauty of the *logos*.

To begin, consider the following lengthy passage from *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Mitya elucidates the theory of the Madonna and Sodom antinomy to Alyosha:

All we Karamazovs are insects as well, and in you, angel, that insect lives as well and will stir up the tempests in your blood. That is to say tempests because sensual lust is a tempest—worse than tempests! Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! Terrible because it is undefined, and it's impossible to define because God has set for us only riddles! Here the riverbanks converge and all contradictions live side by side. I am not a learned man, brother, but I have thought about this at length. It's horrible, what mysteries there are! Too many riddles weight the person down on earth. Solve them as you know how without getting burned by the fire. Beauty! What's more, I cannot stand that another person, of lofty thought and heart, begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. And what's still worse, is one who already has the ideal of Sodom in their soul and yet will not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and their heart burns from it, truly, truly burns like in young and innocent days. No, persons are vast, too vast; I would narrow them. The devil knows what it's about, that for sure! What the mind imagines as disgrace the heart imagines as beauty. Is there beauty in Sodom? Believe me, that there is beauty in Sodom for the immensity of the masses—did you know that little secret or not? It is also dreadful that beauty is

not only terrible, but it also contains a secret thing. The devil battles with God there, the field of war is the hearts of people.³⁹²

Every aspect of Dostoevsky's Orthodox perspective on beauty is revealed in Mitya's oration: its antinomic quality arises in the convergence of riverbanks leading to contradictions; the duality that returns the person to a higher truth known in innocence and purity; a connection to the mystery of the person; an inherent connection with the Divine image and likeness; and the manner by which seductive beauty leads the person to sinfulness in a movement away from authentic being. Beauty, according to Misha, incorporates freedom, kenosis, and personal uniqueness. Through Mitya, Dostoevsky explicitly expresses the foundations of the TPP within the text.

Robert Louis Jackson rightly supposes, however, that, "We cannot uncritically attribute Dmitri's ideas about beauty to Dostoevsky... Dostoevsky must not be confused with the Dmitris: *their aesthetic* confusion is not his; on the other hand, his commitment to a conception of ideal beauty points in his novels to the ultimate solution to [the aesthete's] dilemma, to man's ultimate salvation and transfiguration."³⁹³ While Mitya believes deeply in both propositions of beauty and non-beauty in the antinomy, he appears to only have a complete understanding of the insectile, sensual, passionate perspective of the ideal of Sodom. The ideal of the Madonna is always in his mind, but never in his heart. And as I have shown in Myshkin, the Orthodox conception of beauty must unfold in the heart and experience of the Person, not in their minds in the novelistic world to bring them, and those around them, into the mode of being-in-relation.

Mitya, like Dostoevsky, slavishly seeks to solve the mystery of the person, but he is drawn like a moth to a flame to the burning seduction of non-beauty because of his intellectual

³⁹² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 100.

³⁹³ Jackson, *Quest for Form*, 64.

insistence on the necessity of the antithesis. Mitya shares the idea presented by many critics of Dostoevsky, that without sin there would be no salvation. In the extremities of his passions, however, he is incapable of seeing beauty apart from Sodom—in his worldview without the antithesis the thesis does not exist. Rather than experiencing beauty Mitya intellectualizes it, considers it an ideal. The only experience he seems to have relationally with beauty is grounded in Sodom. And therefore, Sodom becomes a necessity.

Mitya's expression of the antinomy, however, also proves the impossibility of a total loss or deformation of their form despite human attempts to annihilate it in either themselves or others. As often as Mitya goes head over heels into sensualism and toward the non-beauty of Sodom, he cannot "renounce the ideal of the Madonna" because the thesis represents the indelible logos of the unique person or object in the world.³⁹⁴ The majority of critical analysis on the antinomy of the Madonna and Sodom explores these concepts as *obraz (form)* and *bezobrazie* (ugliness, etymologically "*formlessness*"). However, the foundations of these studies engage the antinomy without a thorough analysis of their Orthodox roots. A lack of a deep understanding of the Personalist and Orthodox grounds of the Madonna and Sodom has led to critical misinterpretations of Dostoevsky's use of this antinomy, particularly regarding this idea of a loss of form within the fictional being.

Jackson analyzes the Russian term *obraz (form)* to contemplate the synthesis of aesthetic and religious aspects in Dostoevsky. However, *obraz* in the Orthodox perspective is the term used for *image*, as in the image and likeness of the Divine in the person indicating a greater depth than simple aesthetics.³⁹⁵ Although it may seem a merely derisory semantic difference

³⁹⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 100.

³⁹⁵ Genesis 1: 26 states "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our Image, after our Likeness.'" In Russian the terms are *obraz* and *podobie*. These are used ubiquitously in Orthodox theological discourse on anthropology and ontology.

between *image* and *form*, the analysis of the antithesis of *form* becomes problematic. Jackson focuses on the concept of *form* in its artistic usage to express a rational investigation of the synthesis of aesthetics and religious thought. He notes, “The idea of the inseparability of the ideal (beauty) from its incarnation (Christ) is an aesthetic one for Dostoevsky [in the same way as] the ‘utility’ of a work (its moral element) is inseparable from the aesthetic element, from beauty incarnate, from form. [...] Artistic and religious vision are ultimately one vision, reveal the same absolute reality.”³⁹⁶ Jackson’s attempt to unify the vision of utility, morality, and religiosity in aesthetics are ultimately flawed because he speaks primarily of *obraz* in relation to plastic arts and natural art, but shies away from a discussion of *obraz* in the person.

My major objection to Jackson’s analysis of the arts in Dostoevsky’s work concerns his views on Myshkin. He notes: “The Christian ideal, the ideal of the image of Christ, was a major inspiration in the final conception of Myshkin... The Christian ideal is projected, though imperfectly, in the image of Myshkin; but the ideal of beauty proves impotent before the disaggregating force of Rogozhin’s sensualism, his ‘monstrous passion’ (*bezobraznaia strast’*).”³⁹⁷ As both Jackson and I attest, Myshkin is a fictional being incapable of incarnating the image or likeness of Christ. However, Jackson concludes that because Myshkin, Dostoevsky’s incarnated ideal, fails to bring perfection and salvation to the novel that only art can transform reality: “Art, Dostoevsky believed, transforms reality—morally transfigures it.”³⁹⁸ He makes no further attempts to analyze the personal beauty within the novel.

However, as I have stressed, in the Orthodox perspective that Dostoevsky holds, without personal revelation the human conception of the essence would not exist and active personal

³⁹⁶ Jackson, *Quest for Form*, 56-7.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

beauty, including art, does not exist without personal and relational qualities to support it. The iconographic images of the Madonna and other static revelations of beauty can aid the person on the soteriological path to authentic being but this journey requires an active participation in beauty, a connection to the other and the Divine. In the light of the Orthodox perception of *obraz* as *image* we must, as Dostoevsky did, inevitably come to a different conclusion, that the beauty of the Madonna is not merely inherent in art in Dostoevsky's work but also in his fictional beings, even if they only experience that perfection in a moment of synergetic communion with the other.

The work of beauty in reality, in Jackson's perspective, become united to utilitarian value. "The 'utility' of a work (its moral element)," he claims, "is inseparable from the aesthetic element, from beauty incarnate, from form," but the aesthetic element remains merely a "premonitory symbol of the beauty of a transfigured reality," rather than an actual transfiguration in the miraculous but also in everyday instances of being-in-relation.³⁹⁹ This concept of *obraz* bears weight within certain contexts in Dostoevsky's oeuvre, and one such instance Jackson analyzes is Stavrogin's discussion with Shatov in *Demons*. Shatov says, paraphrasing Stavrogin, "The aesthetic principle, as the philosophers say the moral principle, as they also say... 'seeking for God' is how I call it just to make things simple. The aim of all movements of nations, of all nations in all epochs of their existence, is solely the search for a god, one's own god, entirely one's own, and a faith in Him as the sole Truth. God is the synthetic person of the whole nation, taken from its beginning to its end."⁴⁰⁰ Jackson concludes, in the same manner as Shatov/Stavrogin, that the ideal of beauty that became incarnate in Christ continues to exist as an aesthetic or moral principle toward which the person must strive. But their vision of Christ is

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 56-7.

⁴⁰⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 10, 198.

not a manifestation of the image of Divine, but rather a credo, a vision, a metaphysical fiction untouched by the material.

Stavrogin/Shatov, in his philosophizing fails to heed the call of beauty and Christ. The intellectualizing of the active beauty in Christ as moral or ideal neuters its personal potential, as in the case of Myshkin. Jackson leans toward the incarnational aspect of beauty in the context of *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* noting, “It is not the abstract idea of ideal of a beautiful life that inspires the Ridiculous Man [as a fictional representative of Dostoevsky], but visions of the *living image*,” and Jackson concludes that what Dostoevsky seeks is “the ideal in flesh... a concrete aesthetic experience, a self-incarnation.”⁴⁰¹ The continual push for the idea that “beauty to Dostoevsky is the beauty of the ideal form—form that is the incarnation of harmony, measure, and repose,” still represents fidelity to the Orthodox perspective.⁴⁰² But Jackson see the incarnation only in the arts and not in personal, active beauty.

The Orthodox Personalist perspective always maintains a personal connection to beauty. Pseudo-Dionysius frames this concept insofar as “we call “beautiful” (*kalon*) that which has a share in beauty (*kallos*), and we give the name of “beauty” to that which is the cause of beauty in everything.”⁴⁰³ The concept of an ideal form as the essence of anything is, in the Orthodox mode of thought, secondary to the personal or hypostatic form. Stavrogin intellectualizes beauty into a utilitarian concept, and Jackson likewise intellectualizes it and reduces the personal aspect to a static form. Both unknowingly separate the person from the image and likeness within them. Beauty, and its fullness in the Logos, is not separated from the person, it is not an essential feature to be longed for, but a reality within every living being must be awakened in a relational

⁴⁰¹ Jackson, *Quest for Form*, 56-7.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁰³ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, “On the Divine Names,” 76.

context.⁴⁰⁴ The unknowability of essence, which drives Stavrogin to madness in the novel, can only be conveyed apophatically or known directly through a relation to its enhypostatization.

Jackson promotes the essential quality of beauty to a primary ontic position. But just as Myshkin cannot truly be the “perfectly beautiful person,” neither can the human form achieve an incarnation ideal of the Divine in space and time. Communion with the Divine does not entail elimination of the unique form of the Person. The manifestation of beauty in Dostoevsky’s fictional world is not an attempt at the reincarnation of the ideal, with the possible exception of Ivan’s *poema* “The Grand Inquisitor,” but rather it longs for an uncovering of the image and likeness within the Person. Dostoevsky learned from Myshkin that the attempt at the reincarnation of beauty within a fictional Person, an attempt to hypostatize beauty as ideal outside of Christ, will always fail. The Person can only convey distinct moments of timelessness and spatial freedom that express not authentic being, but the movement toward authentic being within a realist context. One cannot speak of an ideal form outside of metaphysical discourse, and an ideal form cannot be realized in a realist novel because once it is enhypostatized within the ontological and anthropological boundaries it no longer reflects essence or ideal. Higher reality breaks into the text as an expression of the momentary communion with the Divine, which can then be rationally processed and discussed as moments of near-perfection or a physical engagement with essential form, but it is always concrete and personal, not ideal and intangible.

When Jackson states that “beauty is to Dostoevsky the beauty of the ideal form,” he is aimed toward the Truth that Dostoevsky knows, but falls short when he adds “beauty is for [Dostoevsky] figural, and it is in the plastic and representational arts of the antique and

⁴⁰⁴ For the discussion on the Orthodox perspective on essence and being see Chapter I §III: The Mode of Being of the Divine.

Renaissance periods that he seeks to form or ‘shape,’ the model, of his ideal beauty.”⁴⁰⁵ Jackson focuses on the creative output of the personal mode of being within the context of Western aesthetic discourse, on material displays of beauty rather than personal acts. And although Dostoevsky recognizes the beauty of the plastic arts that points toward the Creator, he most admires and creates dynamic actions that transmit the *logos* of the person. Beauty for Dostoevsky is active (transcendent, relational), not passive (representational, authoritative). But Jackson continually insists on a passive quality to the moral-aesthetic spectrum. This passivity stems from the displacement of the unique quality of the personal *logos* with the reincarnation of the ideal form through art.

A theory of art and beauty that is passive, non-invitational, petrifies the unrepeatable goodness of the person when the object or person succumbs to an ideal form. In this mode, rather than meeting the other through art, the person bows before a monologic force that overtakes their uniqueness. This Western perspective leads to the essential qualities taking primacy over the personal. In the Personalist perspective, however, only relational knowledge of the Truth reveals to the person the qualities of essential or ideal features of Being, for, as Yannaras posits:

We do not know the essence, the Being of beings (*to Einai tôn ontôn*); we only know the *mode* by which they *are* [...] God becomes “known” either through the “things” of the reality of the world as distinct absence, or as erotic certainty [through] relation... Unknowable and inaccessible as a while in His essence – “which is beyond all things and transcends all things” – He is revealed as self-offering love for every human person – “condescends to abide in all things” – as passion for erotic goodness, as zeal for an exclusive personal relation.⁴⁰⁶

The distinction between ideal and real is fundamentally engrained in Dostoevsky because of his closeness to Orthodox thought and Mitya’s antinomy clarifies Dostoevsky’s position. Beauty is

⁴⁰⁵ Jackson, *Quest for Form*, 46.

⁴⁰⁶ Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 11, 67. The use of *erotic* here and elsewhere is “the loving impetus and movement of exodus from the individualized existence in the realm of objects, for the sake of the actualization of *relation* in the highest sense,” and not the biological or sexual *erotic* (*ibid.*, 20).

not the surrender to the ideal; it requires an embracing and communing action to further the soteriological journey of the Person through their freedom and uniqueness.

Jackson's analysis conflates a philosophic perspective on ideal forms with the concept of the Incarnation, akin to the idea that "in the West's understanding, God is defined only by His essence. What is not essence does not belong to God; it is a creation of God. Consequently, the energies of God are either identified with the essence as 'pure act,' or any external manifestation of them is necessarily of a different essence, that is, a created effect of the divine cause."⁴⁰⁷ If we replace *essence* with *ideal* in this quote, we can see how Jackson neglects the nuance of the Eastern contemplation of essential features. He inadvertently categorizes the ideal ontically by equating it with the Incarnation rather than conceiving of the Incarnation as the realization, the disclosure, and the *real and existent being* of Being that communes with the person through beauty.

The analogous conceptualization that equates the Incarnation to the ideal form is over-intellectualized. There is a hyper-rationalization of an action or object that, to the Orthodox mind, is primarily experiential. The Underground Man passionately expresses Dostoevsky's perspective on hyper-rationalization:

Gentlemen, you will excuse me for philosophizing, it's because of these forty years underground! but allow me to fantasize. Don't you see: reason, gentlemen, is a fine thing, no doubt about it, but reason is only reason and it only satisfies the reasonable function of the person, but desire is the manifestation of all of life, that is all of the personal life, which includes reason and all of life's itches... Reason only knows what it's managed to learn.⁴⁰⁸

The Underground Man's words directly relate to discourse on the primacy of being over essence. First, we see that the isolated mind, cut off for 40 years in the underground from any relational existence, gnashes its teeth in both spite of and longing for the desire for personal, relational

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁰⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 5, 115.

life.⁴⁰⁹ Mired in nothingness, with the exception of the vast cellar of the subconscious and the smaller room of the rational mind, the Underground Man is driven to a longing for the other that expresses itself in physical pain.⁴¹⁰

In expressing the desire for the manifestation of life through desire, the Underground Man also discloses the second issue of the inherent problem of philosophizing and rationalization as a replacement for relational being. There is a limit to how far reason can ruminate. Beyond that limit, the rational mind must turn to either the sub- or supraconsciousness. The person must fantasize or contemplate through either the natural/biological or transcendent functions of their being. Both of these sections of the mind, however, crave relation in order to guide conscious reason to communicable conclusions regarding non-rational experiences. Jackson does not engage with the question of how the mind deals with the incarnation of the ideal in beauty. In doing so, his analysis lacks a discussion of the supra-rational component to the ideal either in art or action.

In portraying Dostoevsky's stance on art as "a philosophical credo—at once a view of beauty and a definition of the human condition," Jackson exposes his analysis within the framework of a pre-Christian or post-Enlightenment perspective, in which the ideal as a metaphysical concept enters reality through plastic art without obtaining ontological fullness.⁴¹¹

Jackson explains:

Beauty to Dostoevsky is the beauty of what may be called ideal form – form that is the incarnation of harmony, measure, and repose. Dostoevsky's formal conception of beauty is the same as found in Greek aesthetics. Beauty for him is figural, and it is in the plastic and representational arts of the

⁴⁰⁹ It is worth noting that Dostoevsky uses the word *проявление* (*proiavlenie*) here (which we have translated as *manifested*), the root of which (*iavit'* or *to show*) is found in the Orthodox holiday of Theophany (*Bogoiavlenie*). The appearance of the Trinity during Christ's baptism by John the Forerunner has been and continues to be one of the most important holidays in the liturgical year. It is the first concrete sign of the unity of the Divine Being with being and the assurance of the unity in essence through three Persons (*homoousia* and *hypostases*) to the world.

⁴¹⁰ ⁴¹⁰ For the analysis of the subconsciousness in the Orthodox perspective see Chapter II §VII:

The Dostoevskian Person.

⁴¹¹ Jackson, *Quest for Form*, 42.

antique and Renaissance periods that he seeks the form or “shape,” the model, of his ideal beauty.⁴¹²

The “model” of beauty for Jackson would fit within Dostoevsky’s image of the Madonna from a representational perspective but not an active one. The mimetic incarnation of the ideal would, in accordance with the antique and Renaissance periods would be closer to Rafael’s *Sistine Madonna* than to an Orthodox representation of the Virgin Mary, such as the *Hodigitria* or *Umilenie* icons of the Theotokos, based on the first-hand icons written by Luke the Evangelist.⁴¹³ The Renaissance image attempts to express reality as it looks, while the iconographic attempts to express reality as it is experienced, calling the viewer into a direct relational experience with the person or event depicted therein. Although Dostoevsky shows a deep connection to and love for the former, it is less likely that he would believe that the Truth toward which beauty points could be found in the graveyard of Western art than in the living and personal iconography of the East.

If the primary purpose of art for Dostoevsky is not a search for representation of an ideal in static objects but rather a communication of personal uniqueness that unravels the mystery of the person and leads both lover and beloved toward salvation, should the reader not expect Dostoevsky’s beauty of the Madonna to be closer to the image of the Virgin Mary created in her presence than a Renaissance representation of 16th century beauty? The former fulfills the Personalist perspective on representational quality of art in two ways: as realistic according to the subjects relational and personal appearance in nature, and as transfigured according to their

⁴¹² Ibid., 46.

⁴¹³ See Figures 15, 16, and 17. The most common icons of the Virgin Mary the *Hodigitria* (*She Who Leads the Way*) and *Umilenie* (*Our Lady of Tenderness*). Dostoevsky attended the Cathedral dedicated to the Vladimir icon of Theotokos, which is the most famous Russian icon of the *Umilenie* type. Leonid Ouspensky’s descriptions of these two types reveals a strong foundation for our analysis of the ideal of the Madonna and its connection to beauty and Christ: “[The *Umilenie* icon] represents the mutual caress of Mother and Child, and emphasizes the natural human feeling, the tenderness of motherly love. It is the image of a Mother who suffers deeply for anguish which awaits her Son in silent consciousness of His inevitable sufferings,” and “[in the *Hodigitria* icon] both the Virgin and Child are represented full face, turned toward the viewer. This hieratic, majestic image particularly emphasizes the divinity of the child” (Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 1, trans. Anthony Gythiel, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992, 61-2.).

being in the higher reality of radiant communion with Divine Being. A brief discussion of the Orthodox view on the Madonna should help to clarify Dostoevsky's fidelity to the Orthodox paradigm.

It is strange that studies of the Mariological influence on Dostoevsky are limited to Western perspectives or, if the study explicitly engages Orthodoxy, it does not address Mary at all.⁴¹⁴ Perhaps this is because Dostoevsky almost always discusses her in the context of Western art. However, Dostoevsky's fidelity to Orthodoxy requires an analysis that approaches Mariology from an Eastern perspective. According to the Mariological discourse of the Orthodox Church, the Theotokos (the Orthodox term meaning *Birthgiver of God*) is the pinnacle of human being, the closest any person has come in life to expressing the image and likeness of the Creator. Other than her continual adherence to the law, which moves her closer to Divine Being, she is no different from any other person. Orthodoxy regards Mary as the "Panayia [Greek for *All Holy One*, a title reserved for the Theotokos, who] also struggled with her own temptations but she overcame them, by God's grace, and the correct use of her free-will... She is the perfect example of what man can attain through the synergy of divine grace and human freedom."⁴¹⁵ The bearing of God, the closest union with the Divine that a person has ever experienced, is the archetype for human being striving toward the Divine. If there were an ideal person who was not fully God and fully human, it would be her. The Theotokos, though, is not perfection, but a movement toward perfection. She is a real, relational being, not an ideal.

⁴¹⁴ For example, there are nearly zero references to, much less analyses of, Mary in Steven Cassedy, *Dostoevsky's Religion*, Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, or Diane Oenning *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory*.

⁴¹⁵ Harry Boosalis, *Person to Person: The Orthodox Understanding of Human Nature*, (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Monastery Press, 2018), 83.

The beauty of the Theotokos and her position as the acme of personal movement toward God expresses the fullness of both the TPP and beauty's role in the ontological boundaries of humanity. The purity, beauty, and holiness of the Virgin Mary are expressed concisely by Pavel Florensky:

But let us present several excerpts from the writings of Ambrose: "Beautiful is Mary," he exclaims, "who presented the sign of Holy virginity (*egregia igitur Maria, quae signum sactae virginitatis exulit*) and raised to Christ the holy banner of immaculate purity (*intemeratae integritatis*)." The Virgin Mary is unfathomable in Her superiority with respect to all of nature. She is higher than nature.⁴¹⁶

Mary's purity and humility raises her above nature and closer to the Divine. In her image Orthodox Christians, and Dostoevsky particularly, finds the model that guides the person from egoism toward unity with the Godhead. But still, even being superior to nature she is first and foremost a person.

Considering the Orthodox conception of the Madonna as not an ideal but as a relational being who acts as a guide and intercessor, this person reveals the distinction between Jackson's perspective on the incarnation of the ideal form and Personalist perspective. The former is idolization and the later soteriological. Florensky expresses this insofar as:

Almost every ascetic work develops the notion of the connection between virginity and humility, as well as the notion of lustful thoughts as a consequence of pride and the egotistical self-assertion of the I... Here, again and again, we return to the basic idea of the difference between the spiritual and fleshy laws of identity. The spiritual law of identity makes me, contemplated by me in God, the *ideal* of myself, whereas the fleshy law of identity makes me the *idol* of myself.⁴¹⁷

The thesis of Dostoevsky's antinomy of beauty and non-beauty therefore expresses a real and concrete example of how beauty manifests itself as a personal interaction and unique meeting point with the Incarnation, rather than an ideal that manifests itself in the person. The charm of the Madonna does not point toward a non-relational ideal, a form that represents and overshadows the creator, but rather toward an actualization of the existent beauty, the *logos*,

⁴¹⁶ Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, 266.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

already within the person—a dynamic movement toward the transcendent reality of authentic being.

Ksana Blank acknowledges the iconographic importance of the Theotokos from the Eastern perspective. However, she still overemphasizes the idealistic value of the Orthodox depiction of Mary in icons when Blank writes:

The pictorial means serve to express the idea of asceticism; physicality becomes abstract; hair is hidden under a *maphorion* (a holy veil); and much attention is given to the eyes—windows to the soul. Significantly, in these two pictorial traditions, the images are put into different spatial contexts. Icons portray the Mother of God against a transfigured (deified) reality depicted symbolically and schematically, whereas Renaissance Madonnas are generally depicted against everyday backgrounds, elegant and pleasing to the eye.⁴¹⁸

While she shows a full understanding of the aesthetic beauty of iconographic depictions, Blank rejects the synthesis of material and transfigured reality and active engagement with the *logos* in favor of the purely symbolic and static imagination of the Divine.

Similarly, Jackson speaks of Dostoevsky’s closeness to the Theotokos as if she were only an icon, only an image of a form that has no presence in reality nor ever has: “the icon, particularly the representation of the Madonna, appears in Dostoevsky’s artistic universe as a religious-aesthetic symbol of great importance—a literal image of beauty toward which man turns in reverence and longing.”⁴¹⁹ In saying this, Jackson limits beauty to representational form, to a mere icon not concrete being. Compare Blank and Jackson’s analyses to Evdokimov’s:

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite speaks of the Beauty that can save the world when he addresses this prayer to the Mother of God:

I pray that your icon will be infinitely reflected in the mirror of our souls and that it will preserve them pure until the end of time, that it will raise up those who are bent down toward the earth, and that it will give hope to those who contemplate and try to imitate this eternal model of Beauty...

In this prayer, the expression “Beauty will save the world” receives its full justification.

⁴¹⁸ Blank, 82.

⁴¹⁹ Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form*, 48.

Dostoevsky works in the context of the Theotokos that Evdokimov and Pseudo-Dionysius put forth, as a person who transcends time and space, and therefore sin and death, as an incomprehensible superiority over nature that continually leads the person toward Divine Being.

The Madonna is not merely an icon but rather “this ‘incomprehensible superiority’ [who] is not exhausted and cannot be exhausted by descriptions and representations.”⁴²⁰ The person of the Madonna is greater than a mere “literal image,” she is a concrete example of the Truth toward which the thesis of beauty points. And while the transcendent aspects of Blank and Jackson’s analysis are true, they lack the personal and active qualities Dostoevsky strives to depict. The supranatural transcendence of time and space of the Theotokos, achieved by her personal beauty, devotion to an ascetic life in the world, and purity, is central to Orthodox doctrine but it is not confined to transcendent space. There is a real and physical meeting point with the Madonna in the Orthodox Personalist perspective.

The Theotokos, in her actions and her striving toward union with the Divine, is therefore the archetype for *existential* beauty and a constant intercessor and guide for the living person. Insofar as she is not a mere icon or ideal of beauty, her personal existence and closeness to living human beings expresses the soteriological quality of beauty about which Dostoevsky wrote—the beauty that discloses and activates the invisible and transcendent. Florensky illuminates the meeting of the Divine and the material in his discourse on the iconostasis, the wall that separates the nave from the sanctuary in an Orthodox church. On it are icons of Christ, the Theotokos, the saints, angels, and the major feasts of the liturgical cycle. While some in the West consider it a barrier between the laity and the priesthood, the East accepts the barrier as a sign of the truth of

⁴²⁰ Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, 267.

reality, one that confirms the barriers of space and time as a gateway to the unification of the world and the Divine.

The iconostasis is adorned with beauty that opens the person into the transcendental qualities of liturgical events. Florensky's rejection of the idea of a barrier invokes the same connection we have shown between the Madonna and beauty:

But if these [invisible] realities were wholly spiritual, they would be incomprehensible to our weak nature - and what exists in our consciousness would therefore not be made better. But if these realities were only in the visible realm, then they would be unable to indicate where lies the boundary between the visible and invisible: nor would they themselves know where that boundary existed. Heaven and earth, altar and temple: this separation can only occur through the visible witness of the invisible world, those living symbols of the co-inheritance of this world, and the other - i.e., through holy people. [...] Iconostasis is a manifestation of saints and angels - *angelophania* - a manifest appearance of heavenly witness that includes, first of all, the Mother of God and Christ Himself in the flesh, witnesses who proclaim that which is from the other side of mortal flesh.⁴²¹

In this way, the earthly person and the Divine enter into communion as mediated by the transcendent beauty of the Church during the services. The Madonna, not as an ideal but as an ontologically full person who transcends space and time, is also a mediatrix between the temporal and the infinite. She is the beauty that the person aims to imitate in order to live an authentic mode of being-in-communion.

Although the Theotokos is a target for the person to aim toward, she is simultaneously an expression of personal uniqueness. Mitya's ecstatic joy at the idea of going to the mines "for all and on behalf of all" expresses the very same personal beauty that the Madonna radiates across time and space.⁴²² Dostoevsky, in aligning his work through Mitya's speech with the Orthodox conception of beauty—to the extent that Mitya can bear it—completely rejects a homogenized

⁴²¹ Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan & Olga Andrejev, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 60, 62.

⁴²² The icon of the Theotokos "Joy of All Who Sorrow" (see Figure 18), visually represents the expression of joy that pours forth from Mitya when he decides to turn toward the Divine by going to Siberia "for all and on behalf of all." In this icon there is a visual representation of the Orthodox concept of personal transcending time and space and the comfort that Mitya finds and seeks to spread through his unique, self-emptying act of beauty.

idealization of beauty. That sort of idealization posits immutable forms and lacks a personal quality thereby denying the grounding of beauty in Christ and leads to a humanistic approach to being foreign to Dostoevsky's polyphonic voice and vision. The ideal that does not take into consideration the unrepeatable uniqueness of the *logos* within each person as it relates to the Divine becomes mired down and stagnate and reflects a Renaissance and pre-Christian Greek—specifically Platonic—discourse on beauty and the other.

The personal and relational quality of the Madonna, however, implies freedom, and freedom implies the possibility of rejection, isolation, and evil. The Platonic aesthetic discourse, even in its positive reception of beauty, inherently rejects that which is unique in the person in favor of the ideal. In the Stanford Encyclopedia's entry on Plato's aesthetics Nickolas Pappas, states that:

Beauty is Plato's example of a Form so frequently for a pair of reasons. On one hand it bears every mark of the Forms. It is an evaluative concept as much as justice and courage are. [...] But physical beauty is atypical being a Form that humans *want* to know. This is the second reason Plato makes beauty such a frequent example of a Form. The process known as *anamnēsis* or recollection is more plausible for beauty than it is for most other properties.⁴²³

Plato presents the forms as something longed for, but merely evaluative concepts given incomplete incarnation. Instead of invitation-to-relation, the Platonic concept of incarnating or reincarnating the ideal therefore overshadows and depersonalizes the other insofar as the other with greatest value is that which is pointed toward and not that which points. While this depersonalization may not be intentional or even negative, a tendency toward egoism and utilitarianism spins out of an aesthetic principle that is not based in personal and relational grounds.

The egocentrism of an attempt to force an ideal of beauty, in a strictly Platonic sense, onto the other is vividly illustrated in Thomas Pynchon's novel *V.* during a scene in which a

⁴²³ Nickolas Pappas, "Plato's Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2020 Edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/plato-aesthetics/> (accessed April 28, 2021).

young woman named Esther begins to abhor herself and her physical appearance. She enters into depravity caused by the seduction of her plastic surgeon Schoenmaker. During a moment of physical intimacy, following a rhinoplasty which reshapes her physical visage according to his will, Schoenmaker continues his verbal seduction, pushing her to undergoing further physical alteration. In response to his passionate pleas, Esther begins to fathom the deforming tendencies of her seducer and pushes back. He, however, claims to only see her essential, hidden beauty. He wants to carve the ideal beauty out of her flesh, a Pygmalion sculpting in sinus and sinew:

“It isn’t me you love,” she kept saying. “You want to change me into something I’m not.”
In return he could only argue a kind of Platonism at her. Did she want him so shallow he should only love her body? It was her soul he loved. What was the matter with her, didn’t every girl want a man to love the soul, the true them? Sure, they did. Well, what is the soul. It is the idea of the body, the abstraction behind the reality: what Esther really was, shown to the senses with certain imperfections there in the bone and tissue. Schoenmaker could bring out the true, perfect Esther which dwelled inside the imperfect one. Her soul would be there on the outside, radiant, unutterably beautiful.”⁴²⁴

Pynchon, in Dostoevskian fashion, captures an apophatic proof of the horror that the Platonic ideal creates in the mind of the passionate person. Schoenmaker’s perception of beauty moves from the personal to the general, much like Madame Kokhlakova’s idea of the person in *The Brothers Karamazov* and attempts to typify Ester’s personal beauty into a Platonic ideal.⁴²⁵ This type of depersonalization, caused by the desire to consume the beauty of the other, similarly manifests in Rogozhin’s kneeling before Nastasia Filippovna. Rogozhin beautifully expresses his unique soul through repentance, but instead of entering into communion with him, Nastasia Filippovna punishes him with the seduction and temptation because of her own sexual urges and egocentric desire for freedom from the other. The desire to consume and depersonalize the other in these scenes manifests a desire to satisfy egocentric urges, not to fulfill a Platonic ideal.

⁴²⁴ Thomas Pynchon, *V.*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990), 296-7.

⁴²⁵ For the analysis of this approach to the person see Chapter II §V: The Dostoevskian Type.

Within the Personalist context, the overtaking of the *logos* by the ego is the root of non-beauty, the foundations of the Beauty of Sodom.

Jackson's conception of the ideal of beauty, insofar as it shares in the Platonic perspective, would allow for non-beauty to infiltrate the person and overtake their beauty in a permanent manner. In this perspective, non-beauty does not masquerade as beauty, but is inherent within beauty and is capable of deforming it. It is truly two forms of beauty and not two receptions of it. What's more, the fact that the metaphysical ideal form of beauty is immutable, in the Platonic sense, entails that the variations of it which appear in the world are only a shade of the form. As essence, the form itself is neither beautiful or not beautiful but merely is. The shadow of the form in material reality is therefore inherently impersonal because it does not convey a personal and relational quality because *there is nothing personal in essence*. Essence is known through personal relation, and without that relation there is only intellectualization.⁴²⁶

The depersonalizing nature of the Platonic aesthetic perspective can be found explicitly in the *Phaedo*, in which Plato expresses the essential features of the ideal form. Socrates synthesizes a conception of the forms in the following manner in his dialogue with Cebes:

-Idea or essence, which in the dialectical process we define as essence of true existence-whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else: are these essences, I say, liable at times to some degree of change? or are they each of them always what they are, having the same simple, self-existent and unchanging forms, and not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time?

-They must be always the same, Socrates, replied Cebes.

-And what would you say of the many beautiful - whether men or horses or garments or any other things which may be called equal or beautiful-are they all unchanging and the same always, or quite the reverse? May they not rather be described as almost always changing and hardly ever the same either with themselves or with one another?

-The latter, replied Cebes; they are always in a state of change.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ For the analysis on essence and being see Chapter I §II: The Primacy of Being over Essence. The Theocentric Personological Paradigm.

⁴²⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Western Philosophy*, ed. John Cottingham, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 205.

Because the forms are unchangeable, all beauty points toward general, essential principles of beauty as ideal rather than the incarnate, personal, and limitless possibilities of the other as promoted in the Personalist view. While beauty is seen as unique, it is not personal insofar as it is overshadowed by the ideal.

Plato's worldview finds its ground in the Greek monologic ontology, a system that is not only averse to change but predicated upon the foundations of the immutability of nature. While that which is existent may be different, there is no change in the ideal of beauty. It may seem to mark a polyphony of beauty, but in fact it binds all to the absolute. The Personalist understanding of this worldview places the cause for these foundations in the fact that "ancient Greek thought, in *all* its forms (Parmenidean, Heracletan, Platonic, and Aristotelian), in spite of its variations on other aspects, agreed on one thing: particularity is not ontologically absolute; the many are always ontologically derivative, not causative. This ontology of the classical Greeks made a personal ontology impossible."⁴²⁸ The ideal only exists in a world where all creation sits in a stasis, in which relational movement and freedom are illusions.

The beauty of the Madonna in the Orthodox perspective, by rejecting the primacy of the ideal over the personal, embodies what Dostoevsky expresses as beauty that "is immanent in everything healthy, that is, to that which is most alive, and is a necessary need of the human organism. It is harmony; in it lies that guarantee of tranquility; it is incarnate in the person and embodies its ideals to person."⁴²⁹ When beauty manifests itself in the person through action there is no longer a reliance on the ideal but on the communion of two (or more) persons. But Dostoevsky strains to inscribe this type of beauty in a more permanent state into a realistic fictional being until Alyosha Karamazov. As I have shown in his struggles with Myshkin,

⁴²⁸ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 102.

⁴²⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

Dostoevsky was incapable of finding the proper balance between the manifestation of personal beauty in the likeness of the Theotokos and Typifying his protagonist. However, throughout his literary output he had no problems reifying the beauty of Sodom and utilizing its pedagogical quality to point toward the truth of the Beauty of Christ.

Jackson analyzes the antithesis of the antinomy, non-beauty, not as a commodification and consumption of the other's beauty but as an active deformation of the ideal. His interpretation of the beauty of Sodom as *bezobrazie* ("formlessness" or "ugliness" in modern Russian) is characterized within a spectrum running from form to formlessness and equating that spectrum to moral good and evil:

The moral-aesthetic spectrum of Dostoevsky begins with *obraz* – image, the form and embodiment of beauty—and ends with *bezobrazie*—literally that which is 'without image,' shapeless, disfigured, ugly. Man finds pleasure (he also calls it beauty) in *bezobrazie*, in the disfiguration of himself and others, in cruelty, violence, and, above all, sensuality – and 'sensuality is always violence.' Aesthetically, *bezobrazie* is the deformation of the ideal form (*obraz*).⁴³⁰

Dostoevsky uses *bezobrazie*, and other words with the same root, frequently in his novels to describe instances of depravity and immorality—an example of this usage the frequent appearance in conjunction with Fyodor Karamazov and his saucebox women, in phrases such as "He loved to behave outrageously (*bezobraznichat* ') with women, not only as he had before, but in even more disgusting ways."⁴³¹ In the Orthodox perspective, the antithesis of beauty involves a the submission to the passions, implying that the roots and fruits of non-beauty are evil but not inherent in the person. Fyodor Karamazov's outrageous behavior is therefore a possibility he actively engages with out of his freedom. He defaces his and other's beauty, but that does not change the inherent *logos* in him that points toward the Divine.

⁴³⁰ Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, 58.

⁴³¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 21.

Jackson, however, rejects the idea that the question of form and formlessness is grounded in the question of good and evil: “Dostoevsky’s conception of the normal and the abnormal, of moral health and moral sickness, turns not on a distinction between good and evil (evil is everywhere and in all men), but on a distinction between a spiritual condition marked by struggle and one marked by inertia.”⁴³² On the one hand this perspective implies that inertia is the foundation of evil, which is not incompatible with the Orthodox understanding of morality but still inaccurate as a foundational principle, insofar as it implies that the person who does not struggle is inherently evil. On the other hand, Dostoevsky cannot separate his ontological framework from the foundational concept that evil, brought into being through the act of non-beauty, is the basis of the abnormality and sickness of the spiritual condition. This is not to say that the Orthodox perspective views physical illness, ugliness, or diversity as evil, but rather that it is the action and not the appearance of the person that defines sinfulness.

In fact, Orthodoxy explicitly and insistently confirms the depth of beauty in diversity and uniqueness through the connection of beauty to the *logoi*, present in all creation. Physical illness and disease are seen not as a mark of sinfulness of the person but rather as a result of the first sin, and its continuation, on the material state on the world. By further clarifying the fundamental difference between Western and Eastern understandings of the nature of the evil in the postlapsarian world Jackson’s notion that “evil is everywhere and in all men” may be shown as foreign to Dostoevsky’s Personalist perspective, and a more complete understanding of the Orthodox perspective may further enlighten the artistic achievements within the novels.

The concept that “evil is everywhere and in all men” is grounded in the idea that the Original Sin of Adam and Eve marks the individual human being with inherent sinfulness, thus

⁴³² Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form*, 61.

making evil a part of human essence, even before manifesting in the biological or natural state. One might logically conclude, as Jackson appears to, that sinfulness as the natural state of the person entails possibility for the image and likeness of the Divine to be, or worse inherently is, deformed within each human being. However, in the Orthodox perspective, Original Sin is not a natural aspect of human being. Evil is not natural to being but rather a foreign body present within human material existence. As Pseudo-Dionysius explains, “whatever is, is from the Good, is good and desires the beautiful and the Good, by desiring to exist to live, and to think. They [the passions and actions of persons] are called evil because of the deprivation, the abandonment, the rejection of the virtues which are appropriate to them.”⁴³³ In Dostoevsky’s worldview, it is not the person who is evil but their actions.

Even the outrageous behavior of Fyodor Karamazov cannot annihilate his personhood. This perspective is extraordinarily different than the general Western Christian conception of sin that—allowing for variations that exist between Catholic and the various Protestant denominations—is inherently a part of human nature because of the first transgression of the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge by Adam and Eve.⁴³⁴ In the Western view, God seemingly condemns Adam and Eve to death for their transgression, it is a situation of a crime and a punishment. A command and punishment that echoes throughout human history and marks each person, either for the rest of their lives or until their baptism, by the Original Sin. According

⁴³³ Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, 91.

⁴³⁴ “The teaching of the Fall, based on the third chapter of the book of Genesis and having received on all sides in patristics, is common in all Christian confessions—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. However, in Christian societies of Western traditions this teaching is linked with the concept of ‘Original Sin’ (*peccatum originale*), or ‘original guilt,’ coming from the Blessed Augustine” (Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity Volume II*, 252.) For more on the differences between Western and Eastern perspectives on Original Sin see the subchapter “The Fall and Predestination toward Salvation” in Alfeyev *Orthodox Christianity Volume II*, John S. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, (Zephyr Publishing: Ridgewood, NJ, 2002), Yannaras *Elements of Faith*, 75-88, Ware, 218-221, Lossky *Mystical Theology*, 121-134, and *Orthodox Theology*, 79-83, and for a substantial investigation of the lexical, liturgical, and mythological boundaries of sin see the chapter entitled “Sin” in Florensky *Pillar and Ground* 125-150.

to St. Augustine, sinfulness, and therefore the punishment for sinfulness, is communicated through concupiscence and therefore the biological process of procreation, which is why the Original Sin marks each person.

The Orthodox anthropological interpretation of Genesis 2: 16-17, however, provides a vastly different conception of evil. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge does not elicit a legalistic sentence handed down from God to Adam and Eve, as if God were saying “you have transgressed and therefore I will punish you.” Rather, sin, and therefore non-beauty and death, enter into the world because of the egocentric decision to break communion with Divine Being, because of freedom. Once Adam and Eve use their freedom to turn from God they are already outside paradise, they are already choosing to move away from beauty toward (what will become) Sodom. This understanding of sin, death, and freedom is much more closely aligned with Dostoevsky’s view than the “crime and punishment” conception of Western Christianity.

Because non-beauty, sin, and death are not an essential feature of human existence—either biological or spiritual—there is always a possibility for redemption, for a turn toward beauty. Jackson reaches toward this idea when he writes, “[the observation that Fyodor Karamazov is not evil but only corrupted], perhaps more than any other, echoes Dostoevsky’s view that the evil that men do rarely serves to define their whole nature.”⁴³⁵ Dostoevsky’s view of the person reasserts that “in spite of death, life is still good. Because of God’s great benevolence, life on earth is indeed beautiful.”⁴³⁶ Human existence, and consequently the entire material mode of being for all existence, experiences the sting of death and evil unnaturally, while remaining ontologically and existentially good.

⁴³⁵ Jackson, *The Art of Dostoevsky*, 305.

⁴³⁶ Boosalis, 19. For more on the differences between Western and Eastern perspectives on Original Sin see Yannaras *Elements of Faith*, 75-88, Ware, 218-221, Lossky *Mystical Theology*, 121-134, and *Orthodox Theology*, 79-83.

Each and every decision to turn away from relation with God continues the encroachment of evil into existence, but that evil cannot overtake creation. Evil has no being and therefore cannot erase or replace being, as Lossky writes:

Evil entered into the world through the will. It is not a nature (*φύσις*), but a condition (*ἐξίς*)... Evil becomes a reality only by means of the will, in which alone it subsists. It is the will which gives evil a certain being. That man, who was by nature disposed toward the knowledge and love of God, could in his will incline toward a non-existent good, an illusory goal, can only be explained by some external influence, by the persuasion of some alien will to which the human will consented.⁴³⁷

That which is unnatural cannot continue to live in the world indefinitely and is caused by some external influence either earthly (postlapsarian) or transcendent (the influence of “demons”), as most instances of true non-beauty in Dostoevsky’s works attest to. Similarly, non-beauty, insofar as it causes sorrow and suffering, merely continues the trend of egocentric rejection of authentic being from the Orthodox “creation myth” of Adam and Eve.

The fact that evil has no real being does not, however, disprove the possibility that it is everywhere and inherent in all things. The experience of reality that Dostoevsky depicts in his novels displays evil creeping into even the most beautiful and good people. Myshkin, as discussed at length, is our greatest example of this, but he lacks a vital aspect of personal relation. Even to the Person in possession of a cleansed *nous* it is impossible to not see sickness, suffering, sorrow, monstrosities, decay, and death everywhere in the world—I will comment further on this in the following chapter in the context of Tikhon, Zosima, and Alyosha.⁴³⁸ And of course, the wounds of self-inflicted sorrow and non-beauty are the building blocks for Dostoevsky’s narratives, as Jackson notes “Fyodor is not a victim; he brings his fate down on himself.”⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 128-9.

⁴³⁸ For the discussion of the *nous* see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

⁴³⁹ Jackson, *The Art of Dostoevsky*, 305.

But in the Orthodox perspective, and for Dostoevsky especially, death, sin, and sorrow are pedagogical, and to deny their presence in the world is to deny the actuality of material existence. To classify Fyodor's actions and earthly demise as fate is to take agency out of his hands. To avoid the imposition of his authorial will on his creations, Dostoevsky presents the antithesis of the beauty of Sodom neither so that it might work for the good nor to express its inescapability, but rather to represent reality as it is in his perspective and to allow his fictional beings to experience freedom. The horror of evil, of sin, of non-beauty can be overcome, and gives way to that which calls a person back into relation, but this is only possible if the image and likeness of the Divine Being remains unextinguished in the free Person.

Before tackling the problem of the pedagogical nature of non-beauty, there stands the primary problem of the idea that sin, evil, and non-beauty as indelibly stamped upon human being, which would remove the possibility of personal work toward salvation. Let us rephrase this in order to completely explore its explosive consequences; if to be human is to fall prey to sin, non-beauty, and death, then *only* Divine intervention is responsible for relation with Divine Being. While certain Protestant denominations may adhere to this perspective, Orthodoxy rejects the idea that the person plays no part in their salvation.

Humanity does not live in a perpetual state of sin, but rather people sell their freedom and beauty into slavery: "the passions represent the lowest level to which human nature can fall... man is brought by them to a state of passivity, of slavery."⁴⁴⁰ Human nature falls into sin by missing the mark as it aims for communion with the Divine. If sin were inherent in Dostoevsky's fictional beings, Mitya's, and any other Person's, fall away from authentic being would lose its artistic force as an act of suddenness. If evil dominates, and the beauty of Sodom's seduction is

⁴⁴⁰ Stăniloae, 77.

not only more powerful, but the state of equilibrium of human being, then there is no mystery to the person at all. Lee D. Johnson's expert analysis of Smerdiakov supports this Orthodox view on non-beauty. Johnson asks "Would it not be detrimental to the author's conception of free will and salvation to create a character born of pure evil, a man wholly bereft of innate goodness and thereby deprived of any considerable chance for redemption?"⁴⁴¹ The answer is and must be, in the context of Dostoevsky's Orthodoxy, a resounding "no."

The concept of sinfulness as falling short of a target is a common thread throughout all Patristic writings on sin and repentance in Orthodox doctrine, and it illuminates the pedagogical aspect of sin with Dostoevsky's exploration of non-beauty. In this perspective, when one falls off the soteriological ladder they theoretically learn how to land on the rung they missed the next time around. There is a necessity to learning how to climb, but not a necessity to fall—one does not need to commit a sin in order to avoid making it. To sin is avoidable, despite the abundance of it in the world, and particularly in Dostoevsky's texts. This is clear in Lossky's description of the necessity of death and non-beauty's continued existence after the Incarnation:

Yet God, and here lies the whole mystery of the "tunics of skin," introduces a certain order at the very heart of disorder to avoid a total disintegration by evil. His beneficent will organizes and preserves the universe; His punishment is pedagogy: better that man dies, that is to say, be excluded from the tree of life, than his monstrous condition [after the Fall in sin] be made eternal. His finitude itself would make repentance well up within him, that is to say, the possibility of a new love.⁴⁴²

In this sense, non-beauty and death are unnecessary, but as long as free will exists and the experience of authentic being-in-relation requires a selfless and willing action the blemish of decay must exist. In Dostoevsky's novels the continued appearance of sin and non-beauty are inherently connected to the novel poetic creation of the free Person.

⁴⁴¹ Lee D. Johnson, "Struggle for Theosis: Smerdyakov as Would-Be Saint," in *nA New Word on The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 74.

⁴⁴² Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, 83.

Although evil and non-beauty add, as Berdyaev phrases it, “an inner profundity” to the Person in the text, they do not lead to goodness. And while they allow for the possibility of redemption, still “evil for [Dostoevsky] was evil, to be burned in the fires of hell... He teaches plainly that it is not a thing to be juggled with, that it is madness to think that a man can deliberately enter on a course of wickedness to get what he can out of it and then throw himself into the arms of good.”⁴⁴³ The beauty of Sodom aligns precisely with the Orthodox views of evil and non-beauty. The image and likeness persist in the “tunic of skin” confirming the undeformable image and likeness within all Persons, while decay, suffering, and death serve as warnings against the passionate inward turn to which non-beauty leads. Rogozhin’s non-beauty, his instance on consuming the *logos* of the other, bears the marks of the “tunic of skin” and the madness to deliberately engage with evil.

Why does Dostoevsky choose to pose Sodom as Mitya’s telos of non-beauty in opposition to the Madonna? Why does General Epanchin evoke this Biblical place in *The Idiot*?⁴⁴⁴ The roots of the beauty of Sodom as it functions within the Orthodox antinomic structure lie in the Biblical context of Genesis 19. If the beauty of the Madonna is personified in the Theotokos, then one should seek the beauty of Sodom as solidified in Lot’s wife rather than the city itself. The Old Testament relates that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God due to the gamut of sinful activities that were performed therein. However, it is not the sinfulness of the cities that Dostoevsky speaks of when he speaks of the beauty of Sodom. Rather, it is the sin of Lot’s wife—who turned her face from the beauty of being-in-relation with God back toward the seductive glow of the cities—wherein the true connection lies. Her image serves as both a symbol of egocentric desire and as a longing for the self-destructive tendencies of the passionate

⁴⁴³ Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky*, 91, 94.

⁴⁴⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 143.

life that marks the presence of non-beauty as both willful evil, such as embodied in Rogozhin or even the altruistically aimed yet egocentrically centered actions such as Myshkin's.

Considering the beauty of Sodom in this manner, it is not inherent evil but the seductive call of evil that exists within Dostoevsky's Persons. Lot's wife was not turned to salt because she participated in the evils of the passions of Sodom, but because she turned her face from the Divine. Analyzing her metamorphosis not literally but rather metaphorically provides a clear connection to Dostoevsky's texts. A person chooses to desire natural urges in a manner that takes them away from communion with the other. In doing so, they become one with the decay and immobility of nature rather than moving themselves and all of creation toward the transcendent dynamism of higher reality. Sinfulness and seduction call the person to be less than a relational being.⁴⁴⁵ By that choice the person, through their impetuous and passionate freedom, creates stony soil in their heart, or, metaphorically speaking, pushes them towards a hardened form, less susceptible to the charm of beauty.

Jackson's analysis leads to a salty, hardened state for the person in the light of the deformation of *bezobrazie*. By considering non-beauty one end of "moral-aesthetic spectrum" of human being he deviates from Dostoevsky's position on non-beauty as a choice. Lot's wife chooses to look back, she is punished for longing for evil as a self-willed act, not as an inherent part of a moral-aesthetic spectrum. It is not Sodom, but the beauty of the Madonna that is the inherent state of being brought into action in Dostoevsky's works. However, free will is the feature that underlies both positions. Because of freedom there is no telos of the beauty and

⁴⁴⁵ In the Orthodox exegetical work on Genesis 19, and particularly Lot's wife as a representation of the passions and the fleshly will toward sin and decay see John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 46-67*, in *The Fathers of the Church: a New Translation*, Vol. 87, trans. Robert C. Hill, (Washington, D.C. : The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), and Origen, *The Homilies on Genesis Homily V*, in *The Fathers of the Church: a New Translation*, Vol. 71, trans. Robert E. Heine, (Washington, D.C. : The Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

goodness one finds imitating the Theotokos on the path to authentic being, which is infinite. In the same manner, there is no end to the possibilities of sin, but no totality of evil within the person. For Dostoevsky, the beauty of the Madonna, as an act of will and not an ideal, does not represent an end point, or a completion of beauty and perfection. In the same way the beauty of Sodom is an act of the will, and has neither end point nor a complete deformation or deletion of the logos in a Person. Mitya Karamazov stands as a refutation to the totality of this particular vision of Dostoevsky's aesthetics as a static moral spectrum. The longing for and expression of non-beauty in Mitya's soul are not inherent to his being as a Person, they are cultivated as Mitya flings himself into depravity and sinfulness.

Mitya himself expresses the mistaken belief in the totality of the beauty of Sodom in the same manner as Jackson. Although Mitya knows that the human soul is primarily directed toward beauty and Truth, his inability to overcome the allure of the passions leads him toward a conclusion that love of sin is inevitable. On the one hand, within his proclamation that "I cannot stand that another person, of lofty thought and heart, begins with the beauty of the Madonna and ends with the beauty of Sodom. What's worse still, is one who already has the beauty of Sodom in their soul and yet will not renounce the beauty of the Madonna, and their heart burns from it, truly, truly burns like in young and innocent days," Mitya clearly excludes the foundation of the soul in corruption.⁴⁴⁶ If both beauty and non-beauty can exist simultaneously in the soul then there is always hope of a dynamic state.

On the other hand, Mitya believes that the call of Sodom is too strong, and as quickly as he runs to the Madonna he turns back to Sodom. His understanding of Karamazovshchina as the natural state of himself, his father, and his brothers indicates a belief in inherent evil and

⁴⁴⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 100.

deformation. Karamazovshchina is the unrestrained insect-like sensuality and moral irresponsibility that leads to self-willed decay and death. In Mitya's perspective, he cannot help his biological nature, and is inherently corrupted. Alyosha is Dostoevsky's attempt to refute this ideology and although he tells his brother that he is "the same as [him]," his metaphorical language referring to a ladder of sinfulness when he says "They are all the same steps. I'm at the lowest and you're up above," rejects the notion that the person is inherently evil.⁴⁴⁷ This analysis is only clear if the reader views the ladder as a tool and not a state of being, as it is in the Orthodox perspective. The Person must climb out of sinfulness not natural but self-willed. The beauty of the Madonna is based on human achievement as is it, in an inverted fashion, with Sodom. If salvation and the manifestation of the image of Divine is possible through human action, then the person is incapable of destroying that potential within themselves.

Furthermore, as evil exists because of free will and the ability to reject loving communion then it inherently must illuminate the uniqueness, the otherness of the person, if only apophatically, insofar as evil is created by a negation of the striving toward Authentic Being, it requires the negation or consumption of an other. Consider this idea in the same way that there is no such thing that exists as deceleration, but only acceleration-in-a-negative-direction. By the same token, it is impossible to create non-beauty because it implies an inherent absence or lack of the *logos*. This concept is absurd, as the Orthodox perspective holds that "the very idea of absolute nothingness is contradictory and absurd: to say that nothing exists is a contradiction in terms; to say that it does not exist is a pleonasm, at least unless we are trying awkwardly to express, in this way, the idea that nothing exists outside God; that, indeed, there is no such thing

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 101.

as ‘outside God.’”⁴⁴⁸ The idea that non-beauty exists in and of itself, therefore, should also be rejected.

Formlessness, therefore, is not an existent disfiguration of beauty but rather the noncommunication or nonacceptance of the invitation-to-being but still contributes to Dostoevsky’s creation of Personhood in fictional beings because it reifies the uniqueness and freedom of the Person. If non-beauty entailed formlessness as a totality it would cast his Persons into the lower levels of fictional being. Ivan, Mitya, Rogozhin, Myshkin, Raskolnikov, etc., would be Types rather than Persons because they would be incapable of achieving true acts of beauty.

In their pride, the Person may attempt to deform the image gifted to them, but it is an impotent act. A Person cannot slide back into the mode of the Type because of non-beauty; even a being seemingly as devoid of material weight such as Myshkin does not fully sink down to that level during the novel. As I have shown, Myshkin’s Typification of Nastasia Filippovna does not reduce her Personhood, but only how he and others come into relation with her. While a fictional being might succeed in transgression by driving themselves and others toward the egocentric mania and the anxiety of isolation, the foundational call toward being-in-relation exists even within the most ruthless acts.

It would be foolish and naïve, however, to claim that evil is impotent or that the Person contemplating or enacting it always has the good in mind. Dostoevsky rarely presents evil and non-beauty as an unthinking or primal force, as close as Svidrigailov or Smerdiakov come to this end, they are still contemplative and redeemable beings. Non-beauty and evil occur when the meaning of life is lost and the struggle toward meaning is replaced with the slavery of “man’s

⁴⁴⁸ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 92.

thirst for the infinite, turned in a direction in which they can't find their satisfaction."⁴⁴⁹ Ivan, as I will argue, fulfills this concept of longing for the infinite through a turn to a morally corrupt rebellion because he cannot reasonably comprehend suffering. Ivan sees suffering as unavoidable and "natural," like Mitya sees non-beauty, and this drives him to madness. But once again, the contemplation of the beauty of Sodom not as a permanent disfiguration or as a mode of being but rather as an attempt at self-annihilation and the annihilation of the other through lustful consumption reasserts the Personalist foundations of literary beings created as dynamic and with a potentiality that reflects the higher reality of human freedom within Ivan's self-hating rationalism.

The draw of Sodom burns most brightly in the sensualism depravity in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The suffering of the Karamazov family is grounded in Karamazovshchina, which manifests the essence of non-beauty and Sodom in Dostoevsky's novelistic world and the strongest argument for *bezobrazie* as an inherent portion of human nature. It is this force that causes the calamities in the lives of the Karamazov family. However, it is not a natural, supernatural, or any other impersonal force. Mitya, as well as his father and brothers Ivan and Smerdiakov, suffer from a personal and passionate turn away from the Divine. In their actions they seek to consume the other, or to turn inward on themselves. However, there is always a pull toward the other when they find that there is no further they can go into the depths of themselves without longing for the embrace of the other. Even though Karamazovshchina is the manifestation of non-beauty it is not an inescapable abyss or void.

To alleviate their sufferings, self-imposed by their descent into the depths of sensuality, passion, and egoism, all the Karamazovs, with the exception of Smerdiakov, look to Alyosha to

⁴⁴⁹ Stăniloae, 77.

save them from their sins, or at least to find some mediation of them. Their turn to God is directed through him because of his polished image and likeness; they see the call to communion in his actions and beauty but they require him to carry their burdens without taking on their own weight. However, Alyosha's voice more often than not goes unheeded. Perhaps it is better to say that although he is heeded by Mitya and Ivan, these brothers are unable to act upon his advice. They are too passionate or intellectualized.

In his confessions in Chapters III, IV, and V of Book III aptly titled *Sensualists*, Mitya reveals to Alyosha and the reader that he desires to be saved from his own corruption, but does not want to take on this burden alone. "I'll tell everything to you alone, because it's necessary, because you're necessary, because tomorrow I'll fall from the clouds and because tomorrow everything will end and then begin."⁴⁵⁰ But Mitya's worship of beauty, which is similar to Rogozhin's yet advanced to much higher levels of sinfulness and soulfulness, exposes both his inherent longing for the infinite harmony and joy of beauty and the depths of freedom as a Person to go careening into the inferno, his "end[ing] and begin[ning]." While Mitya is more physically violent and more passionately entangled in the seductive allure of fallen beauty than Rogozhin, he is also more open to the call of brotherhood and communion.

Instead of heeding the call of beauty that is in front of him—in the Persons of Alyosha, Katerina Ivanovna, and Grushenka—Mitya constantly flings himself heels up into sensuality. Rather than restraining himself at the sight of the earthly delights of sin and turning toward the other lovingly, he passively waits for a miracle: "I am sending you to father, and I know what I'm saying: I believe in a miracle. [...] In the miracle of Divine Providence. My heart is known to God, and he sees all my despair. He sees the whole picture. Surely, He won't let something

⁴⁵⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 97.

terrible happen. Alyosha, I believe in a miracle, now go!”⁴⁵¹ His faith in God and other Persons is passive. He becomes spiritually inert because he cannot divorce a human being from their insectile biological urges. Yuri Corrigan notes, “The events of his father’s death force Dmitri to enter into the dreaded chaos of his interior life.”⁴⁵² Even before the death, however, Mitya cries out for relation to fill the void he feels in his existence. He wants to be with others, but his desire to dominate them overpowers him. He is still too (mistakenly) convinced that the beauty of Sodom contains enough of the beauty of the Madonna to save him.

Instead of the foundations of human existence being based in good and beauty (Madonna), Mitya assures himself that evil (Sodom) sits at the heart of every person in order to excuse his own behavior, thereby causing him to reject the relation he seeks in the beauty of the Madonna and to continually turn back to Sodom. In this way, Dostoevsky apophatically reifies the truth of beauty through Mitya. For no matter how strong Mitya’s active desire to consume and be consumed by non-beauty might be, the torment he feels when he rejects beauty apophatically confirms the truth of beauty’s soteriological foundations. Mitya does not sin because he was created to do so, but rather because he succumbs to the urges present in the human body. His fault is not in his stars, but rather in himself.

Mitya is constantly struck by the suddenness of natural beauty, and this openness to the *logoi* of the created world prepares him for his eventual deep encounter with personal beauty. His first real attempt to embrace personal beauty arrives in the form of Alyosha and his pure, innocent expression of goodness, which, along with Grushenka’s return to him, ignites the desire for repentance and salvation in Mitya. His confessions to his brother show both his sincerity and

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 112. For the discussion of the problematic nature of the miraculous in Dostoevsky see Chapter IV §III: The Apogee of Higher Realism Via the Meeting of Being-in-Relation and Beauty in Alyosha’s *Noetic Vision* of The Wedding in Cana.

⁴⁵² Corrigan, 130.

willingness to love others and respond to the call of beauty. However, his initial fervor for communion fades, just like Myshkin's story of the man who is given reprieve from his execution.⁴⁵³ Throughout *The Brothers Karamazov*, Mitya continually breaks his promise to repent and rejects opportunities to respond to the call of joy and beauty.

Dostoevsky provides a clue to the root of Mitya's failure to respond to its call to being-in-relation in the epigraph to the novel from the Gospel of John. The epigraph relates one of Christ's parables in which He communicates a metaphor concerning His own death and sacrifice by likening Himself to a kernel of wheat that must die so that many seeds will grow from it.⁴⁵⁴ However, Mitya is not the kernel falling to the ground. Nor is it Alyosha, Ivan, or even Zosima, as some critical analyses have assumed. Robin Feuer Miller, who wrote one of the most striking and engaging analyses of the epigraph, links the kernel to memory, which brings forth grace through the remembrance of goodness and beauty. However, Miller also proposes that the epigraph takes on many guises in the novel and "becomes a kind of standard-bearer for these weighty, metaphysical themes, themes the modern reader tends to ignore."⁴⁵⁵ I proposed a reading of the epigraph within an expanded frame of reference, also engaging the parable of the Sower, will shed more light on Dostoevsky's antinomy of the beauty of the Madonna and the beauty of Sodom.

⁴⁵³ Myshkin recounts to the Epanchin women the tale of a man who plans to revel in and utilize every infinite portion of time allowed to him if only he is given a reprieve from his execution, but who cannot possibly live in joy in every moment of his existence after the stay is ordered (Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, Part I, Chapter V). Zosima's story of his older brother Markel's metanoic turn toward God that expresses itself in his love for the birds and the earth and all things supports the difficulty of being constantly in the joy of communion with the Divine while living (Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, Book XI, Chapter II). In Dostoevsky's works, it is easier for a person who is assured of their imminent death to love all of creation than a person aware of the infinite time within the limits of their moral existence to do so. However, this joy is possible to maintain in a mode that is both moderate and commiserate to the earthly sufferings one experiences in the time and space of mortality. Dostoevsky depicts a continuous mode of joyful being-in-communion in both Zosima and Alyosha through their adherence to hesychasm, which I discuss in Chapter IV §III: The Apogee of Higher Realism Via the Meeting of Being-in-Relation and Beauty in Alyosha's *Noetic Vision* of The Wedding in Cana.

⁴⁵⁴ John 12: 25

⁴⁵⁵ Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 14.

Dostoevsky works within the Orthodox conception that Christ is the kernel Who has died so that the fruit of repentance can come forth from those who follow. The brothers are those who receive the Word as it falls, and from whence the seeds will grow and bear fruit. Christ can appear through works of beauty, as they do in Alyosha through Zosima, and Mitya (briefly) through Alyosha and Grushenka. Dostoevsky engrains in his Persons the same image and likeness that human beings have, and while the image and likeness contains a reflection of the Divine, it is not yet divinized. Therefore, these Persons are not the wheat, but the soil onto which the seed will fall; the brothers are therefore the soil waiting for the kernel to enter and to bear fruit. Dostoevsky promotes his idea that Christ is the source of beauty by subtly combining it with a biblical reference that is not explicitly signaled in the text, specifically the parable of the Sower.

In the parable of the Sower, which appears in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, Christ preaches that a sower can plant seeds wheresoever he chooses, but depending on the ground upon which it falls it will be received differently.⁴⁵⁶ He then explains the parable privately to His disciples, illuminating the meaning of each type of ground and in what way the seed will take root. To the Orthodox Christian well versed in Scripture, the connection between the metaphorical seeds in this parable and the kernel from the Gospel of John is abundantly clear.

The entirety of the parable is as follows:

Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Matthew 13: 1-9, Mark 4: 3-9, Luke 8: 4-8.

⁴⁵⁷ Matthew 13: 3-9.

As Archbishop Theophylact relates in his exegesis of this parable, “Who, then, is the sower? It is Christ Himself... He went forth, not to burn up the accursed earth and evil hearts, nor to cut off the thorns, but to sow the seed. What seed?... Christ’s own; that is, He went forth to preach His gospel.”⁴⁵⁸ If he did not utilize it directly and purposefully in the text, Dostoevsky, who constantly read the Gospels, would have this context at the very least engrained in his sub- or supraconsciousness because of his deep-rooted Orthodoxy, and he might have expected readers would be familiar with it as well.

By applying the parable to the context of *The Brothers Karamazov*, a clear parallel emerges, allowing an analysis of the brothers as Persons who also, through their actions, become symbolic representations of the four types of spiritual soil of which Christ speaks in the parable: Smerdiakov is the wayside, Mitya is the stony place, Ivan is among the thorns, and Alyosha is the good soil. These designations are directly related to their reaction to the charm of beauty and the seduction of non-beauty. Smerdiakov is a pure sensualist who sees nothing but egocentric usefulness in beauty. Mitya readily accepts the Truth of beauty with odes to joy, but quickly falls away. Ivan is strangled by the thorns of hyper-intellectualization that stab at beauty and scratch out his spiritual eyes, leaving only the empty sockets of rationalism. Alyosha responds to the charm of beauty with free and self-emptying love and is able to take up the role of the sower for his brothers by imitating Christ through hesychastic practices.

Dostoevsky allows his Persons to function as symbols to convey the path toward higher reality and authentic being in an artistic rather than philosophic mode. They do not stoop to the level of Type, but contain the macrocosmic representation of all humanity within their unique personal beings. In a way, the symbolic reading of the brothers functions in the same manner as

⁴⁵⁸ Theophylact Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Mark*, trans. Fr. Christopher Stade, (House Springs, MO: Chrysostom Press, 2008), 37.

Christ's parables. After the parable is told the disciples ask Christ why He speaks in parables and what they mean. His response is that hearing the Truth is difficult because it requires a purified heart, or, as the Orthodox Personalist analysis frames it, a cleansed *nous*. He conveys the difficulty by paraphrasing the prophecy of Isaiah, saying “Hearing you will hear and not understand. And seeing you will perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull.”⁴⁵⁹ Save Alyosha, none of the brothers have cleansed themselves properly to receive the charm of beauty.

In a way, many scholars have heard but not understood the foundational importance of the ability of Dostoevsky's Persons to open their hearts to beauty because they are not deeply engrained in the liturgical, scriptural, traditional, or monastic foundations of Orthodox and therefore miss encoded meaning. But in the deeper Orthodox context, the degree to which Ivan and Mitya are able to receive the call to being-in-relation—and by it their progression as Persons throughout the novel—is more fully laid bare through their symbolic representation of the Parable. This representation also highlights the importance of connection of the antinomy of the beauty of the Madonna and of Sodom for Dostoevsky to theosis and the Person.

Let us begin with the thorny briar patch of Ivan's soul. Because he is the greatest materialist and philosopher of the group, the middle brother encounters the greatest struggles with the seed of faith that has fallen into him. Despite the thorns of his hyper-consciousness that pierce and deflate his ability to unseal his heart to the beauty of the other the kernel of faith in Ivan does open the upper room of his supraconsciousness, albeit briefly. The door peaks open twice in the novel, during his moments of greatest despair: first with Alyosha regarding his *poema* “The Grand Inquisitor,” and second with the devil during his intense illness. The first

⁴⁵⁹ Matthew 13: 14-15.

reveals the immutability and unblemished image within him, while the second exposes the depths to which the call to being-in-relation has penetrated his mind despite his philosophical over-thinking.

In Book V Chapters III, IV, and IV, while speaking to his brother Alyosha about faith, Ivan openly admits that his rational mind prevents him from believing in a higher reality. This is due to the fact that he cannot agree to the exchange of universal harmony for the suffering of children, even if he wishes that he could agree. He says “I completely refuse the highest harmony. It is not worth a single tear from the tortured child who beat her chest with her fist and prayed in the fetid outhouse with her unredeemed tears to ‘dearest God!’” It is not worth it because her tears remain unredeemed.”⁴⁶⁰ In Dostoevsky’s view, this sort of calculation of suffering and harmony is a mark of the egocentric mind dominating the eye of the heart.⁴⁶¹

Albert Camus proposes that Ivan’s rejection of God’s world—not God Himself—is an acceptance of humanity and innocence, claiming that, “Ivan explicitly rejects the mystery and consequently, God, on the principle of love. Only love can make us consent to the injustice done to Martha, to the exploitation of workers, and, finally, to the death of innocent children.”⁴⁶² But Ivan’s love is pragmatic, humanist, and devoid of an actual connection to beauty. His love is grounded in Sodom as it is an egocentric urge hidden beneath a false face of care for humanity *in toto*. This is clear from his statement at the beginning of “Rebellion” that “I could never understand how it’s possible to love one’s neighbor. It is precisely one’s neighbor, in my opinion, that one can never love.”⁴⁶³ He is guilty of the same sin of egocentricity that Zosima

⁴⁶⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 223.

⁴⁶¹ For more on calculations and egocentric desire see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

⁴⁶² Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower, (New York: Knopf, 1957), 55-6.

⁴⁶³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 215.

warns Madame [Kokhlakova against earlier in the novel.](#)⁴⁶⁴ However, Ivan takes this tendency to its limit in his hyper-intellectualization. Ivan takes personal responsibility for the torture of children because he calculates all of the sins of humanity. However, he is incapable of taking responsibility for his brothers, his father, or his beloved. Rather than experiencing the joy of the call to being-in-relation that comes with the opening of the heart to the charm of beauty he rejects the personal because of the sinful predilection of fallen humanity rather than opening himself to the image and likeness of God in them. He cannot love the Person, only the ideal of children.

As he continues to speak with Alyosha, Ivan vividly expresses both his and the Orthodox perspective on the image and likeness of humanity is in his poem “The Grand Inquisitor.” He presents both halves of the Madonna and Sodom ideal in his story of Christ reappearing in 16th century Spain. Through Ivan, Dostoevsky expresses not the joyous, radiant Christ who later appears in the novel as a concrete and relational Person who embodies the soteriological goal of humanity and manifested beauty, but rather an enlightened view of the condescension of the Divine to the human condition. Vasily Rozanov, in his seminal work on “The Grand Inquisitor,” expresses the darkness in Ivan’s soul because of his turn from the beauty of the other in favor of the mask of non-beauty and Sodom in his own soul:

Everything sad and gloomy inexorably attracts contemporary man, for there is no longer any joy in his heart. The tranquility of the old short story, the gaiety of early poetry, whatever the beauty that may have accompanied it, no longer interest or attracts: people strangely shun everything like that they cannot bear the disharmony between the bright impressions that they receive from the outside and the absence of any light in their soul⁴⁶⁵.

⁴⁶⁴ For my analysis on Typification and the idea of loving humanity over those with whom one is in immediate relation see Chapter II §V: The Dostoevskian Type.

⁴⁶⁵ Vasily Rozanov, *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, trans. Spencer E. Roberts, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 189. This is the foundational work on the *poema* from *The Brothers Karamazov* and I do not engage with a full analysis of it here. However, it is important to briefly expose how Ivan’s Christ and Inquisitor represent the attempted deformation of the ideal of beauty in order to show that through Alyosha’s response Dostoevsky’s perspective on the image precludes the idea that deformation is possible.

Beauty is overtaken by the need for reality, for freedom, and a lack of joy. Ivan's Christ in the *poema* is precisely like Holbein's, mute, deeply realistic, and suffering image of Christ ravaged by death in the human condition. In the *poema*, the Inquisitor accuses Christ of allowing humanity to suffer in the name of freedom, echoing the tragedy of Ivan's unbelief. Ironically, the Inquisitor reveals not the reality of Christ in Dostoevsky's world view but in Ivan's. The tragedy, both within the embedded narrative and in Ivan's soul, is that the Inquisitor, who does not believe, tortures others in the name of Him in Whom he does not believe.

Both the Inquisitor and Ivan suffer because the seed of belief that was planted in them through their image and likeness, but is eventually strangled by the thorns of their own negligent spiritual landscaping. They suffer, and therefore they abuse Christ to make others feel their anxiety and isolation. Ivan rejects his Creator because he feels rejection by and isolation from Him. And he seeks confirmation of his ideas from Alyosha by telling him his *poema*. The Inquisitor echoes this need for confirmation when he tells Christ, "Truly, have we not loved humanity, by so very humbly recognizing their impotence, lovingly lightening their burden, and allowing their weak nature to sin, even if it is only with our permission? What is the point of you interfering with us now? And why are you looking at me so silently and soulfully with your meek eyes?"⁴⁶⁶ The foundations of non-beauty are all laid bare in this charge against Christ: the rejection of personal communion with the other, the rejection of freedom, the acceptance of sin as a natural mode of human existence. Ivan, through the *poema*, creates a response to the call of the transcendent through the other, but his purely Euclidean mind accepts only the suffering and decay of material reality while it rejects the beauty presented before him in personal relation.

⁴⁶⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 234.

In a way, Ivan's charge against Christ in his *poema* is the same as the charge one might make against Dostoevsky's failure to depict perfection in *The Idiot*; there is no reason that a creator who is good would allow for the suffering of the innocent in the name of freedom, love, and beauty. Dostoevsky flees from the ideal in favor of freedom, and the path to overcoming suffering requires a willing acceptance of everything freedom implies—including death, decay, and suffering. But unlike Dostoevsky, Ivan turns to Karamazovshchina, to the brute strength of sensualism and non-beauty to overcome not the roots of general suffering but his own internal misery.

But the acceleration of the passions through Karamazovshchina does not cure egocentric isolation, but rather leads to a belief in and the praxis of the idea that “everything is permitted.”⁴⁶⁷ If the Incarnate Christ is no more than Holbein's depiction and Ivan's ontology, incapable or unwilling to overcome secular morality and miracles, then it is easy to believe as Ivan does; that non-beauty is stronger than beauty and that the image and likeness within the person is useless. The devaluation of the other and the rejection of a Personalist ontology leads to the moral degeneration in which everything is permitted. Ivan cannot overcome this idea through Christ and the Inquisitor, but Dostoevsky tests the declaration of ultimate freedom of egocentricity in Ivan once more in the novel, through another face-to-face meeting with a being of transcendent reality.

Ivan's conversation with the devil presents a significantly greater challenge to his ideology than his “encounter” with Christ in his *poema*. In keeping with Ivan's logical judgements of beauty and humanity, the devil presents his thesis, that if Satan is real, God therefore also must exist, as a direct challenge to Ivan's intellectualization but also as an attempt

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 240.

to mire him down in it. The endeavor to supply a logical proof through mystical revelation seems contradictory, but in its logical complexity Dostoevsky's further reveals the connection between beauty and non-beauty to the soul of the Person, challenges Ivan to defend his Euclidean worldview. There are two primary aspects of this meeting that elucidate Dostoevsky's perspective on Ivan's inclinations to the antinomy of the beauty of the Madonna and of Sodom: the first exposes how Ivan's relationship with the devil—presented as an anthropologically complete Person—unveils both halves of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty, and the second reveals how the working of non-beauty, even with ill intent, still points toward the Truth of the synthesis of Christ as the Truth of beauty.

Before undertaking a closer analysis of the textual exchange between the devil and Ivan, it is critical to take one more look at Jackson's analysis of *bezobrazie*. His supposition that the beauty of Sodom is predicated on a belief that the desire to disfigure is an essential quality of the mode of being of the person is based on an analysis of Ivan's meeting with Satan. This analysis leads him to an assertion that is in direct conflict with Dostoevsky, insofar as he writes:

In his profound despair over the brutalization of men, Ivan, symbolically, is prepared to discard Dostoevsky's vital distinction between *obraz* and *bezobrazie* in the definition of man... Ivan declares: 'I think if the devil does not exist and, therefore, man created him, he created him in his own image.' Here the dual nature of man vanishes, and the spiritual countenance of man (*obraz*) is replaced by the mask of moral *bezobrazie*. Ivan in his near-atheism posits the idea that man is created in the image of the devil.⁴⁶⁸

Although Jackson does not claim that the Person is, in Dostoevsky's work, created in the image of the devil, he gives too much credence to Ivan's proposition. Ivan, Rogozhin, and Fyodor Karamazov lead Jackson to the conclusion that "Moral-sensual *bezobrazie*, as we have noted, is for Dostoevsky the central area in which man disfigures both himself and his ideal."⁴⁶⁹ But once

⁴⁶⁸ Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, 59.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

again, in the Orthodox perspective it is not possible to disfigure the ideal—the *logos*—within the Person, only to sully it. Ivan’s meeting with the devil stands as a rejection by Dostoevsky of precisely this point: the Person is not made in the image of the devil, nor does the person take on the likeness of the devil after the Fall, and no matter how hard an outer or inner force tries, a deformation of that image is impossible.

In Ivan’s meeting with the devil the pedagogical quality of non-beauty and its inability to actively work good is made abundantly clear. The first clue to this is in the ontological and anthropological qualities of Satan in this scene. The fantastic and grotesque parody of the Incarnation in which Satan takes on humanity in order to attempt to drag Ivan away from his attempt to save his brother does not lead to a turn toward salvation. Therefore, it is necessary to address the elephant in the room in order to continue the Personalist analysis of Ivan’s meeting: is Ivan’s relationship with the devil a fantasy caused by illness or some other non-normative function of his cognitive abilities—i.e., a product of his imagination—or a real relationship with a being of supra-material existence?

On the one hand, the dispute may not even really matter. For the purposes of this analysis, the physical existence of the Devil is less important than the debate his appearance causes in Ivan with regard to its exposure of the antinomy of the Madonna and Sodom. However, if the devil is materially manifested in the novel it opens a whole other, and massively significant, view on relational being within Dostoevsky’s novels. Let us begin with the idea that it is not a physical, but merely an imagined meeting. Recall that during his conversation with Alyosha about his belief, Ivan exclaims that “if the devil doesn’t exist, then people have created him, and they created him in their own **image and likeness**.”⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, even if we do not

⁴⁷⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 217.

believe that Ivan is actually speaking to a being of a similar ontological composition—to an actual physically manifested demon—the ontological and anthropological significance of Ivan’s brain producing an encounter with non-beauty (evil) incarnate, who attempts to seduce him into sin by confounding him with an apophatic proof of the existence of higher beings provides fertile ground to study the seed of non-beauty in Ivan’s heart.

If Ivan is not actually speaking to the devil, he is still debating, if only with himself, the significance of the image and likeness of the person in the context of beauty and non-beauty. But the appearance of an ontologically sound yet transcendent being within the text, however, only further supports the Orthodox and Personalist foundations that build toward Dostoevsky’s vision of higher realism. Ivan is manifesting his own literary creation in reverse: rather than interviewing a silent Christ, a loquacious Satan holds him over the coals. While for many the appearance might seem too fantastic, within the Orthodox context, the influence of the devil and other demons are not an infringement of daily reality but, to a certain extent, a fairly commonplace event. Even if the devil does not manifest to the physical senses of the person, “the holy Fathers teach that our passionate thoughts are put into our consciousness, most of the time by Satan, by arousing some passion which we have become accustomed to.”⁴⁷¹ Although the person is responsible for their actions, each sinful action of the person entails some relational experience with the demonic. Despite the narrator informing the reader that Ivan is on the verge of brain fever before the meeting, and coupled with Ivan’s insistence that the devil is only a product of his imagination, my reading of the conversation still accepts the reality of the manifestation of a supramaterial being. I base this on the fact that demons are not uncommon in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre, but are a vital component to his realistic depiction of the state of the soul

⁴⁷¹ Stăniloae, 158.

based on his Orthodox tendencies and on Ivan's own discourse on the image and likeness of the persona and the devil, which returns in the conversation between the two.

If Dostoevsky believes that there is a transcendent realm that can come into contact with the material, why then would one doubt that Ivan's meeting is not between two existentially sound beings? A critical analysis that completely rejects the reality of the touching of the two realms could posit that Dostoevsky would reject a depiction of that reality as a completely legitimate event in a realist novel. However, Dostoevsky clearly believes in the ontological boundaries that would allow for such an event. Perhaps an explanation of the manifestation of the demonic in the life of a person through the Orthodox perspective might allow a reader to see the world as Dostoevsky does and ease the access to a critical discourse in this direction.

Ivan's devil does not merely appear, physically manifested, out of nowhere. Even before their *tete-a-tete*, the devil has long since taken root in Ivan as the thorns of his rationalism and materialism, if not in the form with which Ivan converses than within his rational mind. Dumitriu Stăniloae notes that, "The bait [that Satan send the person] is, then, the first appearance in our consciousness of an evil desire."⁴⁷² Therefore, the rationalism and materialism in Ivan, which are only sinful insofar as they stamp down belief and lead to other passions, are manifestations of egocentric pride and *prelest'* in him. Gregory Nazianzus in describing his own struggle with the supra-corporeal in his poem "Concerning His Own Affairs" provides a parallel we can use to discuss Ivan's encounter with the devil as a manifestation through the passions of an ontologically and existentially whole being:

Nevertheless, in the inexorable scheme of things, [mortals] are tried by the evil thorns of living. The raging demon, the contriver of evil, devises from without a thousand strings of doom. Alas for mortals in their misery. Worsted in open conflict, the demon often hides hateful destruction under noble guise. He wreaks such havoc against human beings as does the bronze under the bait, which brings destruction to fish. Seeking for life they draw the unforeseen bane into their entrails, and swallow their own doom. So it was with me. After I discovered the dark character of the evil one,

⁴⁷² Stăniloae, 111.

he came at me in fair guise, like unto light. He would have me in my search for light draw nigh to wickedness, my fickle mind being filched away to its destruction.⁴⁷³

Both Gregory and Ivan struggle as they are beset by a being working under the guise of the sublime and good and who physically manifests in order to test them further. Dostoevsky tests the strength of the thorns of passion that line Ivan's path. While the author, like Gregory, wants to reject that strength, Dostoevsky allows Ivan the freedom to engage with it in a realistic manner. Utilizing the symbolic connection to the field of thorns from the parable, it becomes clear that Dostoevsky's forced confrontation with the thorn-sower as an ontological full being elevates the reality of the novel insofar as it shows a connection to the higher realm while pushing but not breaking the verisimilitude of the text.

The great value in accepting the reality of transcendent beings in Dostoevsky's work lies in its opening the reader up to the reality of an accessible transcendent reality within the novels. If one can accept that Dostoevsky sought to depict the beauty of Christ in a real, and not ideal, form, then it should be of no surprise that the will to non-beauty can also be manifested in the form of demonic presences. In reading his texts in this manner, the novel is no longer simply realist in its ontology, but becomes a higher realism insofar as it becomes capable of materializing the mode of being-in-relation that surpasses logical confines. It artistically transcends the boundaries of the genre in a manner that does not transgress them by entering into grotesque, gothic, or romantic boundaries.

Malcolm Jones presents an alternate take on the presence of demons and devils in Dostoevsky's texts. He focuses on Ivan's, but in general he presents these incursions as

⁴⁷³ Gregory Nazianzus, "Concerning His Own Affairs," in *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Three Poems: Concerning His Own Affairs, Concerning Himself and the Bishops, Concerning His Own Life*, trans. Denis Molaise Meehan, O.S.B., (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 26-7.

hallucinations, projections, symbols, or dreams. While he gives some credence to the Orthodox perspective on demonology he is more in favor of a personal perspective of “minimal religion”:

The appearance of little devils to Ferapont (not to mention Alyosha, Lise, and Ivan Karamazov) is a prominent example [of pagan superstitions], the more significant in that it occurs within the heart of a Christian community and is accompanied by eccentric, not to say unorthodox, theological speculations. Such chaos monsters, representing the threat of an originary chaos to an established cosmos, are common to most if not all ancient religions and are embodied, in the Christian tradition, in the person of Satan. However we interpret Ivan’s devil—psychological interpretations seem the most convincing to many readers—Satan steps onto the stage in person in Ivan’s legend of the Grand Inquisitor.⁴⁷⁴

Although, many readers might prefer a psychological interpretation to an ontology that allows for the presence of actual demonic forces in the novel, this neither discredits the latter nor does it indicate that one should consider Dostoevsky’s foundations in the demonology of the Orthodox tradition to be invalid. By treating the incursion of a higher being not as a transgression of material existence but a natural and necessary—albeit transcendent—quality of reality Dostoevsky can depict a non-transgressive form of higher realism. The reality of Satan is therefore extraordinarily germane to the examination of Dostoevsky’s higher realism within the Orthodox Personalist conception.

Putting the question of the devil’s reality aside, and hopefully having proved convincing evidence of the necessity or at least usefulness of accepting it, here are two quotations from the deceiver himself confirm the content of this meeting as focusing not merely on a question of belief but on the ontological significance of beauty vis-a-vis the person. When he first appears, the devil says to Ivan, “I see you persist in expecting something great of me, and perhaps something beautiful.”⁴⁷⁵ What is the beauty that Ivan expects from the devil? Ivan needs and demands proof of the existence of God and, within the spirit of Satan’s artistic élan in 19th century European literature, expects brilliance in the proof. That which is good within beauty, in

⁴⁷⁴ Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, 151.

⁴⁷⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 75-6.

this case, would be a manifestation of personal uniqueness of either mathematical or philosophical eloquence. Dostoevsky creates the perfect contradiction of these qualities by depicting a Faustian devil as a sickly sponger. What could be more brilliantly contradictory and illogical than satanic beauty, or non-beauty, as a Goethesque devil with rheumatism?

Dostoevsky's stroke of brilliance in conjuring a rheumatic Satan to confront Ivan provides a being who, because of his all-too-humanness, is perfectly relational, and thereby elevates this portion of the novel into the realm of higher realism as it apophatically confirms a higher level of being relationality via the meeting of the transcendent and the material. It is an inversion of a positive vision of the Divine insofar as the meeting with the manifestation of non-beauty teaches Ivan about his rejection of relational being and leads him to a decision to attempt to save his brother. Dostoevsky masterfully crafts this lesson through the perfectly Dostoevskian demon— neither a beautiful and seductive Lermontovian demon, nor a magical metamorphic Mephistopheles, nor even a monstrous Dantean Satan, but rather the most typical of 19th century Russian gentleman. And even if Ivan has created the devil, if he has no ontological form outside of Ivan's mind, then Ivan's conception of the image and likeness of the human person is one of non-beauty, of sickness, contrarianism, and debauchery, confirming the pedagogical quality.

However, as I contended, just because the person experiencing the demonic form does not want it to have ontological reality does not mean that Dostoevsky did not intend it to. As much as Ivan pushes back against the reality of this meeting there is no logical or concrete proof that the devil exists, having his own ontological form. Reading this scene within the Orthodox framework does not lessen the reality of Ivan's selfishness, his struggle with morality, or his defiance of his own ideology. In fact, overcoming not only his own will but also an external will, dressed in the most convincing guise possible, contains greater artistic force than a pedestrian

hallucination because it is so very convincing and real despite the incursion of the transcendent world.

Dostoevsky slides the devil convincingly into the verisimilitude of the text by providing a contemporaneous and reasonable sensation in the devil's garb and discourse. More potent, however, is Dostoevsky's dressing the devil in the flesh of non-beauty. The active rejection of the good is given human flesh, albeit it ordinary and sickly. The devil is not a monster, he is not completely deformed or disfigured (*obezobrazhennyi*), but rather Satan comes in the image and likeness of the person *after the Fall*. Appearing in this mode, the devil plays to Ivan's desire to see humanity as completely fallen in order to bolster disbelief, but the person after the Fall is completely normal. In fact, he tells Ivan, paraphrasing Menander in Terrence's Latin translation, "I put on fleshy form and I take the consequences. Satan *sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto*," further confirming the ontological foundations of the demonic and non-beauty's relation to evil.⁴⁷⁶ The devil bluntly yet with great beauty attempts to confirm Ivan's belief that the abuse of beauty is natural in the person, but the truth is not what Ivan expects.

Satan's confirmation of Ivan's ontological and anthropological theories, which substantiate Ivan's insistence on the debased and deformed beauty of humanity, is his method of seducing this Karamazov. By his manifestation he proves two things to the young intellectual: that Ivan's materialistic and hopeless view of humanity's cruelty is true—humanity is fallen and suffers because of non-beauty and freedom—and that God exists. He tricks Ivan into a paradox by tempting him with material proof of the existence of God while simultaneously telling him "there are no proofs that can help with faith. Thomas believed not because he saw the risen Christ, but because he wanted to believe before he saw."⁴⁷⁷ Satan knows that material proof is

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 71.

not enough for one to believe, and that the existence of this proof will send Ivan into a liminal state of mental anguish. The devil creates a Schrödinger's Ivan, stuck in a perpetual state between faith and unbelief by juxtaposing beauty in the image and likeness of the Divine with non-beauty. He convinces Ivan of the truth via a truth—Madonna—and corrupts him further with another (partial) truth—Sodom.

This Faustian devil, insofar as he claims to be “part of that force which would do ever evil, and does ever good,”⁴⁷⁸ seemingly attempts bringing Ivan to an honorable end, which would confirm the antinomic antithesis that sin leads to salvation. And although this devil declares that working evil will eventually work good, Dostoevsky rejects this path to the Truth of Christ. To prove this end, Dostoevsky allows his devil to do good only insofar as his actions are a lesson, a pedagogical experience that leads back to beauty and Truth. Clearly, Satan knows full well that his workings will cause great sorrow and increase the passions in Ivan. He knows that for Ivan, the truth of God's existence brings not comfort but further suffering, because he is no longer able to rationalize the abuse of children or other unnecessary suffering in the world. The truth does more to harm Ivan than a lie would.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the devil does not do good, but rather re-enacts and inverts his original sin by tempting Ivan to leave his state of intellectualized and hyper-rational ignorance and turn against his “creator.” Ivan accuses the devil of merely arguing using his own arguments against him. If this is true, then it confirms that Ivan's views on the suffering of children, on the “Grand Inquisitor,” on the “geological Cataclysm” are results of non-beauty, of his own egocentric pride. Despite the forcefulness of their expression and their truth in light of the mode of existence of the fallen world they are still arguments of demonic origin that do not

⁴⁷⁸ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: A Tragedy*, trans. Walter Arndt and ed. Cyrus Hamlin, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 36.

confirm an inherent deformation of the person. Dostoevsky has created the perfect paradox to the logical mind: suffering and non-beauty are facts of the natural world and yet they are not essential or necessary features of it because the world was created as and to be transcendent beyond these features. He highlights these passions as they express themselves in Ivan as the work of the devil that brings out Ivan's own sinfulness in him. The demonic manifestation exacerbates this spiritual illness, it cannot remedy it. The "cure" the devil offers is worse than the disease.

While the pedagogical good that arises from Satan's game may lead Ivan back toward the path to authentic being, the devil knows that the thorns of intellectualism and rationalism will continue to strangle Ivan's faith as it attempts to grow even if he turns away from non-beauty. What's more, the connection to the parable of the Sower becomes explicit when the devil reveals his deviousness:

I lead you alternately between belief and unbelief, and I have my reason for it. It's a new method, sir. As soon as you lose your belief in me completely, you'll look me in the eyes and begin to believe that I am not a dream, but that that I am, for I know you, and at that moment I will have achieved my goal. And my goal is a noble one. **I will fling a tiny seed of faith into you, and from it an oak will grow**, yes, such an oak that sitting upon it you will long to enter the ranks of 'desert fathers and chaste women' for that is what you in secret greatly, deeply want.⁴⁷⁹

The devil claims that through illogical argumentation Ivan can be convinced that he does not believe in the transcendent world, which will then lead him to the belief in God. A paradox, to be sure, but one that, at first glance, seems to be beautiful gesture. However, it is not a call to being-in-relation, it is beauty in disguise—non-beauty creeps back to sting Ivan. If the devil is watering Ivan's faith it is only a trickle that maintains just enough belief that will grow only to be strangled by the thorns, while the devil is secretly providing more hydration. The more the seed

⁴⁷⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 80.

grows the tighter the thorns dig in. The higher the oak rises, the harder it falls. Satan wants Ivan to strangle himself in his egoism. Herein is the clearest manifestation of non-beauty,

Consider, briefly, “The Grand Inquisitor” within the same Orthodox context as Ivan’s meeting with the devil. The *poema* is a seductive discharge of Ivan’s Personal freedom and uniqueness—a creative manifestation and watering of egoism. In the same way the devil attempts to snare Ivan with non-beauty, so too does Ivan attempt to lure Alyosha into an egocentric trap through creative non-beauty. The thorns sprung up from the soil of Ivan’s rational materialism, the bastardization of his inherent beauty, nearly ensnare his brother as well. But the *poema* also provides a pedagogical experience for Ivan and Alyosha, just like the devil’s temptation of Ivan. Non-beauty cannot raise them up on their soteriological path, but it shows them both the error of this train of thought.

The *poema* presents both the beauty of the Madonna and Sodom insofar as Ivan’s attempt to discredit and deform the image and likeness of the Divine in humans—through his depiction of the Inquisitor himself and his “unsatisfactory” presentation of Christ—brilliantly expressing not only, as Alyosha claims, a justification and praise of Jesus, but the grounds of Personhood in the image and likeness of their creator. Although Ivan is incapable of making a rational turn toward beauty, the Truth is seeded in him. When Alyosha kisses his brother, and Ivan yells, “Literary theft!” there is a moment of relational being, when the beauty of the Madonna arises inspired by the pedagogical aspects of the *poema*. While Ivan sees the relational kiss of Christ to the Inquisitor as an impotent attempt at love and relationality, Alyosha manifests the active beauty of a loving gesture. Ivan even proclaims a declaration of love for his brother—to the best of his abilities.⁴⁸⁰ Eventually, thanks to Alyosha’s brotherly love toward Ivan and his encounter

⁴⁸⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 240.

with the devil, he attempts to speak the truth and repent during Mitya's trial. But Ivan has not yet cleansed his heart, and is incapable of clearing the field of his soul, and therefore snags himself on the thorns still present, falling into madness.

Ivan, within the context of the parable of the Sower, provides a deep investigation into the manifestation of non-beauty through rationality and materialism. Perhaps the events of the trial would push Ivan to tend to his *nous* and set fire to the thorns clutching at his heart in the subsequent and uncompleted novel. Dostoevsky did not have time to furnish us with the end of Ivan's story so we as readers will never know, but it is clear that Ivan's journey is not complete at the end of the novel. Therefore, it is reasonable to still wonder if his perception of Sodom is a convincing one. Mitya, on the other hand, provides a much clearer image and mode of the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty within the context of the parable of the Sower.

Mitya represents the stony soil, that quickly sprouts and receives the Word with joy, but hearing the word and rejoicing in it, he just as quickly rushes headlong about-face into non-beauty. The movement between the two ends of the antinomy is clear in Mitya, and his inability to adhere to one or the other is another potent representation of non-beauty's seductiveness. Ivan's thorny soil potently illustrates non-beauty, but both rejection and reception of beauty are vibrantly expressed in Mitya. Book III Chapter III, "Confession of a Burning Heart—In Verse" encapsulates the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty as Madonna and Sodom within the context of Mitya's laterite soul. Throughout the chapter Mitya flits between conducting drunken prayers to the *logoi* in all things in the world via their expression of the Logos, such as his parody of the Orthodox Doxology "Glory to the Highest on earth/ Glory to the Highest in me..." and a longing to debauch himself, careening heels up like a boson from an electroweak interaction, such as his comment that "whenever I happened to sink into the deepest, deepest shame of debauchery (and

I always found that happening to me), I always read this poem about Ceres and the insulted person. But did it correct my behavior? Never! Because I'm a Karamazov."⁴⁸¹ Mitya is completely open to the charm of beauty, but he is also voraciously greedy for it. He simultaneously believes and yet is unwilling to submit his ego to the other. He comes into relation with Schiller and Goethe through their art, but devours them for himself, for his Karamazovshchina.

This extreme passionate sensualism is the rocky portion of Mitya's soul that overwhelms the good soil. Mitya does not maintain his connection to beauty, leading to his rejection of the seed of the Word. If Ivan submits to the intellectual thorns sharpened by the passions, the seed that falls on Mitya bounces off the impermeable ground of natural urge hardened by the passions. Mitya's suspension between the rocks and salvific soil manifests itself in the form of his discourse on and lived experience of the antinomy of Madonna and Sodom in "Confession of a Burning Heart—In Verse." His vacillation between Madonna and Sodom provides a direct parallel within the exegesis of the parable of the Sower according to Archbishop Theophylact. Mitya's is the "other seed [that] falls upon stony souls, meaning those who easily accept the seed, and then reject it. Those who are stony resemble, to a small degree, the rock which is Christ, inasmuch as they accept the Word. But inasmuch as they accept it only for a time and then reject it, they are dissimilar."⁴⁸² Although Mitya eagerly opens himself to the *logos* in all things, he takes the beauty of whatever he uncovers for his own selfish ends.

Mitya is extremely proficient in finding beauty in that which is wicked, which entails finding the *logos* despite the selfish abuse by the other or the self, but he is unable to maintain his movement toward the good. However, what he calls "the beauty of Sodom" is not finding beauty

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 96, 99.

⁴⁸² Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Mark*, 37.

in the evil actions of the person, as Mitya proclaims, but rather the reception of beauty in an egocentric manner—it is non-beauty. Herein is Mitya’s fatal mistake. The beauty of the Madonna is inherent in all things as the *logos*, but its abuse, in the self or in the other, is the beauty of Sodom. Mitya sees the Madonna, but he cannot help but call it Sodom. In this, he reifies both the inherent desire for the infinite and good and the natural urge toward self-preservation and pleasure. But in the end, he succumbs to biological longings; he would rather fall off the ladder and turn back to Sodom than move upward toward the New Jerusalem, as he says at the end of his confessions, he will not open himself to relation, but if need be, to protect his egocentric urges, “If there’s an if, I’ll kill.”⁴⁸³

The petrification of Mitya’s soul manifests from his confusion of the source of beauty. Flowers of evil spring from his hardened soil because his meditation is decadent. It hymns: “Do you come from deep heaven do you come from hell,/ O Beauty? Your eyes, infernal and divine,/ Pour out both goodness and crime,/ And for that you can be compared to wine.”⁴⁸⁴ Mitya laments and flounders because to him beauty appears to be not merely invitatory, but primarily seductive. In this way he reveals his own Myshkin-esque deficiency by judging beauty. By idealizing beauty, neither of these two doomed sentimentalist are capable of determining what is beautiful and good, as opposed to what merely masquerades as beauty or uses its *logos* to distort the Truth.

Even though Mitya constantly rushes into physical and experiential relation with the other, he stumbles in the same manner as Myshkin. The idolization of beauty that the two Persons promote petrifies their souls and relegates beauty to the status of an inaccessible

⁴⁸³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 112.

⁴⁸⁴ Charles Baudelaire, “Hymne à la Beauté,” from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in *Flowers of Evil and Other Works/ Les Fleurs du Mal et oeuvres Choisies: A Dual Language Book*, ed. and trans. Wallace Fowlie, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 41.

construct of metaphysical inquiry. This aesthetic judgment communicates Dostoevsky's discourse on beauty, insofar as he says:

And, perhaps, precisely in this consists the greatest secret of art, that the image of beauty created by it immediately becomes an idol, *unconditionally*. And why does it become an idol? Because the need for beauty develops most at the moment man is in discord with reality, in disharmony, in struggle, that is when *he is living most of all*, because the person lives most of all when he is seeking something and striving; at such a time he feels within himself a most natural desire for everything harmonious, for tranquility, and in beauty there is both harmony and tranquility. But when the person finds what he has been striving for, then for a time life as it was slows up for him, and we have seen examples in which the person, having achieved the ideal of his desires, not knowing what further to strive for, being satiated, would fall into a kind of anguish, would even foment in himself this anguish, seek out another ideal in his life and, out of extreme surfeit of pleasure, not only would not value what he had enjoyed, but consciously would even turn from the direct path, exciting in himself alien tastes, unhealthy, sharp, inharmonic, sometimes monstrous ones, losing measure and aesthetic feeling for healthy beauty and demanding instead of it exceptions.⁴⁸⁵

The idolization of beauty, stripping it of its synergetic component and ripping its personal-relational quality from it, transforms beauty to non-beauty and causes anxiety, isolation, and death.

If Mitya's soul is indeed petrified by his isolation and solipsism it might be possible to conclude that the image and likeness within him is deformed. But the deformation of the image and likeness excludes the possibility of being-in-relation and the movement back toward authentic being. Mitya, however, is the Person most suited to express Dostoevsky's rejection of the deformation of the image. Although he vacillates between the two ends of the antinomy, when he embraces beauty, he goes into it heels up. In his ecstasy, Mitya articulates the greatest and most elaborate expression of being-in-relation. Donald Sheehan points toward Mitya's cries of ontological joy when meeting Alyosha in prison as one of the heights of the Orthodox understanding of the relationship between the person and the Divine in world literature.

Regarding Mitya's speech, Sheehan writes: "The walls of autonomy are fully breached [by the 'thunderbolt' of relationality released by his father's death] as Dmitri voluntarily accepts

⁴⁸⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

the Orthodox reality wherein ‘everyone is guilty for everyone else’ because each person possesses personhood only as reality. The result in Dmitri is the rush of understanding that, as the false freedom of self-willed autonomy vanishes, genuine joy arrives.”⁴⁸⁶ Sheehan is correct in that every aspect of Orthodox Personalism is present in Mitya’s speech. However beautiful and sincere this speech may be, Mitya fails to carry out his intellectualization of this beautiful joy. He remains locked in his subconscious, and even his desire to go “underground” to the mines for his sin symbolically represent his inability to rise up into authentic relational being.⁴⁸⁷

Even though it is only momentary experience of joy, it is still a full expression of Dostoevsky’s comprehension of the Truth to which the thesis of the Madonna leads, and the antithesis about which Sodom teaches. But it is a real desire for relational-being. What unlocks this moment of pure Orthodox Personalist rapture is his experience with Grushenka. Mitya’s hyper-sensualism simultaneously pushes him toward relational experiences insofar as his living life to the fullest sensual extent opens him to constant opportunities for relation with an other. However, as it is passionate it sends him into a mode that typifies both life and the other. Grushenka’s return to Mitya is that which allows him to face trial for the murder of his father *that he did not commit* and to utter such lofty words of sheer active personal beauty. However, this same relationship prevents him from activating this beauty in reality.

Immediately after his speech that is a “pure ontological song wherein the singer’s affirmation of being (‘I am!’) communicates ontological ecstasy to every living thing in such a way that each created thing remains entirely and perfectly itself at the very same moment each thing becomes a single note in the singer’s vast song,” he laments his relationship with

⁴⁸⁶ Sheehan, 26.

⁴⁸⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 31.

Grushenka.⁴⁸⁸ “Grusha is killing me,” he complains and then admonishes Alyosha, saying “God save you, dear boy, if you ever ask forgiveness from a woman you love. Especially from a woman you love, no matter how guilty you are before her!”⁴⁸⁹ His words should not lessen the forcefulness and validity of feeling that Sheehan ascribes to Mitya’s ontological song, but the reality of Mitya as a Person, his uniqueness, lies explicitly in the capability of evoking Madonna in thought and Sodom in deed.

What holds Mitya back from realizing the beauty of the Madonna at this point is revealed precisely in his words. “Grusha is killing me,” and “God save you if you ever ask forgiveness,” are non-beauty given verbal form. Mitya cannot be saved because he refuses to open to his beloved (“Grusha is killing me,”), which is made all the more clear because he preaches a rejection of the step necessary to relational being—never ask forgiveness. Mitya is the Evdokimovian aesthete *par excellence* of Dostoevsky’s oeuvre.⁴⁹⁰ Instead of exploding into the novel with joyful relational being, Mitya’s feelings erupt in violent and unpredictable manners, often wrapped in poetic verse and flare. It is no surprise that Mitya’s three confessions to Alyosha in the First Book of the novel are, to quote the titles of Chapters III, IV, and IV, “In Verse,” “In Anecdote,” and “Heel’s Up,” based on his rejection of the Orthodox concept of being guilty “for all and on behalf of all.” His confessions are all directly related to and grounded in his materialistic, sensual existence. This is why there is no contact between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-will-be when Mitya makes reaches ontological ecstasy. He does not see the manifestation of beauty in the world because he does not, or perhaps it is better to say *will not*,

⁴⁸⁸ Sheehan, 27.

⁴⁸⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 33.

⁴⁹⁰ Evdokimov, 21. See the previous section for the analysis of the curse of the aesthete.

take up this cause and act beautifully. His soul is still stony and he has not trained his mode of being to accept the invitation to being-in-relation.

Despite his immediate receptiveness to joy, Mitya's eagerness to turn back to Sodom is too strong within him. His free will is so strong that he cannot forgo his own pleasure for the sake of others. Mitya wants to flee from the face of God. Ivan planted a seed of unbelief in him though a plan to escape punishment. According to the plan, he'd like to go to magic America where it seems that all responsibility for others vanishes and all things submit to the egocentric urges for life, liberty, and a pursuit of happiness. On the one hand, in his ontological hymn, Mitya expresses his need to flee the metaphysical Sodom of his dandified life and sees the beauty of salvation in the face of the other before him. And yet he immediately longs to turn back, turn himself to salt and matching the symbolic stoniness composition of his soul. He begins to see with the eye of his heart, but his *nous* has not been purified, the stone has not been rolled away from the door to the upper chamber of his supraconsciousness.

And so, like the Argos against the Symplegades, Mitya dashes his soul upon the clashing rocks of non-beauty and his subconscious surges with thoughts of the beauty of Sodom. Herein lies the ultimate act of non-beauty, the ultimate betrayal of the Orthodox Personalist ideology that Dostoevsky professes. But it is such a glorious, life-like display of passion and beauty that one cannot help but admire Dostoevsky's artistic genius in depicting such tragic rejection of the good. In contrast, Alyosha experiences the depth of sin and passion offered in the seduction of Sodom, but he has spiritual training, purified his heart, and is experienced with the liturgical way of life provided by his monastery. This training allows him to beat back his own temptations and opens him to the direct experience with the beauty of the Madonna, and having the spiritual tools to analyze, convey, and live in the upper room of his supraconsciousness he is able, unlike Myshkin,

to share this experience with others. However, I will continue this analysis of Alyosha's successes in the following chapter.

The antinomy of Madonna and Sodom bears fertile ground for Dostoevsky to push the boundaries of realism and stretch toward his higher realism. In a way, he toys with his readers' expectations, both purposefully and inadvertently. In *The Idiot*, the reader expects Nastasia Filippovna to go to Myshkin at the end of Part I, and for him to win her over throughout the rest of the novel because Dostoevsky wants us to believe in his goodness. The inhabitants of the novel and the reader are convinced of his moral, spiritual, and ontological perfection, and yet the boundaries of the novel prevent the overtaking of the beautiful and free aspects of the Person through violence, illness and death. The beauty of Sodom rises up to prevent the bastardization of the charm of beauty.

Dostoevsky's trend of encouraging and not fulfilling the expectations of his reader continues in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where he once again allows non-beauty to prevent a Person from breaching the ontological walls of the novelistic world and the beauty of the Divine that awaits them. Mitya opens his soul to the reader, and in doing so presents a roadmap that guides them through his and his brothers' actions toward or away from salvation. Non-beauty presents itself as a choice, not a certainty, that either masquerades as beauty—such as Grushenka's passionate toying with Mitya and his father—or explicitly reveals itself as evil—particularly evident in Ivan's discourse on the suffering of children. Yet deep within the onion layers of each Person's being is the bulb of beauty, the charm that calls the self and other back into relation. While we as readers might expect evil to win, expect Mitya's guilt and Ivan's hatred for his family to push him from them, Dostoevsky gives us at least the hope in, if not evidence of, Alyosha's capacity to overcome the superficial "preeminence" of non-beauty through

his presence and charm. Alyosha is capable of playing this role because he not only accepts the charm of beauty, but begins to actively push through the threshold of material existence toward authentic being by keep one foot firmly planted in the certitude of higher, transcendent reality and one firmly planted in the fertile and incubating warmth of the earthen soil.

§V: Beauty as the Threshold Before Authentic Being

The steps the Person takes toward authentic being are unlocked, in Dostoevsky's novels, by the charm of beauty. It should now be clear in Dostoevsky's response to Dobroliubov, within the context of the antinomy of the Madonna and Sodom, beauty is not solely connected to material being, but rather equally influences the spiritual and physical states of the Person, insofar as beauty is "both harmony and tranquility."⁴⁹¹ By opening themselves to beauty and entering into the mode of being-in-relation, the Persons in the novel are capable of overcoming physical and material urges and decay, just as death and decay run rampant due to the turn toward egoism and non-beauty. Even in the state of the postlapsarian world, the Person is able to step across the threshold opened by beauty and into the upper room of human perception. In the cases of Mitya, Sonia, Raskolnikov, and (to a lesser extent) the Underground Man, beauty allows them to see the wholeness of the other as a unique and free person. However, this opening also allows the Person to see creation as intended, through a meeting of the world-as-it-is with the world-as-it-will-be.

Beauty's charm, when activated through the personal and free decision to come into relation to the other, weakens the existential boundaries drawn by the passions and allows the Person to perceive and interact with higher reality in a very real manner in the novelistic world. I have shown how non-beauty can deform the barriers of time and space and bring chaos into the

⁴⁹¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 18, 94.

world in *The Idiot*. Conversely, I have discussed in theory how, according to the Orthodox conception, beauty unlocks time and space in a positive direction, but not yet in the novel. The positive depiction is far more difficult for Dostoevsky to express in poetic form because it is harder to remain faithful to mundane reality while expressing a view of it that, outside of Orthodox circles, is rarely discussed, much less experienced. For these very reasons a compelling argument for this theory in the novels has not yet been made in the critical literature.

Stepping through the doors opened by beauty to the upper chambers of the individual mind and soul is extraordinarily difficult, even for one steeped in Orthodox monastic practices. Non-beauty and evil bar those doors, or at least rust their hinges. Until *The Brothers Karamazov*, it was easier for Dostoevsky to portray in his texts the antinomy of beauty and non-beauty simply in order to prove that the veil between the physical and metaphysic are traversable. How then, could he hope to convincingly portray the need for purity of heart and struggle through relation to enter into this mode of higher being without the positive image of a good and beautiful person falling into ruin or, even worse, breaching the lofty ontological and anthropological boundaries he created?

Dostoevsky's best-known example of the opening of higher reality to a Person appears in Myshkin's experience during the opening moments of his epileptic fits. And yet, as I have discussed, Myshkin only glances at the surface of transcendent reality and is incapable of transmitting what he has experienced to another Person. Even the narrator has difficulties entering into Myshkin's experience. Because Dostoevsky was unaware or incapable of that which would allow the meeting of the person and the world-as-it-will-be to be fulfilled when writing *The Idiot*, he utilized Myshkin's sickness to initiate a feeling that there is something more to the world. It is only a hint and intimation at the presence of the Divine other through an

incommunicable and mysterious “religious feeling” that Myshkin intuitively feels from within himself. And this isolation renders these feelings impotent. Dostoevsky is unable to depict a positive ending for this experience with higher reality in Myshkin not because he—Myshkin—is physically ill, but rather because his Personhood remains isolated and mired in anxiety because of his “perfection.” He is incapable of comprehending or actualizing his inner experience in the exterior world because of the incompatibility of perfection with the ontological and anthropological confines of Dostoevsky’s higher realism.

However, Dostoevsky manages to reveal in Myshkin the reality of the encounter with the world-as-it-will-be as if through a glass, darkly:

He fell to thinking, incidentally, about his epileptic condition, that there was a stage in it just before the fit itself (if the fit occurred while he was awake), when suddenly, amidst the sadness, darkness of soul, the pressure, his brain would momentarily catch fire, as it were, and all his life’s forces would be strained all at once in an extraordinary impulse. The sense of life, of self-awareness, increased nearly tenfold in these moments, which flashed by like lightning. His mind, his heart were lit up with an extraordinary light; as if all his agitation, all his doubts, all his worries, were placated at once, resolved in a sort of sublime tranquility, filled with serene, harmonious joy and hope, a complete wisdom and ultimate reason. But these moments, these glimpses, were still only a presentiment of that final second (it was never more than a second) from which the fit began. That second was, of course, unbearable. Reflecting on that moment afterward, in a healthy state, he often said to himself that all these flashes and glimpses of a higher self-perception and self-cognizance, and therefore of “higher reality” were nothing more than illness, a violation of the normal state, and therefore if this was not at all higher reality, then, on the contrary, it must be counted as the very lowest. He decided, finally, “Who cares that it’s an abnormal strain if the result itself, if the moment of sensation, remembered and examined in the healthy state, turns out to be the highest degree of harmony, of beauty, it gives a hitherto unheard-of and unknown feeling of fullness, measure, reconciliation, and an ecstatically prayerful merging with the highest synthesis of life?” These vague expressions seemed quite comprehensible to him.⁴⁹²

This sort of experience of beauty hints at the harmony and tranquility of the Madonna, but it remains on the wrong side of the threshold. What should be mediated by the observation of the *nous*, which would allow the Person to engage beyond the daily and decaying husk of the world in time and space, is instead interpreted rationally.⁴⁹³ Myshkin does not have the capacity to

⁴⁹² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 187-8.

⁴⁹³ For the discussion of the *nous* see Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

meditate upon and utilize the knowledge in his heart. His inability is caused by, on the one hand, as Vyacheslav Ivanov notes, the fact that Myshkin is not of the world: “In him we have a soul that has plunged from that ‘place beyond the skies’ (*ἐπουράνιος τόπος*) described by Plato, where, with the gods, men unborn contemplate the forms of eternal beauty.”⁴⁹⁴ On the other hand, he is too concerned with the earthy doings of those around him. He hears beauty’s call, but is weighed down by his earthly cares, he engages in a constant need to be of the world so as not to be seen merely as a symbol of perfection. To find love, he tries to be earthly, even if his creator intended to strip him of this free will.

Myshkin is not of the world and yet he is also tragically incapable of escaping its gravitational forces. Ivanov, paradoxically, reminds us that Myshkin’s first love, upon exiting his deaf, dumb, and blind state in Switzerland, was not Marie but an ass. Ivanov sees in this relationship a connection to the divine—particularly the orgiastic rites of Greek religious practices—as well as a symbol of stubborn patience. I however, propose that this donkey is a symbol of Myshkin’s misplaced concern in the worldly affairs due to his incomplete incarnation as the “perfectly beautiful person,” and therefore a rejection of his idealized nature and a nod to his Personhood. But Dostoevsky cannot synthesize that which is earthly in Myshkin, which is not strong enough to bring him into relation, with the ideal beauty that he is supposed to incarnate.

Dostoevsky’s failure to express the beauty that is within Myshkin draws connections between the concept of beauty and the concept of care. From an Orthodox Personalist perspective, there are two types of care, earthly and spiritual. Earthly care can best be described according to Heidegger’s term *Sichvorwegsein*, which entails the desires of a being that always

⁴⁹⁴ Ivanov, 90.

thrust them “ahead of themselves.”⁴⁹⁵ But care for the material slams shut the door to the upper chamber of the supraconsciousness, as Myshkin’s experience before his epileptic fit depicts. Myshkin, through his desire to be presentable within the social world of St. Petersburg and physically and economically fit to fulfill his role as a worldly man, attempts to leave the orgiastic world of the forms, but he is always getting ahead of himself. This care burdens his being down with earthly weight that prevents him from achieving Dostoevsky’s goal of salvation. This type of care takes the Person out of themselves as a relational being and moves them into a life of ouroboric autocommunication that focuses on what will be instead of what is—a permanent concern for the future that excludes personal relation because of its inherent anxiety and fear.

In Dostoevsky’s work, this earthly care is directly related to non-beauty. The development of non-beauty, as I have shown, either through the gluttonous consumption of the beauty of the other or the seductive annihilation of the other via the manipulation of one’s own beauty, entangles the Person with fear, sin, and death. This care not only fosters but is reliant upon an anxiety of being; it seeks to fill the longing for eternity with finite existence through a constant rush of transient objects that rise up and pass out of being. The characteristics of care, in the Heideggerian categorization, are as follows:

- 1) the fruit of fear, 2) the intertwining of man with the world (fear of the world), 3) the cause of man’s forever getting ahead of himself, 4) because of the consciousness that he has betrayed

⁴⁹⁵ Heidegger’s Sixth Chapter of Division One is entitled “Care as the Being of Dasein.” In this Chapter he discusses the role that anxiety plays in keeping the person in an authentic mode of being through a desire and, more accurately, a constant state of “Being-ahead-of-itself.” There are fundamental relational components to Being-in-the-world and care, but unlike the Orthodox perception, Heidegger’s care fundamentally distracts the person from entering into a full mode of being-in-relation because it functions from a place of fear and anxiety. On the one hand, earthly care is “care for [one’s] existence in the world” (Stăniloae, 117). This earthly care must be filled with anxiety because of the certainty of physical decay and death. On the other hand, spiritual care, in the Orthodox sense, is the longing for fullness in relation with the infinite, the “care for [one’s] eternal destiny, the care for salvation” (Ibid.). Spiritual care is not without its own fear, “but it is [a] fear that death ends all, and that this fear alone will succeed in delivering [the person] from what [they] fear” (Stăniloae, 118). In this way, the person frees themselves from care, fear, and anxiety while maintaining a striving for being-in-relation and personal uniqueness because it is no longer fear of being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) but rather care for the authentic nature of the person. For more, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 225-273.

himself, 5) for the fulfillment of his more fitting possibilities. But by care man doesn't in fact look for or find the realization of his most fitting possibilities, because he has never really gotten to intimately know himself; so the proper purpose of his existence has remained hidden by care.⁴⁹⁶

Care subjugates beauty to the utility of the future insofar as it becomes a tool to achieve maximum temporal pleasure and minimum pain.

In his relationship with Aglaya, Myshkin's earthly being overtakes his ideal conception, he is too concerned with her material well-being. His earthly care for Aglaya is juxtaposed with his complete indifference toward Nastasia Filippovna's earthly being. Notice that it is only after Myshkin becomes engaged to Aglaya that the Prince finally returns to the happy, and carefree mode the reader finds him in at the beginning of the novel: "It is difficult to imagine just how animated and encouraged the Prince became that evening. He was so cheerful that it was fun to look at him... He began to talk, and this had not happened to him since the morning of his first acquaintance with the Epanchins six months prior."⁴⁹⁷ And although the return of his joy is a mark of positive and relational outpourings, this only leads to Aglaya's rejection of him for not being perfect enough. Although it might be unfair of Aglaya, Myshkin's engagement with earthly cares, in the Heideggerian sense, shatters his relational bond with her. The anxiety of being-ahead-of-itself places too much strain on Aglaya, causing her longing for the ideal to grow, and causing their relationship to collapse.

The Orthodox concept of care for the eternal, as opposed to the Heideggerian *Sichvorwegsein*, confirms the capacity for opening the Person to higher reality through beauty because the longing for the infinite that is expressed in the person finds fulfillment in engagement with the Divine. Stăniloae describes this care as the person's "care for [their] eternal destiny, the care for salvation. This care is opposed to the other one. It is no longer care for

⁴⁹⁶ Heidegger's perspective is codified in Stăniloae, 116-7.

⁴⁹⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 8, 429.

[their] existence in the world; it no longer comes from the passionate state for the pleasure of the world and so neither from the fear of its pain.”⁴⁹⁸ That which is beautiful leads the person into personal relationship and therefore leads a person out of the decay of earthly time and into the eternal and peaceful existence of Divine Being.

Care for the eternal inherently constitutes care for the beautiful, and therefore not only discloses the most intimate aspects of the existence and purpose of being but activates it as well. During every Orthodox Eucharistic liturgy, the priest intones the words “now lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of All Who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic hosts.”⁴⁹⁹ This phrase expresses the contemplation and vision of the Divine that enters into the world. And spiritual care explains why Myshkin cannot pass his experience with the transcendent world on to others: he lacks an actual engagement with the spiritual, he is only born of it. While Myshkin approaches this mode of care through his fits, he cannot access them because he is spiritually unprepared. Although Myshkin is an inherently spiritual being, he is not grounded in the systematic structures that allow for the reception and communication of the fullness of beauty. One must first lay aside the earthly cares to engage the spiritual, but Myshkin has neither the grounding nor training to do so.

Dostoevsky’s fictional Persons express their capacity for both earthly and eternal care through their relation to beauty and non-beauty. As catalysis for the actions within the novels—the fuel that ignites the fires of the “logical conclusion of the scandal”—beauty and non-beauty overcome the inertia of material and natural existence. Both the salvific and sensual fires that

⁴⁹⁸ Stăniloae, 117.

⁴⁹⁹ The only time this prayer is not read during a Eucharistic Liturgy is during the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts that is served on weekdays during Great Lent. Instead of the Anaphora the priest recites the words “Now the Powers of Heaven invisibly with us do serve. Lo, the King of Glory enters.” Hieromonk Herman and Vitaly Permiakov eds., *Hieratikon: volume two, Liturgy Book for Priest & Deacon*, (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2017), 248, 119.

rage within the protagonists power the narratives by feeding the engine of freedom within them. But the greatest problem Dostoevsky faces, however, is how to continue to stoke the spiritual mechanism in his positive depictions of being while retaining fidelity to the genre of the “critical realist novel,” defined by both contemporary literary norms and the ontological and anthropological limits of his worldview, within the novel.

From his failure in his quest to create perfection in *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky travels from Myshkin through Stavrogin and finally to Alyosha, working from a perfectly beautiful person, to a completely repellent one, and finally arriving at the positive depiction of a good person in a manner that is both reasonable within the boundaries of a realist novel and capable of bringing salvation to others around him. In his final, and ultimately only successful, protagonist Dostoevsky turns to the personal groundedness of being-in-relation through the charm of beauty that is faithful to the constraints of the realist novel through the Orthodox practice of hesychasm. The beauty that leads Alyosha to a moment of purity and a realization of the heights of the world transfigured requires an Orthodox way of life—a method that grows from the ontological and anthropological roots discussed in the first section of this dissertation and sprouts from the nourishment of the waters of beauty as revealed in this now concluded section.

Chapter IV: Hesychasm, Metanoia, and Noetic Vision as the Fulfillment of Higher Realism

The fountains mingle with the river/ And the rivers with the ocean,/ The winds of heaven mix for ever/ With a sweet emotion;/ Nothing in the world is single;/ All things by a law divine/ In one spirit meet and mingle./ Why not I with thine? - Percy Bysshe Shelly, *Love's Philosophy*.⁵⁰⁰

I have argued throughout this study that the goal of Dostoevsky's artistic output was the creation of a reasonable and realistic expression of the incursion of a higher reality into the world of the novel—a depiction of higher realism. Although critics have repeatedly discussed the question of higher or fantastic realism in Dostoevsky's works, they have tended to shy away from an engagement with its successful depiction, instead discussing it in general terms. Donald Fanger, in his seminal monograph on Romantic Realism, reduces the concept of "Realism in a Higher Sense" to the idea that "Dostoevsky does just what Tolstoy says he cannot do. He concentrates his novel around a single key event, and he makes his characters act in demonstration or clarification of a series of ideas... It is, in short, his 'realism in a higher sense.'"⁵⁰¹ Contemporary scholarship engages the question with more clarity, but continues to skirt the explicit connection of Dostoevsky's higher realism to his Christocentric aesthetics.

Molly Brunson considers that the

correlation of aesthetic and religious objectives is precisely what distinguishes Dostoevsky's realism so markedly from that of his contemporaries... Dostoevsky considers his 'fantastic realism,' what he would later call 'realism in a higher sense,' a transcendent alternative to a more grounded, objective recording of phenomenal reality, one capable of accessing truths far higher, or deeper, than those of the material world.⁵⁰²

She utilizes Dostoevsky's longing for the transcendent to discuss the connections between literature and painting, citing textual evidence that Dostoevsky longs for an artistic

⁵⁰⁰ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Love's Philosophy*, in *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, New Edition* by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck in Ten Volumes, vol. 3 (London, E. Benn Limited, 1928), 299.

⁵⁰¹ Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 215.

⁵⁰² Molly Brunson, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840-1890*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), 163.

representation that moves beyond mimesis while maintaining fidelity to the set of representational conventions of realism as genre. This view characterizes the typical scholarly approach to Dostoevsky's engagement with higher realism, which either discusses it as an unrealized concept which opens the door to a particular manner of criticism or steps onto the threshold of engaging with the concept as metaphysical but shying away from (or remaining ignorant of) its Orthodox foundations.

In her observation that “more importantly, when works of artistic realism *do* cross into subjective or spiritual or imaginary realms, they are not violating their own aesthetic commitments,” Brunson successfully elucidates, in a manner that few other critics have achieved, what a moment of higher realism in Dostoevsky's work should look like: the instant in which the ontological and anthropological boundaries are penetrated in a manner that depicts the transcendent world—the world-as-it-will-be when freely and lovingly entered into relation with Christ—without destroying the world of the novel or the freedom of the Person.⁵⁰³ This chapter posits that Dostoevsky does in fact achieve a fidelity to the genre conventions of the realist novel while injecting it with the beauty of the world as transfigured in a manner that, contrary to general critical consensus, does not rely on a dreamed, imagined, epiphanic, or utopian state. I shall explore higher realism within the context of what Diane Oenning Thompson calls “a reflection of the divine [as] a poetic reality [that] transcends the prosaic world of causality toward a world of correspondences and equivalences.”⁵⁰⁴ While Thompson has explored the Biblical connections between the novel and Orthodoxy, I shall investigate the living expression of Orthodox theology through the practice of hesychasm in the texts, and in doing so further

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁰⁴ Diane Oenning Thompson, *The Brothers Karamazov and the poetics of memory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 72.

illuminate the iconographic representation of higher realism within the text. What Alyosha experiences in *The Brothers Karamazov* is not a momentary engagement with a higher realm, but rather the suddenness of relation that embeds itself in his heart and opens him to a constant and, most importantly, free engagement with transcendent reality throughout the rest of the novel.

Dostoevsky attempts to show, either in a positive or negative manner, endeavors to reach into this higher realm before successfully achieving a positive depiction of his worldview in his final novel. Myshkin's epileptic encounters in *The Idiot*, as I have shown, do not fulfil these criteria. Kirillov and his attempt to become a Man-God in *Demons* not only fails, but also adds to the chaos and egocentric consumption present in the fallen the world as it results in the death of the Shatovs and the chaos of Pyotr Stepanovich's circle. However, Dostoevsky's higher realism blossoms resplendently in *The Brothers Karamazov* during Alyosha's vision of the Wedding in Cana in its successful depicting of the contact between the transcendent world and the reality of the novel and giving full force to Dostoevsky's belief in Christocentric aesthetics. What had been missing from his novels until *The Brothers Karamazov* was a realistic Person who has experienced this transcendent vision, which in Orthodox Personalism is known as *noetic vision*, and who could display through their actions a path to a state of authentic being. The Orthodox practice of hesychasm, an ascetic way of life that brings the person into closer contact with the Divine, as revealed through the life of the Elder Zosima, is the key that opens Alyosha's heart to the experience a vision of the world-to-come. In this experience, which is more than a mere dream, Dostoevsky pulls back the veil covering the reality of the novel and offers the reader a glimpse of that world.

Going forward in this chapter, I shall discuss the practice of hesychasm and its depiction through the persons of the retired Bishop Tikhon in *Demons* and Zosima in *The Brothers*

Karamazov and finally, dissect the successful depiction of higher realism in Alyosha and how he maintains his engagement with higher reality and authentic being in a manner that maintains the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the novel. The reality of *noetic vision* and the encounter of transcendent being according to the Orthodox practice and Personalist philosophy are necessary to more fully comprehend Dostoevsky's success in uncovering a moment of higher reality. An analysis of these concepts in conjunction with the texts reveal what many scholars have overlooked, and in doing so have realized the fear that Dostoevsky expressed in the introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*. When the narrator poses the rhetorical question "Why should I, the reader, spend my time studying the facts of [Alyosha's] life?"⁵⁰⁵ he expresses the very real fear that the answer he proposes to the mystery of the person, as depicted in the life of Alyosha Karamazov, will go unnoticed or derided. Dostoevsky expresses the fear that awhile it may be possible to express in literature the experience of transcendent reality, of coming face-to-face with the Divine, and to still live in the world as a person who struggles and suffers while maintaining a connection to an authentic experience of the mode of being-in-relation, most of his readers would never be able to completely comprehend what he had achieved. This final chapter attempts to demystify and illuminate the mystical and experiential aspects of the Orthodox traditions that Dostoevsky utilizes as a key to this literary expression and to show the artistic genius at play in its realization.

§I: The Hesychastic Method as the System Leading toward *Metanoia* and the Cleansing of the *Nous* and the Foundations for Achieving Higher Realism in Literature

After the failure to achieve a Christlike person in the guise of Myshkin in *The Idiot* Dostoevsky shifts toward a representation of authentic being in the likeness of the holy men of

⁵⁰⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 5.

Russia, and specifically the monastics and hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. In Dostoevsky's attempt to show the retired Bishop Tikhon, based on Tikhon of Zadonsk, as an example of a person who has responded to the invitational quality of beauty as charm, we see the first steps toward a depiction of a fictional being living authentically, and who has access to the transcendent world, the world-as-it-will-be. However, the censoring of the section of the novel featuring Tikhon because of his discussion with Stavrogin regarding the latter's crimes against a young girl removes a necessary piece from the puzzle of Stavrogin's soul. Without Tikhon as a positive depiction of the mode of being-in-relation the novel is unable to fully convey the higher realism that Dostoevsky sought. It is through the Person of Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* that Dostoevsky finally achieves a positive depiction of a holy person; however, he relies on the genre form of hagiography to depict the saintliness of the Elder. The inserted text alone is not enough to bring a higher realism to the text of the novel. Nevertheless, Zosima's life and interactions with Alyosha unveil for the young man the first steps into an authentic state of being-in-relation. The two are able to achieve a proper state of authentic being through the hesychastic lifestyle that Zosima nurtures and embodies in Alyosha.

Before looking at Tikhon and Zosima as explicit manifestations of the Orthodox practice of hesychasm, however, it is necessary to briefly define hesychasm and the Orthodox mode of monastic living to illuminate how Dostoevsky encodes these qualities into Alyosha to serve as apophatic and cataphatic proofs of his belief in the Christocentric aesthetics of higher realism. The practice of hesychasm was preserved in Russia through the practice of eldership, in which an advanced—in both age and spiritual wisdom and practice—monastic takes others into his spiritual care and oversees the daily physical and spiritual actions of their novices. The Elders of Optina Pustyn', whom Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov visited following the death of the

author's son Alyosha in 1878, maintained the monastic tradition of hesychasm through the teachings of Elder Paisius Velichkovsky, who learned the tradition from its source on Mt. Athos.⁵⁰⁶ Numerous books and articles have been written on the concept and practice of eldership in relation to Zosima.⁵⁰⁷ Instead of retreading this well-worn path, let us look into the relatively unknown concepts of *metanoia* and *noetic vision* as they relate to the practice of hesychasm.

Hesychasm is, at its foundation, a tradition of the practical method of achieving spiritual regeneration, cleansing the eye of the heart, and moving the person closer to theosis, the mode of being-in-relation with the Divine. According to Sergei Horuzhy:

This tradition is a community, united on the basis of a certain practice: starting from the 4th c. and up to now, the tradition is occupied exclusively with creating and then keeping and reproducing identically the hesychast practice or the spiritual art of “Noetic Practice” (*Praxis noera*, in Greek), a holistic practice of man's complete self-transformation, in which an adept of the practice, advancing step-by-step, ascends to *theosis*, the union with God and his energies. For reaching its goal, this anthropological practice should have precise plan and method, which means that it should be based on reliable anthropological knowledge... [S]ince the goal of the practice, *theosis*, represents the “surpassing of the natural” (a formula used by Orthodox ascetics), i.e. actual

⁵⁰⁶ Mt. Athos is the monastic center of the Eastern Orthodox world. Located on a peninsula in northeastern Greece, the mountain has been home to multiple—currently 20—Orthodox monasteries since approximately 800 AD. This refuge for monastic tradition was the center for the defense of hesychasm in the 14th century by Gregory Palamas, and is revered for its continuation of the spiritual and dogmatic foundations of the Orthodox Church. Paisius Velichkovsky left the Kiev Caves Monastery for Romania and eventually Mt. Athos in pursuit of the hesychastic tradition, which had waned in Russia until the eighteenth century. His translation of the *Philokalia*, the writings of the Church Fathers from the fourth to fifteenth centuries on hesychasm, was the first to be published in Russia. Through this text and his direct Eldership, his disciples spread the tradition of eldership and the Jesus prayer throughout Russia, and particularly influenced the monks of Optina Pustyn'. For more on the growth of the practice of eldership in Russia see “Optina Monastery and the Remarkable Monastic Movement,” in Sergius Chetverikov *Elder Ambrose of Optina*, (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2009), 75-106 and Leonard J. Stanton, *The Optina Pustyn Monastery in the Russian Literary Imagination: Iconic Vision in Works by Dostoevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Others*, (New York: Lang, 1995).

⁵⁰⁷ For further reading on eldership, the connection to Mt. Athos and Zosima see John P. Dunlop, *Staretz Amvrosy: Model for Dostoevsky's Staretz Zossima*, (Belmont, Ma: Norland Publishing Co., 1972), Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet 1871-1881*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 451-59, 578-580, 621-635, Nadejda Gorodetzky, *Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk: Inspirer of Dostoevsky*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), Sergei Hackel “The Religious Dimension: Vision or Evasion? Zosima's Discourse in *The Brothers Karamazov*,” in *New Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. by Malcom Jones and Garth Terry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 139-168), Malcolm Jones *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), Vasily .L. Komarovich, *Die Urgestalt der Bruder Karamasoff: Dostojewskis Quellen, Entwürfe und Fragmente*, (Munich: Piper, 1928), and Sven Linner, “The Saints of Reality,” in *Starets Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: A study of the mimesis of virtue*, (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wksell International, 1975).

transcensus of human being, this anthropology should in some part go out of the usual anthropological discourse restricted to empirical man, in order to become a *meta*-anthropology.⁵⁰⁸

Clearly, the concept of a hesychast anthropology in this light aligns with our study of the transcendent nature of the Person in Dostoevsky's novels. The word *hesychia* in Greek means *stillness, silence, or tranquility*, and this quiet inner and exterior peace brought on by the hesychastic practice is achieved, in part, through the silent repetition of the Jesus Prayer.⁵⁰⁹ However, this silence is only a part of hesychastic tradition as a whole, and will be explained within the context of the entire practice.

The first three chapters of this dissertation have linked Dostoevsky's poetics with the concepts of theosis and the *nous* through ontological and anthropological foundations and the drawing of one Person to another through the charm of beauty. But up until *The Brothers Karamazov*, and so far into this investigation, Dostoevsky's novels had failed to achieve a positive fictional depiction of the Person entering into communion and experiencing the deification of the world. While successful at depicting the world-as-it-is, he had not yet successfully created a mimesis of the world-as-it-will-be. For Dostoevsky's poetics to move from anthropology/realism—the depiction of the human being after the Fall struggling to live authentically—to meta-anthropology/higher realism—the achievement of and continued movement toward authentic being—the “precise plan and method... based on reliable anthropological knowledge” must be investigated in the creative works.

⁵⁰⁸ Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov*,” 3-4.

⁵⁰⁹ The most in-depth commentary on the Jesus Prayer in Russian can be found throughout the works and letters of Theofan Zatvornik, *Sobranie sochinenii v 26 tomakh*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravilo Very, 2003), and for a concise reading on the subject see Kallistos Ware, *The Jesus Prayer* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2014). An in-depth discussion of the importance of the notion of silence and hesychia in *The Brothers Karamazov* can be found in the Chapter “Silence” in Malcom Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005) 139-146. We will return to the question of silence in our analysis of Alyosha's vision of the Wedding in Cana in Chapter IV §III: The Apogee of Higher Realism Via the Meeting of Being-in-Relation and Beauty in Alyosha's *Noetic Vision* of The Wedding in Cana.

The intersection of the world of the monastery and the “real world” in *The Brothers Karamazov* provides access to this “plan and method.” The plan of hesychasm is shown in greatest detail in John Climacus’ *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* and its 30 “rungs” upon which a monastic must climb to continue to reach toward theosis. Horuzhy simplifies these steps within the context of *The Brothers Karamazov* to four general states: the *Spiritual Gate* of *metanoia*, the *Unseen Warfare* against the passions, *Hesychia* as silence and a state of *unceasing prayer*, and finally the telos of the opening of the senses and feelings to *Noetic Vision*.⁵¹⁰ By explaining these stages as experienced in Orthodox ascetic practice, it will be clear that just as a person is able to achieve a vision of transcendent reality, so too are Dostoevsky’s Persons, if they are able to achieve a mastery of each level within the novels, capable of seeing and conveying to the reader the ontological unlocking of higher realism.

The first state, the *Spiritual Gate*, requires repentance and conversion. Although many Persons in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre experience a form of repentance and confession, only Alyosha truly experiences the *Spiritual Gate* as a state, or mode of being, rather than a momentary ascent onto this rung. Raskolnikov is the prime example of a Dostoevskian Person who experiences this first stage of hesychia but immediately falls back toward where he began. Raskolnikov may repent, but he does not experience what the Orthodox teachings call *metanoia*, or the state of conversion of the soul which returns it to its original, prelapsarian state. Isaac the Syrian, one of

⁵¹⁰ For a complete explanation of the steps see Sergey Horuzhy, *K fenomenologii askezy*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo gumanitarnoi literatury, 1998), and for a condensed description see Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov* in the Prism of Hesychast Anthropology,” 5-6. I have corrected a number of errors in the translation of this text within the dissertation. Horuzhy’s analysis is based on a tradition begun by Lorenzo Scupoli in *Combattimento spirituale*, which was then translated into Greek by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theofan Zatvornik in a Russian edition. See *Unseen Warfare: being the Spiritual combat and Path to paradise of Lorenzo Scupoli as edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, (London: Faber and Faber, 1952). The terms *Spiritual Gate/Metanoia*, *Spiritual Warfare*, *Hesychia*, and *Noetic Vision* will be capitalized and italicized when referring to the stages of the hesychastic method throughout the rest of the text. When these terms, or related terms such as *metanoia*, *hesychia*, and *noetic vision*, refer to the specific actions and not the stages, they will be italicized but not capitalized.

the foundational teachers of hesychastic practice defined *metanoia* discreetly as the opening of the person to love and perfection. Vladimir Lossky provides a concise definition of this state of being and delineates it from a Western understanding of penitence:

If it is true that penitence is the beginning of this way, ‘the gateway of grace,’ this is not to say that it is a passing moment, a stage to be left behind. It is in fact not a stage but a condition which must continue permanently, the constant attitude of those who truly aspire to union with God. The word ‘penitence’ does not properly express the idea of this fundamental attitude of every Christian soul which turns to God. The word ‘repentance’ would perhaps be less inadequate, despite its almost wholly negative connotation. The Greek *μετάνοια* means literally ‘change of mind’ or ‘transformation of spirit.’ It is a ‘second regeneration’ granted by God after baptism; a possibility of return to the Father; a continuous exodus from ourselves; a power which brings about the transformation of our nature. It is the opposite state of soul to self-sufficiency, to the spiritual complacency of the Pharisee, of the ‘just man’ who considers himself to be in a ‘state of grace’ because he is without self-knowledge. Repentance, like the way of ascent toward God, can have no end.⁵¹¹

A clear connection between Dostoevsky’s poetics of repentance and Lossky’s description can be drawn. The greatest example of an act of contrition in his works, and perhaps in world literature, is Raskolnikov’s confession on the Hay Market Square in *Crime and Punishment*. However, this gesture of penitence—and we use this term here to depict the lack of spiritual fullness—cannot be called a full movement into a state of *Metanoia*, but rather merely a first step toward an understanding of the necessity of humility and self-responsibility to achieve the peace and love of being-in-relation. Dostoevsky’s failure to depict a state of “higher realism” is highlighted in Raskolnikov, when the freedom with which the author imbued his fictional being overwhelms the movement toward authentic being. Raskolnikov, as a Person, is incapable of entering a constant state of *Metanoia* in the novel, but he does express the possibility of making that turn, even if he falls away from it later.

In the Epilogue to *Crime and Punishment*, the narrator describes Raskolnikov’s aversion to entering a state of *Metanoia*:

⁵¹¹ Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 204.

What then? He did in fact feel ashamed before Sonya, whom he tortured because of this shame with his contemptuous and rough manner. But he was not ashamed of his shaven head and shackles: his pride was badly hurt, and he became sick from his wounded pride. O how happy he would have been if he could blame himself! He would then be able to bear anything, even shame and disgrace. But he judged himself severely, and his hardened conscience found no particularly terrible fault in his past, except perhaps a single particular *blunder*, which might have happened to anyone. He was ashamed precisely because he, Raskolnikov, has perished so blindly, so hopelessly, so deafly, and so stupidly, by some verdict of blind fate, and must resign himself to submit to the “nonsense” of that verdict, if he wanted to find any peace for himself.⁵¹²

Clearly, Raskolnikov finds no fault in his actions or intent, but only in his mistake. He is justified in own self-righteousness, and his *prelest*’ overcomes his will to repent.⁵¹³ But even in this state of egocentric self-sufficiency, the narrator still shows the glimmer of hope that Raskolnikov will move toward being-in-relation with Sonya. He begins to long for the infinite love of entering into communion with her, but Dostoevsky is unable to create this for his audience, at least not yet.

Rather, this part of the mystery of the person is, as written in the novel, “the beginning of a new story, a story of the gradual renewal of the person, a story of their gradual regeneration, of the gradual progress from one world into another, of the meeting with a new reality, hitherto completely unknown. This might be the subject of a new story, but our present story has finished.”⁵¹⁴ Raskolnikov provides the reader with a view of the first rung of the hesychastic ladder, and the perils associated with climbing it, from Dostoevsky's view. In his first major post-Siberian novel the author has already begun climbing his own ladder toward the creation of a higher realism, but he is not yet practiced in its creation. The trials and errors which occur from *Crime and Punishment* through *The Brothers Karamazov* are a battle against the tendencies of personal freedom to lead the person to egocentric isolation in the postlapsarian world, rather than renewing their nature, and a struggle to produce a work that depicts the overcoming of this struggle with a verisimilitude that both conforms to and transcends the boundaries of the novel as

⁵¹² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 416-7.

⁵¹³ The concept of *prelest*’ is discussed at length in §III: Dostoevsky’s Beauty as an Antinomy, Rather than a Dialectic in Chapter III.

⁵¹⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 6, 422.

genre. Here, Dostoevsky succeeds in depicting, as Horuzhy frames the *Spiritual Gate*, a “vast economy of repentance, including unusual and powerful, extreme practices, such as compunction (*penthos*, an abiding sorrow for sins), weeping, etc. [a] permanent repenting attitude and giving a specific and intense repenting note to consciousness.”⁵¹⁵

The second stage of hesychastic practice is *Unseen Warfare*, the struggle with the passions. In the previous chapters I spoke at length about the passions and their effect on the Person in both the Orthodox conception and within the novels. Horuzhy indicates that within the hesychast tradition the passions “follow cyclical patterns, reproducing themselves, and serv[ing] as traps for man, making him incapable to change himself and ascend the Ladder. Thus, the very first tasks of the ascetic practice include the removing and uprooting of these phenomena... then he proceeds to creating the [capacity for] ‘preventive reaction’, i.e. the suppression of any [incipient] passion [...which will finally] lead him to *dispassion*.”⁵¹⁶ Dostoevsky does not attempt to engage this step of the hesychastic practice until after *Crime and Punishment*. Although Raskolnikov continually struggles with the passions internally he has not crossed the threshold of the first step until the end of the novel. Dostoevsky does not depict, until briefly in the Epilogue, the struggle to maintain the turning back toward the Divine, but only the struggle to make that turn. Even if Raskolnikov, within the scope of the novel, had achieved the beginning stages of *metanoia*, he has not yet mastered dispassion. In this way the first major post-Siberian novel stands as the first literary embodiment of the hesychastic ladder, the *Spiritual Gate*, from which Dostoevsky attempts to climb to the next in his subsequent novel.

⁵¹⁵ Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov*,” 5.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

One might say that Dostoevsky progressed in his ability to show this level of hesychastic practice in *The Idiot* through the Person of Myshkin. However, even from a non-Orthodox perspective, Myshkin's dispassion fails to live up to an image of Christ. Alina Wyman considers that Myshkin's deviations from the paradigm of a Christlike figure reveal, what she borrows from Bakhtin, a movement away from "active empathy" for others into a "passive empathy." She claims that although Myshkin expresses an "uncanny proximity to God, the hero's rootedness in the realm of the Absolute, that distant 'place beyond the skies,' may explain his Godlike perspective in respect to Rogozhin and Ippolit... But in Myshkin's relationship with Nastasia Filippovna the opposite loss of balance is encountered: the hero becomes 'drowned' in herself, as it were, too fully incarnated in the other."⁵¹⁷ In Wyman's perspective, Myshkin's desire to be in the mode of being-in-relation with Nastasia Filippovna ironically leads him away from authentic being. However, she defends Myshkin from the latest critical trends that reject Dostoevsky's attempt to create an active Christlike figure. She also expresses the inability of Myshkin to fully contend with his human passions in a manner that is commiserate with the Personalist analysis. And although she does not explicitly mention the hesychastic stage of *Unseen Warfare*, a similar trajectory appears in her analysis.

Myshkin is shown to be an adept in the "preventative reaction" of the passions in all areas despite not experiencing any form of ascetic training, except for his interactions with Nastasia Filippovna. Whether he loses his dispassion because of any biological or sexual urges seems to be less of an issue, or at least one for further investigation elsewhere, than the fact that despite his near-unbelievable capacity for self-restraint he is unable to control himself and remain dispassionate with regard to her unique being. Myshkin has failed to pass through the first, and

⁵¹⁷ Wyman, 172.

continual, state of the *Spiritual Gate*: he lacks any definite moment of *metanoia* in the text, and therefore is unprepared for the rigor of *Spiritual Warfare*. As a Christlike being, or at least having been planned to be such, Myshkin does not experience a moment of *metanoia* that would allow him to turn back. Vyacheslav Ivanov asks, “Why is [Myshkin] not allowed to become completely a son of earth? Why is he denied complete incarnation?”⁵¹⁸ Rather than allowing Myshkin to experience a conscious and freely committed spiritual transgression, Dostoevsky replaces this inevitable step on the spiritual ladder with physical infirmity. Without the foundation of repentance that leads to a turn toward being-in-relation, Myshkin is left rudderless upon the stormy sea of the passions. He is not granted “complete incarnation” because Dostoevsky does not yet realize the necessity of this element of life to the hesychastic method.

By overreacting to the problem of Raskolnikov’s egocentric uniqueness, which bars him from maintaining a state of *metanoia*, Dostoevsky places Myshkin on the path toward authentic being. However, without the crucible through which Raskolnikov passed—and which according to the hesychast tradition all people need to experience—Myshkin fails perhaps even shorter than Raskolnikov does on the ladder toward authentic being. Without the first step of the ascetic practice, the path crumbles like a concrete bridge without rebar. Just as each stage of hesychasm must be present in the person to move toward its telos, so too must the fictional Person experience each stage in order to experience and express the higher ontological boundaries of higher realism in the text. In this way Myshkin’s inability to struggle with the passions in any real or meaningful manner—he is unable to save the life of the one Person who most needed his love and communion—prevents him from glimpsing or expressing higher realism. The moments of illumination experienced before his fits do not transcend the ontological or genre boundaries

⁵¹⁸ Ivanov, 92.

of the novel. Although numerous Persons in Dostoevsky's novels struggle with the passions and overcome them, only one Person succeeds in emerging from this warfare in a manner that will depict Dostoevsky's vision of the transcendent world.

The state of *hesychia*, the third stage in Horuzhy's explanation of the ascetic journey, is achieved via a victory over spiritual attacks and a movement into a space of silence and constant prayer. This level of ascetic practice is

one of "sacred silence", tranquility, quiet concentration and integration. Now the vector of the hesychast's principal attention changes its direction: main efforts can now be devoted not to struggling [with] worldly forces, but acquisition of Divine grace and union with Christ in [the Holy] Spirit. Concentrating on this, the [practitioner] is now able to attain the hesychast unceasing prayer; and the unceasing praying accumulates bigger and bigger spiritual energies in man, which makes possible further ascent up the Ladder.⁵¹⁹

This state would seem to be the most difficult level to depict in text because of its inherent non-linguistic and non-rational character. However, Dostoevsky's works are replete with moments of transcendent silence. And yet he rarely shows the fullness of the state of *hesychia*, or at least readers are unable to penetrate into the silence to see what is experienced by the fictional being. The moment that silence is related it is no longer silence.⁵²⁰ One can begin to see from whence the complexity of depicting this state in a literary manner arises through an understanding the untranslatable quality of it from the Orthodox perspective. Dumitriu Stăniloae characterizes *hesychia* as a state beyond apophatic theology "which still thinks the concepts it negates," beyond prayer "because [*hesychia*] has its source in prayer," and finally beyond the self because "this knowledge of God beyond its own depths, when its own subject is no longer seen directly,

⁵¹⁹ Horuzhy, "The Brothers Karamazov," 6.

⁵²⁰ Dostoevsky's interest in the importance of silence in his novels is the topic of a number of recent articles. For the influence of Fyodor Tiuchev's poem "Silentium!" on Dostoevsky's writing of *The Brothers Karamazov* is an area of particular interest see Jason Cieply, "The Silent Side of Polyphony: On the Disappearances of 'Silentium!' from the Drafts of Dostoevskii and Bakhtin," in *Slavic Review*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2016, 678–701. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5612/slavicreview.75.3.0678 (accessed 5 Apr. 2021). For a detailed rendering of *molchania* (*active silence*), see Benjamin Jens, "Silence and Confession in *The Brothers Karamazov*," in *The Russian Review*, vol. 71. 1. January 2016. 51-66. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/russ.12061> accessed on April 5 2021).

and the divine subject indirectly, but vice versa, takes place after the total exit of the mind from itself, beyond itself.”⁵²¹ To find oneself in a state of *hesychia* is to willingly and lovingly negate the self without losing a single portion of the uniqueness of one’s being. It is also an untranslatable moment because it is only directly accessed through personal experience. At this moment, from an exterior position, one either accepts the inability to have a secondhand experience of another’s moment of *hesychia*, or must wait for that moment to be translated and passed on through the language or actions of one who experienced the *synergia*, the meeting between the person and the Divine. Readers, are left to experience not the state of silence itself but only the effect that it has on the fictional being—how it changes their mode of existence.

Dostoevsky found it difficult to portray the fullness and repercussions of this sacred stillness and silence in his novels. Before he encountered the reality of ascetic stillness at Optina Pustyn’, Dostoevsky’s first attempts to depict contact with the Divine in *The Idiot* erupt in a violent and unbearable manner through Myshkin’s physiological distress and his convulsions. The eventual successful depiction would be simultaneously much subtler while also obtaining a thunderous force. The force of the depiction of the state of *hesychia*, is in fact so great that scholars such as Malcolm Jones and others value it higher than the telos of a momentary glimpse of theosis, which is opened by this state.⁵²² Without the deep knowledge of the Orthodox practice that makes this mode of being possible it would be logical to place a greater value on the moment of tranquility rather than the active experience of *synergia*—the moment at which the person comes into contact with the Divine by both the strength of their own will and the power and influence of the Creator. When the ascetic practices are disregarded or displaced and one

⁵²¹ Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, 295-8.

⁵²² See the chapter “Silence” in Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, 139-146.

focuses exclusively on the individual comprehension of the Divine, it is easy to lose track of the foundations from which and toward which Dostoevsky is building his higher realism.

Malcom Jones, in his investigation into the religious experiences within Dostoevsky's novels, asserts that Dostoevsky assumed a certain amount of knowledge of the dogmas and praxis of the Orthodox Church in his readers. What's more, and in fact more importantly for Jones' study, he further implies that the lacunae in that knowledge can and must be filled in through a "minimal religion" that places personal experience above doctrine. Although he grants the necessity of the Orthodox tradition in Zosima and Alyosha's experiences, Jones claims that "the institutions and the dogmas of the Church are there to guide us, but our own religious experience may be much more diverse and in essence much simpler. It is this picture of minimal religion (and indeed minimal atheism, for there is no institution yet to embody it) that Dostoevsky depicts, a picture in which the institutional Church plays a background part."⁵²³ Jones continues, focusing on the concept of silence as a poetic device that is "a reflection of the inadequacy of language to express reality in its most important aspects, a narrative strategy to awaken and sustain interest, a source of dramatic intensity, a means of characterization, especially of neurotic characters, and a lever of plot development."⁵²⁴ He is completely correct in this analysis insofar as the poetics of the novel influence the reader in these ways, but also more particularly as he addresses them within the context of *hesychia*. However, in his focus on *hesychia* as a "quest for nothingness," he values the silence and the tranquility of what he calls the "theological dogma" of ascetic practice higher than the state which comes after it.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, 138-9.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

By neglecting the fullness of hesychastic practice and focusing exclusively on the moments of silence, those moments which both positively and negatively affect a Person's movement toward deification, Jones undervalues the key moment in Dostoevsky's texts regarding religious experience: when Alyosha achieves the final stage of *Noetic Vision*. Although contact between the Divine and the person begins in the silence of *hesychia*, it continues, as do all three of the previous stages, throughout the life of the person. A struggle to maintain a state of *metanoia*, dispassion, and silence are required to continue viewing the world through the eyes of the heart—the *nous*.

What Horuzhy calls the “ontological unlocking of anthropological reality” is the moment in which the human person is opened to reality without time, without space, and within communion with Divine being—living authentically.⁵²⁶ Essentially, reaching the stage of *Noetic Vision* changes the ontological boundaries of the world for the person. Dostoevsky seeks to unlock this state within literature, and does so in *The Brothers Karamazov*—Alyosha's successful achievement of this state brings him into this higher ontology. Through his eyes the reader is able to perceive, as Dostoevsky understands it, the world-as-it-will-be, the transcendent world—a higher realism. I have discussed the *nous* as the supra-consciousness in §VI of Chapter II “The Dostoevskian Character” and how Dostoevsky begins his march toward higher realism by imbuing his Persons with the capacity for *Noetic Vision* through their anthropological mode of being-in-relation. Depicting what seeing “through the eye of the heart” might look like required of Dostoevsky an active engagement with the praxis of Orthodox asceticism.

It would seem then, that Jones was correct in his assessment that if Dostoevsky only assumed a limited amount of knowledge from his readership of the dogmas and practices of the

⁵²⁶ Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov*,” 6.

Orthodox Church then it would be up to the individual reader to fill in what they did not know with their own personal experience. However, one can counter this perspective by concluding that although Dostoevsky assumed most people would not be able to understand the meaning or mode of depicting higher reality unless they made the effort to do so, any exposure to the practices would inherently awaken some closeness to and understanding of the process. The individual experience is less important than the inherent longing for beauty and being-in-relation. But neither the practice nor the telos can be forced on the reader, and so it must be left to them to come to the realization that the ascetic path is the one that Dostoevsky believes is necessary to arrive at a moment of higher being, fictional or real.

This moment of higher being is unveiled in Dostoevsky's hero Alyosha Karamazov.

Dostoevsky clearly amplifies his desires to do so in the introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which he writes:

What is so notable about your Aleksey Fryodorovich that you should choose him for your hero? What particularly has he done? To whom and for what is he known? Why should I, the reader, have to spend my time on the study of the facts of his life?

The last question is the most fateful, for I can only reply: "perhaps you yourself will see from the novel." But suppose they read the novel and do not see, do not agree with the noteworthiness of my Aleksey Fyodorovich? I say this because, to my sorrow, I foresee it. To me he is noteworthy, but I decidedly doubt that I shall succeed in proving it to the reader.⁵²⁷

Just as the person working their way toward a vision of transcendent reality must follow the program of hesychastic practice, so too must the reader engage in a prescribed manner to unlock this higher realism. And Dostoevsky clearly foresees that most will have neither the knowledge of these practices nor the will to learn them in order to read his novel. This does not mean that to enjoy or experience some level of what Dostoevsky intended to depict in the novel one must have a complete understanding of hesychastic practices.

⁵²⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 5.

Dostoevsky, despite his desire to be completely understood, already came to terms with and expected that his readers will not have or obtain an expertise in the practice of hesychasm. But in penning the introduction in this manner, in alerting his reader that he expects some lacunae in their knowledge should raise red flags to the reader. He indicates that there is a key to decoding the cypher of Alyosha's Person that may not be well-known but is accessible. "I've wasted useless words and precious time [talking about how no one will understand my hero even in showing his formative youth]," the narrator says, "first, out of politeness, and second, out of cunning: after all, as they say, I warned you in advance about something."⁵²⁸ That "something" is our key. In his desire to allow the reader a more complete comprehension of the mode of being-in-relation and the fullness of higher realism that Alyosha embodies, he points towards the decoding device—the hesychastic method. Dostoevsky provides the reader enough of the ascetic practice to ignite the lamp of their knowledge while simultaneously refusing to force them into this mindset. The reader does not have to comprehend or actively notice the system because Dostoevsky illumines just enough to open it in their mind, even if he is painfully aware of the certitude of them missing his message.

Furthermore, the necessity of a richer understanding of the ascetic practices that Dostoevsky ingrained into the text and its? Persons should not be prohibitive to either a nineteenth-century or contemporary reader or scholar. The hesychastic practices were not buried in a secret manual or at monasteries, they were not and are not purposefully hidden away from the world at the time the novel was written or now. Although the practice would not reach its zenith in the Orthodox world, and particularly within the Russian Empire, until after the time of the writing of *The Brothers Karamazov*, its roots had been well established and it would blossom

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 6.

shortly thereafter. And an engagement with Orthodox monasticism is even more accessible today in both the West and the East. What is more, one should not think that it is necessary to have an encyclopedic knowledge of or experience with hesychastic practices to see what Dostoevsky has done in the novel.

Horuzhy clarifies how, within the communities in which hesychasm is practiced, a complete engagement with this way of life is not necessary, but that even beginning to engage with it brings about a greater awareness of its thrust and telos:

At a first glance, describing human being in reference to the steps of the practice, even connecting the human constitution with this practice, it would connect hesychast anthropology exclusively to the small community of adepts cultivating this practice; which implies that it is an especially narrow, specialized anthropological conception of no value for general anthropology. However, it turns out to be of much wider spread and greater importance. As said above, hesychast tradition plays a special part in the life of Orthodoxy, representing an instance of higher spiritual and moral authority. It has to be added now that its special part includes also what could be called the *function of an anthropological model and reference point; an anthropological school*, if you wish. Its spiritual and moral authority produces anthropological implications. In any Orthodox society there emerges always some circle of people, for whom the integral way of life created by the tradition (*bios hesychastos*, the “hesychast life”) that becomes the model and reference point for their lives. They do not become “full-time adepts” of hesychasm and members of hesychast tradition, but nevertheless they adhere to the “hesychast life” in various degrees and forms: they adopt its attitudes and values, learn some elements of its school of prayer, assimilate some of its behavioral patterns, etc. etc. In short, they conform to the tradition and are orientated towards it in their way of life, both inner and outer. Thus, one can say that they *realize anthropological strategies, adhering to hesychast anthropology*, and all of their circle forms up a community or stratum, adhering to the hesychast tradition.⁵²⁹

In the same way in which one does not need to be within the “small community of adepts” to practice the ascetic lifestyle, so too can the reader engage with the hesychastic qualities of the novel, and in doing so move closer to a vision of the higher reality in the novel, without entering into the religious praxis of hesychasm. To perceive the quality of higher reality in the novel one does not need to be a “full-time adept of hesychasm,” but the more aware of the strategies at play one becomes, the clearer the vision of the transcendent world within the novel shifts into focus.

⁵²⁹ Horuzhy, “*The Brothers Karamazov*,” 7.

§II: The Reification of the Hesychastic Method and the Beginnings of Higher Realism Through the Retired Bishop Tikhon and Elder Zosima

How, exactly does Dostoevsky set out the signs that point the reader not only toward a depiction of *hesychia* but further on down the ascetic road to *Noetic Vision*, where he achieves a full depiction of higher realism? To lead the reader in this direction, Dostoevsky relies on depictions of ascetics whose lives are conducted according to this method, namely the retired Bishop Tikhon and Elder Zosima. Although Bishop Tikhon's appearance was excised from *Demons*, the spirit of his hesychastic practice haunts the text. And while the immediacy of the system of hesychastic practice is dampened due to this deletion and may be lost to a reader unaware of its systems, a close reading of the rejected chapter reveals just how explicitly Dostoevsky applied them and how much was lost because of the editorial decision.

In his letter of October 8, 1870 to the editor-in-chief and publisher of *Russkii Vestnik* M.N. Katkov, who published the novel, Dostoevsky avers that one of his goals in the text would be to create a positive depiction of saintly figures, and particularly members of the clergy, while also admitting that achieving it would be a difficult task. He writes:

There will be bright faces [as well as gloomy ones in the novel]. Generally, I'm afraid that I don't have the strength to do much. But for the first time I want to touch on one category of people who haven't been touched on in literature. I take Tikhon of Zadonsk as the ideal of this type of person.... I will compare him to the hero of the novel. But I'm very afraid; I have never attempted it, but I know something about this world.⁵³⁰

Despite the fact that Dostoevsky does not explicitly clarify what "this world" is, based on his knowledge of Orthodoxy he is clearly speaking about the appearance of the monastic life in the novel. Therefore, it is logical to infer that "this world" is in fact the engrained hesychastic system within Russian monasticism and hierarchs. There is no question that Dostoevsky knew this world

⁵³⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 29 (1), 142.

intimately. Regarding the accuracy of Dostoevsky's view of contemporary Russian monasticism, Dostoevsky told Maikov in March of 1870 that he "had taken [Tikhon] rapturously into his heart long ago."⁵³¹ In the same letter he mentions archimandrite Pavel of Prussia, an elder of the St. Nicholas Edonverie monastery, and the monk Parfenny, whose work *The Legend of the Pilgrimage and Travels through Russia, Moldava, Turkey and the Holy Land by the Tonsured Monk of the Holy Mount Athos Parfenny* greatly influenced Dostoevsky and includes an encounter with elder Leonid of Optina Pustyn', as influences on his depiction of Stavrogin's visit to the monastery.⁵³² Clearly, Dostoevsky was aware of the life of Tikon and Zadonsk, as well as other instances of Russian and Byzantine Monasticism before the writing of *Demons*, but perhaps part of his inability to give full force to the Character of Tikhon is due to a lack of direct experience with the monastic and hesychastic traditions at this point in his life.

His visit to Optina Pustyn' in the summer of 1877 helped metamorphize his literary engagement with these traditions. This visit afforded him personal meetings with the current elder Amvrosy, who would later be made a saint, as well as other monastic brothers living according to hesychastic principles. As for the history of Orthodox monasticism, Sergei Hackel informs us that Dostoevsky also acquired two books on the history of the monastery, the biography of elder Leonid of Optina, works by Simeon the New Theologian, Mark the Ascetic, and Anastasios of Sinai, and, perhaps most importantly Isaac the Syrian.⁵³³ Hackel further confirms Dostoevsky usage of these texts in his discussion of the influence of Isaac the Syrian's

⁵³¹ Ibid., 118.

⁵³² The Edinoverie movement, starting in the late eighteenth century, began the attempts at rapprochement between the Moscow Patriarchate with the Old Believers, between whom a schism formed in the late seventeenth century during the time of Patriarch Nikon and the Old Believer archpriest Avakuum—for more see Paul Meyendorff, *Russia Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).

⁵³³ Hackel, 142. For a in depth reading of the connection between Amvrosy and Zosima see Dunlop, *Staretz Amvrosy*.

discourse on tears and *hesychia* in relation to Zosima's teachings. [What's more, the text on Isaac the Syrian's writings and life that Dostoevsky received appears in the novel itself. Clearly Dostoevsky utilized these texts he received from elder Amvrosy in the creation of the novel, and the impact they had on him aided the progression of his depiction of the hesychastic tradition.](#)

Both Dostoevsky's first-hand experience as well as the textual references used for Tikhon and Zosima's monasticism and the general monastic life in the texts provide sufficient proof to authenticate Dostoevsky's knowledge of Russian and general Orthodox monasticism. There is a shift in the forcefulness of the depiction of monastic figures between *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. One primary difference that I will investigate is how Dostoevsky moves from creating a typological Character of the retired Bishop Tikhon in *Demons*, to creating a Person in Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. As the neither beings are of the typological level of Type, their authenticity based on an alignment with the typical conception of an Orthodox monastic in the nineteenth century is unnecessary, particularly if the goal is to aim the reader toward the hesychastic method. If either Tikhon or Zosima were an attempt at complete faithfulness to ideal monasticism they would not be potent Characters or Persons. While both are built from the image of a concrete historical source, Tikhon of Zadonsk, the Tikhon of *Demons* is far closer to a sketch than Zosima. By turning first to this Character, the progression to a potent and positive depiction of a saintly figure, as Dostoevsky desired, becomes clear. This analysis will also clarify how vital an understanding and experience of hesychastic tradition is to a complete comprehension of Dostoevsky's achieving a depiction of higher realism.

Margaret Ziolkowski as well as other scholars have confirmed the connection between the Character of the retired Bishop Tikhon and his saintly prototype, Tikhon of Zadonsk.

Margaret implies that there is a certain oddness of both Tikhons that mark them as unified, but

also inherently sets them to run parallel to the typical depiction of a nineteenth century Russian monk: “Both are retired bishops who do not enjoy the confidence and support of their abbots and some of their fellow monks because of what is perceived as their spiritual laxity.”⁵³⁴

Furthermore, she discussing the limited nature of Tikhon’s contribution to the “kenotic spirit” of Dostoevsky’s world, and thus she confirms the issues of his contribution to the hesychastic process in the novels in her analysis that reveals Tikhon’s limited effect on the novel. While it is true that he appears only briefly—and outside the boundaries of the text published within Dostoevsky’s lifetime at that—a deeper reading into his conversation with Stavrogin shows that Dostoevsky did indeed “know something about” the monastic world and the hesychastic tradition it contains, and that the creation of Tikhon serves as a vital stepping stone toward the fulfillment of higher realism in Dostoevsky’s final novel when he is able to create a positive depiction of a saintly figure who guides another Person to authentic being-in-relation through beauty.

The first step to seeing Dostoevsky’s completed poetic vision is to obtain a full understanding of Tikhon as a fictional being. Dostoevsky’s Tikhon teeters on the border between the levels of the Type and Character according to the typological structure presented in the second chapter of the dissertation. He does not quite contain the depth of historical or psychological background found in other Characters in Dostoevsky’s later works—due mostly to his limited appearance in the novel—but there is more substance and grounding than would appear in a Type. If the chapter had not been excised perhaps Tikhon would have developed into a Person, and been more like Zosima, but one can only guess at this thought. The most potent arguments for Tikhon’s Characterhood lie in his moments of fear, hesitance, faith, and love; he is

⁵³⁴ Margaret Ziolkowski, “Dostoevsky and the Kenotic Tradition,” in *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition* Edited by George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 35.

not merely a representation of the Orthodox hierarchy writ large. Herein lies the genius of basing his positive depiction on an “oddity” of a monastic as a foundation, rather than a more traditional or contemporary model such as the Elder Amvrosy of Optina. Dostoevsky at once presents a relatable and valuable fictional being, but one that does not rely too heavily on caricature or a higher realism.

With this in mind, it would be difficult to consider Tikhon a Person, not only due to the brevity of his appearance in the text but because he is not free enough to warrant this level of typological being. There is no need for Tikhon to be a Person in *Demons*, Dostoevsky only requires him to fulfill a role, and a Character is, as I have shown in the second chapter, perfect for this. The depth of psychological and emotional response seen in him certainly mark him within the realm of Character, and his loving self-emptying and uniqueness bring him to the verge of Personhood, he *nearly* comes into relation with Stavrogin, but he is rejected. He exists solely as a tool for Dostoevsky to till the soil of Stavrogin’s soul as a Person. There is neither the dynamism in the depths of Tikhon’s being that would free him from Dostoevsky’s authorial intent, nor does he have the space to grow in relation to another Person.

In a manner similar to the Underground Man, the lack of a Person with whom the other can make a strong loving relation leads to an egocentric end. But throughout the excised Chapter it becomes clear that the fictional Tikhon is too much like his prototype. As Dostoevsky told Katkov, his retired Bishop Tikhon is an attempt to mimic a type of positive figure, rather than to develop a Person from them. The narrator informs the reader that:

Information [about Tikhon] was varied and contradictory, but that there was something in common, namely, that those who loved and those who disliked Tikhon (and there were such), all somehow kept silent about him. Those who disliked him probably did so out of neglect, and those

who were loyal, and even those fervently so, did so out of modesty, as if they wanted to hide something about him—some weakness of his, or perhaps that he was a holy fool.⁵³⁵

The reclusive nature of retired Bishop Tikhon is not only in keeping with his prototype's life in retirement, but also indicates a sort of stagnation and a fidelity to what has already occurred in reality rather than a fidelity to the ontology within the text. The fictional Bishop seems only to spring to life when agitated the other, he is reactionary rather than independently dynamic.⁵³⁶ He is on the cusp of Personhood—and perhaps if Dostoevsky and the censor had allowed him room to breathe—might have found it in his relationship with Stavrogin, as have Pyotr Stepanovich and Shatov. Dostoevsky did not seem to think that he needed to give his positive religious figure this much attention at this time. Or perhaps he was simply not yet prepared to create a vital figure of this nature. However, it is impossible to say, as some critics have, that “The monk and former bishop Tikhon is uncharacteristic of the Orthodox religious world as the monk Zosima.”⁵³⁷ Dostoevsky does, however, impregnate his retired Bishop with the life of the hesychastic method, not only in his being but in the plan that arises from his desire to save Stavrogin. In the short two sections in which Tikhon appears, Dostoevsky depicts him moving through all four hesychastic stages. The depiction of the hesychastic method is built into the fibers of Tikhon's Character, beginning with his seclusion. Although Dostoevsky never explicitly explains why Tikhon enters retirement and seclusion, based on the historical Tikhon one might reasonably assume that he had fallen out of favor with the majority of the nobility. The real Tikhon received a slap in the face from a so-called “Voltairian” landowner due to the Bishop's stance on social inequality and justice. In response Tikhon fell on his knees and begged

⁵³⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 6.

⁵³⁶ For a detailed investigation into the life of Tikhon of Zadonsk in retirement see Nadejda Gorodetzky “Retirement” and “The Inward Man” in *Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk: Inspirer of Dostoevsky* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 63-116.

⁵³⁷ Wil van den Bercken, *Christian Fiction and Religious Realism in the Novels of Dostoevsky* (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 54.

forgiveness.⁵³⁸ Clearly, this act falls into the first level of *Metanoia*, and shows the nearly automated response of repentance in the practiced ascetic. The burden of preaching and working toward social equality through Christian means took a mental and physical toll on Tikhon, and after over a year and-a-half of requests to the Synod and Empress Tikhon was granted leave to retire and recuperate in the Zadonsk monastery.

The fictional Tikhon is marked with the same praise and stigma from the people, hierarchy, and nobility. As the narrator notes, in retirement the Bishop “was visited by the simplest of folks as well as well-known nobles...” but the typical view of the bishop is one that corresponds to the ideas of “one of our dignified little old ‘club gentlemen,’ a pious old man at that, [who maintained]that ‘This Tikhon is almost crazy, or at least an incompetent creature, and, without a doubt, drinks.’”⁵³⁹ On the one hand, the dual love and disdain from the upper classes confirms the suspicion that the fictional Tikhon retired for similar reasons as his prototype. On the other, the anecdote about the slap and the fervent request for forgiveness indicates the connection of the retirement of the fictional Tikhon, who suffers similar denigration, to the first hesychastic stage of *Metanoia*. Although there is no mention of a similar situation to the slap, the narrative that unfolds in Tikhon’s conversation with Stavrogin depicts a similar state of a permanent attitude of repentance.

When Stavrogin reveals his crimes through his letter, Tikhon questions him about his reaction to being forgiven for his sins. In their exchange Dostoevsky unambiguously depicts the permanent attitude of repentance. When Stavrogin tells him that life would be easier for him if people would forgive him, and particularly so if Tikhon would forgive, the Bishop asks for

⁵³⁸ This tale and the following information are related in Gorodetzky’s chapter “Retirement,” 58-62.

⁵³⁹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 6.

Stavrogin's forgiveness as well. Stavrogin is, at first, confused, only to respond "Ah, yes that's a monastic formula."⁵⁴⁰ Stavrogin is correct, insofar as it is an Orthodox custom to respond to a request for forgiveness by both forgiving and asking for forgiveness in return—a custom that stems from the liturgical practice of the priest asking those in the church for forgiveness at various points during the celebration of the Eucharist—but his cynicism is misplaced. In Tikhon the immediate response of asking for forgiveness is not a pleasantry or rote formula, but a living experience of the hesychastic method in response to a specific passion.

Here, Tikhon performs an actual metanoic turn in asking for forgiveness for laughing at Stavrogin's confession and for judging him. He is so steeped in the hesychastic mode that when he is overcome by passions, even passions that others may not consider to be heinous, he immediately seeks to return to a state of harmonious being-in-relation. When Tikhon reveals the "universal laughter" that will accompany the revelations within Stavrogin's letter, the latter is unaware that a sin has been committed against him. It is no wonder Stavrogin, or the reader uninformed of the hesychastic method, is cynical. What seems trivial and perhaps normal human behavior, is in fact a dehumanization of the other and elevation of the self to Tikhon. While Stavrogin believes that the Bishop is judging others, Tikhon states that in his proclamation about the egocentric condition that causes laughter and amusement at the misfortune of others. Tikhon clarifies, stating "I said it more in judgement of myself than others," and in this reveals his guilt and the failure of postlapsarian humanity to move back into communion with the other.⁵⁴¹ In this way, Dostoevsky illuminates the fullness of humanity through the possibility of both fall and redemption. Although the Bishop is practiced in hesychasm he still falls prey to the passions. But

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

being practiced, and having had access to the higher stages of hesychasm, he is able to quickly, almost preemptively move back to the first stage. And this display of egoism and humility are key to Dostoevsky's plan to provide a hesychastic path for Stavrogin.

As the conversation continues Tikhon displays a knowledge of and enacts the second hesychastic stage, *Unseen Warfare*, in the novel. Here he provides a direct engagement of the title of the novel and its second epigraph to the hesychastic method. While the ending of the novel may have changed due to Tikhon's exorcism from the text, his Chapter reveals more about the importance of the passage from the Gospel of Luke regarding the Gerasene swine to the novel. Shortly after the publication of the novel, and without access to the omitted chapters, critic and proponent of the Narodniki movement N.K. Mikhailovsky wrote "The second epigraph, especially in connection with its explanation through the mouth of Stepan Trofimovich [at the end of the novel], shows only that the idea of the novel is intricate, that there is some pretention. But the key to understanding it is offered in the form of an allegory, which is not immediately understood."⁵⁴² But for Dostoevsky the allegory is completely transparent for those who have ears to hear it, and Tikhon's Chapter illuminates it even further for us readers.

In his letter to A.N. Maikov of October 9, 1870 Dostoevsky expresses the singular importance to the novel of the man who had been cleansed of the demons sitting at Christ's feet while the possessed herd dives into the sea as recounted in the Gospels. Dostoevsky writes "This is the theme of my novel. It's called 'Demons,' and it's a description of how these demons entered a herd of swine. No doubt I will write badly; being more a poet than an artist, I have

⁵⁴² Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky, "O 'Besakh' Dostoevskogo" originally published in *Otechestvennie zapiski* 1873 no. 2 <http://dostoevskiy-lit.ru/dostoevskiy/kritika/mihajlovskij-o-besah-dostoevskogo.htm> (accessed March 3, 2021).

always taken subjects beyond my strength. And that's why I'll probably ruin it.”⁵⁴³ Thanks to the censoring of the Chapter and the subsequent shift of the portrayal of a positive figure of Orthodox monasticism and hierarchy part of Dostoevsky’s meaning is obfuscated. Because the retired Bishop’s role in guiding Stavrogin in his spiritual warfare, or at least offering another strategy, no longer inhabits the text the meaning of the allegory is lost, even to Dostoevsky. Joseph Frank notes that “Dostoevsky’s handling of the dying Stepan Trofimovich is one of the most telling demonstrations of his artistic tact and scrupulosity. Deprived both of his positive Christian figure in Tikhon and the opportunity to confront Stavrogin’s despair with the divine mystery of Christ’s all-forgiving love, Dostoevsky must certainly have been tempted to nudge Stepan Trofimovich’s repentance in some conspicuously Christian direction.”⁵⁴⁴ Yet as tactfully and scrupulously artful of a turn as the final text is, the aim of the novel indeed is “ruined” by Dostoevsky’s attempt to tackle subjects “beyond [his] strength,” as he said to Katkov. The impact of the demons going out of the man and his cleansing is impossible without the hesychastic method.

Or perhaps this ruinous attempt to depict a positive figure is not completely Dostoevsky’s fault this time, as it had been with Myshkin. As it was Katkov who exorcised the explicit demons in “At Tikhon’s,” it is clear that the titular Bishop was well prepared to aid Stavrogin in dealing with his demon, but whether that aid would have actually brought Stavrogin toward salvation is unknowable. The demons that rage in Stavrogin are different than those he releases to others. Berdyaev informs us that, in *Demons* “all are possessed, all are raging, all are in convulsions and having seizures. Stavrogin alone is not raging—he is terribly calm, deathly cold, he is frozen,

⁵⁴³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 29 (1), 145.

⁵⁴⁴ Frank, *The Miraculous Years*, 496.

hushed silent. This is the whole essence of *Demons*: Stavrogin gave birth to this raging chaos, released all the demons from himself, and poured his inner life into the demonization around him, but he himself froze, was extinguished.”⁵⁴⁵ And while demons most certainly have come out from Stavrogin and entered into the rest of the world of the novel, either as ideologies or as actual spiritual beings, he is still not free of their possession, he does not sit at the foot of Christ. What’s more, he tells Tikhon “I believe in the demon, believe canonically, in the personal and not the allegorical.”⁵⁴⁶ This is the demon he sees in both dreams and in waking life, that part of the legion that he could not cast out of himself, but one the reader only explicitly sees in the excised Chapter. And here we return to the second stage of the hesychastic method, *Spiritual Warfare*.

This demon of Stavrogin’s, upon being invoked, immediately tests the retired Bishop through its host. Stavrogin asks “Do you believe in God?” and then, “It is said that if you believe and order a mountain to move, it will move... however, that’s poppycock. Even still, I’m curious, could you move a mountain or not?”⁵⁴⁷ Tikhon is not tricked into succumbing to *prelest*, but instead begins both his struggle with the demon and his struggle to save Stavrogin by bringing him into the hesychastic practice. As he says “Let me not be ashamed of Thy Cross, O Lord,” and subsequently “the corners of his mouth began to move nervously and quickly,” Dostoevsky depicts Tikhon’s humility by the admission that he does not believe perfectly followed by silent prayer. These actions aligns him with the hesychastic method.⁵⁴⁸ This movement of the mouth should not be read purely as fear or a weakness of faith represented by a

⁵⁴⁵ Berdyaev, “Stavrogin,” *Istochnik: Russkaia mysl’*. God tridsat’ piaty, kn. V (1941). <http://odinblago.ru/filosofiya/berdyaev/stavrogin/> (accessed March 17, 2021).

⁵⁴⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 11, 10.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

biological trembling, but rather as a confirmation that Tikhon has moved into a mode of almost involuntary prayer, of what Horuzhy calls “preventative reaction,” as outlined in the second hesychastic stage. Readers are experiencing a direct moment of *Spiritual Warfare* as Tikhon overcomes Stavrogin’s demon.

In achieving the second stage, and even a moment of *hesychia*, the third stage, in his silent prayer, he then turns the conversation toward Stavrogin’s faith. As a practiced hesychast, Tikhon is prepared to aid Stavrogin and to come into closer communion with him. The path begins through scripture. As the retired Bishop recites Revelations 3:14-17, the passage regarding the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, he makes a direct and personal connection with Stavrogin’s soul. Just as Sonya’s reading of the resurrection of Lazarus secures a direct personal relationship with Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, so too does Tikhon’s recitation of Revelation being a process of dynamic and synergetic being-in-relation. Hearing the words of Revelation, Stavrogin proclaims a kenotic love for the Bishop, saying “You know, that I love you very much?”⁵⁴⁹ It is a concrete and real moment of authentic being through beauty and relationality for both of them, even if it is fleeting for Stavrogin. But it is Tikhon’s successful actions within the second stage that opens up Stavrogin to the first stage, a true metanoic turn, even if it only lasts a moment.

At this point, Tikhon acts according to the third and fourth stages of *Hesychia* and *Noetic Vision*. Dostoevsky frequently describes him in the chapter as silent or quiet, and he often pauses before speaking, or speaks in hushed tones. More importantly, Tikhon is able to peer into Stavrogin’s soul on more than one occasion thanks to his cleansed *nous*. The first instance of this takes place, even before they begin to talk, when Tikhon tells him that he resembles his mother

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.

not physically, but in his spiritual disposition. Although Stavrogin vehemently rejects this notion, Tikhon seems to be able to read his soul not only here, but throughout the course of the two sections of the Chapter. Having access to the final state of hesychastic practice, Tikhon is able to discern the nature of Stavrogin's soul, the truth behind his confession, his desire for self-abasement, and—most importantly—his inability to suffer the slings and arrows of laughter that will accompany the uncovering of his secret. Knowing this, Tikhon reveals his plan to help save Stavrogin from his self-inflicted and desired fate. The hesychastic practice that makes these things known to the reader and it is through hesychasm that Dostoevsky attempts to cleanse the demons from Stavrogin.

The clearest indication that Dostoevsky writes with the Orthodox monastic and hesychastic principles in mind is Tikhon's solution to Stavrogin's possession. Tikhon predicts both the futility of the written confession and Stavrogin's inability to even present it to the public. And after reading the confession and exposing the limits of Stavrogin's forbearance in the face of humiliation to him, Tikhon's presence, his self-emptying love, opens Stavrogin who then displays a true desire for further *metanoia*, a more concrete movement into the first stage of hesychasm. He knows that battle with and victory over his demon is the only possibility of peace: "I want to forgive myself... I know that only then with this apparition vanish. That is why I am seeking boundless suffering," and like Mitya Karamazov, who expressed desire for suffering to Alyosha, Stavrogin is told that he need not suffer alone.⁵⁵⁰ Tikhon tells him that this is the first sign of true belief and the path to the resurrection of his soul.

However, Tikhon, seeing into Stavrogin's future, realizes this man's need of a deep and loving personal relationship, something he is incapable of providing as a Character. Instead, he

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 27.

offers an alternative to the egocentric repentance of the confessional letter that can only lead to madness and suicide. Tikhon advises him that “You are battling with the desire for martyrdom and self-sacrifice; conquer this desire of yours and put down your pages and intentions—and then you will already have conquered everything. You will have put to shame your pride and your demon! You will be a victor, you will attain freedom!”⁵⁵¹ He proposes that Stavrogin begin his path by submitting himself to an elder. Through this advice Dostoevsky explicitly ties together hesychastic movement through eldership with the salvation of this Person. But again, in typical Dostoevskian fashion the connection between the Orthodox principles and the world of the novel are left on the threshold thanks to editing and, more importantly, the freedom of the Person.

While Tikhon suggests that Stavrogin need not necessarily become a monk, but only become a novice, to go under obedience of this great elder, in order study the paths to a mode of authentic being-in-relation. But as a Person, and one who is inclined toward egoism and *prelest*’ and he rejects Tikhon. Like Raskolnikov, Stavrogin is not yet prepared as a Person to turn to the path that Alyosha will take in *The Brothers Karamazov*. And as the end of the novel bears out, this hesychastic path is not taken by Stavrogin. Tikhon sees through the eyes of his heart that Stavrogin will not walk this path and, like Zosima before Alyosha, predicts Stavrogin’s actions and his suicide. It seems that Dostoevsky, like Tikhon, knew that the demons within his protagonist could not be overcome. But does Stavrogin’s rejection of the hesychastic path represent another of Dostoevsky’s failures—Raskolnikov was not ready for salvation, and Myshkin was unable to save Rogozhin or Nastasia Filippovna? Vasily Komarovich seems to think so: “Humility has not conquered the spirit of pride. And yet only such a victory in solving

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 29.

the given problem [of saving Stavrogin] could have revealed the ‘majestic, positive, and sacred figure’ under the unsightly mask of the hypochondriac [of Tikhon]. However, Dostoevsky was not to succeed in depicting ‘the sanctified possessed at the feet of Christ.’⁵⁵² Although we do not see a sanctified Stavrogin, we have no indication that Dostoevsky ever meant for the end of *Demons* to depict the repentant and cleansed sinner.

As a Person an ending in which he repents, stops Pyotr Stepanovich, and saves Shatov seems to be completely unlikely, even if “At Tikhon’s had remained in the novel. Therefore, perhaps it was convenient that this Chapter was exercised and that Dostoevsky did not have to struggle with Stavrogin’s quest for redemption with the path having been made so obvious to him. Whatever the answer to this hypothetical might be, it is clear, however, that following *The Idiot* Dostoevsky realized that the only path to a depiction of a true mode of authentic being in a fictional Person required following the hesychastic path. He attempts to resolve this issue in *Demons*, but thanks to circumstances out of his control he is once again prevented from producing an accurate depiction of reality as it is and as it will be. Moving on from Tikhon, the issue he faces is how to incorporate a model for and a potent and realistic example of a person climbing the hesychastic ladder in a text without making them too typical or too scandalous for his publisher. He finds the answer to these problems, and simultaneously solves the difficulties he confesses to Katkov that he experiences first hand in the Character of Tikhon, in the Person of Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Zosima is clearly a more deeply developed and complex fictional being than Tikhon, but does he cross the threshold from Character to Person? And is it even important that he holds that typological position within the context of the novel? Kate Holland’s study on the hagiographic

⁵⁵² Komarovich, 87.

elements of Zosima's life in *The Brothers Karamazov* provides fertile ground for this discussion.

She writes:

The difference between the hagiographic and novelistic modes is evident if we compare the narrative of Zosima's duel and the narrative of the mysterious stranger. Even as Zosima describes the events leading up to the challenge, the moment of conversion intrudes. His behavior seems to follow a predetermined pattern, a path toward enlightenment. There is no narrative suspense, no identifiable moment of moral choice, when his conscience could have led him either one way or another. The mysterious stranger, on the other hand, continually defers his admission of guilt, demonstrating his moral choice.⁵⁵³

One might argue that the reduction of Zosima's past to a hagiographic mode makes Zosima even more Typical than Tikhon. His life is even more fictionalized and made to adhere strictly to hagiographic genre conventions. But does a life that follows the obedience of a system designed to instill obedience prevent him from entering into the typographical level of Person? The answer to this depends on if one believes that hagiographic literature strips the subject of their uniqueness and personhood, or if, in the Personalist perspective, the life that is lived in striving toward the Divine is similar in many ways but simultaneously gilded with byzantine decorations of the unique person.

If, then, one considers Zosima as merely a product of a hagiographic tradition that seems to vary only slightly from person to person—although in fact hagiographic tradition in the Christian East is extremely vast and varies in form and content—and that Dostoevsky's incorporation of the genre in his novel merely repeats what already exists in Orthodox literature, then yes, Zosima would not be considered a Person. However, does being a saint make one less of a person within the greater Orthodox content? Absolutely not. Despite their higher progression on the soteriological ladder, saints still maintain their humanity, only at a higher level of reality. Furthermore, Zosima's *zhitie* (*hagiographic life*) deviates from the standard Orthodox *zhitie* in

⁵⁵³ Kate Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration: Dostoevsky and the Problem of Genre in the 1870s*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 174.

numerous ways, not least of which is the first-person narrative style of his historical encounters.

But it does express the most important aspects of the *zhitie*. As Gail Lenhoff writes:

A *vita* [*zhitie*] is an account of events in the life of a person who imitates the example of Christ to a degree regarded as in some way exceptional... It is understood that because the acts of a saint are real events in the life of an individual and because a person's candidacy for this class is often signaled by miracles, there are going to be instances when a person whose behavior is not typical of a saint is nevertheless presented as being worthy of veneration.⁵⁵⁴

Generally speaking, the *zhitie* of Zosima seems odd to the reader because they are most likely unfamiliar with the genre or have certain expectations for the life of a saint, and in Zosima neither of these are fulfilled. An oft heard critique of Zosima is echoed in Caryl Emerson's discussion of Alyosha's Elder in relation to Ivan's Grand Inquisitor: "Is the elder Zosima a sufficiently vigorous, convincing rebuttal of the 'extreme blasphemy' of the Grand Inquisitor? Can Zosima be made to seem equally tough, unsentimental, novelistically compelling, a man who has also thought things through to the end and is anchored in the realities of the world?"⁵⁵⁵ He is either not saintly enough or too saintly for most readers.

Why is it, exactly, that so many people have difficulties reading Zosima as strong, well developed, and unique fictional being, as a Person? On the one hand, in line with Emerson's perspective, Zosima and the Orthodox response falls short of refuting Ivan's (threshold-)atheism. He is not saintly enough, or at least his saintliness does not defeat the darkness of the Inquisitor. On the other hand, he is too saintly and does not feel enough like a viable, dynamic fictional being, as Sven Linner writes:

When Dostoevsky decided to depict a saint of unquestionable authority in *The Brothers Karamazov*, he thereby eliminated from his figure the sort of weakness which we see in Tikhon from the preceding novel... Dostoevsky has not only made the starets Zosima mentally healthy,

⁵⁵⁴ Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts*, (Columbus, OH: Slavica Press, 1989) 27.

⁵⁵⁵ Caryl Emerson, "Zosima's 'Mysterious Visitor': Again Bakhtin on Dostoevsky, and Dostoevsky on Heaven and Hell," in *A New Word on The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 155.

but has also stripped his character of the features that make Tikhon one of his most fascinating figures, nearly as complex as Myshkin. The portrait of the starets, after all, is almost devoid of shadings; we perceive no hint of contradictions or tensions in him, hardly even any pain.⁵⁵⁶

This view of Zosima's existence in the novel reinforces the idea that the hagiographic nature of the Elder neuters him of his vivacity, stripping him of his personal uniqueness. However, there are obvious signs of human shadings: the pains of age and sickness, the sorrow at the coming tragedy of the parricide, the contradictions and hesitations Zosima faces before he enters the monastic life. These moments exemplify that Zosima exists in the text as not only a Person, but as functional and "realistic" form of an idealized person. He is not perfect, but he is the ideal toward which a person can strive. This is the same principle of the ideal of beauty as discussed in the previous chapter—the person is "idealized" not in a platonic or metaphysical manner, but in the reality of their living in the authentic mode of being-in-relation through self-emptying love. Georges Florovsky writes "We now know that Starets Zosima was not drawn from nature; in this instance Dostoevsky did not proceed from the examples at Optina. This was an 'ideal' or 'idealized' portrait, patterned largely after St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, whose writings inspired Zosima's 'Instruction' [*Pouchenie*]."⁵⁵⁷ Like the retired Tikhon, Zosima stems from the prototype of Tikhon of Zadonsk but he is even more "ideal" than his counterpart in *Demons* because he contains a dynamism and spark of higher reality that was lacking in the earlier novel.

It is not the foundation for a fictional being that determines their typographical level but the level at which they function in the novel. And while the Zosima of Alyosha's hagiography may well be typical of a saint—and therefore this fictional being of the text within the text might be called a Type—the interactions between the Zosima of the general narrative of the novel and

⁵⁵⁶ Linner, 79-80.

⁵⁵⁷ Georges Florovsky, "The Quest Evolution of the Dostoevskian Conception of Human Freedom," in *Theology and Literature*, in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* 11, (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Buechervertriebanstalt, 1987), 87.

Alyosha, particularly in the *noetic vision* of the Wedding at Cana, show the reality of the Person. What's more, the odor of corruption stemming from Zosima's corpse that dominates the narrative for the entirety of Book VIII confirms Zosima's material side, his humanity, his connection to the world. He overcomes the false accusations of those who seek a miracle and overlook the miraculous nature of the everyday self-emptying, loving, and unique reality within Zosima's Personhood. The disdain of Fr. Ferapont and the murmurings of both monastics and townsfolk before and after Zosima's death stand to show that Zosima is not greater than any other person within the novel, except that his is more advanced in his spiritual progression. This very same idea can and must be applied to our understanding of Zosima as a typological Person as well; Zosima is already on a higher level of being-in-relation thanks to his adherence to the hesychastic tradition, but he remains a Person. Perhaps a closer inspection of how precisely Zosima fits into this Orthodox schema of soteriological progression will further elucidate the understanding of his Personhood.

Due to the uniqueness and freedom instilled in Zosima, particularly as expressed in his idiosyncratic quirks based on Tikhon of Zadonsk, Zosima does not fit the stereotypical view of a monk, which has led to a history of misgivings surrounding the orthodoxy of Zosima's Orthodoxy. However, as Paul Contino notes, "Although some have critiqued the elder's Orthodox practice as thin, Zosima's recollections are implicitly rooted in the incarnation, with its sacralization of time, space, and story, and the church as Christ's body."⁵⁵⁸ However, in the years following the publication of the novel even the monastics at Optina Pustyn' did not see their monasticism in Zosima. Konstantin Leontiev wrote to Vasily Rozanov on May 8, 1891 that:

In Optina 'The Brothers Karamazov' is not recognized as a truthful orthodox writing, and the elder Zosima does not at all look like Ambrose of Optina, neither in his doctrine nor in his

⁵⁵⁸ Paul Contino, *Dostoevsky's Incarnational Realism: Finding Christ among the Karamazovs* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 50.

character. Dostoevsky described only his appearance, but he made him *speak* quite *differently* from what he was saying, and not in *the style* of Ambrose manner of speaking. Father Ambrose put strictly *church mysticism above all*, and only then followed applied morality. As for Father Zosima (though the mouth of which Fyodor. Mikhailovich speaks himself!), puts morality, ‘love’, ‘love’, etc. above all, and mysticism, indeed, is *very weak*.⁵⁵⁹

But as seen in Dostoevsky’s own words and subsequent analysis, Zosima was not meant to be a mimetic depiction of any living monastic, much less the spit and image of the current Elder Amvrosy. Rozanov, in his response to Leontiev, expressed the truth of Dostoevsky’s vision: “If [Zosima’s behavior] did not correspond to the type of Russian monasticism of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, then maybe, and even probably, it corresponded to the type of monasticism of the fourth to ninth centuries.”⁵⁶⁰

This “monasticism of the fourth to ninth centuries” is the monasticism that was revitalized in Russia through hesychastic practice and propagated by Paisius Velichkovsky. Florovsky, in describing the composition of Tikhon of Zodonk’s character, furthers the notions of that which Rozanov eludes to:

In any case it is impossible to see a representation of early *Rus* in St. Tikhon. This is precisely where his originality lies—in the fact that by spiritual type, he was a man of the new, post-Petrine epoch... This was a man of the troubled eighteenth century... In St. Tikhon, radiant contemplation of the early Byzantine mystics is unexpectedly renewed—the vision of the Tabor light, the pathos of the Transfiguration, and all the inundating joy, so strongly shading him by frequent grief from confusion... Here was revealed to Dostoevsky not the early, but the inner *Rus*.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ Rozanov, V.V. *Sobranie sochinennii v 30 tomakh, III, Literaturnye izgnanniki*. N.N. Strakhov. K.N. Leontiev., *Pod obschch*, ed. A.N. Nikol'yukina, (Moscow: Respublika, 2001), 337.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. For a detailed analysis of Zosima’s status within Orthodox tradition through the discourse between Rozanov and Leontiev see Alexander A. Medvedev “The Elder Zosima as a Renovation of Orthodox Tradition (K.N. Leontiev and V.V. Rozanov’s Polemic about the Novel by F.M. Dostoevsky ‘The Brothers Karamazov’,” in *The Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 3 (November 2018), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/the-elder-zosima-as-a-renovation-of-orthodox-tradition-k-n-leontiev-and-v-v-rozanovs-polemic-about-the-novel-by-f-m-dostoevsky-the-brothers/viewer> (accessed March 22, 2021). And for more information on Zosima’s positioning in the category of Russian monasticism see Linda J. Ivanits “Hagiography in “Brat’ja Karamazovy””: Zosima, Ferapont, and the Russian Monastic Saint,” in *Russian Language Journal*, Winter 1980, vol. 34, no. 117, 109-126, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43669580> (accessed on April 11, 2021).

⁵⁶¹ Georges Florovsky, “*The Brothers Karamazov: An Evaluation of Komarovich’s Work*,” *Theology and Literature*. in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* 11, (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Buechervertriebanstalt, 1987), 91.

If Zosima did not inhabit Optina Pustyn' as it was in the 1880s, he certainly prefigured and helped tilt the sails of both the popular view of Russian monasticism and its practice in Russian monasteries toward the hesychastic foundations of Byzantine mysticism of the fourth to ninth centuries. He demonstrates the living embodiment of the hesychastic traditions of that early Byzantine mysticism as a Person not only within the liturgical or hagiographic boundaries of the Church, but in in the world. Zosima is an embodiment of the budding hesychastic revival in nineteenth century Russia. Unlike Velichkovsky, whose work is aimed at the spiritual regeneration within the monasteries, Dostoevsky announces the revitalization of the hesychast tradition through the realization of authentic being-in-relation that stems from living according to the hesychastic mode for those outside the walls of the Church, liturgically and sacramentally speaking. From an Orthodox perspective, any problems with Zosima's orthodoxy would not simply be a product of his comfortable furniture or eating jam, of which he is accused within the novel, but rather, the primary issue would be with a transgression of the sacramental and liturgical life. However, Dostoevsky does not explicitly depict the sacraments within his major novels. His concern is not with adding to the treasury of Orthodox canonical or scriptural writing.

Rather his work brings the reader to the threshold of the Church proper, and brings the spirit of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church into the world through his heroes, but I will return to this topic after analyzing Alyosha's vision of the Wedding in Cana. In depicting the fullness of the Church—its ecclesiality—, including its liturgical and sacramental components in discreet manners, through Zosima and Alyosha Dostoevsky expresses the beauty of which I wrote in the previous chapter. For, as Pavel Florensky writes:

There is no *concept* of ecclesiality, but ecclesiality itself is, and for every living member of the Church, the life of the Church is assimilated and known only through life—not in

the abstract, not in a rational way. If one must nevertheless apply concepts to the life of the Church, the most appropriate concepts would be not juridical and archaeological ones but biological and aesthetic ones. What is ecclesiality? It is a new life, life in the Spirit. What is the criterion of the rightness of this life? Beauty... The connoisseurs of this beauty are the spiritual elders, the *starsy*, the masters of the “art of arts,” as the holy fathers call asceticism. The *starsy* were adept at assessing the quality of spiritual life, The Orthodox taste, the Orthodox temper, is felt but is not subject to arithmetical calculation. Orthodoxy is shown, not proved. That is why there is only one way to understand Orthodoxy: through direct Orthodox experience.⁵⁶²

Aside from the fictional hagiography of Zosima, Dostoevsky’s texts are not liturgical, but on that threshold. As an elder Zosima, as Florensky explains, expresses the living example of Orthodoxy and hesychastic practice as a whole, bringing together the Personhood and beauty that stem from the image and likeness of the Divine of which this dissertation has, at great length, discussed. For Dostoevsky, the entrance into the ecclesiality of the Church is not directly liturgical, but of lived, relational experience, and so it should be unsurprising that his fictional beings never cross this threshold into the realm of the explicitly sacred in the novel. Due to the balancing on this tightrope between the sacred and the profane however, it is also unsurprising that readers and critics either over-inflate or look past Zosima’s potency as an embodiment of the hesychastic model.

Dostoevsky, in creating Zosima, does succeed in creating a positive figure of a monastic and in him comes closest to presenting the realities of the sacramental and liturgical life in the texts, due to the hesychastic mode that runs through the elder’s entire being. Although this fictional Person is accused both within the text and critically of being somehow outside the boundaries of Orthodoxy, it is clear that Zosima’s life and teachings in no manner transgress Orthodox moral or canonical boundaries. While the institution of eldership was questioned and debated in Russia during Dostoevsky’s lifetime, it has not and was not deemed outside the

⁵⁶² Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, 8-9.

canonical limits of Orthodoxy.⁵⁶³ Although Zosima is never shown giving or receiving sacraments, he constantly speaks of them, particularly in the last moments we as readers see of his earthly life. And it is precisely at this time, when he is actively yet discreetly engaging in the liturgical life of the Church, that the accusations of leading a passionate and sinful life are leveled by others.

The reactions in the novel of the monastic brethren, the locals, and—most explicitly—Fr. Ferapont as well as those of critics such as Leontiev are made to the outer works, the explicit legalistic elements, of Zosima’s work as an Elder in the hesychast tradition. The inner work, that which is directly related to the positions of *Metanoia*, *Spiritual Warfare*, *Hesychia*, and *Noetic Vision* are all plain to see in Zosima and point toward the definite position of his fictional being at the level of Person. These inner workings of the hesychastic tradition within Zosima’s life most vividly takes shape in his relationship with Alyosha. Horuzhy, discussing the inner life of Zosima, notes:

To him, the inner world of his fellow beings is open and, due to this gift, he is a far-sighted counselor and spiritual teacher for every man coming to him... The Elder is an experienced hesychast, who reached the higher steps of the spiritual Ladder and never ceases the Noetic Practice. [... However,] there is no visible trace of the fact that the Elder is a practicing hesychast, cultivating *Praxis Noera*. His homilies say nothing about the hesychast Method, the steps of the Ladder, etc.”⁵⁶⁴

Dostoevsky leaves the connection of hesychastic practice up to the reader to identify on a personal level, mirroring the necessity of experiencing a personal connection in order to achieve an authentic state of being-in-relation with the other. The praxis of hesychastic traditions is

⁵⁶³ For more on the flourishing of eldership and the controversy see “The Opponents of Eldership: The Persecution of Elder Fr. Leonid in 1835-1836” 63-70 in Clement Sederholm, *Elder Leonid of Optina* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2002) and Irina Paert, “Monasticism and Elders between Reform and Revival, 1721-1801,” “The Institutionalization of Spiritual Guidance, 1810-1890,” and Elders, Society, and the Russian People in Post-Emancipation Russia. 1860-1890,” 41-139 in *Spiritual Elders: Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* (Bloomington, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

⁵⁶⁴ Horuzhy, “The Brothers Karamazov,” 10-11.

maintained internally, while the liturgical and sacramental components, which are vital to maintaining internal practice, are left on the other side of the threshold.

Why does Dostoevsky leave the most vital aspects of Orthodox life—the sacramental and liturgical—out of the body of his texts, leaving the hesychastic method viewed only as if through a glass darkly? Why does he leaving himself open to criticisms such as Leontiev’s and Fr. Ferapont’s if his desire is to create a Person who represents the reality of being? Horuzhy explains:

To start with, in his scantiness of words on the hesychast Method and all concrete matters of hesychast practice, Zosima [and therefore Dostoevsky] is not alone, such scantiness being a well-known trait of Russian hesychast practice. [...] Next, it is necessary to note that the discourse of Zosima displays on of the main traits, which create a bond between the world of hesychasm and all the world of Dostoevsky: the pivotal world of repentance.⁵⁶⁵

As Horuzhy explains, the hesychastic method is, generally speaking, not a topic often discussed outside the circles in which it is practiced, namely outside of monasteries. An Elder will guide their spiritual children or those coming to them seeking counsel along the hesychastic ladder without speaking of it except on certain occasions. The tradition and its steps are kept close to the Elder’s heart for multiple reasons; the two most important of which, for sake of the analysis of Zosima and Alyosha, are first, that the Elder needs to maintain a level of humility that speaking openly about the method would undercut, and second, not everyone who comes for advice is willing to or capable of walking along the explicit steps of a rigorous and monastic style of hesychastic practice. Both of these points explain why Tikhon, in *Demons*, tells Stavrogin that he should not join the monastery, but remain in the world and practice the hesychastic method within himself.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 12.

I will not go further into a dissection of the fidelity to Orthodox teachings and practices of Zosima. This task has been accomplished elsewhere by literary critics, monastics, students of theology, and hierarchs of the Orthodox Church and other religious leaders—Christian and otherwise.⁵⁶⁶ Rather, let us turn our focus to how Zosima displays the four levels of hesychastic practice in the text in order to unveil how he leads Alyosha onto this path and prepare him for the trials he faces throughout the novel after his Elder's repose. *Metanoia*, the first step of the hesychastic method, is the central theme of all of Zosima's teachings, discussions, and actions. It is also the heart of all of Dostoevsky's works and, as I have demonstrated throughout the previous chapters, crucial to Dostoevsky's anthropological, aesthetic, and ontological foundations. The capacity for repentance and turning toward the other, and particularly the Divine, is that which brings the Person from a realist mode into a higher realism—active *metanoia* provides the Person with access to authentic being-in-relation in a manner that transcends the norms of the nineteenth century realist novel. The second level, introducing the victory in *Spiritual Warfare*, is achieved through struggling with the passions, not hiding from them or turning toward *prelest*, and Zosima's example from the interactions with Mitya goes on to be reflected and shine in Alyosha's visit to Grushenka's. The silent prayer of the third step *Hesychia* is harder to pinpoint precisely in Zosima, but comes naturally to Alyosha. And finally, the *Noetic Vision* of Zosima asserts itself vividly in the text three times; twice didactically displayed for Alyosha, and once bringing the two together in the synergetic and kenotic fulfillment of authentic being and higher realism in the novel.

⁵⁶⁶ Beyond Leontiev and Rozanov's dialogue, Contino, Jones, and Linner's aforementioned books, there is a wonderful study by Konrad Onasch "Dostoevskij und die Lehrtradition der Orthodoxen Kirche," in *Dostoevsky and the Twentieth Century, the Ljubljana Papers*, ed. Malcolm Jones, (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1993), 137-48 which also investigates Zosima's Orthodoxy.

The sign of the first level of the hesychastic method is apparent nearly every time the Elder speaks in the novel. *Metanoia* is embraced in the concept of repentance toward all and on behalf of all who possess a portion of the Divine, their personal *logos*. As Horuzhy notes, “The world of hesychast asceticism is penetrated and colored by the atmosphere of repentance, which represents not only the beginning gate of spiritual ascent, but also the permanent attitude of the Orthodox consciousness.”⁵⁶⁷ Zosima first learned this permanent attitude of forgiveness and repentance for all and on behalf of all from his older brother Markel, and perfected it throughout his time in the monastery; “I gradually became convinced that my brother was in my destiny, as if an instruction and guidance from above, for if he had not appeared in my life, if he had not been at all, then perhaps I think that I would not have accepted the monastic order and entered on this precious path.”⁵⁶⁸ Zosima’s hesychasm draws potency from the boundless capacity for forgiveness and kenotic love that his brother pours out into the world. It colors his discourse with the women of faith and Madame Kokhlakova in the Second Book, Chapters III and IV, his intervention in the Karamazov family dispute between Mitya and Fyodor Pavlovich, and the biographical portions and sermons/lessons in his hagiography.

More importantly, this infinite capacity for forgiveness and repentance as the ultimate act of kenotic love is precisely that which Zosima recognizes in Alyosha. The Elder remarks that “Although his face does not very much resemble [my brother], perhaps only slightly, Aleksey seems to me to resemble him so much spiritually that I have many times taken him for that very youth, my brother, who had come to me mysteriously at the end of my journey, for some recollection and insight.”⁵⁶⁹ Zosima’s recognition of Alyosha’s inherent inclination toward

⁵⁶⁷ Horuzhy, “The Brothers Karamazov,” 12.

⁵⁶⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 259.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

metanoia and the first level of hesychastic practice stems from his own encounter with the first level in his brother Markel. And it was experiencing Markel's *metanoia* that began Zosima on, and sustained him through, his monastic path.

Metanoia is the first step not only toward the soteriological goal, but also the beginning of an authentic experience of higher reality in the text. The Underground Man, Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Rogozhin, Nastasia Filippovna, Stavrogin, Mitya, and Ivan, as I have claimed, display at least a moment of *metanoia* and pushes their fictional being upward into the fullness of Personhood in the texts, and while *metanoia* is not a requirement for Personhood—Pyotr Stepanovich being the prime example of this—it is central to the fundamental state of relational being at that typological level. In *The Brother Karamazov* Zosima learned and mastered this practice, but he is so well versed in it that he appear to lack personal uniqueness—hence the above cited issues regarding him. In Alyosha, however, the inherent state of all humanity—in Dostoevsky's estimation—that actively strives for communion with the other through kenotic love and repentance shines brightest in its juxtaposition with the reality of fallen human nature. This quality is the cornerstone of Alyosha's beauty, it is that which brings Zosima into a state of being-in-relation with him. In Zosima's word he expresses the unique beauty of both Alyosha and his brother within the concept of beauty as charm, as an invitation into authentic being and a return to the image and likeness inherent in all humans. The inherent state of *Metanoia* thrusts the typicality of Zosima up into the realm of Personhood, as it allows him the freedom to create his relationship with Alyosha, moving him beyond a stereotypical figure or mere Character. And this state of *Metanoia*, although intended as part of the natural mode of human being, is impossible to maintaining at all times. Rather, *Metanoia* requires practice. And both Zosima and Alyosha's ability to maintain the state of *Metanoia* is put to the test in the novel.

The practice of repentance arrives along with *Spiritual Warfare*, but also leads directly to a moment depicting *Hesychia* and *Noetic Vision* in both Persons. Dostoevsky exhibits Zosima's battle with the passions in a similar manner to Tikhon's confrontation with Stavrogin. When placed in the role of arbiter between Fyodor Pavlovich and Mitya in the First Book of the novel, Zosima is confronted by Ivan's demon, which manifests the idea that "if humanity's belief in the immortality of the soul was destroyed, not only love but all of the life of the world would dry up. Not only that, but then no longer would anything be immoral, everything would be permitted, even anthropophagy."⁵⁷⁰ Zosima rejects this ideology by telling Ivan that toying with it is a sign of his capacity for lofty thought, and that working through them in his articles and in discussions in drawing rooms—here Zosima also displays *noetic* foresight, predicting the positive and negative impact of Ivan's retelling of his *poema* about the Grand Inquisitor to Alyosha later in the novel—will lead him to the knowledge that is the cause of his heartache: that the immortality of the soul is indeed real and that the immorality of humanity cannot outweigh the love of the Divine. This conversation unfolds in a loving and open manner, the struggle against the passions is won through silent forbearance and loving reproach. Zosima does not react passionately to Ivan's troubling thoughts, but opens himself to the other. He accepts the beauty of the personal uniqueness that struggles with an idea while rejecting that which attempts to egocentrically consume the other.

In this way Zosima mirrors Tikhon's actions when he tells Stavrogin that if he is capable of belief then he is on the way toward salvation. But this requires a willingness to move forward with one's struggle with the passions. The contest Stavrogin could not engage in, Ivan takes on—thanks in no small part to the connection he makes with Alyosha and Mitya. The

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 64-65.

hesychastic path is opened to Ivan, but he will not walk it alone. When Zosima adds “May God grant that the decision of your heart come to you while you are still on this earth, and may God bless your path,” he again peers into the future with the eyes of his heart. The “path” of which Zosima speaks is not hesychastic practice explicitly, such as entering a monastery or studying with an elder, but rather it is the path that Ivan will walk with his brothers—with Alyosha as his guide toward spiritual enlightenment and salvation and Mitya as his partner in their mutual growth.

Zosima’s struggle against Ivan’s demon and the advice he gives him to overcome it may seem too easy, or perhaps even nonexistent. But Zosima functions on an idealized level of hesychastic practice. He has struggle with his own passions for so long, as the hagiographic entry informs the reader, that he is well prepared for this instance. The hesychastic method is clearly at play here, however, marked distinctively at the end of their conversation with a moment of *Metanoia* and *Hesychia*. First, Ivan, of his own volition, comes to Zosima for a blessing, much like Stavrogin opens to Tikhon and proclaims his love for the retired Bishop. And second, the entire room and all therein sit under the cloud of a mysterious and solemn silence. There is an air of trepidation due to both suspicion that Ivan is insincere in his acceptance of Zosima’s words and the possibility that this moment of authentic being-in-relation has influenced time and space in the room. The hush should be read as the incursion of the beginnings of higher reality into the world, a mutual realization of the beauty of opening the self to the other.

This silence is broken by the upheaval of Fyodor Pavlovich and Mitya reigniting their passionate struggle. And as the passions rage, Zosima once again provides a model for the hesychastic method. In the turmoil of the struggle between the two over greed and lust, Mitya actively rejects *metanoia*, saying “I came intending to forgive, if he had held out his hand, to

forgive and to ask forgiveness...⁵⁷¹ What's more, the two threaten each other's lives by suggesting they hold a duel. Their passions have broken through and spilled out for all to see. Then, despite Mitya's refusal to follow the beginning steps to authentic being and to move back toward a mode of being-in-relation with his father, Zosima reopens the first step on that path to him not through instruction or ideas, as he did for Ivan, but through action. Zosima bows before Mitya, a symbol of repentance in the Orthodox tradition, and asks for forgiveness from everyone present.

By bowing to Mitya and asking the forgiveness from everyone in the room, Zosima fulfills all four stages of the hesychastic method: *Metanoia* through the act of bowing and asking forgiveness, *Spiritual Warfare* by not responding to the temptations arising from the passions and judging the two for their sins—which Dostoevsky makes even clearer through the cry of “Shame!” from the monk Father Ioseph—, *Hesychia* through his silent and prayerful reaction to the event, and *Noetic Vision* in his foresight into Mitya's sufferings, both spiritually and materially. If Dostoevsky is not purposefully coding this method into the text it is embedded in it thanks to his familiarity with and desire to express Orthodoxy in a positive and active manner. The text further confirms Zosima's following of this path in the next chapter. In Zosima and Alyosha's conversation, in which the elder tells his pupil that he must leave the monastery to aid his family, he confirms that Alyosha is to be the “elder” for his family, bringing them along the hesychastic path toward the experience of authentic being that Alyosha will soon see with the eyes of his heart. For Alyosha's defense in walking this path, Zosima instructs him in the art of his own mode of protection, “If demons rise up, read a prayer.”⁵⁷² Zosima passes on that which

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 72.

he embodies with the knowledge that Alyosha will excel in its execution, and admonishing him to go into the world to aid those in need.

In every act Zosima teaches Alyosha the path of the hesychastic method, he shows him through an active life of living the precepts of his faith to tread the path to authentic being-in-relation and to find salvation. From this moment forward in the novel Dostoevsky works to illuminate how the connection formed through Alyosha's freely given, loving, and self-emptying obedience, leads to the fulfillment of the author's desire to depict the mystery of the person through beauty. And in doing so unveiling a reality simultaneously as it is and as it will be, activating a form of higher realism in the novel through Alyosha and Zosima's example of authentic being-in-relation through the image and likeness of Christ.

§III: The Apogee of Higher Realism Via the Meeting of Being-in-Relation and Beauty in Alyosha's Noetic Vision of The Wedding in Cana

Alyosha Karamazov represents both the hero of Dostoevsky's masterpiece and incarnation of the Orthodox Personalist, aesthetic, and hesychastic principles that this dissertation seeks to illuminate. Based on Dostoevsky's son Aleksey Fyodorovich, whose death in 1878 prompted his father's trip to Optina Pustyn' with Vladimir Solovyov, and inspired by the life of Saint Aleksey Man of God, Alyosha is yoked with the same task as Myshkin—the salvation of those around him.⁵⁷³ Enough critical ink has been squandered on the fact that Alyosha is indeed modeled on a saint, saintly in his demeanor, inspired by a saintly elder, and inhabits a hagiographic realm within the novel. There has also been much attention paid to the

⁵⁷³ For more on the connections between Alyosha and Saint Aleksey Man of God see Valentina Vetlovskaya, "Alyosha and the Hagiographic Hero," trans. Nancy Pollak and Susanne Fusso, in *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson, (New York: Prentice Hall, 1984), 206-226.

moment that I focus on, the vision of the Wedding in Cana, with regard to its poetic structure, its place within the novel, and its impact on the structure and narrative trajectory of the novel.⁵⁷⁴

The final section of my dissertation, however, based on the work in the previous chapters, diverges from previous scholarly work by penetrating into the Orthodox Personalist, aesthetic, and hesychastic foundations of this scene in order to demonstrate that which so many critics have neglected or missed in their assessments of the scene, namely, that Dostoevsky realizes his longed for vision of higher reality within the novel by depicting a meeting of the world-as-it-is with the world-as-it-will-be. He achieves this without breaking the ontological, anthropological, or poetic boundaries of the text thanks to his fidelity to an Orthodox conceptualization of these boundaries. The vision of the Wedding in Cana is the crowning moment of the novel, in which the Person is elevated to a higher level of authentic being but does not lose their freedom, is allowed access to the transcendent world through a cleansed *nous* and direct personal relation with the other, experiences the beauty of authentic being-in-relation, and maintains a faithfulness to the hesychastic method throughout the rest of the novel in an attempt to raise up other Persons to this level (with varying degrees of success).

Before analyzing the vision itself, it is necessary to discuss what makes Alyosha different than Myshkin or Zosima, and how his preparation for the vision is critical to a more complete understanding of its artistic originality. Critics tend to focus on two issues with Alyosha's character, both of which echo their complaints about Zosima. Both issues with Alyosha are

⁵⁷⁴ Major sources for these studies can be found in works such as Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, Sven Linner, *Starets Zosima*, Gary Saul Morson, "The God of Onions: *The Brothers Karamazov* and the Mythic Prosaic," Diane Oenning Thompson, *The Brothers Karamazov and the poetics of memory*, Mark G. Pomar, "Alesha Karamazov's Epiphany," Valentina Vetlovskaya, "Alyosha and the Hagiographic Hero," and Margaret Ziolkowski, "Dostoevsky and the Kenotic Tradition."

neatly compartmentalized in Ksana Blank's analysis. She states that: "When facing temptations [Alyosha] manages to overcome them without strenuous effort. Thus, saddened by the rumor of an 'odor of corruption' following the elder Zosima's death, he gives up his ascetic regime, but a few days later his spiritual integrity is restored."⁵⁷⁵ Blank goes on further to state that Alyosha's evolution as a character is incomplete. She alludes to this because unlike his prototype, Aleksey Man of God, Alyosha does not leave home until the end of the novel and therefore we as readers are not privileged to see his spiritual growth. Essentially, Blank claims first that Alyosha's development is too easily earned, and that second, he is incomplete and his spiritual struggle is not depicted within the novel.

The first issue echoes a typical critical complaint that Alyosha does not go through any real spiritual trials in the novel or that he easily overcomes them. This is due to the fact that there is little room for him to grow as a Person because he is already completely idealized from the beginning of the novel. An analysis of Alyosha's path from his first encounter with the stench of death from Zosima to his eventual return illuminates not only that Alyosha suffers greatly in his *Spiritual Warfare*, but also that he also develops successfully in his mission. Alyosha becomes an inversion of the prototype of Aleksey Man of God, as Alyosha is charged with an obedience by his elder to return to his family in order to save them. The spiritual struggle and growth occur before he enters the world properly.

The second issue, that there is nothing spectacular or novel in Alyosha's experience because he is not fully realized, ignores the massive change that occurs between the first and final moments Alyosha spends at Zosima's coffin-side. The idea that Alyosha is incomplete, or that the novel does not adequately address the issue of Alyosha's spiritual journey is predicated

⁵⁷⁵ Blank, 54.

on either the idea that a novel is enough to contain the fullness of a Person or that achieving a higher state of being, achieving higher reality, entails that this state will remain exactly as shown in the moment it is achieved throughout the remainder of the novel. Or, it implies the thought that a Person who climbs higher up the hesychastic ladder will instantly bring salvation and harmony to those around them.

As I have contended throughout the dissertation, the Orthodox perspectives on salvation, authentic being, and perfection do not entail a final state which is achievable in life, but rather that even an adept at the hesychastic method falls back at times and continues to climb and achieve higher and higher states of authentic being through beauty and relation. If we as readers experienced an endpoint to Alyosha's spiritual journey we would need to witness him in the afterlife, and the novel would certainly no longer be a realist one. The fulfillment of higher realism comes in the depiction of a moment of *Noetic Sight* without violating the verisimilitude of the novel, thereby furthering the narrative without fracturing it. The only way to achieve this is by depicting a moment in which the transcendence of the world-as-it-will-be enters into the world-as-it-is.

Having already discussed the foundations of Alyosha's hesychastic training and his proclivity toward the mode of being-in-relation in the previous section, the focus now shifts to how Alyosha puts this Orthodox mode of being into practice and how moving into communion with the other opens the beauty of the Divine to him. Let's begin with the "odor of corruption" that reeks from Zosima's decaying corpse. As discussed in the previous chapter, the problem of non-beauty and evil are tied to necessity and the natural processes humanity experiences after the Fall, and Alyosha's obsession with the miraculous takes him away from spiritual care and thrusts

him into the mode of Heideggerian *Sichvorwegsein*.⁵⁷⁶ Between leaving the monastery and returning he is constantly running ahead of himself, seeking to fill the longing of his aching soul for the infinite with material things. He forgets that within the Orthodox Personalist perspective death and decay are not a part of the intended order of existence, but have become an inseparable part of nature as a result of the Fall.

Death and decay do, however, play into the dance of relational being, acting in opposition to beauty as charm. As Christos Yannaras explains, “Nature is not only a reality of *beauty*; it is also a reality of *non-beauty*; it functions not only as *invitation-to-relation*, as charm, but also as exclusion (either progressive or sudden) of the rational subject from every relation [...] Nature functions, in consequence, as a law of decay, pain, torment, and finally extinction (death of physical existence) that governs the rational subject.”⁵⁷⁷ Just as *suddenly* as the appearance of the other can bring joy and relation, so too can sin and sorrow *suddenly* manifest in the absence of the other. Numerous scholars consider Alyosha’s moment of fear, passion, and despair at manifestation of non-beauty through the suddenness of death to be a minor inconvenience at best. However, this moment allows Dostoevsky the opportunity to illuminate how, through hesychastic training, a person becomes capable of overcoming the evil and isolation of non-beauty and in doing so confirms the capacity of achieving an authentic moment of being-in-relation by returning to the unique beauty of the other.

Although it is not necessary for a person to experience non-beauty to come into a moment of authentic being, Dostoevsky builds a concrete path from the one to the other through

⁵⁷⁶ For the discussion of non-beauty and necessity, see Chapter III §III: Dostoevsky’s Beauty as an Antinomy, Rather than a Dialectic. For the discussion on care, see Chapter III §V: Beauty as the Threshold Before Authentic Being.

⁵⁷⁷ Yannaras, *Relational Ontology*, 73.

an overcoming of doubt, fear, and transgression. He begins with the seed of *prelest*, planted in Alyosha and others through their expectation of a miracle confirming the orthodoxy of eldership and Zosima's life and methods. The incursion of necessity strips Alyosha of his freedom, and opens his senses to the inescapability of the law of decay.⁵⁷⁸ Rather than a miracle, the natural order of decay takes place, and the odor of corruption confirms only that Zosima was a Person, because if he were only a saintly Type, he would not have succumb to the grip of death. The odor, however, does not preclude his saintliness, but it shakes those of little faith who require the miraculous for their own egocentric desires. It indeed seems that the fallenness of the world has overcome faith, and that eldership and the hesychastic method are incapable of overcoming natural law.

In this moment, there appears to be no connection between the material and transcendent worlds, and that all has fallen into the decay of non-beauty. Liza Knapp writes "Alyosha had expected the 'finger of providence' to interfere with the course of events determined by natural law. Instead providence lends its hand to this mechanical process."⁵⁷⁹ Alyosha forgets about the material processes of nature and is startled by them. Although the possibility of uncorrupted remains is a vital and common experience in Orthodoxy, the demand for and necessity of a substantiation of an individual's closeness to the Divine through intervention of the Divine into the laws of nature is not Orthodox. Alyosha's expectation of a miracle depicts a lack of faith in the reality of the transcendent world. He has forgotten the miracles, the everyday acts of love and relational being that point toward the synthesis of the world-as-it-is with the world-as-it-will-be, that he has already witnessed in his relationship with Zosima. The non-beauty of nature feeds the

⁵⁷⁸ For more on necessity and manner by which it separates creation from the Divine see Chapter I §IV: The Incarnation as the Relational Locus of the Knowledge of Being and §V: The Created Person, Image and Likeness.

⁵⁷⁹ Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia*, 201.

egocentric drive toward isolation, and a need for the miraculous is a prime example of that isolation.

Dostoevsky addresses the Orthodox response to thirsting for miracles in Ivan's *poema* of the Grand Inquisitor. Rozanov, in his work on the Grand Inquisitor, writes:

Christ left mankind His image, which it could follow with a free heart as an ideal in keeping with its (secretly divine) nature and answering to its confused inclinations. This decision of whether or not to follow Him must be a free one, and it is precisely in this freedom of choice that its moral virtue lies. But every new revelation from heaven would appear as a miracle, it would introduce compulsion into history, and would take this freedom of choice away from man, and along with it its moral virtue.⁵⁸⁰

While Rozanov speaks directly to Ivan's engagement with his demons, these ideas can also be understood in direct relation to Alyosha's experience. The miracle that Alyosha and the others in the novel await only enslaves them to a belief in the Divine based on their own urges. This in turn destroys their freedom. Dostoevsky made this mistake before when he gave Myshkin access to the Divine that he was neither prepared for nor able to reject. Alyosha similarly becomes enslaved by cutting himself off from relation to Zosima and the Divine.

Then, precisely when Alyosha enters into the most de-Orthodoxized moment of his life, Dostoevsky presents an authentic Orthodox condemnation of the need for miracles. Fr. Ferapont arrives in Zosima's cell and begins to cast out demons. This moment appears to be a refutation of Zosima as an authentic hesychastic practitioner and seems to portray Fr. Ferapont as a negative representation of monasticism. He is greeted with contempt by Fr. Paissy, "Why for have you come, dear father? Why for are you disrupting the services? Why for are you disturbing the humble flock?" He then accuses his monastic brother of egocentric sinfulness, stating "You drive out the unclean spirit, but perhaps you are serving him?"⁵⁸¹ The explicit reason Fr. Ferapont

⁵⁸⁰ Rozanov, *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, 124-5.

⁵⁸¹ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 302-3.

comes is to denounce Zosima's egocentric lifestyle, setting him in opposition to Alyosha and the "heroic" side of the narrative. It might even seem that Fr. Ferapont's actions are demonic, or at the very least that his actions must be rejected by the reader, as overly critical of Zosima at best and un-Orthodox at worst. As Linda J. Ivanits notes, "Commentators have almost unanimously perceived Ferapont as evil. Most studies have considered him an unhealthy, somewhat comic double looming behind the saner figure of the charismatic elder... But it seems significant that while for the reader Ferapont represents the aberration of the religious ideal, to many of Dostoevsky's fictional monks and simple folk he embodies sanctity."⁵⁸² Dostoevsky is not condemning the majority of Orthodox monks in this scene. If one reads this passage with a sympathetic bend toward Alyosha or Zosima, or even focusing solely on Fr. Ferapont's personal grudge against Zosima, then it is impossible to see how Fr. Ferapont's actions are completely in-line with Orthodox tradition because they are so tainted by his pride. Read without sympathetic eyes aimed solely at Alyosha, but rather in the light of a distinctly Orthodox perspective—in which the miraculous occurrence of uncorrupted remains exists but is not a necessity—, Dostoevsky's brilliant understanding of the teachings of the Church shine through in a most unexpected fashion. Herein the absolute necessity of Fr. Ferapont's intervention into Alyosha's hesychastic journey becomes clear.

Although Fr. Ferapont is in general extremely harsh and strict, and his claims to see demons everywhere might appear cartoonish, he is a devoted follower of Orthodox monasticism, and his dispute with Zosima has merit.⁵⁸³ Clearly, Fr. Ferapont is closer to the stereotypical image of a monastic or a holy fool. But by reconsidering Fr. Ferapont as an active practitioner of

⁵⁸² Ivanits, 110.

⁵⁸³ Ivanits' article provides an exceptional reading of Ferapont and Zosima in this light.

the hesychastic method—although one mired within the stage of *Spiritual Warfare* who, despite his struggles with his own passions, is still capable of a certain extent of *noetic sight*—then what Dostoevsky depicts in Fr. Ferapont's actions is a rejection of the enslavement to the miraculous within the hesychastic tradition. Fr. Ferapont provides the necessary lesson for Alyosha, the very one depicted in Christ's rejection of Satan in the desert and to which the Grand Inquisitor falls prey in the *poema*. There are demons in the room, but they are not Zosima's, as Fr. Ferapont claims. The only mistake Fr. Ferapont makes is allowing his pride to overcome his *noetic sight*, he does not know which demons he is driving out. These are not demons of sensory passions, but the egocentric pride of Fr. Paissy, Alyosha, and others. Their false belief in the necessity of a miracle to confirm Zosima's Orthodoxy is a form of *prelest*' that needs to be overcome through *Spiritual Warfare*, which manifests itself in the form of invisible demons around the elder's coffin.

In this scene Dostoevsky, however backwards it may seem, depicts an active moment of *Spiritual Warfare* that propels his hero further on in his hesychastic path. Alyosha experiences, rather than learning from the words of his new spiritual father Fr. Paissy about, the non-beauty before him. He is still mired down by his own ego at this moment, however, the false allure of non-beauty masquerades as beauty through his hope in the miraculous. Alyosha does not yet understand that the corruption of the flesh is not completely evil, in the sense that it happens naturally, but rather evil arises from corruption when it inspires a lack of faith, a refusal to accept the Divine's interaction with the world-as-it-is rather than how one person needs it to be. The longing for a miracle becomes a necessity—the foundation of egocentric isolation. And in this egocentric cocoon he succumbs to a belief in the absolute inevitability of death and decay. Alyosha's faith in the victory of Christ over death and decay that is promised through

communion with the Divine is overcome by his sorrow. But it is Fr. Ferapont's faith that allows him to see past the spiritual delusion that demands miracles.

All those who chose to side with Zosima and who succumb to the need for the miraculous are ones who have fallen "into temptation," who "are those of little faith," as Fr. Paissy labels Alyosha while the young man flees from the carnivalesque scene beside the elder's coffin.⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, even Fr. Paissy falls into the temptations stirred up by the demons in the room. The first evidence of these temptations is Fr. Paissy's wrong-hearted claim, as quoted above, that Fr. Ferapont is serving the devil. In fact, Fr. Paissy's questioning of the means by which Fr. Ferapont drives out devils is a direct parallel to an admonition Christ gives in the Gospels. Fr. Paissy levels the same egocentric charge at Fr. Ferapont that the Scribes and Pharisees level at Christ. They claim that when driving out demons Christ acts through the power of Satan. Here Christ replies: "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out?"⁵⁸⁵ Dostoevsky explicitly places Fr. Paissy in the role of those who do not believe. And in doing so, Dostoevsky discretely reveals how vital Fr. Ferapont's exorcism is to Alyosha's moment of *metanoia* to come.

Although Fr. Ferapont is so wrapped up in his own *prelest'* that he cannot see his own sins, he is able to penetrate into the souls of others, realizing how they have strayed from active and loving communion in the name of the miraculous, or at the very least in the name of Divine justice. Rather than explicitly preaching this point, Dostoevsky uses the actions of another

⁵⁸⁴ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 305.

⁵⁸⁵ Matthew 12:25-7.

character on the hesychastic path to guide Alyosha. Charging this scene with pathos and humiliation, Dostoevsky crafts a moment that feels more relatable and real to the reader. By imbuing it with this emotional force the reader is forced to feel Alyosha's burden and, eventually, see more clearly his rise back up to being-in-relation at the moment of his vision of the Wedding at Cana. Fr. Ferapont is indispensable to this process, as he makes Alyosha capable of seeing his own failure. If Alyosha had not been shown the sinfulness of longing for a miracle he would not have been capable of experiencing the fullness of ontological unlocking in his *Noetic Vision* of the Wedding in Cana. Alyosha's moment of suffering is necessary so that he can make an active turn back to being-in-relation. His mettle is tested so that he will shine all the brighter throughout the rest of the novel.

Like Christ at the tomb of Lazarus, Alyosha weeps and mourns for the state to which the human body is reduced in death.⁵⁸⁶ Lazarus' sister Martha meets Christ before He raises her brother, and before the miracle she still shows faith in the Divine. It is her and her sister's faith that allow for the unexpected miracle to occur.⁵⁸⁷ Alyosha, however, succumbs to a need for a sign of the resurrection—a miraculous occurrence—to comfort him. Lacking that sign, he falls off the hesychastic ladder. This is not, as critics have contended, a minor bump in the road for Dostoevsky's hero. Rather, Alyosha's rejection of the material nature of death causes him to reject the fullness of the Orthodox teaching of resurrection, a major loss of faith. Alyosha's transference of the hagiographic expectations of the miraculous onto Zosima disrupts the path to salvation that Dostoevsky encodes into the text and therefore disrupts the wholeness of the world in which the young man lives.

⁵⁸⁶ For an extended discussion of the Resurrection of Lazarus, beauty, non-beauty, and relational being see Chapter III §II: The Relational Grounds of Beauty According to Orthodox Personalist Concepts.

⁵⁸⁷ See John: 11 for the story of the raising of Lazarus.

Although it is possible for a human body to remain uncorrupted, this is a miraculous and rare event, something one might expect in a hagiography but not in reality. And these hagiographic expectations are left unfulfilled in the novel. Dostoevsky will not sacrifice the ontological and anthropological boundaries of reality within the novel for the convenience of his worldview. This fidelity to his principles also applies to strictly confirming Zosima and eldership as Orthodox within the text. The lack of a miracle needed to confirm that Zosima was saintly in his life does not confirm that the hesychastic method and eldership are non-Orthodox, but rather allows polyphony of perspectives on its orthodoxy to flourish. There is more nuisance at work here than a hagiographic depiction would allow for. Instead, Alyosha combats the opponents of the hesychastic methods through *Spiritual Warfare*. Dostoevsky masterfully parallels Alyosha's experiences with biblical scenes in order to strengthen his position.

There is a particular parallel to the Apostles that Dostoevsky draws upon in order to confirm not only the fullness and struggle of Alyosha as a Person, but to confirm, in his eyes, the rightness of the theological positions he professes. For the Apostles, the experience of the death and Resurrection of Christ confirms that He is indeed the Incarnate God, and even though they were afraid and even doubted the miraculous nature of His death, they were rewarded after experiencing *Spiritual Warfare*. Alyosha must also undergo this *Spiritual Warfare* having beheld the truth of biological need and decay in order to experience the fullness of authentic being and reveal higher realism in the text. The parallel arises from the Gospels that indicate uncertainty that the Apostles encountered at the death of Christ. As Alexander Schmemmann writes:

It must be frankly stated that the classical belief in the immortality of the soul excludes faith in the resurrection, because the resurrection (and this is the root of the matter) includes in itself not only the soul, but also the body. Simply reading the Gospel leaves no doubt about it. When they saw the risen Christ, the Apostles, as the Gospel says, thought that they were seeing a ghost or a vision. The first task of the risen Christ was to allow them to sense the reality of His body. He takes food

and eats in front of them. He commands the doubting Thomas to touch His body, to be convinced of the Resurrection through his fingers.⁵⁸⁸

The focus on the material nature of the resurrection, Fr. Schmemmann tells us, is the most important aspect of Christian preaching regarding future life. Before the news of the Resurrection the Apostles hid from fear, having physical confirmation only of Christ's suffering and death. Similarly, Alyosha smells the odorous reek of biological death and loses faith. Like Thomas, whose faith is confirmed by the mark of death, Alyosha's spiritual struggle persists until he experiences proof of the deification of the flesh. Much like Prince Myshkin in his statement that one's faith could be shaken by the reality of the wounds and decay of Christ's body as depicted in Holbein's painting, so too does corruption make Alyosha, at least momentarily, reject the path to authentic being through relation.

Before he overcomes this egocentric fall and comes to his moment of *Metanoia*, Alyosha actively seeks the degradation of his soul. Alyosha, in his *prelest'*, decides to jump into this pool of egoism in imitation of his brother. Even though the narrator claims that Alyosha did not need the miracles of healings, or the victory over corruption from Zosima's corpse, he also claims that Alyosha expected them, noting that the injustice of Zosima's mocking, coupled with his conversation with Ivan, have shaken the young hero's faith. There is still a kernel of sinfulness in him that he has not yet faced. And so, rather than face the truth as presented by Fr. Ferapont, Alyosha runs away, flinging himself head over heels toward another moment of egocentric isolation by further accepting the false charms of non-beauty.

His faith shaken, Alyosha agrees to experience the so-called pleasures of the flesh, manifested as sausage, vodka, and Grushenka's sexuality. While drinking alcohol, eating meat,

⁵⁸⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, "The Christian Concept of Death," trans. Robert A. Parent, in *Russkaya mysl'* nos. 3299, 3300. March 13, 20, 1980. <https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr-alexander-schmemmann/the-christian-concept-of-death> (accessed on April 1, 2021).

and sexual intercourse are not prohibited by Orthodoxy, extramarital sex and eating meat during a fast, such as the period in which this portion of Alyosha's narrative takes place, are explicitly sinful. Herein Alyosha's rejection of Zosima's teachings in favor of material and biological urges manifests itself in freely willed action. Leonard J. Stanton categorizes Alyosha's behavior thusly:

Devastated by Zosima's physical corruption, his stench, as a 'sign from heaven,' Alyosha seeks to wallow, in the very worst way, in his own sense of humiliation and depravity. He is so distracted by grief that he forgets those in the world to whom Zosima had sent him: his brother Dmitri and his friend Iliusha's father. Instead he goes off to the one being who poses the greatest threat to his chaste guarding of his heart and body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸⁹

In Stanton's view, Alyosha consciously seeks precisely those pleasures that his father and brother revel in in order to abase himself. Instead of repenting for the weakness of his faith, he dives deeply into Karamazovshchina.

Whether by force of his DNA or his active willingness to put on the image of Karamazovshchina, Alyosha initiates a katabatic decent into the passions. For one untrained in the hesychastic method, this retreat into sensualism would end just as it does for Mitya, who claims that he cannot help but continually dive straight into debauchery "[b]ecause I'm a Karamazov. Because if I fall into the abyss it's straight in, head over heels, and I'm even glad that it's such a humiliating position, for I find it beautiful."⁵⁹⁰ The fall into Karamazovshchina, into sensuality, is therefore one that begins with the deceptive call non-beauty masquerading as beauty, and one who engages with it without the guide of an elder or hesychastic training would be unable to restrain themselves from non-beauty's siren song. As Robert Louis Jackson notes, "The aesthetic confusion is in *man*; and this confusion is reflected in Dmitri's whole peroration on beauty, and first of all, in his broad use of the term *beauty*."⁵⁹¹ Jackson points out that Mitya's

⁵⁸⁹ Stanton, 196.

⁵⁹⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 99.

⁵⁹¹ Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, 64.

comprehension of the Beauty of Sodom is not an independent form of Beauty, but rather the persons misappropriation of it—using beauty to achieve egocentric gains rather than relational movement. Mitya cannot tell beauty that calls one into relation from non-beauty that isolates the person. Alyosha can, but chooses not to.

Mitya, on the one hand, is tricked into believing that there is a redemptive quality in non-beauty that springs from self-debasing actions. He identifies what is beautiful in anything, the inner *logos* of things, and consumes them looking for redemption. On the other hand, Alyosha decides to try his hand at his brother's lifestyle as a reproach to what he knows in his heart to be true. The first three Chapters of Book VII in *The Brothers Karamazov* discreetly outlines Alyosha's *Spiritual Warfare* as he battles against the allure of non-beauty before which he is willingly being led. While the biological urges and the sensual insect-life of Karamazovshchina takes hold of him, triumphing over the personal mode of being-in-relation, Dostoevsky brilliantly proved a battlefield where good and evil battle for the soul, and upon which Alyosha is free to experience these temptations. Dostoevsky is placing his hero freely into this warzone to test his theory of the person fully engaged with the hesychastic methods.

Dostoevsky even provides an incarnation of demonic persuasion in the scene. The young man Rakitin plays the role of tempter in Alyosha's *Spiritual Warfare*, even though it is Alyosha's active choices that lead him to the crossroads of sin. The seminarian careerist, as the narrator calls Rakitin, tells Alyosha "So that's how we are? Now we're shouting, just like us mere mortals! And we used to be such an angel." Their conversations outside of Zosima's cell is marked by spiritual questions, indicating that this is not a mere moment rebellion but active temptation. Alyosha even confesses to Rakitin that his faith is wavering, he notes that he believed, believes, and will believe in miracles, indicating that he still unaware of the individual

and isolating component of his sorrow. But then he notes that despite his own needs he still he has not rebelled against God, but, quoting Ivan, that he only “rejects this world.”⁵⁹² It is at this point Alyosha begins his metanoic turn by confessing to the passions to which he has succumbed. He cannot see the whole of his transgression yet, but his history of hesychastic practice combined with his natural permanent attitude of repentance begins to push back against the fallen and “natural” desire for non-beauty.

Although the moment of *metanoia* begins during his conversation with Rakitin, Alyosha is still tempted, and still unable to overcome his spiritual temptations. His urge to experience Karamazovshchina leads him to Grushenka, and it is only here, in the presence of another Person, that he is capable of achieving a full metanoic turn and overcoming his spiritual struggle. Rakitin’s typological level of Type is not open enough to a relational mode of being to help Alyosha overcome his egocentric drive. He achieves peace and renewal after Grushenka has leapt catlike onto his lap, attempting to seduce him, but the process is not completely clear. Much has been written about precisely when, who, or what causes Alyosha’s change of heart while sitting in Grushenka’s parlor. Some, like Kate Holland, argue that it occurs simultaneously with Grushenka’s. Holland notes that, “His and Grushenka’s moral transformation occur simultaneously, and it is impossible to identify which of them instigate the conversion process.”⁵⁹³ Others argue that Grushenka is responsible for the process. Alina Wyman views their shared movement as an active consummation of moral renewal in Alyosha thanks to Grushenka: “Grushenka’s act of kindness is simply her refusal to go through with her malicious plan, and her unexpectedly pious respect for Alyosha’s grief restores the hero’s faith both in his

⁵⁹² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 308.

⁵⁹³ Holland, 175.

human and in his divine *other*.⁵⁹⁴ Whether the incident is mutual, one-sided or initiated by the other, it is clear that Alyosha experiences an active moment of *Metanoia* that, like Zosima's repentance for beating his servant in Book VI Chapter II, the hagiographic "From the Life of Elder Zosima", remains with him for the remainder of the novel.

Although Alyosha never physically succumbs to his passionate inclinations, he suffers spiritually from them. But once he has arrived in the den of iniquity—how Grushenka's lair has been painted by for Alyosha the rumors swirling through the novel—Alyosha does not fall head over heels into debauchery. In fact, he allows Grushenka to sit on his lap and caress him, but he does not respond physically or internally. He sips champagne, but declines to drink more. He faces the physical temptations head on, as his soul has already found a toehold on loving repentance and obedience to the hesychastic methods. As the narrator tells us:

The great grief of his soul absorbed all the sensation that could have arisen in him, and if he could only had given himself a full account at that moment he would have guessed that he was now in the strongest armor against all seduction and temptation. Nevertheless, in spite of all the vague unaccountability of his state of mind and all the grief that oppressed him, he could not help marveling at the one new and strange sensation that was being born in his heart.⁵⁹⁵

What Alyosha finds in that "one new and strange sensation" is that which Zosima informs us shines so brightly and naturally in Alyosha, the first stage of the hesychastic method. A deep and meaningful engagement with his biological urges, with the realities of Karamazovshchina and the passions, seems to have been necessary to polish Alyosha's spirituality—or at least necessary for the reader to accept his experience as rich and real, rather than too formulaic or fictional. Conquering his own passions allows him to actively live the hesychastic methods and enter into being in communion. Dostoevsky did not merely code this goodness into Alyosha but tested it in

⁵⁹⁴ Wyman, 213.

⁵⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 315.

the same manner Ivan and Mitya are tested in the novel. Schillerism and rebellion end in imprisonment and madness, but the hesychastic path leads to authentic being.

What's more, besides the experience of *Spiritual Warfare* that leads him to Grushenka's lap, and the subsequent explicit moment of *metanoia* following her telling of the legend of the Onion, Dostoevsky exposes another level of the hesychastic method in these chapters. Alyosha acts in accord with the third stage of the hesychastic method, *Hesychia* between his struggles with the passions and the moment of being-in-relation with Grushenka. He sits, in prayerful silence until he needs to speak in order to address the death of Zosima. Following his prayer, he is finally able to refute his momentary loss of faith, and opens himself up to Grushenka in loving relation. While Grushenka's tale and her abandoning of the plan for his seduction play a role in his redemption, achieving a true state of *metanoia* comes through his personal experience of the other as fully human for the first time, embracing rather than denying the sinfulness and biological decay that the other entails.

In that moment when Alyosha experiences the metanoic change in his soul he also sees clearly for the first time. His *nous* has been cleaned through the fires of *Spiritual Warfare* and he is able to see Grushenka for what she is. Dostoevsky, through the narrator, expresses what we as readers must come to see, a moment when the boundaries of otherness dissolve and the personal and relational qualities of authentic being shift into focus:

This woman, this 'terrible' woman not only did not frighten him now with the old fear, the fear that had been born in him before at every dream of a woman [i.e., Karamazovshchina, *P. G. W.*], but on the contrary, this woman of whom he was most afraid, sitting on his lap and embracing him, suddenly aroused in him a completely different, unexpected, and special feeling, a feeling of somehow extraordinary, of the greatest and most sincere curiosity about her, and all this without any fear, without the slightest old horror—that was the main thing and what surprised him in spite of himself.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

No longer the object of his brother and father's feud, no longer "that terrible" woman, no longer merely an ideal of non-beauty and sexual allure, Grushenka is a Person whom Alyosha can love in a manner which is impossible through Karamazovshchina. Alyosha is opened to authentic love that is self-emptying and renewing in an active manner for the first time.

But this love is no longer merely spiritual as it was with Zosima, and it eliminates his fear of the material other. The immediacy of the other, the meeting of the Person, and the opening to their uniqueness allows for authentic being-in-relation. Stanton provides a precise explanation of this sudden pivotal moment:

Grushenka, however, diverges from the image of the nameless and faceless temptresses of the parables. She is, above all, a person, not a cipher. She is not "a whore," we know her name, we see and hear her. Indeed, she assumes a personal ontology—separate from the parable and particular to the novel—when her pity for Alyosha as a sinner in despair establishes a bond of spiritual kinship between them. That kinship, *and, above all, Grushenka's personhood*, is what Alyosha saw as he stared long and wonderingly through Grushenka's eyes into her soul.⁵⁹⁷

What began as non-beauty and evil is transformed by the personal and self-less into one of the great moments of beauty and relationality in world literature. It is not a transformation of either of these two Persons into ideals—both will continue to exist as flawed completely human Persons throughout the novel—but rather in seeing each other as persons for the first time they repent of their dehumanizing tendencies and the beginning of the ontological unlocking of anthropological reality.

In a way, Grushenka experiences the same metanoic turn as Alyosha. She has overcome *Spiritual Warfare* and returned to the other she attempted to consume using beauty as bait. It is his hesychastic obedience, silence, and forgiveness reflecting the image of Zosima and Orthodox traditions, however, that opens her to this path. She too sees the other as a Person, for perhaps the first time. She no longer thinks of Alyosha as a pawn in her world, and consuming him simply to

⁵⁹⁷ Stanton, 199.

take his spiritual virginity no longer appeals to her. Although she wanted to ruin him, he showed love for her and calls her “sister.” Alyosha tells Rakitin “I came here to find an evil soul—I was drawn to it because I was evil and low, and I found a true sister, a treasure, a loving soul... She spared me just now... I’m talking about you, Agrafena Alexandrovna. You renewed my soul just now.”⁵⁹⁸ This kindness and recognition of the other as intimately connected to the self—as a sibling—leads to Grushenka’s confession of her salacious plot, her repentance for it, and her belief that she can be saved. Alyosha, in turn reveals that he similarly wanted to use her to passionate ends, and confesses that “I stood up to speak to you not as a judge but as the lowliest of the accused.”⁵⁹⁹ His confession is the beginning of Alyosha’s permanent attitude of *metanoia* that he rejoices in following his vision of the Wedding in Cana.

Grushenka then explains her legend of the Little Onion, expressing the hope that one small act of kindness can lead to salvation. Alyosha confirms for her the truth of the story, having experienced its veracity through the hesychastic method and through their interaction. It seems in Dostoevsky’s world that one little act of kindness can save one from the fires of egocentric isolation, at least for a moment.⁶⁰⁰ When she confesses her plot to seduce him, she exposes that her and Alyosha share not only their relational redemption, but that they were led to it because of similar sins. Grushenka informs Alyosha that she feared him because he was too good, and hated him for that. Her metanoic moment reveals she viewed Alyosha in the same way that many critics see him, as too ideal, as a Type rather than a Person.

⁵⁹⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 318.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁶⁰⁰ For detailed accounts of the narrative of the Onion see Holland, 175-7, Morson, “The God of Onions,” and Sara Smith, “The ‘Lukovka’ Legend in *The Brothers Karamazov*,” in *Irish Slavonic Studies* 7 (1986), 41-53.

This Typification of the other marks both her and Alyosha's fears and passions. One sees the Type of the fallen woman, and nothing more. The other sees only the Typical nature of saintliness. Only through the personal revelation, spurred on by Zosima's material corruption and Alyosha's all-too-human response are they able to see one another as Persons. So too must the reader be encouraged to see these two not as Types, like Rakitin who is told to sit silently in their presence, but as fully realized Persons capable of authentic being either through communion or self-afflicted isolation. For Dostoevsky's realization of higher realism in the text to occur he needs to prepare the reader to see both Alyosha and Grushenka as unique, free, and loving persons. Their *metanoia* cleanses both their souls and prepares the reader to use their own vision of the soul experiencing the personal encounter with the Divine.

Dostoevsky, however, does not force movement toward authentic being on these beings. To ensure that the reader is not tricked into thinking that this moment indicates an unchanging and pure ideal, he immediately allows Grushenka's spiritual instability—her freedom—to display itself. She claims that she might still abandon her plans to forgive those who have wronged her, and that she is free to do as she pleases. Dostoevsky juxtaposes this with Alyosha, who has been strengthened having endured this crucible of *Spiritual Warfare*. One uses freedom to rise up toward authentic being, while the other freely falls back toward their egocentric isolation. It will be tested again, by Ivan's demon, by Mitya's actions, by Smerdyakov's rebellion, and by Kolya Krostikin's egoism, and it will waver. But he has come to not only accept but to actively love the world and all the people therein, personally, and selflessly. The two walking away from each other on the spiritual path laid out by hesychastic tradition underscores how vital this method is to achieving *noetic sight*, allowing the transcendent world to enter into the world of the novel without violating its boundaries.

Having passed through the first three gates of his hesychastic journey, there remains but one more for Alyosha. Dostoevsky wants Alyosha to not only imitate but to surpass his Elder in all things, including the hesychastic method. If Zosima embodies the ideal of the Orthodox monastic and clerical type, then Alyosha is meant to embody that which elevates Zosima but outside the liturgical and sacramental space. The reader is not meant to encounter a hagiographic idealization but a Person living an active moment of being-in-relation. After his encounter at Grushenka's, all that remains to depict him breaching the boundaries of the world-as-it-is, expressing his communion with the Divine and his experience with the eye of his heart. The upper chamber of Alyosha's mind is prepared for this experience, and the reader, having walked along the path with him, should also be prepared to access this higher reality as well. The encoded hesychastic path that the reader treads with Alyosha should prepare them for the truth of the higher state of the ontological and anthropological boundaries of Dostoevsky world. It is up to the author to produce at this exact moment the aspects of higher reality without violating the boundaries of the novel. Unlike Myshkin's eschatological visions, unlike Verkhovensky's moralizing, and unlike the "Dream of the Ridiculous Man," this moment must be a real, shared, and unique experience of authentic being-in-relation that conforms to the fictional world Dostoevsky has built in order to solve the problems he struggles with in his writing.

Dostoevsky presents his solution to the mystery of the person through a moment of higher reality that appears via the personal and relational meeting of Zosima, Alyosha, and Christ at the Wedding in Cana. Herein he portrays an example of the meeting of the transcendent world-as-it-will-be with the world-as-it-is without violating the ontological boundaries of the novel or the reader's expectation of verisimilitude. Clearly, the vision works within the poetic structure of the novel, but what is this vision? Is it a momentary epiphany, a dream, a

hallucination, a product of chemical and electrical stimulations in Alyosha's brain, or something more? Scholars are divided on this question. Most agree that it is connected to some miraculous incursion. However, most critical readings explain the transcendent nature of this moment by stripping it of or underplaying its theophanic qualities. Liza Knapp deftly expresses the nature of the miraculous aspects of this moment and its connection to Zosima and Grushenka:

Denied the expected miracle at Zosima's death... Alyosha in the presence of Grushenka benefits from another sort of miracle: that of Christian love... Alyosha's self-pitying grief has turned to joy. He has experienced, in an accelerated fashion, what Zosima had called the "great mystery of human life" whereby "old grief" "gradually transforms into quiet, tender joy" (14:265). The miraculous nature of this transformation Alyosha has undergone is further evidenced by the vision he experiences as he listens to the Gospel reading.⁶⁰¹

Knapp concludes by describing his vision as an "ecstatic mental process." She does not, however, explain what that mental process is or what its ramifications are. Critics in this manner tend shy away from exactly defining this moment.

Even around the time of the novel's publication critics were unsure how to deal with the transcendent. In her article "Realism," Knapp discusses how Dostoevsky's contemporary and early twentieth century critics defined the fantastic in his novels. On the one hand, his contemporaries saw characters such as Myshkin or Alyosha as fantastic because of their 'unbelievable' attitudes. They shy away from the mystical aspects of these fictional beings. Knapp explains what the critics considered the element of the fantastic as "actual manifestations of the new social reality."⁶⁰² Unsurprisingly, the fantastic is read as a mere code for utilitarian analyses and the religious or mystical aspects are largely ignored.

On the other hand, Knapp points out another critical trend, as exemplified by Ivan Lapshin who, "observes [that], if miracles occur in Dostoevsky's novelistic world, they occur in

⁶⁰¹ Knapp, *Annihilation of Inertia*, 204.

⁶⁰² Knapp, "Realism," 233.

the soul of the believer; even if some of Dostoevsky's heroes believe that human behavior cannot be explained by natural law or even that 'seeds of other worlds are planted in this one,' the action follows realistic principles."⁶⁰³ This perspective accepts the fantastic as something real, but denies its connection to the material world. In Knapp's two analyses there are two foundational differences in ontological and relational importance: the first expresses the shared and relational importance of the vision's inception but sets forth a denial of the reality of the vision, while the second emphasizes the interior and individual experience of the transcendent world as real but positioned as fundamentally cut off from reality. A reading of the Wedding at Cana within the egocentric context of a dream, an epiphany, or a product of biological interactions either strips the vision of its relational quality or dismisses its impact and grounding in the material world.

This dissertation is predicated on the idea that Dostoevsky's understanding of the anthropological, aesthetic, and ontological conditions of the world, with which he then imbues into his novelistic world, are inherently relational. This relationality bridges the perceived gulf between the transcendent and material world as understood in Western philosophic tradition and is key to unlocking the fullness of reality, or higher realism in the novels. If this premise is true, then would not the apotheosis of these ideas in the texts necessarily be relational as well? By expressing this vision as an entrance into *Noetic Vision* I explain how this critical scene acts as Dostoevsky's answer to the ontological, anthropological, and aesthetic questions. It contextualizes the moment within Dostoevsky's desire to depict the beauty of Christ, the mystery of the person, and the necessity of overcoming ego for salvation. The type of analyses that posit the Wedding at Cana as a dream or epiphany drain it of this context essentially isolate it within Alyosha's ego. If Myshkin's visions failed to bring him into proper relation with others and

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

support him as a Christ-like perfection it was because the visions were inherently individualized and inaccessible to those whom he loved. His failure to save others or to transcend into a moment of higher realism is predicated on his visions being purely internal. Conversely, Alyosha's vision is inherently relational, and therefore cannot be merely a dream or epiphany in the Western literary sense.

Many scholars have investigated the vision of the Wedding at Cana as a moment of epiphany or as a dream.⁶⁰⁴ The reason for the expression of Alyosha's transformation primarily within the literary confines of this Western idea springs from two sources: first, from the disconnection of an epiphany from its roots as an experience of the Divine, and second, from a misunderstanding of the hesychastic context in which Alyosha's vision occurs. For these reasons, it is easy to understand how readers would dismiss Alyosha as being unremarkable, as Dostoevsky feared they would. Without an understanding of the immensity of the appearance of the Divine there is a lack of awe for the direct interaction with the Other. Furthermore, because Alyosha's path is considered too similar to the hagiographical narratives seen in the Orthodoxy tradition this scene comes across as a rote expression rather than a unique one. As Kate Holland frames the latter problem:

This representation of Alyosha's sudden epiphanic transformation challenges many of the core genre assumptions of novel theory... Here Dostoevsky seems to move out of the traditional realm of novelistic narrative into a world of silence, unity, and myth. Narrative is no more, and the novel must end. Yet it does not. The kairoic moment notwithstanding, Alyosha returns to the world... the novelistic machinery continues to turn.⁶⁰⁵

Holland attempts to read this scene as something more than epiphany, but cannot unify her reading of this moment as an apogee and the continuation of the novel.

⁶⁰⁴ For more on Alyosha's vision as epiphany see Julian W. Connolly "Dostoevskij's Guide to Spiritual Epiphany in 'The Brothers Karamazov,'" in *Studies in East European Thought* 59, no.1/2 (June 2007), 39-54; and Pomar, "Alesha Karamazov's Epiphany: A Reading of 'Cana of Galilee.'" For the vision as a dream see Morson, "The God of Onions."

⁶⁰⁵ Holland, 162-3.

If this is what Dostoevsky has been struggling to depict, how can there be more after it? If it is higher than realism how can it fit into and serve to further the novel? While this moment is certainly a direct challenge to the “genre assumptions of novel theory” and an assault on the verisimilitude of a realist novel, reading this scene within the Orthodox context and with an eye on Dostoevsky’s progression as an artist it is no surprise that the novel does not end at this moment. Dostoevsky does not violate the boundaries of his novelistic world, but fills them to the brim. Alyosha may have taken a step up the hesychastic ladder, but this is not the telos of his life or of theosis, and therefore his mission in the novel must continue. I will return to why the positioning of the vision in the novel is so important and why it cannot be the end after discussing the meaning and influence of epiphany in the literary context.

The problem, it seems, is how great an influence the concept of epiphany holds in the literary tradition on the interpretation of any scene in which a fictional being finds revelation in a state beyond “normal” cognition. This literary type of epiphany that most critics apply to Alyosha’s vision, although extant in Western literature throughout the nineteenth century, was coined only by James Joyce in *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* in the early 1900s. A brief definition of an epiphany, according to Martin Bidney is as follows:

[P]uzzling but privileged moments, sudden gifts of vision, when one’s feeling of aliveness intensifies and the senses quicken. [Moments in which characters] locate meaning in enigmatic but vivid instants... Literary epiphanies are felt as aesthetically privileged. They are moments of imaginative or poetic intensity, comparable in imaginative power to traditional theophanies or appearances of the divine.⁶⁰⁶

Notice that literary epiphanies are marked as distinct from a traditional theophany in that the latter contains an interaction with the divine. Alyosha’s experience may begin as an epiphany,

⁶⁰⁶ Martin Bidney, *Patterns of Epiphany: From Wordsworth to Tolstoy, Pater, and Barrett Browning*, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 1. For further reading on the foundations of literary epiphanies in the nineteenth century see Morris Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, (London: Owen, 1971), and Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth -Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1987).

insofar as he experiences a privileged, intensified, and vivid moment wrought with meaning—thus fulfilling all the criteria of the first part of the Western literary definition—but it diverges immediately due to the presence of Christ at the Wedding feast.

Looking at the text, it is clear that Christ is the central image, although not the focus, of the vision. When Alyosha, at first, refuses to look at Christ, Zosima exhorts him in the following manner: “Do not fear Him. He is terrible in his greatness before us, terrible in His heights, but He is infinite in mercy; He became like us out of love for us and rejoices with us, transforming water into wine, so that the joy of his guests does not end.”⁶⁰⁷ Zosima invites Alyosha to a direct relationship with the Divine in his experience of paradise. There is no vision in *The Brothers Karamazov* without the direct communion with the Divine. The Wedding is a symbol of the world-as-it-will-be, and both in the novel and the Gospels it is a distinct moment of intervention of the transcendent into the world. This moment, which Alyosha experiences first hand, cannot simply be an epiphany in the Western sense because it involves this authentic and relational moment of synergy between the Divine and the person. The otherness of existence is overcome through beauty that charms two unique persons into a moment of authentic being-in-relation *in the presence of the Divine*.

Alyosha’s vision as a direct experience of the world-as-it-will-be requires some faith in, or at least knowledge of, the Orthodox and hesychastic tradition in order to be fully perceived in this manner. For Dostoevsky there is a firm, concrete, and real moment of relational experience transgressing otherness and opening the subjects and readers up to authentic being and the Divine. Alyosha has successfully passed through the first two stages of the hesychastic practice and achieves the second two stages *Hesychia* and *Noetic Vision* when he returns to his elder’s

⁶⁰⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 327.

coffin-side. To consider it as Western literary epiphany, without an understanding of Dostoevsky's grounding in the Eastern tradition, leaves the scene as a hollow repetition of images, symbols, and narratives from liturgical and hagiographic sources.

With only, at best, a basic grasp of the hesychastic tradition it is reasonable for contemporary Western readers to see Alyosha's journey and vision with significantly less luster and force. Kate Holland's description of his progression is an obvious case in point: "Alyosha begins as hagiographer but ends up as hagiographic hero... Alyosha begins to model his worldview according to hagiographic convention, and his faith is challenged as he observes the gap between the novelistic world he inhabits and the hagiographic world he produces in his own work."⁶⁰⁸ She is correct in her assessment that if one reads Alyosha as a pure product of hagiography and a strict adherence to the sacramental form of writing⁶⁰⁹ and its traditions then he is, to some extent, a boring and unremarkable being.

From Holland's perspective there is nothing unique about the experience except for the way in which it influences the structure of the novel. Furthermore, she shifts the cause of Alyosha's, and Dostoevsky's, victory from the reality of his actions and lived experience of active love and repentance to a passive repetition of conventions. With eyes attuned to the explicitly Orthodox methodology at play in the novel leading up to the vision, the structure of the

⁶⁰⁸ Holland, 173-4.

⁶⁰⁹ Hagiography is sacramental within the Orthodox context insofar as its creation and use are grounded in the liturgical, dogmatic, and traditional contexts of the Church. Unlike Western tradition, Orthodox does not consider there to be merely seven sacraments, but rather that a multitude of works become sacramental through prayer, attention to dogmatic and liturgical structures, and an engagement of the persons with the Divine. As Kallistos Ware notes, "Only in the seventeenth century, when Latin influence was at its height, did the list [of seven sacraments] become fixed and definitive. Before that date Orthodox writers vary considerably as to the number of sacraments: John of Damascus speaks of two; Dionsius the Areopagite of six; Joasaph, Metropolitan of Ephesus (fifteenth century) of ten" (Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 268). Furthermore, one writes a hagiography not according to their own will but within these traditions but maintains the uniqueness of the person depicted. In this way hagiography is akin to iconography, insofar as "*the icon is a sacrament* for the Christian East; more precisely, it is the vehicle of a personal presence" (Evdokimov, 178).

narrative confirms Alyosha achieved a higher level of being, a more authentic form of being-in-relation as a Person, before the hagiographic interjection into the novel. While the events depicted in the Life of Zosima may come before the Vision in the *syuzhet*, chronologically the writing of the Life comes after the Vision of the Wedding in Cana. What's more, Dostoevsky makes it clear that Alyosha has been living within the structures of the hesychastic world of the monastery long before his elder's death. That which grounds his conversion is in place well before he wrote the "Life of Zosima." The Life was written, as the narrator notes, "some time after the Elder's death."⁶¹⁰ It therefore seems backwards to argue that the act of writing the hagiography was the cause of Alyosha's experience of *metanoia* and *noetic sight*. What close attention to the chronology of the text does indicate to us is that Alyosha's path in the hesychastic system is not straightforward, hagiographic, or fixed. Rather, as a Person, he is first exposed to the reality of material being. He then misses the mark, falls from the hesychastic method, only to be pulled back up onto it by those with whom he enters into an active mode of being-in-relation.

Holland wants to read the vision as literary epiphany comingled with hagiography. For her it is a moment that "returns to the aesthetic and ethical values of an earlier, more traditional genre system." Furthermore, her assessment that "*The Brothers Karamazov* constitutes an attempt to reveal, transform, and extend the novel's own genre possibilities by engaging with, and borrowing from, the rich generic heritage of Christian legend," moves toward a more holistic reading of the novel and this scene in particular, however, she does not look beyond the formal boundaries and into the lived experience of the Orthodox tradition that is so vital to the

⁶¹⁰ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 260.

achievement of Dostoevsky's dream.⁶¹¹ But she, as well as many other scholars, still cannot fully escape from the Western perspective that diminishes the importance of Divine intervention into the world of the text. She supposes that the structure of the novel fragments into smaller slices of subgenres. In this way, the genre conventions of the novel end with the vision of Cana. The narrative resumes but as a scattershot of individual perspectives on moral paradigms through other generic conventions. It only returns to the familiar structure of the novel in the final books depicting the courtroom drama.

But Alyosha's vision does not shatter the novel, and even though individual voices—such as Ivan's, Mitya's, the prosecutor's, and defense lawyer's—are heard discussing Dostoevsky's mysteries, Alyosha is there during all these discussions. More often than not he is silent, but his presence always works to build up the personal mode of being-in-relation through his beauty. Alyosha's path toward salvation is not the telos of the novel nor does it break the structure, but rather unites it, silently, with the expanded boundaries of a higher realism always present. It is of absolute importance and its location in the novel is critical. By depicting a moment that exists in harmony with the telos of the soteriological goal at nearly the midpoint of the novel Dostoevsky is able to continue to develop how a Person that has seen this state of higher, authentic being-in-relation can still exist in the world of the novel. If the vision were merely a form of Western epiphany Alyosha would have either been taken out of the world, or incapable of continuing to fulfill the experience of being-in-relation in the world. But as a *noetic vision* Alyosha's experience at the Wedding in Cana is carried throughout the rest of the text. An appreciation of how a *noetic vision* is defined and then appears in the novel is necessary to finally shed light on Dostoevsky's successful depiction of higher realism in his art.

⁶¹¹ Holland, 163.

Essentially, there is a concreteness to Alyosha's vision that is grounded in the fact that Divine being, although higher than material reality, is present in the world through the activity of the Divine energies, often experienced as a kind of light.⁶¹² Alyosha sees in his vision the actions of the Divine energies as he experiences the timelessness of existence in the presence of the Divine other. According to Orthodox theology, without the hesychastic training he undergoes, or at least without some cleansing of his spiritual organs, he would not be able to have this sort of vision. What's more, obtaining the capacity for this spiritual sight not only connects one to some metaphysical or mystical realm, but rather it leads to a momentary purification of the material body, bridging the existential gap between the metaphysical and material. In his description of an experience of *noetic vision* in the life of the Orthodox saint Seraphim of Sarov, Paul Evdokimov provides guidelines for this analysis of Alyosha's experience: "The experience [of the light of Divine grace] as told in this story is not an ecstasy which takes those who have it out of this world, but rather an anticipation of the transfiguration of the whole human person."⁶¹³ Alyosha's vision lifts the veil and allows Alyosha to bring some of that transcendence with him.

Accepting the transcendental nature of Alyosha's vision of the Wedding in Cana is the first step in reading it as an explicit moment of *noetic vision* that crowns his hesychastic journey and simultaneously shatters and confirms the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the novel. Gary Saul Morson expresses an inherent truth about the transcendent quality of Alyosha's vision, even though he insists that this experience is merely a dream. He states that, "As Alyosha muses, he dreams he attends the marriage at Cana, for it is always going on, and Jesus is always bidding new guests to that wedding."⁶¹⁴ It is clear that there is a juxtaposition of a moment in

⁶¹² The concept of the Divine energies is discussed in Chapter I §III: The Mode of Being of the Divine.

⁶¹³ Evdokimov, 27.

⁶¹⁴ Morson, "The God of Onions," 117.

time of Alyosha's life with time that is "always going on," enclosing a single point within an act that endures throughout eternity. In Morson's perspective the dream is merely a celebration of the teachings of the Divine, not an active encounter. However, he exposes the fact that linear time intersects with eternity, and points toward a familiar aspect of Orthodox ontology as depicted through iconography, which sets the foundation for reading this vision as *noetic sight*.

As discussed in Chapter III § III: Dostoevsky's Beauty as an Antinomy, Rather than a Dialectic, the Orthodox liturgical experience of time transcends the temporal boundaries and reveals the inherent connections between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-will-be. This synergy of linear time and eternity is often depicted in iconography. The same synergy appears in Alyosha's *noetic vision* of the Wedding in Cana. Within the context of Dostoevsky's Orthodox foundations, despite Alyosha being described as awakening from the vision, it is vital to consider this moment to be more than simply a dream. What Alyosha experiences is not generated from the lower room of his consciousness. It is not an engagement of disparate events in his subconscious, but rather a participation in the eternal activity of the Wedding in Cana through the upper room of his mind, his supra-consciousness.⁶¹⁵ The supra-conscious or *noetic* functions of the mind are the organs capable of processing the incursions of the transcendent into material reality through their cleansing via the hesychastic methods.

Dostoevsky indicates that this is not merely a dream or unconscious processing of experiences by expressing the participation of linear time and eternity. It is not necessary to read Alyosha's "dozing off" and "awakening" only as markers of biological processes because the reader has been prepared for an Orthodox understanding of the vision. Immediately after the narrator informs the reader that Alyosha has dozed off he is still actively engaged with the linear

⁶¹⁵ The foundations of the segmentation of the human consciousness between subconscious, conscious, and supra-conscious mind occurs in Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

reading of the Gospel.⁶¹⁶ The present moment continues to exist but it is transfigured. The reader is given a verbal depiction of multiple moments in history, the past in the biblical account of the Wedding, the present in Alyosha and Zosima's presence, and the eternal in Zosima's transfiguration. The narrative begins to take on an explicitly iconographic mode, of which the synergy of time is the first indicator.

The visual depiction of the experience of multiple moments of human history, most often the present and past within the confines of the infinite, is a common occurrence in Orthodox practice. The confluence of timelessness with time is, in fact, an everyday encounter for the Orthodox believer in the form of iconography. Paul Evdokimov informs us that "Chronological time and order are not absolutes in themselves. Scenes may be placed side by side according to the interior order of 'redeemed time.' Episodes can be associated according to their meaning and the spiritual requirements. This helps us understand why scenes are never enclosed in walls."⁶¹⁷ As Alyosha begins to fall asleep while sitting at his elder's coffin-side multiple scenes are placed side by side. Redeemed time is activated within the text. Even Fr. Paissy realizes that "something strange had happened to the young man."⁶¹⁸ That "something strange" is far more than merely a

⁶¹⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 326.

⁶¹⁷ Evdokimov, 223-4. To view this transgression of chronological time see Figures 19 and 20 of the icon of the Transfiguration of Christ and the mosaic of the Pentecost in the dome of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice depict clearly this transgression of time that is so familiar to the Orthodox mindset. In the icon Christ is portrayed rising above Mt. Tabor, surrounded by the uncreated light of the Divine energies, a central topic of hesychastic concern, flanked by Moses and Elijah, and with the apostles Peter, John, and James in states of fear, ecstasy, and adoration below Him. The icon also depicts Christ ascending and descending with His apostles in the small "caves" to the left and right. Between these three active scenes and the appearance of the long-dead prophets engaged in conversation with the Word, the iconographer is depicting the timelessness and spacelessness of the icon and the reality of the capacity for overcoming the boundaries of death and decay in the material world. Other icons, such as the mosaic of Pentecost in Figure 20 that shows the standard depiction of this event and features the apostle Paul seated with the other 11 apostles although he had not yet experienced his conversion of the road to Damascus until well later, similarly display these chronological or temporal transgression in order to underscore the Orthodox boundaries of ontology. For more on these particular icons see Florensky, "Reverse Perspective," in *Beyond Vision*, and *Iconostasis*, Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. Anthony Gythiel, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), and Michel Quenot, *The Resurrection and the Icon*, trans. Michael Breck, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

⁶¹⁸ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 327.

dream. While experiencing the “interior order of ‘redeemed time’” Alyosha is not fully asleep. He listens to the Gospel, he speaks with Zosima, he overcomes his fears, and he moves from kneeling to standing when Zosima takes him by the hand. There is a physical connection that is maintained in Alyosha even as he is caught up in the eternal and his physical actions occur both in eternity and material reality. All these factors lead to a reading of the vision as inherently iconographic.

But how can one be certain that this is indeed a form of Orthodox time and supra-conscious engagement? Malcolm Jones, for one, actively rejects the connection of Alyosha’s vision to Orthodox tradition. In his analysis, this scene is nothing more than a typical interiorized dream, albeit one with significant personal value. I present his analysis at length to underscore how de-Orthodoxized and interiorized an analysis can become when one is unfamiliar with the hesychastic and liturgical traditions, and how it moves away from Dostoevsky’s foundations in the Orthodox understanding of Christ and obfuscating Alyosha’s importance within that tradition:

Father Paissy reads from John about the Wedding at Cana of Galilee. Alyosha associates the first miracle with the joy brought by Christ. It is evident that he is falling asleep. He sees Zosima alive again. He is a guest at the wedding. Zosima asks if Alyosha sees his sun, and Alyosha says he is afraid to look. Zosima tells him not to be afraid. His greatness is awful but he is merciful. Tears of rapture fill Alyosha’s soul and he leaves. We have already referred to this passage more than once, but it is worth quoting it again in the full light of Epstein’s model [of Minimal Religion] and we shall note, as we have before in a different context, that all but token references to Orthodox ritual and traditional Christian doctrine has been suppressed; perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that, though channeled through it, Alyosha’s religious experience has been liberated from Orthodox ritual and traditional Christian doctrine, at a moment when it might be expected to overwhelm him, at a moment when a performance of that ritual and a proclamation of that Gospel coincides with a profoundly emotional religious experience that seems to cry out for such an interpretation.⁶¹⁹

Jones concludes saying the Orthodox context should be there, but it is not due to Dostoevsky and the narrator’s suppression of it. He claims that because, upon awakening, Alyosha runs out into

⁶¹⁹ Jones, 133.

nature to embrace it Dostoevsky is depicting an interior religion and not a fidelity to the canonical or traditional religion.

Furthermore, Jones argues that because there is no ritual structural, or as I have phrased it liturgical context, this scene must be beyond the Orthodox tradition and framework. He, like Leontiev, accepts only the hard-lined Orthodoxy of the liturgical traditions and the reality of Optina Pustyn' in the late 1800s as the grounds for maintaining Orthodoxy. But the Orthodoxy of the hesychastic tradition in which Dostoevsky is steeped and in which he is working is a vital, lived, and extremely personal religion, and Alyosha is clearly engaging with this tradition. What's more, when he returns to Zosima's room, Father Paissy is reading the Gospel over the corpse of the deceased. Someone unfamiliar with Orthodox tradition and its connection to the sacramental life of the church may not realize that this is explicitly in accordance with Orthodox liturgical and sacramental tradition.⁶²⁰ The vision occurs during a sacramental act. There is no suppression of Orthodoxy here. The joy and thanksgiving that Alyosha exudes after the vision for having been opened to the fullness of being-in-relation on the most intimately personal level is framed by and in accordance with these traditions.

To continue this train of thought, it is not only the fact that Alyosha has arrived back to actively engage in the sacramental preparation for the burial of his elder the narrator that marks the vision as in line with Orthodox tradition, but also that Alyosha is explicitly practicing the third level of the hesychastic method—*hesychia*—as he enters into the *noetic vision*. The narrator informs the reader that

[Alyosha] began to pray quietly, but soon found himself praying almost mechanically. Fragments of thoughts flashed through his soul, lit up like stars, and then went out, replaced by others, but there was something while, solid, satisfying in his soul, and he

⁶²⁰ Dostoevsky creates a similar situation in *Crime and Punishment* with Apollon reading the Psalter over the Underground Man. This is further discussed in Chapter I §VI: The Dostoevskian Character.

was fully aware of it. Sometimes he would being the prayer fervently, he wanted so much to give thanks and love... but when he began the prayer, he would suddenly turn to something else, think about it, and forget both the prayer and what he had interrupted it with.

It would be easy to dismiss Alyosha's lapses in prayer as failures and to use this as proof of Alyosha disengaging with Orthodoxy and entering into a personal and isolated experience, but even this action aligns with the hesychastic method. As he slows down his prayer, rejects his individual needs to "give thanks and love," and opens himself fully laying aside all earthly cares, the words of the Gospel unlock the highest stages of authentic being in him.⁶²¹ Gregory Palamas, the defender of the hesychastic method, calls stage pure pray, when one moves from personal prayer to a self-emptying mode of openness that leads to unity with the Divine and ecstasy.⁶²²

What Dostoevsky has actually depicted is the state of *hesychia*. The prayer of the heart is not one of controlled by the volition of the person, but an acceptance of the will of the Divine into the heart. Horuzhy defines *hesychia* in this way:

Now the vector of the hesychast's principal attention changes its direction: main efforts can now be devoted not to struggling against worldly forces, but to the acquisition of Divine grace and union with Christ in Holy Spirit. Concentrating on this, the hesychast is now able to practice unceasing prayer; and the unceasing praying accumulates greater and greater spiritual energies in man, which makes it possible further ascent up the Ladder. Hesychast anthropology states firmly that man's union with God is holistic, approached by man as a whole, and hence to achieve it, man should collect all his energies together and organize them into a coherent energetic structure. The formation of the core of this structure is a key stage of the process, a special sophisticated transformation of consciousness, which is called "bringing the mind in the heart" and makes intellectual energies bound inseparably with psychic, emotional ones. When such specific structure is built up and oriented to God in prayer, the hesychast becomes "transparent for grace", by an ascetic formula. This is the key point of the Hesychast Way, which opens the approaches to the meta-anthropological summit of the practice, theosis. This point is *synergia*: not yet the full and perfect union of human and Divine energies, but already their meeting, mutual accord and harmony, their coherent action.⁶²³

⁶²¹ For a discussion of ontological unlocking and "earthly cares" in the context of on Heidegger's concept of Care in context with the Orthodox transcendence, see Chapter II §IV: Beauty as the Threshold Before Authentic Being.

⁶²² See "Pure Prayer," 255-261 and "Perfection" 303-374 in Stăniloae.

⁶²³ Horuzhy, "The Brothers Karamazov," 6.

Alyosha's individual prayer gives way to *synergia*. As his physical state joins with his spiritual state he begins to drift completely into the connection of the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-will-be.

The intersection of linear time and the eternal is not the only indication of the iconographic representation of this state. Alyosha also notes that space seems to be opening into the infinite as he enters this timeless realm. Yuri Corrigan speaks about the "expanding room" into which Alyosha enters, and through this brilliant phrasing on Dostoevsky's part the iconographic nature of the vision becomes even more concrete. Even though he sees the transcendence of space, Corrigan still views the process as an entirely interior event, contained within Alyosha's subconscious. He writes:

Alyosha's prayer near the corpse recalls Zosima's characterization as a form of introspective "education..." The movement through the realm of thought into deeper, unconscious space, toward the 'something' that is "whole" and "firm" within the psyche, is accompanied by the impression of expanding space. As he moves beyond the realm of thoughts and impression in the farther realm of this dream, he asks himself 'Why is the room expanding?'"⁶²⁴

Corrigan's interpretation confirms that expansion of the room is an indication that this vision is not merely contained within Alyosha, but reaches out into the infinite and transcendent. Despite Corrigan's indication of the boundless nature of the event he still reads it as completely interiorized. Continuing on in this vein of analysis will clarify that these indicators of boundless nature reveal a relational quality to the vision.

In the Orthodox tradition, the concept of space unfolding and expanding is the same as timelessness. In fact, the concept of reverse perspective and the non-Euclidian quality of Orthodox iconography is a well-known topic in the study of plastic arts, thanks in particular to the work of Pavel Florensky. Although these concepts were primarily developed after

⁶²⁴ Corrigan, 125.

Dostoevsky's death in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the iconographic spatial and temporal principles are instinctively rooted in Dostoevsky's supraconsciousness. This *noetic understanding* is exemplified in Alyosha's comment that the room is expanding is a written or spoken expression of the Orthodox encounter with space during its interaction with the Divine. Therefore, what Dostoevsky depicts in Alyosha's vision is nothing short of an icon given literary flesh. Diane Oenning describes Dostoevsky's artistic translation of the experience of authentic being-in-relation as iconographic in the following manner:

Alyosha's brief rebellion over, he obeys his elder's command. The quest has been fulfilled with a vision of uncreated Light, the test passed as Alyosha leaves firm for life to sojourn in the world. [...] In his depiction of his hero, Dostoevsky carries [the principle of iconographic expression] to its fullest extent.... Thus, in the iconographic scenes the narrator "paints" for the reader, he beholds and venerates what they symbolically represent. Indeed, the very painting of an icon is an act of veneration. The narrator invites us to behold the icon with him and in this way to take us into the image, to bring us into direct communion with "Christ the icon of God."⁶²⁵

The synthesis of the Gospel narrative, Alyosha's hesychastic silent openness to the Divine, and his relationship with Zosima—rekindled by Grushenka's story of the Little Onion—create the perfect space for the realistic, reasonable, and experiential opening of the novel. What this synergy results in is the *ontological unlocking of anthropological reality*, as Horuzhy calls it.

Alyosha's *noetic vision* certainly breaks the genre boundaries of a conventional realist novel insofar as it manifests the transrational, but it does not break Dostoevsky's novel.⁶²⁶ As readers, Dostoevsky has prepared us by allowing us to travel with Alyosha to this point. By stamping down the false expectations of the miraculous in Zosima's death and reinforcing the reality and orthodoxy of Alyosha's Christianity we are completely unfazed by the incursion of the transcendent in the guise of an iconographically structured *noetic vision*. The hesychastic tradition encoded into the text prepares the reader to experience this moment without it shaking

⁶²⁵ Oenning, 302.

⁶²⁶ For more on this concept see the discussion on Evgenii Onegin in Chapter II §VII: The Dostoevskian Person.

us from the reality of the novel. But Dostoevsky does such masterful work encoding all this into the text it comes across as completely normal, easy to dismiss as too hagiographic, simply a dream, or just another literary device. In fact, the *ontological unlocking of anthropological reality* occurs in a form so common in the Orthodox experience that one might easily look past it because the familiar sight of the icon being translated into words is so masterfully accomplished that its positioning in the text masks its novelty and beauty. In other words, the reader is so well prepared for the moment they miss it.

One might still be asking how, exactly, is this vision iconographic? To analyze it in such a fashion requires a brief interlude on icons themselves. Icons are visual depictions of the fullness of the *logoi* or the Logos as manifested in reality. An icon makes visible the fleetingly discreet boundaries between the visible and invisible world, leading the viewer into contemplation of the world-as-it-is synergistically unified with the world-as-it-will-be. The pinnacle of iconography and its sacramental role is, according to Pavel Florensky, the iconostasis, or icon screen, in an Orthodox church. Depicted on it are persons who are witnesses to the possibility of the connection between these two worlds, who have progressed up the soteriological ladder and experienced the fullness of being-in-relation with the Divine. Florensky writes:

Heaven and earth, altar and temple: this separation can only occur through visible witness of the invisible world and the other—i.e., through the holy people. These holy persons, visible in the visible, are nevertheless not conformed to this world, for they have transformed their bodies and resurrected their minds, thereby attain existence beyond the world in the invisible... Thus, they are (we may say) the witnesses on the boundary between the visible and the invisible, the symbolic images of those visions that arise when passing from one state of consciousness to into another.⁶²⁷

What Florensky describes as “visions that arise when passing from one state of consciousness into another,” in the icons on the iconostasis are precisely that which Dostoevsky depicts in

⁶²⁷ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 61.

Alyosha, both as a Person and within the *noetic vision*. The passing from one state of consciousness can appear in three forms, but it reaches its peak in the experience of authentic being. These three forms, according to Florensky, are the dream, the artistic creation, and the mystical experience.⁶²⁸ Dostoevsky incorporates all three spheres of the encounter with the Divine into the novel, but of all his attempts to depict the fullness of reality, higher realism, the mystical experience is only truly penetrated by Alyosha.

Even if Alyosha's vision appears to begin as a dream, the content of his vision and the artistic sympathy to the iconographic style raises it up to at least the second form, which we might call an epiphany. But through the direct relation with Zosima as deified and the presence of Christ Dostoevsky raises it from epiphany to the third form of contact with the higher realm. As Yuri Corrigan notes, Alyosha's *noetic vision* "opens out" to the reader like a curtain or veil being drawn back. In fact, the Russian verb *razdvigat'sia*, used by Alyosha to reveal this "opening out" of the room he is in, is used to indicate curtains opening in common Russian speech. It also means "to grow" or "expand." This word choice on Dostoevsky's part further reinforces the iconographic beginnings of the vision for, as Evdokimov tells us:

[The meaning and spiritual requirements of the icon] help us understand why scenes are never enclosed in walls. The action takes place outside the limits of time and space, that is, everywhere and in front of everyone. If it is necessary to indicate that the event took place somewhere inside, this is indicated in the background by a red veil hanging between the buildings. The icon is thus never a "window on nature" nor even on a specific place but rather an opening onto the beyond, a beyond that is bathed in the light of the Eighth Day.⁶²⁹

Herein lies the meaning of the inverse, or reverse perspective, of Orthodox iconography and the genius Dostoevsky displays in neither centering this section on Alyosha or Zosima or the audience, but opening the text up with Christ as center, as Beauty that charms all into relation

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 44-5.

⁶²⁹ Evdokimov, 224. Icons of the Wedding in Cana canonically contain a red veil being pulled back to signify this experience. See Figure 21 for one such example.

and toward the soteriological telos of being-in-communion. As the room and vision open out from time and space, Alyosha comes into direct relation with his Elder, alive in the fullness of the “light of the Eighth Day,” or the joy of the Wedding feast. Nature is not gone, but it is deified, and Alyosha will return to it with rapture, still seeing it both as-it-is and as-it-will-be after his vision recedes.

Another element of visual iconography that Dostoevsky encodes into the text, indicating the engagement with the world-as-it-will-be, is the presentation of the experience of the Divine from multiple perspectives. Dostoevsky assembles the vision through three separate perspectives: Father Paissy reads the Gospel, Alyosha and Zosima converse, and the narrator seems to be present physically within the vision as well. All of these narrative expressions open the reader to an experience of the fullness of this moment of being-in-relation insofar as it requires a meeting of the polyphony of voices to convey the expansion of the world to meet the ontological and anthropological boundaries. The *noetic vision* written in iconographic form becomes an active work of creative beauty that invites the reader into this authentic mode of being-in-relation that Alyosha and Zosima have achieved in the presence of the Divine. There is unity, self-emptying love, freedom, and absolute uniqueness portrayed on the page, meeting all the qualities of the Theocentric Personological Paradigm.⁶³⁰ The beauty of these two persons that has forged their relational communion, leads to a face-to-face meeting outside the barriers of space and time but held fast within the ontological boundaries of the novel. The beauty of their inner *logi* provide the pigments that paint the scene and points toward the soteriological telos shining like the sun in the vision. Two Persons achieve communion through the charm of beauty.

⁶³⁰ For more on the Theocentric Personological Paradigm (TPP), see Chapter I §II: The Primacy of Being over Essence. The Theocentric Personal Paradigm.

The charming beauty that Dostoevsky facilitates pulls the narrator into relation with them, and invites the reader to do the same. And illuminating the entire scene is the ideal as an active and relational Being, the incarnation of Beauty as Christ who enters the narrative as both Person and God. The beauty of the Madonna is successfully depicted in the loving, free, self-emptying acts of Zosima and Alyosha and the one true “perfectly beautiful Person” is incarnated in the text.

The final major indication of the iconographic nature of this passage is the description of Zosima. He is transformed, having moved from a stinking, decomposing corpse into a deified state. Like Christ He first appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, Zosima is at first unfamiliar to Alyosha in the vision.⁶³¹ However, thanks to his purified senses, Alyosha is able to see his elder shining with the radiant light of the Divine. The narrator also does not recognize Zosima at first, but then he is revealed through the visage of his face and voice. The personal quality of the unique individual who is unified with the Divine in the icon is articulated through the face. Hilarion Alfeyev explains that “The saint is recognizable on the icon, but he is different. His features are refined and ennobled; he is given an iconic appearance. An icon reveals a persona in his transformed, and deified condition.”⁶³² The narrator describes Zosima in precisely this manner: “Yes, he came up to him, the wizened old man, with small wrinkles on his face, joyful and laughing. The coffin is gone, and he is in the same clothes as when he sat with them yesterday when the guests came to visit him. His face (*litso*), is completely open, his eyes are shining.”⁶³³ Dostoevsky portrays here the iconic transformation of the material face (*litso*) into the personal (*lichnoe*) countenance (*lik*) that occurs through the communion of the person with

⁶³¹ See John: 20, Mark: 16, and Luke: 24 for these instances of Christ being, at first, unrecognizable after the Resurrection.

⁶³² Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Orthodox Church: Volume III: The Architecture, Icons, and Music of the Orthodox Church*, trans. Andrei Tepper, (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2014), 215.

⁶³³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S. 14*, 327. For the discussion of *litso* and *lichnost*’ as related to the person and therefore a foundational aspect of the fictional Person see Chapter I §I: Character as a Form of Being: the Literary and Ontological ‘Prosôpon,’ ‘lichnost,’ and ‘Chelovek.’

the Divine through the Divine Energies. Alyosha encounters his elder not as he was in the world but in complete communion with the Divine.

The interplay between the face, the personal, and the transcendent countenance is vastly important in iconography and Dostoevsky masterfully paints this into the novel. Regarding the personal qualities of the face in the icon, Alfeyev informs us that:

Ancient iconographers differentiated *lichnoe* (personal) from *dolichnoe* (circumstantial). The latter, including the background, scenery, clothing, would often be given to a disciple or artist who was not yet a master, while the master himself painted the actual faces. The *personal* was always treated with particular care and this part of the iconographer's labor was especially highly regarded... The spiritual center of the iconic face is the eyes which rarely look straight at the viewer; neither are they directed to the side. Most often the eyes appear to look "over" the viewer, not so much into his eyes but into his soul.⁶³⁴

This personal quality expresses the relational quality of human and Divine being in the icon. And Dostoevsky achieves this iconographic depiction of the deification of the person in both the eyes and face of Zosima. A dream or epiphany does not convey this direct meeting of the Divine in the other in this manner. Only in *noetic vision* or its artistic representation in the icon does one find this meeting. Even before the Divine comes into focus, the presence of the Godhead is explicitly shown in Zosima's face. Zosima alone would be enough for one trained in the hesychastic tradition to realize the *noetic* quality of this vision, but Dostoevsky solidifies this connection by presenting Christ directly as the enhypostatization of Beauty within the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the text and opens this interpretation to readers unfamiliar with the deeper structures at play.

The beauty of Zosima's eyes and face and the sonorous tones of his voice charm Alyosha, and through their deified beauty allow Alyosha to overcome his final moment of egocentric isolation. He is afraid to look directly into the Light of Tabor, but encouraged by his elder he looks and with his cleansed *nous* sees the Incarnation. Through their communion in

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 220.

relational being they are able to comprehend the Divine. Florensky clarifies the presence of the Divine to those in this state when he writes:

Everything accidental, everything caused by things external to this essence—i.e., everything in our face which is not the face itself—is swept away by an energy like a strong fountain of water breaking through a thick material husk, the energy of the image of God: and our *face (litso)* becomes a *countenance (lik)*. We are beholding a countenance, then, whenever we have before us a face that has fully realized within itself its likeness to God: and we then rightly say, Here is the image of God, meaning: this holy countenance, we thus behold the divine prototype; for those among us who have transfigured their faces into countenances proclaim—without a word and solely by their appearance to us—the mysteries of the invisible world. [...] A countenance is the *appearance* of some reality and, as such, it mediates between our act of comprehending and that which we comprehend in the sense that it opens for our speculative sight the essence of that which we are seeking to comprehend [the Divine].⁶³⁵

In this manner, Dostoevsky creates an iconographic image in which two Persons—capable of free action and self-emptying love while being unique—enter into communion through the charm of their personal beauty. And thanks to their adherence to the hesychastic method of self-cleansing they are at last ontologically and anthropologically unlocked, simultaneously witnessing and expressing a higher reality of transcendent being-in-relation with the Divine.

The iconographic depiction of the person that Dostoevsky presents in this scene is the fulfillment of his attempts to solve the mystery of the person, to depict a perfectly beautiful person, to reify the beauty that will save the world, and to depict a positive figure of a saintly person. Evdokimov avers that:

It seems clear that Dostoevsky clearly grasped the full meaning of such an *iconographic vision* of the world. As a novelist, he experienced an insurmountable difficulty in trying to describe an eminently good person. He wondered what this ideal man could possibly do in life: be a justice of the peace, a social reformer? He had to give up his quest and borrow his good person from the lives of the great spiritual saints. This is why his saints do not participate in the external activities of events. If they do participate in them, however, it is *in a totally different manner*. Dostoevsky drew the face of a saint and put it on the far wall as a sort of icon.

The participation in a “totally different manner” is the realization of the spiritual “usefulness” of that which Alyosha experiences in his *noetic vision*. From the Wedding Alyosha brings back not only the foundations of the hesychastic tradition, but an assurance of their efficacy. And this assurance and his own continued perseverance carries him through the rest of the novel. He

⁶³⁵ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 52-3.

immediately returns to the earth and weeps and grasps it because he can see it as-it-is and as-it-will-be.

The *noetic vision* of the Wedding in Cana marks the beginning of Alyosha's permanent attitude of repentance as he longs to "be forgiven by all and for everything" a principle that has descended into his soul and will not leave him for the rest of the novel.⁶³⁶ Even more so than his brother Mitya's cry of ontological freedom of "I am!" Alyosha's synergetic communion with all of creation while maintaining his personal uniqueness is the fulfillment of the ideal Person.⁶³⁷ Unlike Myshkin, Alyosha remains free and unique, but retains the loving and invitational and helps guide his brothers toward authentic being-in-relation. However, he refuses to force this vision, understanding, and mode of being-in-relation on them or their lovers in the novel. Freedom and love remain in perfect harmony in Alyosha, which he also provides to the young boys, in a way taking up the role of his elder for them, only outside the walls of the monastery. However, no matter what throughout the rest of the text after his *noetic vision* he is guarded by the reality of what he experienced in his iconographic vision and Dostoevsky's answer to the riddle of being and the person thrives within him without corrupting his typological status as a Person.

To see how Alyosha maintains his freedom as a Person requires of the reader an understanding of the vision as something tangible, beyond philosophy, and beyond mysticism. The vision could have the concrete influence on, while still adhering to, the ontological and anthropological boundaries of the text if it were merely a Western literary epiphany or dream. It needs to be a *noetic vision* achieved through *Metanoia*, *Spiritual Warfare*, and *Hesychia* if it is to successfully open the fictional beings, the author, and the reader to a moment of authentic being-

⁶³⁶ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 328.

⁶³⁷ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 31.

in-relation with one another and the Divine. Through Alyosha's transcendence of space and time in the superconscious experience of the Divine in communion with Zosima, Dostoevsky creates a moment of relational being for the reader, fixing a scene of beauty that opens them up to a direct meeting with him as the author and his literary Persons.

This iconographic depiction in text is Dostoevsky's final achievement of higher realism. It conveys both the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-will-be without, to paraphrase Kate Holland, breaking the world of the novel—the world does not end.⁶³⁸ The ideal of beauty, Beauty itself, Christ, appears in the novel without overthrowing the freedom of the other. The continuation of the novel after this apogee is no surprise because for Dostoevsky, working within the hesychastic method, this “experience of the higher stages of the asceticism is only the approach to *theosis*, the fullness of which is only made accessible for persons who have entered the eschatological horizon.”⁶³⁹ The novel *needs* to continue to express continually the state of Alyosha's Personhood, but also to prove that his experience of authentic being through beauty is completely within the ontological and anthropological boundaries of realism, or at least Dostoevsky's radical higher realism. Through his meticulous and inspired poetic construction, the incursion of the Divine into reality is not only permissible within the ideological framework of Orthodox and Dostoevsky's *Weltanschauung*, but it is acceptable within the poetic structure of the novel as well.

The Orthodox Personalist lens provides a road map to navigate through the implicit concepts of synergetic anthropology, relational ontology, aesthetics of charm, and hesychastic practices in the texts. All of these concepts are present in the post-Siberian novels, and are

⁶³⁸ Holland, 162.

⁶³⁹ Horuzhy, 6.

reworked and tested until they reach the moment of pure transcendence of higher realism in *The Brothers Karamazov*. This moment, although not a soteriological telos for Alyosha, is the pinnacle of Personal engagement with the Divine, insofar as Dostoevsky's secular writing can bear it. Without the foundations of these four theoretical pillars one can still experience the joy and light of being-in-relation that Dostoevsky captures in the vision of the Wedding at Cana, but the manner by which he achieves it as an artistic expression is more difficult to put into words. Reaching this peak, the novel continues, just as life continues along with experiences of being-in-relation with the Divine that occur. The eschatological telos of life has not occurred, nor has it within the world of the novel. Had Dostoevsky continued writing perhaps there would have been more explicit moments of these principles in the subsequent novel. However, at this point, the analysis of the high-water mark of higher realism concludes. The analysis is no more, and the dissertation must end.

Conclusion:

Dostoevsky's influence on Personalism cannot be understated, and using this theoretical mode of discourse as a lens to investigate both the ideological and poetic foundations and structures of his works effectively shows a productive manner of observing precisely how Orthodoxy shapes them and is expressed therein. It is clear that these analyses are fruitful within the context of Dostoevsky's oeuvre, and expanding them to engage other authors, such as Pushkin, Gogol', and Tolstoy who worked closely with, if not at times expressly against, an Orthodox Weltanschauung would most likely result in similarly enlightening studies. But would this mode of Orthodox Personalist literary analysis function well outside the context of Russian literature of the nineteenth century? Or does its usefulness as a literary tool end when the author is too far removed from the threshold of the Orthodox Church?

The answer to these questions lie in this term *threshold*, and its significance to both Dostoevsky's work and Orthodox Personalist literary analysis in general. From a literary perspective, and particularly within the context of Dostoevsky studies, the term *threshold* has already been developed in relation to formal qualities of a realist text. Gary Saul Morson dedicates an entire chapter to the concept of Threshold Art in his book *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia*. He discusses *Boundary Works* and *Threshold Literature* as works that purposefully remain ambiguous with regard to the genre conventions to which they adhere. Often these works are designed to operate between two or more conventions. Regarding those texts that are purposefully composed to engage multiple conventions, Morson writes:

I refer to boundary works of this type as *threshold literature*—a class that is perhaps best described in terms of the three principle strategies its work uses. First, the author of a threshold work may create an entire text of uncertain status and exploit the resonance between two kinds of reading. [...] A second type of threshold work creates hermeneutic perplexity not by generic

ambiguity but by generic incompatibility... In the third type of threshold literature, double encoding becomes neither ambiguous nor incompatible, but deceitful encoding.⁶⁴⁰

These three types of threshold works delineate how an artist utilizes generic conventions to create novel forms and generate new meaning in texts. I, and other scholars such as Morson and Kate Holland, have shown how Dostoevsky masterfully utilizes the techniques of threshold art—particularly in his use of hagiographic narrative, Biblical citations and parallelisms, and poetic forms—to guide the reader toward his higher realism.

To analyze and appreciate moments of ambiguity, incompatibility, or deceitfulness in Dostoevsky's works does not require insight into the deep roots of Orthodoxy. One can appreciate the oddity of the inserted hagiographic sections in *The Brothers Karamazov* and what they add to the narrative and meaning of the novel without fully understanding the theological or even structural foundations of the genre. So too is one able to understand Dostoevsky and Ivan's thrust in "The Grand Inquisitor" *poema* without a knowledge of the Orthodox exegetical tradition on the temptations of Christ. In each of these situations, however, the insights of Orthodox Personalism uncover unique readings into the particularities of the scenes and structures of the text and how they feed into Dostoevsky's attempt to solve the mystery of the person and present a positive depiction of a real, spiritually attuned Person within the text.

But, as Malcolm Jones notes, it is not necessary to read even the spiritually charged scenes in Dostoevsky's novels completely within the Orthodox tradition. Jones writes: "But even the great spiritual experiences of Alyosha and Dmitri may justifiably be said to be minimalist in that they are presented as direct expressions of religious experience only lightly touched by the forms of orthodox theology and dogma and often contaminated by decidedly unorthodox, if not

⁶⁴⁰ Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia*, (Austin, TX: University of Austin Press, 1981), 50-1.

heretical sources.”⁶⁴¹ What allows for Jones’ reading is the fact that Dostoevsky is not working directly within the context of the Orthodox liturgical or sacramental experience, but rather on its threshold. Therefore, in the ideological context, as Jones’ analysis might imply, refraining from entering into the central realms—the liturgical or sacramental regions—of Orthodoxy allows Dostoevsky to open his texts up to multiple analyses because they are not explicitly tied to dogma or other earthly institutions grounded in metaphysical or transcendent truths.

To a certain extent, Dostoevsky’s writing bears out polyphonic readings of the sort that Jones presents in the novels because Dostoevsky’s authorial voice is consistently challenged within the texts. Although he often speaks of the Truth of Christ and the absolute value of the teachings and institutions of the Orthodox Church in his notebooks, his journalistic writings, and his personal correspondence, he typically shies away from explicit discussions of them in his artistic works. There is even evidence of him reigning in his desires to be more explicit about the beauty of Christ in his artistic output. One such example is found in Notebook VI for *The Brothers Karamazov*, where it is clear that Dostoevsky originally intended for Zosima to speak directly about the Uncreated Light of Mt. Tabor and the Transfiguration of Christ. If the elder had spoken the words as Dostoevsky wrote them, “Your flesh will change. Illumination of Tabor. Life is a *paradise*, the keys are ours,” then perhaps the Orthodox foundations of Alyosha’s *noetic vision* and the physical and spiritual change he experiences and shares with others would have been clearer for readers unfamiliar with these ideas.⁶⁴² Instead, the actual change, the beginning of the process of deification that occurs in Alyosha thanks to hesychastic practice, is defined more obliquely by Zosima:

But on earth we truly seem to be wandering, and if the precious image [*obraz*] of Christ were not before us, we would perish and be completely lost, like the human race before the flood. Many

⁶⁴¹ Jackson, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, 133.

⁶⁴² Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 15, 245.

things on earth are hidden from us, but in return we are given a secret, intimate sense of our living connection with the other world, with the heavenly and higher world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here, but in other worlds. That is why the philosophers say that the essence of things cannot be understood on earth. God has taken seeds from other worlds and sowed them on this earth, and has cultivated his garden, and all that could grow has sprung up, but what is cultivated lives and is alive only by the sense of its contact with the mysterious other worlds; if this feeling weakens or is destroyed in you, then what is cultivated in you also dies.⁶⁴³

There is a certainty in Christ in Zosima's words, but the direct connection to the uniquely Orthodox qualities which Alyosha encounters in his *noetic vision* of the Wedding in Cana is presented as if through a glass, darkly. Dostoevsky walks the reader up to the threshold of the Orthodox teachings in his texts, but does not force the reader to enter into them.

Considering *threshold art* from an Orthodox perspective, however, further exposes the value of working from the Personalist direction as it relates to Dostoevsky's light-handed approach to Orthodoxy. Fr. Silouan Justiniano, a monk, Fine Art M.A., and editor of the *Orthodox Arts Journal*, posits a concept of the threshold that functions within the metaphorical paradigm of the structure of an Orthodox church. In this paradigm the three sections of the church, the nave, the narthex, and the space outside the building correspond to categories of Sacred, Threshold, and Profane art. Fr. Silouan writes "Sacred art, as its various forms harmoniously come together in the symphony of Church cult, sacramentally places us in the presence, *within* the mystery of the Sacred; whereas gallery art [the profane] *may* function, in spite of its disadvantages, as a transitional *border* leading from the profane to the inner sanctum of the Sacred."⁶⁴⁴ This concept conceives of art as a border, one that can lead to either the Profane or the Sacred. Fr. Silouan goes further to note that *threshold art* can be "seen as an art of the *narthex*, so to speak, in which the catechumen is instructed, purified in *metanoia* and made

⁶⁴³ Dostoevsky, *P.S.S.* 14, 290.

⁶⁴⁴ Silouan Justiniano, "On the Gift of Art... Part V: The Threshold," *The Orthodox Arts Journal*, May 4, 2016, <https://orthodoxartsjournal.org/on-the-gift-of-art-part-v-the-threshold/> (accessed May 3, 2021). Note, that in this paradigm the term *profane* does not carry inherent negative connotations, but merely serves as an opposition to art that explicitly engages with the contemplation of the Divine.

ready for initiation into the Mystery of the incarnate Logos.”⁶⁴⁵ This connection between *metanoia*, the narthex, and initiation to the Logos in threshold art perfectly encapsulates Dostoevsky’s engagement with Orthodoxy in his poetic output.

Considering works such as *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *Demons*, and *The Brothers Karamazov* as works of *threshold art* in the Orthodox sense allows one to synthesize the polyphonic dialogue of the secular and religious analyses of Dostoevsky’s work in a manner that maintains the integrity of Dostoevsky’s authorial intent and the freedom of thought and being that he gives to his fictional Persons. It also allows this polyphony to carry over into critical assessments of his works as well. In this light, one can better comprehend that although the literary and ideological analyses need not be predicated upon Orthodox thought, a Personalist reading illuminates Dostoevsky’s work in a significant and distinctive manner. Dostoevsky is therefore a particularly fruitful launch-pad for this type of analysis, insofar as his works are explicitly meant to lead the reader from the metaphorical space outside the church building at least up to the narthex and at most encourage them to enter into the sacramental space of the nave. If his work is, to use Zosima’s words, meant to “cultivate lives” through the beauty of “the precious image of Christ before us,” then the Orthodox Personalist literary analyses attempted in this dissertation endeavor to maintain a fidelity to this *threshold art* by revealing that which points toward the Sacred without stepping completely into it. In this way the dissertation is written in imitation of Dostoevsky’s style.

An analysis of other works as *threshold art*, therefore, is possible only insofar as it does not attempt to “Orthodoxize” non-Sacred works, but rather to investigate how the Personalist theories of anthropology, ontology, and aesthetics can be seen in authors from other cultural,

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

temporal, and ideological backgrounds mirror. If the Personalist perspective posits that the foundation of all beauty is the unique *logos* in all persons and things, which point toward the Creator and call others into relation, then a study of other artists would entail an investigation into how they embody or move away from this foundational principle, searching for cataphatic or apophatic confirmations of the theory of the centrality of Christ in beauty and relation. This dissertation begins to investigate this principle in the works of Pushkin, Gogol', Tolstoy, and Bely, but also alludes to its possible use in the works of American authors such as Thomas Pynchon and David Foster Wallace.

Donald Sheehan is the first American scholar to attempt any sort of literary Personalist analysis on non-Russian literature through his discussions of the works of Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, and Shakespeare. Another similar analysis is Sergei Horuzhy's first monograph which analyzes James Joyce's *Ulysses*, though his Personalist readings did not fully develop until after this work. With these two scholars in mind, however, there is the possibility that the field of Personalist literary analysis can continue to develop not merely in Slavic studies, but cross-culturally because its methodology and focus respect and encourage the uniqueness and absolute value of each person who engages with a text or work of art. Centering the focus of literary study on the person and their connection to others within a larger concept of beauty supports a mentality of inclusiveness and a celebration of the vibrant and diverse range of discourse on Dostoevsky. Just as his texts give full credence to the voices and ideas of a multitude of perspectives, so too should the Personalist analysis encourage this polyphony. And by extending the scope of Personalist studies, this manner of discourse can reify these perspectives across temporal and spacial boundaries.

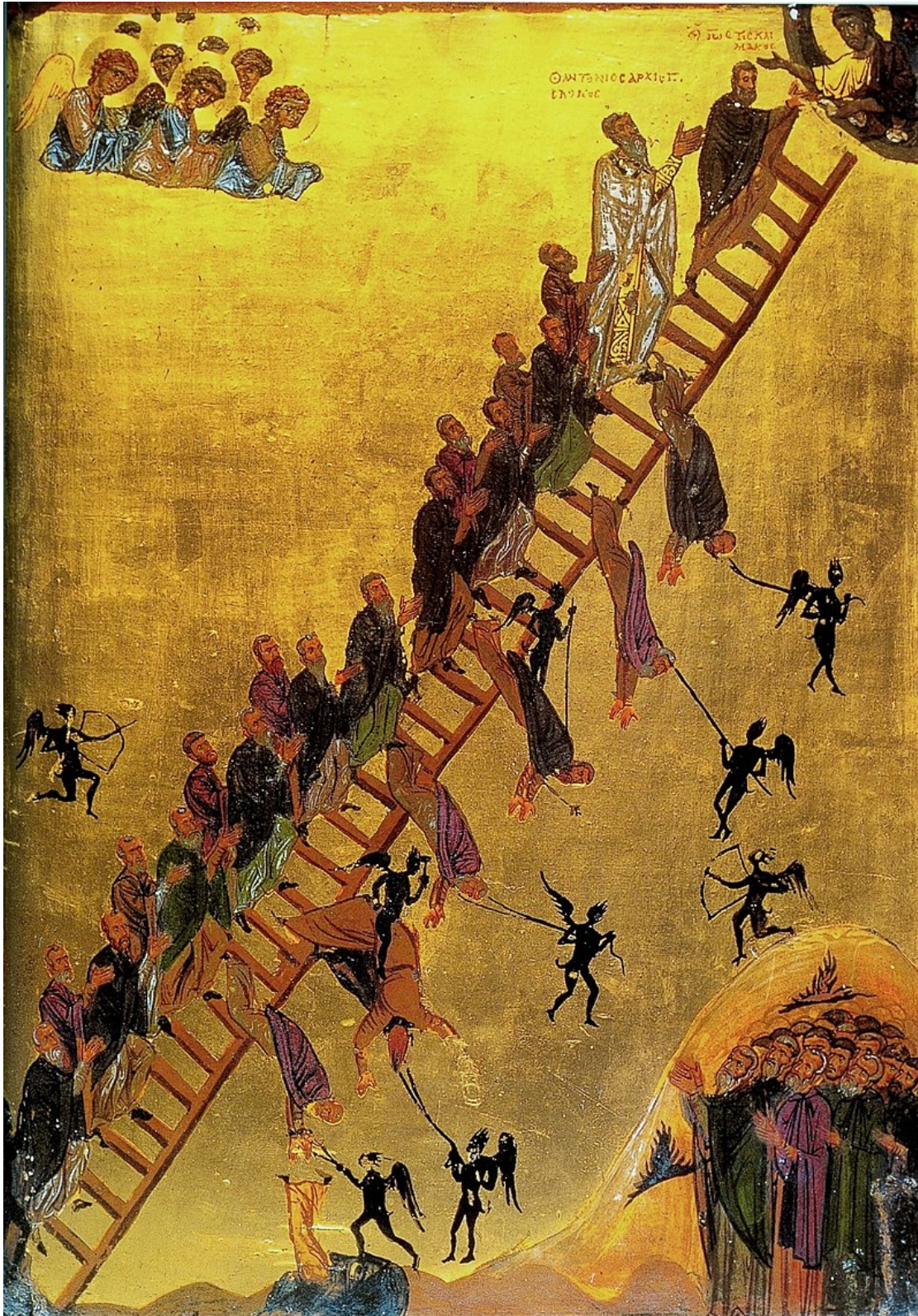
Dostoevsky may not have finished writing the sequel(s) to *The Brothers Karamazov* but his work on his final novel, along with the work that brought him along his path to creating this masterpiece of Personalist fiction opens doors to an innovative mode of depicting fictional being, inspires a polyphony of voices to continue the discussion of the mystery of the person in fictional and critical literature, and continues to bring numerous readers, in and outside of Russia, to the threshold of his beliefs, leaving them, more often than not, changed because of the relation into which they enter with him and his Persons. These three aspects of his work must continue to be enjoyed, analyzed, and engaged with in new, novel forms as each unique voice comes into dialogue with the author. And this dissertation, hopefully, contributes to an endless yet infinitely profitable shedding of ink over these thoughts and ideas.

Figure 1 Andrei Rublev, *Old Testament Trinity*



Andrei Rublev, *Old Testament Trinity*, 1411 or 1425-7, State Tretyakovskiy Gallery, Moscow.

Figure 2 The Ladder of Divine Ascent



The Ladder of Divine Ascent, 12th century, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

Figure 3 Oleg Shurkus, *Apostle Peter*



Oleg Shurkus, *Apostle Peter*. 2017, <https://static.tildacdn.com/tild6535-3137-4232-a332-666232323061/010.jpg> Accessed May 3, 2020.

Figure 4 Leonardo da Vinci, *Anatomical Studies of the Shoulder*



Leonardo da Vinci, *Anatomical Studies of the Shoulder*, 1510-11, Royal Library, Windsor.

Figure 5 Petr Mikhailovich Boklevsky, Nozdrev: personazh iz Mertvikh dush



Petr Mikhailovich Boklevsky, *Nozdrev: personazh iz Mertvikh dush*, in *Al'bom'' Gogolevskikh'' tipov''*: v'' risulkakh'' khudozhnikova, ivdanie vtoroe, St. Petersburg: Tip V, 1882.

Figure 6 Marc Chagall, *Nozdriov*



Marc Chagall, *Nozdriov*, plate XXII (supplementary suite) from *Les Âmes mortes* 1923-48, MOMA, NY, The Louis E. Stern Collection.

Figure 7 Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*



Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*, 1520-22, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel.

Figure 8 Claude Lorrain, *Coastal Landscape with Acis and Galatea*



Claude Lorrain, *Coastal Landscape with Acis and Galatea*, 1657, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

Figure 9 Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notebook Page 75, Notebook 3 of The Idiot



Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notebook Page 75, Notebook 3 of The Idiot, in P.S.S. 11, 250-251.

Figure 10 Hans Holbein the Younger, *Darmstädter Madonna*



Hans Holbein the Younger, *Darmstädter Madonna*, 1526/1528, Johanniterhalle, Schwäbisch Hall, Germany.

Figure 11 Gustav Klimt, Detail of: Beethoven Frieze, 'The Well-armed Strong One'



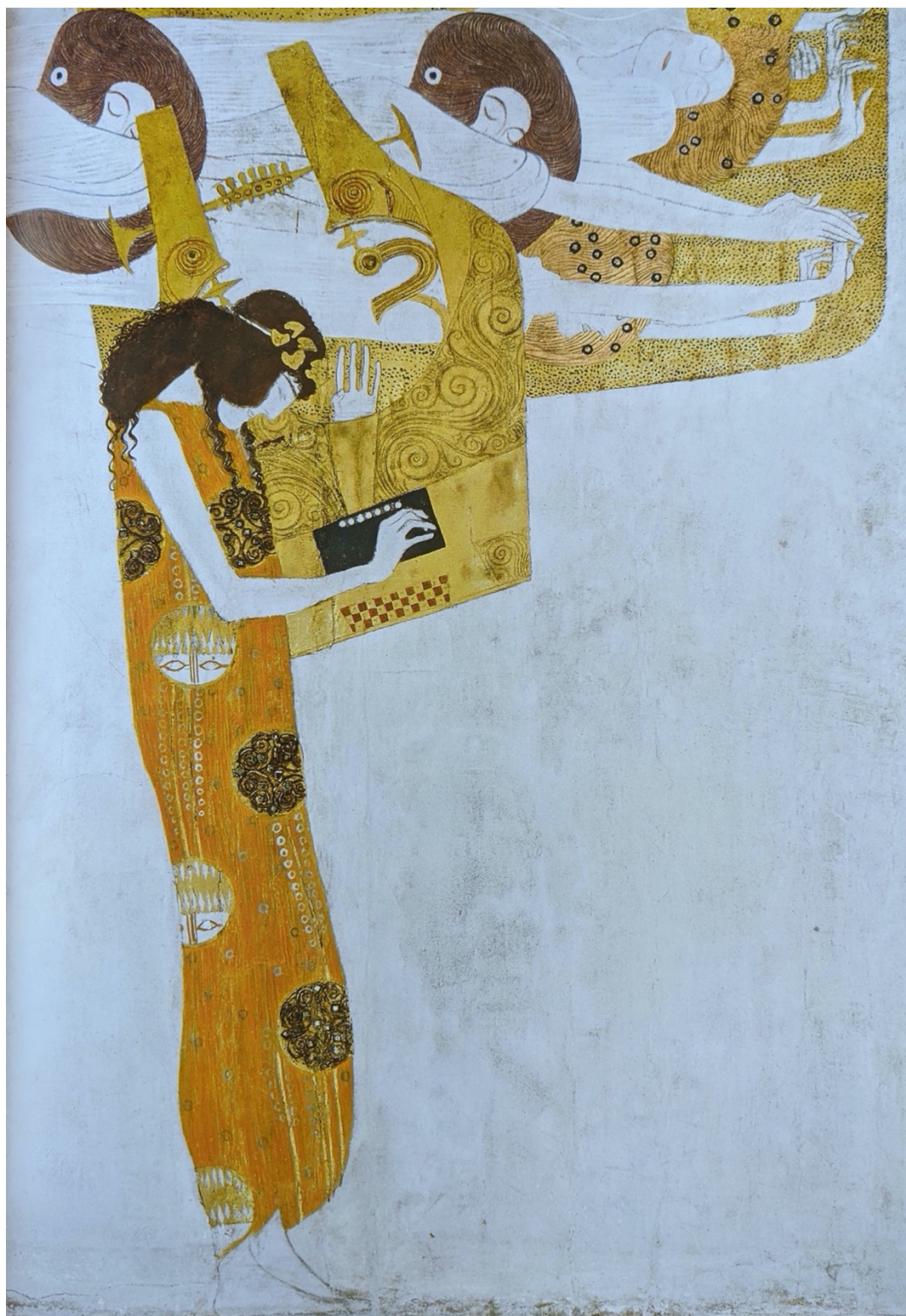
Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'The Well-armed Strong One,' 1901-2, Secession, Vienna, from *Gustav Klimt: The Complete Paintings*, ed. Tobias G Natter, (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 67.

Figure 12 Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'The Hostile Forces'



Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'The Hostile Forces,' 1901-2, Secession, Vienna, from *Gustav Klimt: The Complete Paintings*, ed. Tobias G Natter, (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 74-5.

Figure 13 Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'Poetry'



Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'Poetry,' 1901-2, Secession, Vienna, from *Gustav Klimt: The Complete Paintings*, ed. Tobias G Natter, (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 69.

Figure 14 Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'Joy, fair spark of divinity' and 'A kiss for all the world'



Gustav Klimt, Detail of: *Beethoven Frieze*, 'Joy, fair spark of divinity,' and 'A kiss for all the world,' 1901-2, Secession, Vienna, from *Gustav Klimt: The Complete Paintings*, ed. Tobias G Natter, (Cologne: Taschen, 2018), 72-3.

Figure 15 Rafael, *Sistine Madonna*



Rafael, *Sistine Madonna*, 1513-4, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

Figure 16 Luke the Evangelist, Panayia Portatissa



Luke the Evangelist, *Panayia Portatissa*, 1st Century, Monastery of Iveron, Mt. Athos, Greece.

Figure 17 Vladimir Mother of God, Our Lady of Vladimir



Vladimir Mother of God, Our Lady of Vladimir, 12th Century, Church of St. Nicholas in Tolmachi, Moscow.

Figure 18 Alexey Kvashnin, *Our Lady Joy of All Who Sorrow*



Alexey Kvashnin, *Our Lady Joy of All Who Sorrow*, 1710, Central Andrei Rublev Museum of Ancient Art, Moscow.

Figure 19 Theophanes the Greek, *The Saviour's Transfiguration*



Theophanes the Greek, *The Saviour's Transfiguration*, early fifteenth century, State Tretyakovsky Gallery, Moscow.

Figure 20 The Pentecost Mosaic, in the center is the dove of the Holy Spirit with the twelve apostles below



“The Pentecost Mosaic, in the center is the dove of the Holy Spirit with the twelve apostles below,” Fifteenth Century Recreation. St. Mark’s Basilica, Venice, Italy. Photograph by Dennis Jarvis,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark%27s_Basilica#/media/File:Venice_SMarco_Vault2.jpg (accessed April 9, 2021).

Figure 21 Icon of the Wedding at Cana



Icon of the Wedding at Cana, from the Iconographic Studio of St. Elizabeth Convent, Minsk, Belarus.

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