

THE GRAND INQUISITOR: THE PATHS OF FREEDOM

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This paper analyzes the antitheistic argument of Ivan Karamazov in the context of theodicy. We focus on the chapter *The Grand Inquisitor*, which, as we demonstrate, represents the ultimate argumentative point of Ivan's "rebellion" against God. Logical impossibility of justifying evil in the world leads Ivan not only to the conclusion that evil is an unerasable mark of God's mistake appearing while making his creation (man and the world), but also that the basis of that evil is one of the most appreciated human virtues: freedom. After Alyosha introduces Christ (thesis) into an argument on theodicy, as an instance that can and has the right to forgive evil and thus cancel its effects, Ivan responds with his dialectical counterpart (antithesis): The Grand inquisitor. Synthesis in this dialectical struggle, as we demonstrate, does not lead to any logically acceptable solution. On the contrary. We are left with the paradox: freedom has, at the same time, led to theodicy and to an accusation against Christ.

Keywords: freedom, norm, metaphysics, antitheism, atheism, theodicy, God, *The Grand Inquisitor*, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Introduction

The issue of freedom is connected to the issue of the boundary. The awareness of freedom demands the relation with regard to which that freedom is practiced, according to the *choice* we make thanks to the *difference* between the elements of a certain system. In other words, the practicing of freedom is conditioned by the possibility of choosing between two or more elements. At the same time, the characteristic of freedom is also the possibility of breaking the given (current) normative constructions. The norm already implies a difference, a boundary on the basis of which a certain axiology is structured. So, for example, the awareness of the difference between good and evil conditions the system of ethical norms which can be broken at any moment. This means that the capacity of both respecting and breaking the given norms is already included in the domain of freedom (or free will), and that freedom as such, is not inherent in any element on the basis of which the system of norms (in this case, ethical ones) is structured. In a word, freedom has nothing in common with the notion of "god" or with

the notion of “evil”, it enables them equally and vice versa, precisely through that binary pair, the notion of “freedom”, in an ethical structure, is affirmed by the possibility to choose.

Behind normative regulation of reality, a metaphysical structure is hiding which maintains that construction. In that sense, a regulatory function of norm is at its core logocentric – it implies a certain relation to sense and truth. Hence, the issue of metaphysics is connected to the issue of God and implicitly God's existence, which should make sense of not only individual human life, but also entire life processes and events.

The concept which implies the order filled with meaning and capable of providing meaning behind empirically established chaos and ‘meaninglessness’ of real and social world should be marked as metaphysical. That order can be understood in such a way either that it somehow ultimately regulates the empirical chaos of the world in a meaningful, albeit, perhaps, not to every single man a necessarily constantly obvious way, so that the regulation for man results in binding norms, which have roots in something unconditional and solid – for example, morality, religious code and so on; or perhaps, that the forces which create the metaphysical order do not relate to the real world nor do they intervene in it, but, leaving ‘this-sidedness’ to itself, in its ‘meaninglessness’, it is only in the otherworldliness that they ‘put to order’ everything concerning man, his soul, his spirit, his ‘entelechy’...

[...] With all the diversity of numerous metaphysical concepts, each one of them implies (‘embodies’) God, the divine or God-like. (Stojanović 102-103)

The relation between metaphysics and norm is the relation between logos (of something “unconditional and solid”) and its regulatory emanation in practice; in somewhat narrower sense, it is a relation where meaningfulness and *truthfulness* (immediate “presence” of being) attempt to embody themselves through certain, in practice useful rules. It is precisely there that the connection which brings together metaphysics and God (that is, implicitly, the question of God's existence) is glimpsed.¹ God is logos itself, the ultimate truth, the ultimate meaning, the ultimate fullness of presence; he is that through which everything ultimately gains justification and understanding. In that sense, God, that is the question of God's existence, can be the

¹ This leads to the issue of relation between metaphysics and theology, as well as a metaphysical aspect of theology itself. However, it is not this text's goal to pry into the specificity of that relation. With regard to that, see: Tillich 57-63

foundation on the basis of which certain normative (ethical) rules gain their value. The norm, in that sense, does not necessarily have to be legally regulated, i.e. does not have to fit into the economy of the relation crime – punishment which a concrete justice system of one country has at its disposal. Of course, it does not mean that legally prescribed boundaries of behaviour cannot coincide with God's laws,² but only that they do not necessarily result from each other. That which is different and which may be different in those two orders is the punishment for the same offence. While, in a country's justice system, the economy of the relation between crime and punishment can be presented exactly, so far as that relation in God's, specifically in the case of Dostoevsky, orthodox, system of values more blurred and is measured by the feeling of own guilt – conscience. That interiorized feeling of suffering, caused by guilty conscience is a part of Christian value ethical system and it should be seriously considered whenever we approach F.M. Dostoevsky's works.

The issue of the relation crime and punishment implicitly leads to the issue of the relation between metaphysics and norm, that is, what is specifically behind the normative structure itself in a given value system. To change the norm in that sense would mean to go against metaphysics as well (or, at least to change the attitude to the truth to which that norm is supposed to bring us closer). On the other hand, to deny metaphysics would mean diminishing the existence of the norm. In this regard, there are two possibilities: A) The first concerns negating the ultimate (metaphysical) truth itself and meaning (God), whereby the axiological background of normative rules which rest on that logocentric basis is eluded. In theological context, it would mean that abolishing God entails erasing the boundary which enables the Christian ethical normative axiology (which reflects in comprehending difference between good and evil). In that way, atheism has direct immoralistic consequences. Bearing in mind "the economy of the relation between crime and punishment", previously mentioned, it implies that "guilty conscience" is impossible if there is not God to vouch for structure of that relation. In other words, if we lose metaphysical background which provides us with the notion of *punishment*, then the notion of *crime* itself, that is, offence is rendered meaningless. In that case, instead of a binary structure and "the economy of relation" we would only have acts, which would lack in valid interpretation. This is precisely the meaning of Nietzsche's statement: "There are absolutely no moral phenomena, only

² So, for example, the commandment: "Do not kill!" can also be found in God's and legal (legislatory) value order.

a moral interpretation of the phenomena...” (64) In order for an act of murder, for example, to be more than that act, i.e. to be rated as amoral, it needs to have foothold in metaphysics, which would guarantee that value, and so on. B) The second possibility does not question the existence of metaphysical instance, which holds a certain value construction – but questions the validity of that value construction itself. In theological perspective, it would not mean negating God, but his creation – the meaning of life and implicitly the norms which regulate him. The problem of theodicy should be placed in those thought coordinates. The fact of evil existing in the world shows that something is not right in the domain of God's creation; the impossibility or difficulty in justifying evil in the world, created in God's will, and in a man, created in God's image, questions the validity of God's thinking. The main question raised here is: How could the ultimate God's wisdom or, even more importantly, the ultimate God's goodness allow itself such a mistake, such as evil? Why and how to explain it? If neither explanation is satisfactory, then the (logical) next step is - the rebellion against God.

The conceptual basis of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* by F.M. Dostoevsky should be sought in the domain of these possibilities (A and B). Both possibilities are present in the novel and both, in a special way, develop motivational courses of this literary work. Our analysis, however, will focus on the conceptual spectrum which implies antitheistic conceptual course of the novel (B).

The Grand Inquisitor: The Paths of Freedom

The focus of our analysis is the antitheistic aspect of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*; in that sense, *The Grand Inquisitor* represents just one of the parts in the argumentative series on the basis of which, that – antitheistic – thesis is developed in the context of the entire work. A functional character of the “poem” of the Grand inquisitor is based on a thought process, dialectics, which is at first conducted by Ivan Karamazov to himself, and later with his brother, Alyosha, as well. In order to understand the argumentative value of the “poem” of the Grand inquisitor, it is necessary to present Ivan's argument in its entirety. Hence, we should start with the chapter preceding *The Grand Inquisitor*, the chapter – *Rebellion*. Ivan's argumentation in *Rebellion* starts with the issue of theodicy – the issue of justifying God due to the existence of evil in the world. Ivan speaks about radical manifestation of evil, evil done for the sake of evil, with no other justification except for the inner satisfaction of the one performing evil. What is affecting him is not only pointless character of evil, but also its universality. “Anecdotes”, i.e. newspaper reports that Ivan is gathering into a “fine

collection”, show that evil is omnipresent – that it is not some trait, reserved for some backward or distant society, but that it is a human trait, present in enlightened countries, as well. Ivan’s examples are gruesome; he presents them with naturalistic clarity, and in order to make his argumentation more impressive, he narrows his presentation to children’s suffering, describing thereby: impaling the removed fetuses, smashing a child’s head with a gun, torturing a five-year-old girl by shutting her into a latrine by the parents and quartering a child in front of his mother. The “anecdotes” in themselves, greatly illuminate Ivan’s starting point and implicitly demand the answer to the question: How is it possible that the Author of this world, in all his wisdom, could create such a system, where suffering and crimes like those are possible? And over whom: children, who are, by definition, already innocent, who have not had the time to sin, who, therefore, have not yet „eaten the apple”, and consequently could not deserve such fate. Here, Ivan outlines the epistemological framework in which he wants to place his argumentation: he uses facts and, like a laborant tries to rationalize the world around him, that is, draw certain conclusions precisely on the basis of those, empirically confirmed findings. He desires a *logical* explanation of the problem of the existence of evil in the world, and wants to calculate the ratio between crime and punishment, on the basis of mathematical parameters, and to grasp the meaning and necessity of the events which so radically affect human existence. Following that causalistic logic, he discovers a mistake in the calculation, realizing that there is a disparity between those relations.

Listen! I took the case of children only to make my case clearer. On the other tears of humanity with which the earth is soaked from its crust to its centre, I will say nothing. I have narrowed my subject on purpose. I am a bug, and I recognise in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. [...] With my pitiful, earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly; that everything flows and finds its level – but that’s only Euclidian nonsense, I know that, and I can’t consent to live by it! (125-126)

Ivan is angry because crime lacks punishment; he is angry because those two notions cannot be made equal or do not always equal on *earth*. That is the *first* mistake Ivan perceives. Euclidean position is the position requiring the explanation of any phenomenon in the context of calculable, empirically verifiable, reality. Ivan’s epistemological position, from which he observes the world and its *processes*, demands a

final result of that complex, ethical equation, determining the causes of every consequence and finally demands that the result indicates the purpose of all previous processes, but in such a way that his Euclidean mind does not find any mistake in the equation's performance. He wants the solution to the problem to happen before his eyes, to be really convinced in the effectiveness of God's mind, which ought to solve that "mess". Otherwise, either the logic with which the world is measured is to be rejected or the world which is not to be explained through that very logic. Ivan, however, does not renounce his Euclidean logic.

What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows effect simply and directly, and that I know it? – I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. I have believed in it. I want to see it, and if I am dead by then, let me rise again, for if it all happens without me, it will be too unfair. (126)

Moreover, consequentiality which arises from that logic leads him to the realization of the *second* mistake, which cannot endure Euclidean measuring. The second mistake actually starts from a possible solution, the correction of the first mistake, and ultimately, also rejects a fair distribution in the domain of the relation crime – punishment, as well as a potential teleological justification of evil. In its basis, the second mistake Ivan discovers would be: even if we were to find a certain, satisfactory punishment for the offender, evil that was done, still remains. And even more than that, even if we were to prove mathematically the necessity of evil, as one of necessary stages which leads to ultimate good, and, in the end, to understanding the meaning of life on earth and life in general, even then, the fact that evil was done cannot be overlooked. Ivan believes that the assumption about necessity of evil through which harmony is attained is unacceptable.

Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? [...] I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed' [...] But what pulls me up here is that I can't accept tht harmony. And while I am on earth, I make haste to take my own measures. [...] While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself,

and so I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It's not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat itself on the breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears to 'dear, kind God'! It's not worth it, because those tears are unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how? How are you going to atone for them? Is it possible? By their being avenged? But what do I care for avenging them? What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? [...] Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. (126)

Here, Ivan's train of thought can be followed clearly, developing argumentation during the consideration of the issue of theodicy. Having formulated the thesis, he finds counterarguments, only to, in the end, by avoiding a solution in some synthesis, radicalize, i.e. completely intensify the arguments of his original thesis. Hence, starting from the need for the issue of the economy of the relation between crime and punishment to be resolved *before his eyes*, he ends up *rejecting* the *punishment* itself, and the ultimate *meaning* ("harmony") itself, which is subsequently promised in some other life, because both, the punishment and subsequent ultimate meaning, in their value, cannot be equivalent to previously done evil. Those are different categories. Evil happened, suffering, tortures, murders were already done, and remain as *unchanged* historical records of human relations. *Every further argumentation in the context of avenging such evil or its redemption through subsequent paradise is inappropriate, precisely because it is impossible to change what has already happened.* In a word, evil exists and Euclidean mind cannot accept that remainder in the equation. Evil is a disbalance which makes God's creation mathematically unacceptable. Hence, neither punishment for the offenders nor paradise and the meaning it promises, are not worthy of the original suffering ("tears"). That suffering does not have its equivalent in the equation. Laborant on the basis of facts concludes that the experiment – has failed.

Ivan rushes to "take measures"; he does not want the eternal harmony to be built on the basis of own suffering, nor the suffering of others. To consent to that harmony, would mean to consent to a failed experiment, consent and accept evil as a necessary and building element of good. Ivan is not only a laborant who acts based on calculations, but he is also a humanist. Discovering a mistake in God's calculation also suggests the need to provide justice to people in some other system, a

different creation, the world that will banish evil from existential equation. Ivan wants to remain with people, not with God. "I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with the unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if I were wrong*" (126) Ivan attacks the workings of God out of mercy to men. Joseph Frank will say, with regard to that:

Ivan's protest against God's world is thus couched in terms of the Christian value of compassion – the very values that Dostoevsky himself (or Myshkin in *The Idiot*) had once called 'the chief and perhaps the only law off all human existence' (788-789)

There is something attractive and naive (or perhaps attractive due to that naivety) in Ivan's attack on God's creation and own siding with the "right" side. "The right side", however, remains ambivalent; there is the impression that Christ himself would justify Ivan's argumentation. Ultimately, what on earth could be more desirable than for suffering, especially children's, to disappear. Hence, Rozanov will say that here the part of humanity rebelling against God is - "divine". "It can be said that what is divine in man rises against God: precisely the sense of righteousness within self and his awareness of his dignity" (91) A man's divine nature is embedded into Ivan Karamazov's antitheistic argument. He seeks for an answer from God in order to quiet the purest, or the most God-like, part of his soul (or the part which is most similar to God). However, he does not get it; there is no answer from the other side, no counterargument which could endure discursive check. Ivan's "ticket returning" is, at the same time, the answer to God's silence. (126) The rebellion reaches its climax here, Ivan remains true to his logic, despite the possibility for it to be proved wrong in some subsequent settling of matters. Thus, he "makes haste to take [his] own measures", so as not to take the accuracy of that ultimate meaning lightly (meaning that God will make known one day), and in order not to forget the revelations this earthly, Euclidean logic led him to. That is why the Ivan's cry is important; he wants answers in the domain of causalistic observation of reality, an explanation on the basis of rules he understands and which seem to him, from this earthly perspective as the only possibility to reach the truth. He would rather remain with human suffering, the awareness of which he was led to by worldly logic, than with divine truth

("even if I were wrong"), which could fit that "logic" into some broader meaningful context, understandable only to God.³

So, Ivan wants the solution to the problem here, on earth. But, how to solve it? Is there any earthly measure, which will undo or, at least, soften evil and its consequences, the measure which will not be reduced to a punishment for an offender or a compensation promised to the degraded ones, the ones murdered and offended in some future eschaton? Ivan mentions one such solution in his account, but then, at the same time, he rejects it almost in a hurry. It is about – forgiveness. If the tortured one or the one watching his close one being tortured, were to forgive the torturer, would not that, in some way, annul evil itself?⁴ However, Ivan continues:

I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She *dare not forgive him!* [cursive Novak Malesevic] Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive

³ We can find an interesting echo of these thoughts in *Devils*. There, Shatov will remind Stavrogin of his words about Christ: "But didn't you tell me that if it were mathematically proved to you that the truth excludes Christ, you'd prefer to stick to Christ rather than to the truth?" (241) However, this Stavrogin's "Christ without truth" is not the Christ Ivan is looking for. Moreover, Ivan wants the Christ with the "truth", but not just any, divine or higher truth, but the truth which is measurable by human logic apparatus and spiritual powers. If the Christ is the bearer of truth, and the Bible says so explicitly, (John, 14, 6), that truth, according to Ivan, must not in any way be different from the one we have on earth. Otherwise, we are dealing with (epistemological) deception. For Ivan, it would be too cheap a trick to solve the problem.

⁴ It should be pointed out that Dostoevsky, that is Ivan, does not say that forgiveness would erase the committed evil. We can assume that, in a certain sense, *forgiveness* could undo the effects of evil (over the one who endured evil and who forgave that evil), but not evil itself. However, in this case as well, evil would be something that *already happened*, so the previous statement, which Ivan explicitly utters, and which concerns undermining the relationship ("the economy of relation") between evil and punishment, as well as both, evil and compensation for the endured evil in the future life, could also be applied in this case. Evil *already happened*, which makes any subsequent intervening – whether it is forgiveness itself – separate from the phenomenon of evil in itself. *In a word, the mechanism which associates the act of forgiveness with erasing the act of committed evil is unclear.* Thus, the thesis „forgiveness annul evil“ should be taken with caution. However, as Dostoevsky, that is Ivan, considers the thesis on forgiveness – which we will see soon, the thesis on Christ's forgiveness – as a serious counterargument in the context of discussion about theodicy, we will allow for conditional validity of this statement, without its further reconsideration.

the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child *she has no right to forgive*; [cursive – Novak Malesevic] she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! (126)

At first, Ivan says that a mother *dare not* forgive a torturer, and then corrects himself and says that *she has no right* to forgive him. There is the difference. "Dare not" forgive would mean that evil, its existence, depends on the power and will of people on earth. If someone forgives, despite not being supposed to, the consequence would be human interfering in the nature of evil, its existence, and even ultimately, its undoing. What would even be the meaning of evil if the one enduring evil can and will forgive? "She *dare not forgive him!*", in that sense, would rather be a cry of astonishment, than disapproval, like Ivan wants to say: how is it possible to forgive his torturer something like that? How is it possible to absolve him of such sins? And ultimately, how is it possible to overcome such evil and lightly – through forgiveness – remove it from this world? "Has no right to forgive", means, however, that annulling evil on earth does not depend neither on power nor human will. Evil, in that sense, remains an ineradicable fact, separated from both, the one that endured evil and the one who committed it. Evil, in that way, remains irreducible remainder, which people, although they caused it, can no longer judge, nor annul it. It, simply, is not in their power any longer. From this perspective, evil exists and that is a problem. Insurmountable and unforgivable.

If, however, people do not have the right to forgive, then who does, Ivan wonders. "Is there *in a whole world* [cursive Novak Malesevic] a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive" (126) Ivan's tendency to always develop argumentative polemic in the domain of reality in which it exists should not be overlooked. "In a whole world" simply means that the being Ivan is looking for has to be of this world, that it has to be someone who walked the earth and endured those same tortures on his own skin. So, who is the one who has the *right* to forgive (which means that he is not a man or not *only* man), and who has lived among people, and who has known human pain and evil? The reader already guesses the answer, and Alyosha, Ivan's brother, imparts it to him implicitly:

Brother', said Alyosha suddenly, with flushing eyes, 'you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive?' But there is a Being and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything. (127)

Alyosha does not mention Christ explicitly, but only responds to those conditions Ivan himself set, in order to gain the right to forgive *everything*. The God who walked the earth in human form, who was subjected to the utmost torture by people, who forgave that suffering and who pleaded Father himself for the forgiveness of that suffering – has the *right* to forgive. Alyosha is even a little surprised that Ivan forgot about him. Of course, however, that Ivan could not forget this main *counterargument*. “Ah! the One without sin and His blood! No, I have not forgotten Him; on the contrary I’ve been wondering all the time how it was you did not bring Him before, for usually all arguments on your side put Him in the foreground” (127) In a word, Ivan was ready for this Alyosha’s answer. Moreover, Ivan wrote an entire essay (“poem”) as a counterargument to this answer.⁵ *Ivan’s response, to Alyosha’s answer (Christ) is - “The Grand Inquisitor.”*

A functional aspect of Ivan’s poem, in the context of the novel “The Brothers Karamazov”, therefore, reflects in showing why Christ does not have the right to forgive evil. Ivan cannot disregard Christ’s character and work as a counterargument in this discussion.⁶ It is not only about Christ, as the story says, giving his “blood” in order to cleanse the humanity from sin (because he himself has forgiven and begged for forgiveness of other people’s sins), but also that by following his character and path, the annulment of all future evils can also be conditioned. Christ is the opposite of evil, thus, following Christ, trying to be as close to him as possible, means – preventing the appearance of

⁵ Ivan is obviously much better prepared for this conversation than Alyosha. He, like Socrates from Plato’s dialogues, controls dynamics of conversation, draws conclusions respecting the rigidity of a logical analysis and, what is most important, anticipates counterarguments which could rebut his original thesis. The Poem *The Grand Inquisitor* is, in Ivan’s words, composed „about year ago“, which means that Ivan had in his mind elaborated all the potential pro and contra arguments regarding his antitheistic thesis, long before this conversation with Alyosha. Thus, at the start of the exposition we said that Ivan „first by himself, and later with his brother“ develops and shapes his thesis. The fact that *The Grand Inquisitor* was conceived of in Ivan’s mind “about year ago” also shows that Ivan does not doubt his point of view, that he completes the equation by this “counterargument” which leaves no room for further reconsideration. *The Grand Inquisitor*, in that sense, is the ultimate argumentative point, ultimate conclusion of one objectively conducted analysis.

⁶ Or a monologue, bearing in mind that all the aspects of the “discussion” are conceived of and analyzed a long time ago in Ivan’s mind.

evil itself. In a word, if we are closer to Christ, so much our possibility to cause evil is lesser. *Thus, Ivan's argumentation, at this point of analysis, had to be directed, no longer at proving a mistake in God's creation, but at proving that the cause of that mistake, therefore, evil, is paradoxically – Christ himself.*

So, Ivan has reached the point where he has to present Christ as a cause of evil in the world. He does this by attributing to Christ the fact that he gave people the freedom (of choice). The paradoxality of this starting thesis reflects in the fact that probably the most valuable human trait is taken as a starting point in the antitheistic argumentative series which leads to associating Christ with evil. Paradoxality and ambivalence of this thesis is greater because it is possible, on its basis – that “the Christ gave freedom to people” – like Berdyaev, to draw a completely different conclusion as well: “At Dostoevsky, there truly are brilliant thoughts about freedom and they should be discovered. Freedom is both anthropodicy and theodicy for him; one should look for the justification of man and justification of God in it.” (67) So, it turns out that it is possible to justify God for evil in the world through concept of freedom, and, at the same time, to accuse him of being the cause of that same evil. The genius of Ivan's “poem” also reflects in both these aspects being given as a part of the same, antitheistic, argumentative flow.⁷ This ambivalence occurs due to the property of freedom to relate doubly in contrast to norm, that is, metaphysics on which that norm rests; therefore, it is possible to break the norm or to follow it unconditionally. Freedom, as has been emphasized in the *Introduction* of this account, is not inherent neither in evil (which would occur or perhaps, more precisely, which would be *perceived* by breaking norm), nor good (which would occur, that is, which would be *perceived* by following norm). Freedom is a potential, therefore, its relation to choices, that is, axiological differences, is indifferent; it does not rest on the quality of existential phenomena, but on their differences. By following Berdyaev, we can agree that equaling freedom with any of the elements of the axiological, ethical system would necessarily lead to annulling, that is, abolishing freedom. “Freedom has its own nature, freedom is freedom, and not good. And every interference and equating freedom with good, or perfect, is the renunciation of freedom, accepting the paths of coercion and violence” (68-69) Equalling goodness with freedom would abolish the boundary, choice, and thus the meaning of

⁷ The consequences of “ambivalence” of Ivan's argumentation also reflect in Alyosha's cry at the end of the poem: “Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of Him, - as you meant it to be”. (135)

freedom itself. In that case, a man would become a mechanism that reproduces goodness or perfection without the possibility of making a mistake; in a word, a man would stop being a man. The fact that the awareness of the boundary stays even after the choice has been made should not be overlooked, so, for example, consciously choosing good in life in no way prevents us from thinking about evil or starting doing evil in some other moment. Freedom, in that sense, is nothing else but the consciousness about the choice.

The plot of the “poem” takes place in Seville, in the sixteenth century, during the Spanish Inquisition” when fires were lighted every day to the glory of God”. Christ, who wishes to “visited His children only for a moment” (128) “, goes into town. He makes a blind man see and a dead girl, like Lazarus once, be resurrected. The Grand Inquisitor, a ninety-year-old man, sees everything. He orders for Christ to be arrested. At night, The Inquisitor, with a lamp in his hand, visits Christ alone.

After he reassured himself that it is really He, the inquisitor, like a prosecutor in a courtroom, initiates a sort of a “process” against Christ. He judges him for building the world, that is, human nature, on bad foundation – the foundation of freedom.

‘Hast Thou the right to reveal to us one of the mysteries of that world from which Thou hast come?’ my old man ask Him, and answers the question for Him. ‘No, Thou hast not; that Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men’s freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, ‘I will make you free?’ But now Thou hast seen these ‘free’ man,’ the old man adds suddenly, with a pensive smile. ‘Yes, we’ve paid dearly for it,’ he goes on, looking sternly at Him, ‘but at last we have completed that work in Thy name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestiln with Thy freedom, but now it is ended and over for good (129-130)

By setting people free, that is, by not buying their *choice* with miracle and secrets, Christ created a man not as good or evil, but a man as a potential for doing good and evil. By giving him a choice, Christ made man independent, separated him from himself, in order to attract him to himself, not by coercion (whereby the effect of freedom would be annulled), but through his own (human) will. However, it is precisely in that possibility that *a man follows Christ without coercion*, where the ambivalent nature of freedom is hiding, which identically enables, thus

without coercion, a man to leave the Christ's path as well. In that ambivalence of freedom, the inquisitor chooses (freely, how else?), on behalf of all humankind, the path without Christ. Why? Because a man is too weak a being in order to fully utilize the potential of his freedom, by following the Christ's path. He stays with *those* people, the people who do not have the strength to *choose* the Christ's path, to save them, that is, to make the life in sin easier for them. They choose "early bread" and vices, because that path is easier than the Christ's.

They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless, and rebellious. (131)

Weak human nature is not capable of using its freedom for good, for respecting normative framework based on Christian metaphysics; the weakness of human nature *traps* the man in sin, the possibility to choose good eludes him due to the *coercion* of pleasure created by evil. Freedom, in that way, loses to "early bread", to vice, ego, enjoyment, in a word, all those temptations the choosing of which is so desirable, and bearing in mind the weakness of human nature, to a certain degree necessary, that is, unfree. So, herein lies the Christ's "mistake", which the inquisitor perceives; He judged "too highly" about human nature. (132) He thought it was capable of harmonizing its choice with the path demonstrated to it, he thought that free *choice* was sufficient weapon and a compass in human hands to defeat and avoid evil. *In a word, Christ judged man wrongly, he simply did not know him enough nor understand him well enough to begin with.* Instead of "avoiding evil" man used the compass to turn against good itself and ultimately, against Christ himself.

Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee. In place of the rigid ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide. But didst Thou not know that he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? (132)

A man was not capable of having only the image of Christ in front of him as the ultimate normative reference, which would direct his choice. He was not capable, nor was he allowed by his lustful nature, to follow His path without coercion. Freedom to choose Christ overcame the

strength of human race. By choosing “early bread”, a man departed from Christ and, so alone, beget evil. That evil on earth, that is, those weak-willed people who created it, which was rejected from Christ, was supposed to be regulated in some way. It was supposed to be made bearable. General human weakness was supposed to be channelled into one sustainable system – Church. The representative of that sustainable system is the inquisitor, who now, on behalf of the weak, even judges Christ himself.

And if for the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands shall follow Thee, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or dost Thou care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but love Thee, must exist only for the sake of the great and strong. No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious, but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them – so awful it will seem to them to be free. (131)

The Grand inquisitor here summarizes the results of Christ’s wrong assessment of human nature. Freedom of choice between good and evil created a gap between those “few”, who had the strength to follow the Christ’s path, and the many (“tens of thousands of millions”) who did not possess that strength. Precisely those many are the ones who cause evil on earth. Burdened by freedom Christ gave them, they fall under the influence of “early bread”, living in evil and creating it, because they do not have the strength to build their life in Christ’s “image”. *This is a relationship between Christ and evil which Ivan Karamazov draws at the end of his equation. Evil, in this case, becomes a consequence of Christ’s wrong calculation, his ignorance of human nature.* By giving them freedom, Christ’s experiment got out of control. People turned both on themselves and on God. A natural consequence of that human rebellion is progressive multiplication of evil. Most people on earth, millions of them, through their own will, cause and do evil. Thus, Christ does not have the *right* to forgive, because he is the cause of all that evil. The mistake he made was the consequence of his infinite love for humankind; giving people freedom, instead of affirmation of good. He caused the affirmation of evil. Thus, *nobody* has the right to forgive!

The fact that the Grand inquisitor speaks about the few who will be saved, i.e. those who have the strength to direct their freedom at

following the Christ's image should not be overlooked. Moreover, the inquisitor himself was one of the few, who, at first, joined the Christ's path, but not for long. "But I awakened and would not serve madness. I turned back and joined the ranks of those *who have corrected Thy work.*" (135) In a certain sense, the inquisitor accuses Christ of religious elitism. Is this really the equation with which Christ stood in front of humankind? Should Christianity be the religion of the people, as The Church sees it, or only for the chosen ones, as it follows from this final result? These "tens of thousands of millions" are nothing but the "material" which serves as a reference foothold on the basis of which the „elect“ can assess and measure their strength. *To choose* Christ already means *not being* a man, because that path requires the suppression and repression of all the human urges and wishes, and awakening and affirming divine attributes in a man. In that sense, the ambivalent nature of freedom is the place where the "proud" display their strength, the place which differentiates men from "gods". Gods do not need a religion, they have their strength, people need religion, those who do not have a foothold within themselves, who are weak and powerless. From the perspective of the Grand inquisitor, it is not what Christ did. By giving people freedom, he created (a few) gods, and left people at the mercy of eternal rebellion and evil.⁸ Therefore, Christ and his freedom are no longer needed; what is needed is only an image, his symbol, which will be used to justify every future deprivation of freedom on earth. In place of Christ – Church, in place of love – ideology, in place of freedom – slavery, it is a consequence of the inquisitor's rebellion, and his attempt at organizing the world.

Synthesis

Now we need to return to the Berdyaev's thesis on freedom as anthropodicy, which we have stated and ask ourselves how is it possible

⁸ It is interesting that Smerdyakov somewhat earlier produces similar argumentation about religion as the salvation for the chosen ones. It should be borne in mind especially when analyzing the motivational structure and the dynamics of the relations between Ivan and Smerdyakov. Smerdyakov, addressing Grigory Vassilyevitch, says: "Again, taking into consideration that no one in our day, not only you, but actually no one, from the highest person to the lowest peasant, can shove mountains into the sea – except perhaps some one man in the world, or, at most, two, and they most likely are saving their souls in secret somewhere in the Egyptian desert, so you wouldn't find them – if so it be, if all rest have no faith, will God curse all the rest? that is, the population of the whole earth, except about two hermits in the desert, and in His well-known mercy will He not forgive one of them?" (66)

at all, when the Grand inquisitor, that is, Ivan Karamazov, is showing us something precisely opposite. However, Ivan's "poem", as we have mentioned, already comprises within itself the ambivalence in the context of the final solution, which conditions the freedom, despite being at the basis of humankind's defiance, to be simultaneously understood as both anthropodicy and theodicy. By the gift of freedom, Christ provided a man not only with the possibility to choose evil, but also good, which means that the possibility of heaven on earth is instantly achievable! It is precisely through the prism of the "few" that the vision of possible heaven on earth can be perceived. To be like Christ, to surrender yourself to the healing medicine of love, to forgive your abusers, is the beginning of realizing heaven on earth. Lossky, with regard to that, says:

The condition for the realization of general harmony is that all the beings are mutually agreed in love – agreed, not in the name of the triumph of monotony but so that all the elements freely relate just like many musicians and singers participate together in an oratorio. [...] God endowed the world with such attributes and provided with such powers that – on condition that it is all used properly – it is possible to achieve perfection and to live in the Kingdom of God and gain absolute values with no premise of evil to speak of (134-135)

So, freedom is the potency on the basis of which two worlds can be built: heaven (where freedom is used to activate healing love and forgiveness) and hell (where the paths of freedom, through the path of least resistance, get stuck in satisfying human "worldly" needs). The vision and the possibility of realizing heaven on earth is attainable exclusively through freedom of choice. *Prerequisite of heaven is making certain choices*. Heaven, as well as hell, are worldly potencies, while freedom is a forest, whose paths enable the realization of those potencies.

The Grand Inquisitor, however, although leaving the possibility to construct heaven on earth through the concept of freedom, still, functionally speaking, aims to prove another thesis: that Christ is the cause of evil on earth, and therefore, he does not have the right to forgive that evil. Due to a mistaken assessment of human nature, Christ could not know what consequences the affirmation of free will in people would have, and therefore, from Ivan's, that is, the inquisitor's perspective, He is also responsible for the evil which necessarily resulted from that affirmation and spread progressively. So, it is not logical to expect the one who is the cause of evil to have the right to forgive it as

well. The argumentative significance of this chapter is reflected in that. In a logical equation, this chapter represents a final part of one argumentative series, which justifies the initial antitheistic thesis.

However, the contextual functionality of this chapter does not end here. Observing the entirety of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the antitheistic argument which reaches its peak in the chapter *The Grand Inquisitor*, receives its counterpart in the next chapter – the chapter *The Russian Monk*. Dostoevsky, himself, in a letter to his editor, while writing *The Brothers Karamazov*, was hoping to give artistically persuasive “christian” perspective of reality and refuge from evil in this chapter. Dostoevsky writes: “In the next book the elder Zosima’s death and deathbed conversations with his friends will occur... If I succeed, I’ll have... forced people to recognize that a pure, ideal Christian is not an abstract matter but one graphically real, possible, standing before our eyes, and that Christianity is the only refuge of the Russian land from its evils.” (Frank 792) This *counterargument* of antitheism no longer happens through *discussion*, nor as an already established *monologue*, as it has been the case with Ivan’s *The Grand Inquisitor*, but it has been given in the context of the entirety of the novel in a series of events and stories from old man Zosima’s life. In that sense, this counterargument does not respond directly to Ivan to his rebellion, but indirectly, it appears to be directed to the reader himself who, in that way, now should catch all the conceptual pro and contra (antitheistic and Christian) aspects of the novel in its entirety. The analysis of the chapter *The Russian Monk*, as well as conceptual pro and contra aspects of the novel in its *entirety*, however, are not the topic of our analysis.

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VELIKI INKVIZITOR: PUTEVI SLOBODE

U tekstu se analizira antiteistički argument Ivana Karamazova u kontekstu teodiceje. Fokusiramo se na poglavlje Veliki inkvizitor, koje, kako pokazujemo, predstavlja krajnju argumentativnu tačku Ivanove „pobune“ protiv Boga. Logička nemogućnost opravdanja zla u svijetu vodi Ivana ne samo ka zaključku da je zlo neizbrisiv trag Božije pogreške nastale prilikom stvaranja svoje kreacije (čovjeka i svijeta) nego i da je osnov tog zla jedna od najcjenjenijih ljudskih vrlina: sloboda. Nakon što Aljoša u raspravu o teodiceji uvode Hrista (teza), kao instance koja može i ima pravo da oprosti zlo i na taj način poništi njegove efekte, Ivan odgovara svojim dijalektičkim pandanom (antitezom): *Velikim inkvizitorom*. Sinteza u ovoj dijalektičkoj bici, kako pokazujemo, ne dovodi ni do kakvog logički prihvatljivog rješenja. Naprotiv. Ostavljeni smo sa paradoksom: sloboda je ujedno vodila u ka teodiceji i ka optužbi protiv Hrista.

Ključne reči: sloboda, norma, metafizika, antiteizam, ateizam, teodiceja, *Veliki inkvizitor*, *Braća Karamazovi*