

**An Exploration of Symbolic Spaces and Spatial Motifs in Dostoevsky's Post-Siberian
Fiction: Spatial Possibilities as Moral and Existential Possibilities of Being.**

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of space and spatial motifs in Dostoevsky's post-Siberian fiction. Drawing upon Henri Lefebvre's tripartite order of space, (physical, social and mental) I examine spaces and spatial motifs and configurations in Dostoevsky's fiction at multiple levels of representation, with particular attention paid to mental (or psychological and symbolic) space. Given that space is *a priori*, I propose that space is of ontological primacy in Dostoevsky's fiction; space is the ground and foundation upon which all moral and existential action, is performed. How Dostoevsky's characters inhabit space, or are positioned towards specific sites and spatial configurations, reveals how they form their ontological connection with their narrative worlds. My line of inquiry takes into consideration both Dostoevsky's Christian worldview, as well as what he perceived to be our most characteristic state of being-in-the-world; we are 'transitional' creatures. Given that Dostoevsky characterised our state of being-in-the-world as 'transitional' (we are not yet able to embody our highest ideals), I argue that for those of Dostoevsky's characters who inhabit spaces that are closed (literally and symbolically), or who attempt to reify a completed form, signals the constriction of their ontological and existential possibilities of being. While those of Dostoevsky's characters who accept their transitional and contingent state of being, are aligned with threshold space and the possibility of moral transformation.

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Signed:

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Introduction

What is space? Space is heterogeneous and abstract, but it is also homogenous and concrete. Space is manifold in its representations and manifestations. It is one-dimensional and multidimensional. It is material and immaterial. It is geometric and purely imagined (Blum and Secor 2011, p. 1034). It is a plenum because all thoughts and actions, speech and gestures, indeed all of life, is articulated and performed in space, beginning with the space of our bodies (Hooper qtd. in Soja 1996, p. 114). The space of our body is irreducibly ours. In *Being and Time* Martin Heidegger argues that Being-in-the-world is essentially spatial and that the discovery of other spatial objects throws us back upon our own spatial position within-the-world ([1927] 1962, p. 346). Our corporeality is felt as a heaviness that spatialises and positions us within-the-world. Through our body, psyche and attendant sensory components, we experience the world as a perceived continuity of spaces and spatial objects extended temporally. Our lived experience of being is an inherently spatial modality. We are embodied in space, *as a space* and we seek frameworks of meaning (ontologies) to make sense of this experience. I intend to show that for Fyodor Dostoevsky, our spatial possibilities of being-in-the-world are our existential and moral possibilities of being, with representational (symbolic, metaphoric and non-linguistic) spaces and spatial motifs colouring and overlaying our world with meaning.

An ontology or ontological framework relates to how we understand what it is 'to be.' Ontology is concerned with being, the meaning of being and the modalities of being which we experience as "embodiment, spatiality, temporality and epistemology" (James 2006, p. 85). Ontology is a foundation which constitutes the conditions for what exists. Ontology pursues the question, is it possible to know with any certainty if there are universal truths about our experience of being? In Dostoevsky's fiction, this inquiry takes the form of ontological and existential (or what I will call onto-existential) questions concerning the nature of reality, human freedom, moral responsibility, identity formation, human suffering and whether or

not there is a God and immortality. Dostoevsky called such questions the accursed and eternal questions, believing them to be of an irresolvable nature, fraught with paradox and contradiction (Mochulsky 1967, p. 399). For Dostoevsky, our lived experience of what Heidegger calls 'being-in-the-world' is more than our embodiment within an *a priori* spatio-temporal configuration; it is also more than the particular epistemologies we are inducted into to make sense of our world; rather, being-in-the-world means a wrestling with onto-existential questions to uncover the meaning of what it is to be.

Taking Heidegger's assertion that "inasmuch as any entity within-the-world is likewise in space, its spatiality will have an ontological connection with the world" ([1927] 1962, p. 134), I maintain that the characters who populate Dostoevsky's fiction likewise have a spatiality (as well as inhabit spaces) and this habitation forms the basis of their ontological connection with their narrative worlds. My aim is to uncover how space and spatial motifs operate upon the formation not only of a character's ideas (Raskolnikov acknowledges that the idea to murder was formed 'lying in a corner') but their onto-existential possibilities and potentialities of being. I contend that in Dostoevsky's fiction onto-existential possibilities are intrinsically bound to how a character perceives of space or spatial configurations and motifs, with *seeing* activating and mobilising a character to make moral decisions within their world of onto-existential possibilities. The metaphors of vision which I employ throughout my thesis are drawn from a number of sources, however, Robert Louis Jackson's formulation of 'an ethics of vision' in *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions*, first prompted me to consider the importance of the metaphors of vision which appear in Dostoevsky's fiction. Jackson argues that an ethics of vision is essentially about moral responsibility. According to Jackson, whether we chose to look or turn away from suffering or injustice implies a complicity in what is being done. To turn away is an act that signals a lack of moral responsibility for others, while to look implies a recognition of the humanity and suffering of other persons. My application of the metaphor of vision (as it relates to moral responsibility and onto-existential choices which are first activated by *seeing*

or *not seeing*), is also drawn from philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy. Murdoch formulates her metaphor of vision under the influence of Simone Weil's idea of 'attention' (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 35). For Murdoch and Weil, seeing is a *moral seeing* implying clear vision and attention to reality (or what I call a spiritual optics), it is a vision requiring moral imagination and moral effort and therefore denotes moral responsibility, much like Jackson's 'ethics of vision'. Those characters who possess moral vision and who attend to reality have a vision which I analogise as the gaze captivated by the icon. While for those characters whose vision is turned wholly inward, away from reality and therefore moral responsibility, possess a vision arrested by the idol. This study will show that what captivates a character's gaze (which is, symbolically speaking the idol or icon) reveals to us not only what moral course of action they will undertake, but their very onto-existential possibilities and potentialities of being. Given that his characters can only see within their world of possibilities, I argue that Dostoevsky shows that the onto-existential and moral possibilities of each of his characters is contingent not only upon the spaces they inhabit, how they perceive of, construct and comport themselves within space, but what kind of vision they possess (pertaining to the idol or icon).

The rather broad methodological framework I have employed as the basis for understanding the various representations of space in Dostoevsky's fiction is drawn from Henri Lefebvre's tripartite formulation of space. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre differentiates between spatial practice, representations of space and representational space. These three categories of space can also be designated as social space, physical space and mental space. Lefebvre calls his first order of space 'spatial practice' or social space. Spatial practice relates to how we perceive ourselves and others in shared spaces. Every culture and people group have social practices that function to create cohesion and continuity in how space is used and produced collectively. Spatial practice relates to daily routines and social practices that are understood through cultural mores and general rules shared by each society (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39). Lefebvre designates his second order of space as

‘representations of space’ or physical space. These representations have a practical impact upon space by imposing an architecture upon it; they are primarily physical spaces produced and appropriated for specific activities. Representations of space belong in the domains of scientists and mathematicians; of planners and social engineers who order space through a system of linguistic and numerical signs (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 38-39). Such spaces can be readily apprehended and understood. In Dostoevsky’s fiction, spatial practice (social space) and representations of space (physical space) play a subordinate role to ‘representational space’ or mental space. For Lefebvre, representational space is *lived through* space, including the space of our consciousness. Lefebvre contends that representational space “overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (1991, p. 39). Representational spaces are not reducible to language or praxis, rather they are configured and apprehended through symbols, signs and images (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39). Religious sites, symbols, and artefacts belong to the order of representational spaces, where purely material objects or spaces are inscribed or overlaid with a metaphysical or spiritual meaning. In Dostoevsky’s fiction, representational spaces bear a cargo of Christian and Eastern Orthodox symbolism. Therefore, my argument that a character’s spatial possibilities are their moral and existential possibilities of being, is a contention which takes into account Dostoevsky’s own, religious worldview.

Lefebvre’s spatial theory emerged in the context of a spatial turn in literary and cultural studies that began in the 1930s with Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin. Mikhail Bakhtin was the first theorist to construct a detailed framework for identifying generic structure in the novel using spatio-temporal motifs he called ‘chronotopes’. Bakhtin’s concept of chronotopes has greatly influenced Dostoevsky criticism given that Bakhtin formulated the idea of chronotopes in a reading of Dostoevsky’s works. Indeed, although there are a handful of critics who have examined the role of space and spatial motifs in Dostoevsky’s oeuvre, this has primarily been conducted through a reading of Bakhtin’s ‘chronotopes’.ⁱⁱ Chronotopes are essentially spaces or spatial objects that are paired with a

temporal sequence which indicate the type of event that will occur in that space-time. For example, Bakhtin designates the public square as a site of catastrophe or scandal, pairing such sites with crisis time (Vlasov 1995, p. 47). Bakhtin maintains that chronotopes vary according to the genre of a work and function as the nodal points that tie together the narrative structure of each novel (Bakhtin 1981, p. 250). I have chosen not to employ Bakhtin's chronotopes in my reading of space in Dostoevsky's fiction because it is my contention that time is a second order construct in his fiction. For Dostoevsky, chronological time is always relative to and placed in the context of infinite time, which relates to Dostoevsky's teleological and eschatological thinking (Knapp 1996, p. 193). Although Bakhtin acknowledges that extratemporal time is often perceived by Dostoevsky's characters as contemporaneous with finite time, the temporal aspect of Bakhtin's chronotopes eclipses the spatial (Bakhtin 1981, p. 148). Indeed, Bakhtin concludes *Dialogic Imagination* by indicating that his work is primarily focused on temporality and somewhat in isolation from the spatial (1981, p. 258). I have also chosen not to employ Bakhtin's chronotopic motifs in this study, as I preference an ontological, not generic basis of inquiry in my exploration of spatial themes in Dostoevsky's fiction.

Despite the wide-ranging influence that Bakhtin's theory of chronotopes has had upon Dostoevsky criticism, there are a number of Dostoevsky critics who have privileged spatiality over temporality in their analysis of the spatio-temporal aspects of Dostoevsky's fiction. One such critic is Jacques Catteau. In *Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, Catteau argues that the spatial aspect of Bakhtin's chronotopes is primarily geometric and geographical whereas, "in reality space varies according to the frame of reference: it may be geometrical, topological, philosophical or perceptual" (1989, p. 382). Catteau's criticism of Bakhtin's chronotopes is valid, and I agree that both topological and philosophical space as well as our perception of space is fundamental to the connection between our spatiality and ontology, yet Catteau's approach to space is primarily geometrical and geographical, like Bakhtin's. Representational space or what Catteau designates

as 'topological' and 'philosophical' space remains on the periphery of Catteau's spatial reading. Indeed, in spatial approaches to Dostoevsky's fiction there is a trend towards a geographic, geometric and topographic mapping/reading of space, in the vein of Bakhtin. Such is the case with Barry Scherr's examination of space in *Demons*, which is conducted from a topographical view. In his article, Scherr draws connections between the provincial town in the novel with the real city of Tver'.ⁱⁱⁱ Scherr argues that the provincial town of the novel can be viewed as a 'topography of terror' with the transgression of physical and social boundaries (space) creating a strong sense of chaos (time) in the town (spatial configuration + temporal sequence = Bakhtin's chronotopes). Anne Lounsbery also looks at space in *Demons* and draws parallels between the isolation of the town and the obscurity of its geographic features with ideological vulnerability and confusion.^{iv} Likewise, Adele Lindenmeyer employs a topographical approach to space in her reading of *Crime and Punishment* and draws connections between the rapid and haphazard urban development of Petersburg in the 1860s and the economic and ideological confusion of those times.^v A number of other critics have explored the topography in the setting of *The Brothers Karamazov* and its satellite towns. Gian Piero Piretto is one such critic, arguing for the connection between a character's spatial mobility or lack of mobility with ethical action.^{vi} Although there are a number of critics who have employed a spatial approach to Dostoevsky's literary worlds, these have primarily been focused upon geographic and physical spaces viewed from a topographical perspective - a perspective which, in the vein of Bakhtin, draws upon a language of spatial metaphors which illuminate ideological themes within Dostoevsky's novels.

A topographical approach to space belongs to a fairly recent trend of literary criticism which came to be known as Geocriticism. Bertrand Westphal coined the term geocriticism in his work titled *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*. Geocriticism is primarily a method for examining geographic space in fiction and is the inheritor of a spatial change of direction in literary and cultural studies that began with Bakhtin but includes a number of other thinkers from a range of

disciplines. One such thinker was Gaston Bachelard who influenced spatial and architectural theory by conducting a phenomenological reading of space in his work *The Poetics of Space*. In this work, Bachelard examines how people experience space(s) phenomenologically, aesthetically and emotionally. In Chapter One, I draw upon Bachelard's ideas concerning his formulation of his terms "homespace" and "corner space" insofar as these terms capture a phenomenological aspect of how Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) and the underground man (*Notes from Underground*) perceive of and inhabit these spaces. Michel Foucault also contributed to a growing corpus of spatial theory by announcing in his lecture, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", the end of the nineteenth century obsession with history and the emergence of the "epoch of space" ([1967] 1997, p. 330). Foucault's formulation of utopias and heterotopias in his lecture also influenced later political geographers and urban theorists such as David Harvey and Edward Soja. The ideas Foucault attaches to his use of the term 'utopias' in his lecture has prompted certain inquiries I explore in Chapter Four, while Soja's notion of Thirdspace has illuminated aspects of Lefebvre's third order of space, "representational space" which I have employed in my broad methodology framework of inquiry outlined above. Foucault's heterotopias, like Lefebvre's representational spaces or Soja's Thirdspace, is a heterogeneous space that is, a nexus of the real, imagined and the lived (existential) spaces of our phenomenological being-in-the-world. Other thinkers such as Fredric Jameson, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and David Harvey appropriated spatial motifs and language to examine globalisation, capitalism and time-space compression in a modern world in which space had simultaneously become striated and homogenised - ideas I relate to Dostoevsky's intimations that the twentieth century would be characterised by totalitarian ideology, specifically 'socialism'.

The spatial turn in literary and cultural criticism which began with Bakhtin, has more recently been inhabited by Marxist geographers and urban theorists such as Barbara Hooper, Doreen Massey and Edward Soja. The common thread between these thinkers is that each use spatial theory to form cartographies of cities, texts

and bodies to map and understand our sense of place or displacement in an increasingly global world, with a number of Hooper's ideas she explicates in her thesis, *Performativities of Space: Bodies, Cities, Texts*, influencing my own thinking regarding ideas concerning the body, ideology and transcendence. The term 'geocriticism' encapsulates the general tendency of ideas explored by the aforementioned thinkers. Geocriticism is concerned with offering a geo-centred as opposed to ego-centred approach to space in literature (Bertrand 'Foreword' 2011, p. xiv). A geo-centred approach is concerned with generating what Robert Tally Jr. calls literary cartographies; that is mapping the spaces and places within a novel as if from a bird's-eye view (2013, p. 45). Geocritical cartographies, like Bakhtin's chronotopes, are primarily concerned with geometric space. In contrast to a geo-centred approach, I intend to uphold an ego-centred approach in my reading of space in literature. An ego-centred approach is concerned with how a character(s) perceives the space(s), spatial objects and symbols that they encounter and the collective or individual meanings they attach to them. It is *lived* through space, and therefore aligned with Lefebvre's representational spaces.

Despite Bakhtin's influence and the general tendency towards a geometric or geocritical approach to space in Dostoevsky criticism, there are a few Dostoevsky critics who should be counted as exceptions to this trend. In his essay on the spatial motif of the bridge in *Crime and Punishment*, Richard Gill argues that the motif of the bridge which appears throughout *Crime and Punishment* appear to Raskolnikov at times of onto-existential crisis and moral choice.^{vii} In *The Idiot: Dostoevsky's Fantastic Prince* Dennis Slattery examines the significance of the different journeys and places Myshkin encounters throughout the novel, arguing that Myshkin's journey from Switzerland (a prelapsarian paradise) to Petersburg is symbolic of Myshkin's descent into the fallen world of the modern city, with Myshkin's 'fall' barring him access to the innocent life he once enjoyed (1983, p. 16). In *Dostoevsky and the Novel*, Michael Holquist examines utopian space and draws parallels between the laws governing the world of dreams (the unconscious) and those of utopianism, an idea which explains both Arkady (*An Accidental Family*) and the

ridiculous man's (*Dream of a Ridiculous Man*) inability to explain their utopian visions, while Vladimir Gubailovskii and Alexander Brookes employ Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry as frameworks for understanding the metaphysical implications of different spatial ontologies in *The Brothers Karamazov*.^{viii} Indeed, Brookes draws an explicit connection between the metaphysical implications of non-Euclidean geometry and Dostoevsky's beliefs concerning the existence of God and the laws of space (2013, p. 24). In the vein of Gill, Slattery, Gubailovskii and Brookes, I examine both the real and symbolic, representational spaces and spatial objects and motifs that Dostoevsky's characters inhabit, construct, perceive and are positioned towards. My intention is to create for the Dostoevsky reader a symbolic 'map key' of a character's spatio-ontological habitation, in order to coordinate an understanding of the vital intersections in Dostoevsky's works between representational space and the existential and moral possibilities which are open to Dostoevsky's characters.

I begin my exploration of Dostoevsky's post-Siberian oeuvre by examining the intersections between the psychological 'underground' both Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) and the underground man (*Notes from Underground*) inhabit. In my opening chapter, I draw upon aspects of Bachelard's notions of homespace and corner space to investigate the role underground space plays in the formation of Raskolnikov and the underground man's identities. Both Raskolnikov and the underground man inhabit a homespace and a psychological state aligned with an enclosed and solipsistic 'underground'. They are divorced from familial and social matrices which ground and qualify identity. Their isolation causes them to vacillate between feelings of monumentalism and degradation, with both characters fantasising of embodying monumental figures who rule over others and, conversely, verminous creatures hiding in their corners. I argue that the spatial motif of the corner, which appears in both novels, represents the limitation of Raskolnikov and the underground man's onto-existential possibilities. It is closed and inertial and signals moral paralysis/stasis. I also examine the countervailing symbol of the threshold, which signals the possibility of moral regeneration and transformation. It

is an interface between two spaces or states of being. Finally, I argue that not only is an escape from the urban city and the space of the underground a pre-requisite for Raskolnikov to be resurrected into a new form and assume a new identity, but that his encounter with the iconic Mother of God/Mother Earth figure is at the basis for his escape from the underground. I also contend that where Raskolnikov attains transcendence from his former underground state, the underground man fails to transcend his psychological and moral paralysis insofar as he is incapable of moral action and therefore remains 'underground.' Underground space is symbolically aligned with moral-spiritual inertia and death.

Like underground space, tomb space in *The Idiot* is primarily represented as a site of psychological habitation. In Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, tomb space represents the terminus of the onto-existential possibilities open to Prince Myshkin, as well as Rogozhin and Nastasya Filippovna. The literal tomb, represented in the novel by Hans Holbein the Younger's painting *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521), is associated with death, silence and decay. All movement, vision, thought and life are extinguished in the tomb. The symbolic meaning of the tomb I appropriate from Jacques Derrida's formulation of the crypt in his foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*. Derrida uses the symbol of the crypt as a metaphor for false consciousness, arguing that false consciousness can be formed within a person when they incorporate fantasies and memories into their consciousness in a largely unmediated manner (1986, p. xviii)^{ix}. Both the literal crypt or tomb and the Derridean crypt conceal 'buried' materials and obfuscate clear vision. I connect the literal crypt with the Holbein painting of Christ in the tomb that hangs in Rogozhin's home to the symbolic crypt of false consciousness. Myshkin's false consciousness, like the literal crypt, causes the obfuscation of Myshkin's spiritual optics. Myshkin's lack of vision causes him to confuse the beauty of the idol with the beauty of the icon and Myshkin ends up believing in an idol, which, like the crypt of false consciousness, buries the gaze (spiritual optics) within itself. For this reason, I argue that Myshkin is a failed Christ figure; he is unable to outstrip what I call 'tomb space'.

In Chapter Three I examine the profanation of both body space and language that occurs in *Demons* under the aegis of nihilism. The novel is set in an unnamed provincial town which becomes possessed by nihilistic ideology. Under the influence of nihilism, the town becomes a vaudeville of profanation and destruction, with the loss of all boundaries or signifiers between good and evil leading to a loss of social and symbolic language, and in turn, the loss of concern with bodily boundaries. Employing aspects of Jacques Lacan's mirror-stage theory, I show how Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov, each become stalled at the pre-linguistic infant stage of their (ideological) development because they are unable to differentiate between themselves (the infant) and what Lacan calls the ideal-*I* they see reflected back to them in the mirror (Stavrogin). Indeed, each character constructs their ideological identities via Stavrogin in a process akin to Lacan's mirror-stage theory. The mirror-stage is a process whereby the infant perceives an image of itself in the mirror as a *gestalt* (Lacan [1949] 2002, p. 4). Yet, this perceived *gestalt* is essentially 'other' because the image is not in fact the infant itself, but a specular and therefore illusory image of wholeness. The failure of each character to transition from the ideological infancy of the mirror-stage to the symbolically mediated world of language also forms the basis of Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov's and Stavrogin's (self) idolatry and the distorted forms of Messianism each character comes to believe in as ideological infants. This distortion occurs because Stavrogin, rather than Christ is at the centre of their Messianic ideology. Each character's Messianism collapses because they are cut off from the Word made flesh (Christ) and flee from Christ in the same manner as the demon-possessed swine of the biblical epigraph of the novel. Indeed, in the novel, Dostoevsky analogises nihilistic ideology as demons that can possess a character, showing that the ontological outcome of nihilism is akin to fate of the demon-possessed swine of the biblical story: a plunge into an (ontological) abyss.

In my examination of Dostoevsky's *An Accidental Family* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* in Chapter Four, I unpack both the role that utopianism plays in the ideological formation of Arkady, Versilov and the ridiculous man's identities and ideals and the epistemic problem inherent in utopianism as an ideological basis. For

Arkady and Versilov, their utopian ideal comes to replace the idea of God, with Dostoevsky showing that just as the ideologues of populism (the ideology he critiques in *An Accidental Family*) sought to abstract the virtues of love and brotherhood from Christianity, but repudiated Christ as the source of such virtues, Arkady and Versilov come to believe in what Dostoevsky called 'secondary ideas' (a particularity, that is an idea specific to a particular time and a place). In both *An Accidental Family* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, utopia is represented as a secondary idea. What connects Arkady, Versilov and the ridiculous man's utopian/*eutopian* imaginings is that in each instance a Christ-figure intervenes when the utopian/*eutopian* ideal begins to falter. The intervention of a symbolic Christ-figure in the dreams of Versilov and the ridiculous man, and the transmutation of Arkady's 'Idea' (to embody a Rothschild, a member of an extremely wealthy family) into the 'Idea' of embodying Christ, signifies a rupture in their utopian/*eutopian* vision. What this rupture signifies for each character, is one of the central inquiries of this chapter. Drawing upon Alain Badiou's notion of truth value, I also assess whether the ideal of utopia has any universalist potential or whether it necessarily must devolve into a totalitarianism. I will also examine utopian/*eutopian* imagination as a vehicle for transcendence as it relates to Arkady and the ridiculous man's attempts to outstrip the conditions of lived reality and gain a new identity. I will also look at why their attempt to gain a new identity is problematised by their desire for isolation, in the same vein as Raskolnikov and the underground man. Drawing upon Ferdinand de Saussure's notions of the signifier and signified, I look at why Arkady and the ridiculous man both struggle to construct utopia because of the aporia between the word (the sign/signifier) and the idea (the symbolic/Signified). Finally, I argue that because Dostoevsky characterised mankind's position in the world, as transitional, utopia and the onto-existential possibilities of the Utopian, can never be our possibilities. In the vein of Iris Murdoch, I argue that all we can do is position ourselves towards an ideal (Christ), and with moral attention and moral imagination, attend to the real world as it is.

In chapters five and six I examine the intersections between spatial tropes and onto-existential themes in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In Chapter Five I focus primarily on analysing the role Euclidean geometry plays in the formation of Ivan Karamazov's worldview. I begin the chapter with a brief overview of Euclidean geometry and space in order to draw parallels between aspects of Euclidean geometry and Ivan's onto-existential worldview. I examine the conversation between Fathers Iosif and Paissy, and the Elder Zosima and Ivan concerning Ivan's article on the marriage of Church and State judicial systems, arguing that the conversation contains the blueprint for understanding Ivan's creation of the Grand Inquisitor and the Inquisitor's purely Euclidean Church. By instantiating, even hypothetically, a totalitarian theocracy as the sole valuating power of what is criminal/sinful or not, Ivan eliminates human conscience and freedom. Arguing that human happiness and human freedom are incompatible, Ivan, via the Grand Inquisitor, would remove human freedom in order to correct what he perceives to be a flaw in the moral architecture of God's world (the suffering of children for a future eternal harmony). Yet in doing so, Ivan creates a totalitarianism. By limiting his epistemological horizon to the flat planes of Euclidean geometry, Ivan establishes a closed system of axioms which, on an ontological level, alleviates suffering and organises people so that he can be happy but for this life only, an idea which is at odds with his desire to see a future 'eternal harmony'. Indeed, drawing upon Vladimir Gubailovskii's argument that Ivan's 'Euclideanism' is implausible, I examine the logical inconsistencies in Ivan's Euclidean worldview. Finally, I turn to the figure of the Grand Inquisitor and look at how his appropriation and control of biblical language is used to construct a Euclidean Church and what it signals regarding the onto-existential possibilities of Ivan, as well as the people who live under the Inquisitor's dictatorial rule.

In my final chapter, I continue to examine onto-existential themes in *The Brothers Karamazov*, with particular attention paid to the Elder Zosima's non-Euclidean worldview. The cornerstone of Zosima's non-Euclidean worldview is theosis (divine union). Both spatially and conceptually theosis is the collapse of all

dogmas, formulas and geometries, indeed, all frameworks that would divide and separate, into an immanency with the divine (a symbolic meeting of Euclid's parallel lines). Zosima's ontology is developed in notes recorded by Alyosha Karamazov of the Elder's life and exhortations to his fellow monks, in which Zosima discusses the concepts of paradise and hell and the attendant themes of unity and isolation, which, I argue are distinct states or positions that become associated either with a non-Euclidean or Euclidean ontology, respectively. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's theory that the unconscious and its psychic content cannot be mapped topographically but possesses non-Euclidean, topological properties, I also show that Alyosha and Dmitri's dreams, as well as Ivan's hallucination fall outside of a Euclidean rubric of understanding. Hence, Ivan cannot integrate his encounter with his hallucinatory devil to his Euclidean worldview because the devil, as a metaphysical being or as a hallucination, belongs to a non-Euclidean realm. For Alyosha and Dmitri, however, the non-Euclidean properties of their psyche allows them to transcend the limitations of their individual selves to encounter a divine union manifest in all creation. Finally, I employ aspects of Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy to unpack Zosima's non-Euclidean answer to Ivan Karamazov's Euclidean reasoning; a response couched in active love, moral vision and moral responsibility. I contrast Zosima's belief in theosis with Ivan Karamazov's epistemological and existential isolation, arguing that the spiritual and psychological dangers of Ivan's Euclidean ontology (or any ontology which symbolically encloses space within three dimensions only) is alienation from God, others and reality itself.

Throughout Dostoevsky's fiction we find that a character's moral and onto-existential possibilities are largely contingent upon their spatial possibilities. The real and psychological spaces that each character inhabits play an important role in the formation of their ideas as well as their onto-existential possibilities of being. To inhabit spaces such as the corner and the underground are indicative of spatial and onto-existential limitation and constriction, while spaces such as the threshold and the horizons of nature, are indicative of spatial and onto-existential freedom.

Metaphors of movement and vision are key to understanding how Dostoevsky's characters see within a world of possibilities open to them, with vision activating and mobilising their being towards or away from specific moral and onto-existential possibilities which are associated with specific spaces, sites and spatial motifs. In each chapter I examine the intersections between the spaces a character inhabits, what captivates their gaze (in an aesthetic and moral sense) and what this indicates regarding their onto-existential possibilities in light of Dostoevsky's Christian worldview.

Chapter One: (A)spatial identity in the underground: corners and thresholds in *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground*

Petersburg is a spectral vision begotten by erring and apostate men; crazy

thoughts are born and criminal schemes ripen in the midst of its fogs. In such an atmosphere everything is concentrated in men, and in men who have been torn from their divine origins – Nikolai Berdyaev ([1921] 1966, p. 41)

Crime and Punishment (1866) and *Notes from Underground* (1864) are works that belong to Dostoevsky's post-Siberian oeuvre, and mark a turn in Dostoevsky's writing from a literary naturalism inspired by Nikolai Gogol in his earlier works (*Poor Folk, Humiliated and Insulted*), towards a focus on ideological, moral and onto-existential themes. Both *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground* are set in Sennaya Ploshchad, a district in old Petersburg, where Dostoyevsky lived for several years.^x Following the liberation of the serfs in 1861, Sennaya underwent rapid, unsustainable and unplanned urban expansion, which catalysed unprecedented rates of crime, prostitution, drunkenness and unemployment (Lindenmeyr 1976, p. 38). In response to these social ills, ideologues of utopian socialism, Fourierism, and utilitarianism such as Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Nikolai Chernyshevsky, sought to reconfigure both the ideological and urban landscape of Petersburg through social formulas that tended towards systems of forced homogenisation. The goal of utopian socialism, like Fourierism and Chernyshevsky's brand of utilitarianism, was the organisation of society to the mutual benefit of all members. Fourier propounded a system whereby groups of people would live in phalansteries (communes) and work together to achieve the utopian ideal of harmony and equality, while Chernyshevsky reified the Crystal Palace in London (a monumental building of glass and iron) as a symbol both of the triumph of science and technology as well as an imagined commune in which people would live and work together in harmony. Dostoevsky, however, rejected these ideologies on the grounds that they negated the individual's freedom by creating what Dostoevsky called "ant-heap ideology" (Dostoevsky qtd. in Frank 2010, p. 376). Dostoevsky believed that people could not willingly submit to the rationality of these proposed systems and that only through force could the formula of the ant-heap be superimposed upon people. He also held that utopian socialism, as well as a later movement, Russian populism, had appropriated certain principles of Christ, namely love and forgiveness, but had secularised their meaning. These movements

envisioned and called for secular utopias that would, given their very secularity, inevitably veto the freedom of the individual. Dostoevsky believed in the need for a guiding ideal, such as Christ, or ideological confusion would ensue.

The ideological origins of Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) and the underground man (*Notes from Underground*) are key to understanding why they respectively retreat into the 'underground' and how underground space operates upon the formation of their ideas. The 'underground' is both a pseudo-literal and psychological space which both characters inhabit. Gaston Bachelard's contention, "I am the space where I am" (1969, p. 137) can be applied to the onto-existential connection which exists between Raskolnikov and the underground man's real and psychological habitats. Due to the psychological connection that exists for Raskolnikov and the underground man to their respective home-spaces, as well as their isolation from society, neither character is represented as possessing a stable identity. The unstable nature of both characters gives rise to extremes as they vacillate between feelings of power and impotence, of ideological monumentalism and degradation, engendered by their urban realities and their attempts to throw off their marginal status. Both characters imagine themselves in the form of monumental, Napoleonic figures, and, conversely, as verminous creatures hiding in a corner. Either extreme eviscerates their human identity. Both characters objectify themselves at the cost of their bodily, spatial subjectivity—real human forms that they struggle to embody. Drawing upon Dostoevsky's belief that the Petersburg is a dreamer and thus detached from nature, I examine how the solipsistic existence of both characters problematises their struggle to assert their spatial identities. Both characters attempt to enact their spatial identities via the ideological notions they form 'underground'. I argue that an escape from the spectral city of Petersburg is a pre-requisite for Raskolnikov to be resurrected into a new form (the Lazarus trope of *Crime and Punishment*), an identity grounded in man's divine origin. By the same token, I examine why the underground man *fails* to become anything and remains underground, in a space populated by phantoms.

The Petersburg dreamer

Drawing on Petersburg architecture as an analogy of ideological confusion in Russia in the 1860s, Dostoevsky contended that,

There is no such city as Petersburg; from the point of view of architecture, it is a reflection of all the architectural styles of the world and of all periods and fashions; everything has been, bit by bit, borrowed and distorted in its own way [. . .] We have some sort of disorderly style here which, however, entirely corresponds to the disorder of the present moment ([1873] 1993, p. 255-256).

In the 1860s, the architecture of Sennaya district characterised the disorderly style of Petersburg architecture in general. Brothels, taverns and ramshackle dwellings haphazardly appeared in the interstices between monumental squares, buildings and parades (Lindenmeyr 1976, p. 38). The economic and aesthetic dissonance which characterised the urban landscape of Petersburg in the 1860s is internalised and concentrated in Raskolnikov and the underground man (Berdyayev [1921] 1966, p. 41). Indeed, Dostoevsky believed that Petersburg's particular *mélange* of economic and ideological disorder fostered a new kind of personality 'type': the dreamer. The dreamer is someone who has retreated into a world of fantasy in flight from the economic and ideological confusion of the urban world. Both Raskolnikov and the underground man are Dostoevsky's literary versions of the dreamer type. The respective solipsism of both characters coupled with their retraction into their own private 'corners', constitutes an effectual escape from the impoverishment and oppression of their undesirable urban existences^{xi}. But it is an escape route that leads to the 'underground,' a psychological space that begets moral-spiritual inertia. Excluded from normal social life both Raskolnikov and the underground man become 'dreamers' fantasising of an escape from their marginal positions.^{xii} In the bleak milieu of Dostoyevsky's urban fiction, such dreams crystallise around two distinct kinds of fantasy: those where the dreamer assumes the identities of monumental historical figures, and/or, conversely verminous

creatures. The dissonance between these countervailing identities corresponds with the very architecture of Sennaya district.

In one episode of his Petersburg feuilletons, Dostoevsky suggests that the Petersburg dreamer is an urban dreamer, divorced from nature and the Russian soil. Dostoevsky wrote that such dreamers “settle for the most part in profound isolation, in inaccessible corners, as if hiding in them from people and from the world” (qtd. in Fanger 1963, p. 478). In the same feuilleton, Dostoevsky wrote, that for the dreamer, “the room vanishes, as does space; time stops or flies so fast that an hour seems like a minute” (qtd. in Fanger 1963, p. 478). True to Dostoevsky’s portrait of the real-life dreamer type, Raskolnikov and the underground man both experience spatial and temporal disorientation of a type which occurs in dreams. Raskolnikov and the underground man are dreamers who have retreated into their respective corners (real and psychological), where they imagine alternative realities and identities. The underground man reflects that he would often dream for three months consecutively, hedged in his corner underground. Similarly, at the beginning of *Crime and Punishment* the narrator observes that Raskolnikov had spent the past month “lying in a corner” preoccupied with day-dreams/fantasies (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 4). When Raskolnikov eventually emerges from his corner, he walks about the streets distractedly, not noticing where he is going. In his Petersburg feuilleton, Dostoevsky wrote that the dreamer “walks with his head hung low, paying little attention to those around him, sometimes even forgetting reality” (qtd. in Fanger 1963, p. 479). For both the real-life dreamer and the literary dreamer type, disassociation from reality causes them to view the world around them as spectral.

Raskolnikov and the underground man’s isolation gives rise to what I call the ‘spectralisation’ of their worlds. Both characters inhabit a psychological underground populated by the spectres of their fantasies. Spectralisation is a process associated with solipsism in which nothing outside of the self appears to have a solid form or material existence. Subha Mukherji maintains that the spectral relates to boundaries: boundaries between fantasy and reality; between

representation and the real (2013, p. xxv). Raskolnikov and the underground man both experience the blurring of the boundaries between fantasy and reality in their retreat inward. Psychologically, both inhabit dream-matrices which collapse the boundary between representation and the real, including the boundary between their embodied, spatial identity and their imagined identities^{xiii}. For both characters, the blurring of the lines between the real and fantasy also affects how they view their home-spaces. Neither character's home is represented as a fixed, geometrical site rather as changeable and amorphous, reacting in proportion with Raskolnikov and the underground man's states of mind. Their homes become aligned with the psychological underground space into which they retreat. This retreat signals the spectralisation of the real world and what is at stake in this withdrawal is the loss of their real spatial (embodied) identity.

In his work entitled *Dostoevsky*, Nikolai Berdyaev argues that the city of Petersburg is itself spectral and that its atmosphere becomes internalised by its inhabitants who are dreamers "torn from their divine origins" ([1921] 1966, p. 41). The spectral aspect of the city also relates to simulacra. Donald Fanger points out that Dostoevsky lamented that the city-bound Petersburger is not situated in an environment in which they can enjoy nature (1963, p. 477), in the sense that, necessarily in the urban cityscape, only symbolic representations of nature can be found in the parks and gardens dotted throughout the city. In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre observes that parks and gardens are merely a simulacra for the open spaces of nature (1991, p. 27). Simulacra are reproductions; they are spectral insofar as they imitate real forms. In Dostoevsky's fiction, the *real*, open spaces of nature are the sites of transcendence and moral-spiritual regeneration, where the real and symbolic deaths and resurrections occur that are necessary for a character to participate in theosis (divine union) with all creation. Indeed, for Dostoevsky, nature is the avenue by which man reconnects with the divine. A reconnection with nature, therefore, signals the onto-existential possibility of moral-spiritual regeneration; nature is the site of rebirth into a heavenly identity. The ancient Latin term, *religio*, which forms the basis of the modern word religion, means 'to reconnect'. Dostoevsky's Christianity as well as the literary romanticism

of his youth informed his belief in nature as the site for encountering the divine. To be positioned in nature, to contemplate the vast horizon separating the earth from the heavens, the finite from the infinite, is a spatial, as it is an onto-existential, position that places the viewer on the threshold of a new life.

In Dostoevsky's fiction, onto-existential choices often intersect with spatial (directional) choice. Indeed, for Raskolnikov and the underground man the onto-existential possibilities of transcendence (verticality/movement) or death (horizontality/inertia) are represented in the horizontal and vertical spaces of the city, as well as the spatial symbols of the threshold and the corner. In the city, verticality is embodied in monuments which point to an 'elsewhere', to transcendence and power. Yet, just as parks and gardens are simulacra of nature, so too are the monuments of the city simulacra of transcendence. Drawing upon the historical association of the vertical (and phallic) with transcendence, Lefebvre asserts that the verticality of secular representations of monument offers *only* the promise of transcendence; transcendence above what Lefebvre calls "time-saturated horizontality" (1970, p. 22). It is a simulacrum of transcendence, just as the bridges of the city are a simulacrum of the threshold spaces found in nature. The corner, however, is a spatial motif which belongs purely to the city. The corner is not simulacrum but represents the limitation of onto-existential possibilities insofar as it is hedged in and partially enclosed. Both Raskolnikov and the underground man describe their homes as corners and draw a connection between the ideas that they form and the corners they inhabit. Corner ideas are circular and beget ideological extremes in view of the fact that the psychological corner is hidden from social praxes where ideas are challenged and tested (Soja 1989 p. 122). The bridges, corners and monuments of the city are representative of onto-existential possibilities, but only as man-made reproductions. For both Raskolnikov and the underground man, a flight from the urban simulacra of the city is needed in order for them to reclaim their divine origins in nature.

The ideological origins of Raskolnikov and the underground man

The underground man represents a nameless urban mass marginalised by poverty and embittered by ideologies that provided them with no practical solutions to their economic problems. *Notes from Underground* is, in large part, Dostoevsky's polemic against the ideas of rational egoism and determinism, which Chernyshevsky advocates in his novel *What is To Be Done?* (1863) Dostoevsky critic Richard Peace traces the origins of rational egoism from the "enlightened self-interest of English utilitarian philosophers Bentham and Mill," to its unique Russian manifestation (2010, p. 119). For Bentham and Mill, rational egoism underpinned the moral framework of free trade and capitalism, whereas in Russia, Chernyshevsky's rational egoism would underpin a socialist society (Peace 2010, p. 119). In Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* the character Vera Pavlovna asks Lopukhov if "man is governed exclusively by the calculation of his own advantage?" ([1863] 1989, p. 115). Lopukhov affirms that this is true and argues that if every person acted rationally in pursuing his own advantage that this in turn would advantage others; an idea which is the cornerstone of Chernyshevsky's doctrine of rational egoism. Via Lopukhov, Chernyshevsky also argued that people do not possess free will, but are subject to the deterministic laws of nature. Chernyshevsky believed, "that no such capacity as free will exists or can exist, since whatever actions man attributes to his own initiative are really a result of the 'laws of nature'" (qtd. in Frank 2010, p. 419). Via the underground man, Dostoevsky vehemently rejected Chernyshevsky's premise on moral and existential grounds, arguing instead that if mankind has no free will, as Chernyshevsky's deterministic worldview asserts, then people are not morally responsible for anything they do; we are not compelled to act rationally for the good of our self or for others. In the face of determinism, the underground man attempts to assert his wilful irrationality while, at the same time crystalising the deterministic principle of lack of free will.

In Dostoevsky's excursus explaining the underground man he wrote that, although the author of the *Notes from Underground* is fictional, "such persons as the composer of these *Notes* not only exist in our society, but indeed must exist,

considering the circumstances under which our society has generally been formed” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 1). The underground man is a parody of man as a mere product of social environment. Philosophically the underground man allows that his free choice is an illusion only to prove that if this is the case, consciousness is a disease that begets inertia and this inertia divests him of any moral responsibility. The underground man points out that if the deterministic laws of nature were to be discovered, a perfect social system could be calculated with mathematical certainty and, in that instant, all onto-existential questions would be answered. In the first part of the *Notes*, the underground man says that,

All that is needed is to discover the laws of nature; then man will no longer be answerable for his actions, and life will become exceedingly easy [. . .] new economic relations will follow, ready-made and also calculated with mathematical precision, so that all possible questions will disappear in a single instant, since they will all have been provided with answers. And then the Crystal Palace will arise. (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 24)

The Crystal Palace was built in London in 1851 for the World Exhibition Fair and contained works of art, science and industry and was itself a testament to mankind’s monumental technological advancement. In *What is To Be Done*, Chernyshevsky appropriates the Crystal Palace as a symbol of a rational and perfect society, founded upon the laws of nature (determinism). Chernyshevsky believed that if a social formula for the rational organisation of society could be agreed upon, it would quash economic and social conflict and establish an unprecedented social equilibrium; forcing people to act rationally through the sheer power of its logic.

The underground man rejects the logic of two times two equals four, (the formula Dostoevsky assigns to the laws of nature and which the Crystal Palace represents) insofar as in its perfection, the Crystal Palace does away with a person’s freedom (Peace 1971, p. 9). The underground man declares,

What do I care about the laws of nature and arithmetic if, for one reason or another, I don't like these laws, including the 'two times two is four?' Of course, I cannot break through this wall with my head if I don't have the strength to break through it, but neither will I accept it simply because I face a stone wall and am not strong enough. (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 12)

The underground man rejects the notion that people would act rationally if only they were shown how. Indeed, he believes that a person's freedom is made manifest precisely in their ability to assert their obscene free will. The underground man's proclamation that man will choose "even stupidest thing – just so that he will *have the right*" (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 28), is very much to the point here. Despite this assertion, however, the underground man feels bound by the laws of determinism. Although the underground man rejects the logic of determinism, he feels incapable of breaking through it, symbolised as a stone-wall. The wall becomes symbolic of mankind's limited onto-existential possibilities given that people have no freely chosen possibilities under the aegis of determinism.

The question of determinism is also raised in *Crime and Punishment* in relation to whether a criminal is responsible for their actions or whether these actions are determined purely by their social and economic conditions. Although Dostoevsky rejected the notion that people are mere products of their social environment (given that he believed in individual moral responsibility) in Raskolnikov he also dramatises the effects that determinism can have upon the human psyche/consciousness. There is the sense that Raskolnikov commits murder, not as an expression of a free act, as Edward Wasiolek maintains, rather because he feels compelled by an extrinsic force (1964, p. 67). The narrator indicates that Raskolnikov seems to sleepwalk towards Alyona Ivanovna's apartment and he feels, "[a]s if a piece of his clothing had been caught in the cogs of a machine and he were being dragged into it" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 70). After overhearing two students discussing a utilitarian motivation for killing the very same Alyona Ivanovna (a miserly pawnbroker), Raskolnikov feels himself compelled by an

extrinsic force (cogs of determinism) to commit the intended crime. Although Raskolnikov appropriates utilitarian ideas to justify his crime, Raskolnikov has, as Phillip Rahv points out, an “inauthentic relation to his crime” (1962, p. 35). Raskolnikov’s motivations are mixed. Indeed, as the novel unfolds, we learn that Raskolnikov’s utilitarian motive is only an apparent motive, placing him in an inauthentic position to the crime. We learn that Raskolnikov’s real motive is to put himself to the test; to see whether he, like Alyona, is a louse, or an ‘extraordinary man’. Raskolnikov believes that the extraordinary man, by virtue of his greatness, is permitted to transgress the law and commit a crime for the sake of a great idea.

The division between the ordinary and extraordinary man is a distinction appropriated by Dostoevsky from one of his contemporaries, a young critic, Dmitri Pisarev. Charged by Chernyshevsky with the task of reviewing Ivan Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons*, Pisarev formulates the idea of the ‘extraordinary man’ in his reflections on Turgenev’s character Bazarov, the proto-nihilistic protagonist of the novel. Dostoevsky used Pisarev’s division of people into the classes of ‘extraordinary’ or ‘ordinary’ people, to shape Raskolnikov’s idea of the extraordinary man which Raskolnikov expounds in his article called, ‘On Crime.’ (Frank 2010, p. 489). In his article, Raskolnikov contends that people are divided between the categories of ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary man is characterised by his conservatism and obedience, while the extraordinary man is capable of transgressing the law for a great idea. Malcolm Jones points out that the Russian word for ‘crime’ (*prestupleniye*) means to ‘transgress’ or ‘to step over’ (1976, p. 68). Raskolnikov allows that the extraordinary man can step over (transgress) judicial and moral law, even stepping over his own conscience in order to achieve greatness. Raskolnikov cites the figures of Napoleon, Muhammad, Newton, Kepler among others, as examples of the ‘extraordinary man’. Despite proselytising the moral permissibility granted to the extraordinary man by virtue of his greatness, Raskolnikov also allows that all people have the same right to exist and says that he believes in God. Indeed, when the detective Porfiry Petrovich asks Raskolnikov whether or not he believes in God and the literal resurrection of

Lazarus, Raskolnikov affirms that he does. This seeming contradiction indicates that Raskolnikov is ideologically confused and is yet to settle upon a guiding idea. In a letter to his friend, M. N. Katkov, Dostoevsky wrote that Raskolnikov, “succumbs — through thoughtlessness and lack of strong convictions — to certain strange, ‘incomplete’ ideas that are floating in the air” (Dostoevsky [1865]1987, p. 221). Raskolnikov is ideologically divided, as his name *raskol* (schism) indicates (Passage 1982, p. 136). Raskolnikov and the underground man both succumb to the haze of floating ideas and their vacillations between different ideological positions affect the very spatial stability of their homes.

“I am the space where I am”: the homespaces of Raskolnikov and the underground man

The underground man’s homespace is aligned with the interstice space between the ground and the floor of a home. Berdyaev points out that the Russian word for ‘underground’ (as it appears in the title of *Notes from Underground*), is *podpol’ya*. The prefix *pod* means ‘under/below’ and *pol* means ‘floor/flooring’ ([1921] 1966, 50). Therefore, the English word, ‘underground’ does not quite capture the meaning that the Russian *podpol’ya*, denotes. As such, the very title *Notes from Underground*, immediately aligns the underground man’s homespace with the cramped and dark space below the floor, a space that is neither subterranean nor tellurian but exists in the interstice between the two. In architectural nomenclature, there is no term for the space under the floor. *Pod’polya* space is not a space designed for habitation, “except for vermin breeding in the darkness” (Berdyaev [1921] 1966, p. 50). From the outset of the *Notes*, the underground man identifies himself as a verminous creature that lives in a ‘hole’. His identification with a mouse gives rise to a psychological involution of his being, a shrinkage that enables him to “slip back ignominiously into its hole” as if he were a mouse (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 10). In the first part of the *Notes*, the underground man seems to take on the proportions of a mouse, allowing him to, “listen [. . .] to these words of [his phantom interlocutors] through a crack in the floor” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 38). There is the sense that the metaphor of

‘mouse’ becomes somewhat literal given that the underground man feels divorced of all human agency, as if he were an animal. Indeed, the underground man says, “I could not become anything: neither bad nor good, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect. And now I am eking out my days in my corner” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 3). The underground man even goes so far as to assert that he would rather be an insect, but laments that even that was not granted to him. The underground man lives in a psychologically uninhabitable space caused by the “poison of unfulfilled desires turned inward” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 11). The poison of thwarted desires does not compel him to want to be a better man, rather it has occasioned a diseased state he calls ‘conscious inertia,’ a state in which he cannot become or do anything. Even the agency of the insect is not granted to him and thus, the underground man crystallises the dehumanising effect that determinism can have on the human consciousness.

Raskolnikov also experiences the morally poisonous sense of thwarted desires in the psychological underground he inhabits. Raskolnikov’s homespace, like the underground man’s, constitutes a type of *podpol’ya*. The narrator describes Raskolnikov’s home as “under the roof of a tall, five-storied house” (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 3). The absence of the descriptor ‘attic’ is conspicuous. Indeed, from the very beginning of the narrative Raskolnikov’s room is described as almost anything but a room. It is: a closet, a cupboard, a corner, a ship’s cabin, a shell, a kennel, a trunk, and a coffin. All of these descriptors denote a hidden and enclosed space, much like the underground man’s homespace ‘under the floor.’ Although we are provided with narrative details of Raskolnikov’s room—it is six paces long, with yellow, dusty wallpaper coming off the walls, a very low ceiling and an old sofa that takes up half the width of the room—the room seems to grow and shrink depending on who is in it or in reaction to the state of Raskolnikov’s mind (Leatherbarrow 1981, p. 77). Raskolnikov’s home is described as cramped, and yet it seems to be able to accommodate a whole number of guests. As William Leatherbarrow observes, the changeable size and function of Raskolnikov’s room is apparent when the tiny room suddenly gains proportions that allow Raskolnikov, as well as Luzhin,

Nastasya, Razumikhin and Zossimov to occupy it. It is as though Raskolnikov's room is a literary exemplum of Bachelard's observation that, "[i]nhabited space transcends geometrical space" (1969, p. 47). Bachelard's assertion requires a proviso regarding who inhabits the space. When Raskolnikov's room is inhabited by others, the room seemingly expands its geometric proportions, but when Raskolnikov alone inhabits the room, it contracts to become a 'shell,' a 'kennel,' or a 'coffin.' At one-point Raskolnikov forgets how small his room is and bumps into one corner and then another as he distractedly paces about the room, thinking, "[s]ince the very scene with Mikolka at Porfiry's, he had been suffocating in a cramped space, with no way out" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 447). Raskolnikov feels himself to be caged in a kennel, a feeling that arises after his interview with Porfiry Petrovich, who, suspecting Raskolnikov has murdered Alyona Ivanovna and her sister Liza, baits Raskolnikov as if he were an animal, toying with him like a dog. When Raskolnikov feels himself to be hounded by Porfiry, his homespace becomes for him a kennel. When Raskolnikov wants to be alone, the home becomes a shell, which he retreats into it like a turtle. Both the size and descriptors Dostoevsky use to depict Raskolnikov's room, are commensurate with Raskolnikov's changing states of mind.

A-spatial identity

The withdrawal of both characters into their amorphous homespaces also signals their shift away from their identification with the space of their body and the social world and into the inward realm of fantasy. Barbara Hooper maintains that the human body is a "concrete physical space of flesh and bone, of chemistries and electricities; it is a highly mediated space, a space transformed by cultural interpretations and representations; it is a lived space" (qtd. in Soja 1996, p. 114). Neither Raskolnikov nor the underground man lives through the space of their bodies (physical or social), but through their fantasies. For the underground man, others exist only as memories or fantasies of his imagination. In the first part of the *Notes*, he lives alone with his servant, but we never meet her and there is a complete

absence of any other characters who might confirm or qualify the underground man's self-image. The entire narrative is told from his perspective; he is the narrator and protagonist of his *Notes*. The underground man does not identify himself using a name, and he has no definite physiognomy. Consequently, as Roger Anderson argues, we could say he has a "transpersonal identity that never quite qualifies, or limits him" (1986, p. 38). Further, Dostoevsky critic Carol Flath contends that the underground man's inability to physically bump into the officer who had offended him can be explained if we view the underground man as incorporeal (1993, p. 522). Indeed, the only sense that we have of the underground man's body or embodied identity emerges in the second part of the *Notes* when he recalls events in his life twenty or so years prior to the events he describes in the first part of the *Notes*. However, the problem with memory as a source of narrative account of the past is, as Bachelard points out that, "[s]omething unreal seeps into the reality of the recollections [. . .] we hover between awareness of being and loss of being. And the entire reality of memory becomes spectral" (1969, p. 58). If, as Bachelard asserts, the act of remembering transforms embodied experience into spectral forms, then it follows that at no point in the *Notes* can we read the underground man as a real, flesh and blood man. For the underground man, the process of recollection and narration, of writing down his memories, further distances himself from the reality of his lived experience. The reanimation of the images of the past can only ever be represented as something spectral. Even the voices of 'real' people (his school fellows, Liza and his servant Apollon) exist only within the underground man's consciousness; they too have been relegated to the world of phantoms. Dostoevsky critic Michael Holquist contends that in his retreat into the inward world of fantasy and memory, the underground man "has abandoned the possibility of *any system* as a privileged source in which to ground his selfhood, he is condemned to a world where *nothing* is real" (1977, p. 60). The underground man's retreat from the world can be read as his attempt to unburden himself of his real, spatial identity. Indeed, the underground man says to his readers that, "we even feel it's too much of a burden to be men - men with real bodies, real blood *of our own*" (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 130). The underground man feels

that the process of individuation is a burden. To escape this burden, the underground man assumes a transpersonal identity, an identity detached from a real body, and therefore spectral.

Originally Dostoevsky had intended for Raskolnikov to be the narrator of *Crime and Punishment*. If Dostoevsky had carried out his intention, the entire narrative could be read in the same way as *Notes from Underground*: as the unreliable account of a narrator who lives in a world populated by phantoms. *Crime and Punishment* is told from the third person perspective by a narrator who is never named and who has no vested interest in manipulating the narrative events. This would indicate that Raskolnikov's spatial identity is more stable than that of the underground man. The narrator provides us with details of Raskolnikov's appearance (he is tall, slender and handsome) as well as Raskolnikov's social position (a former student; poor but educated), yet there is a significant discrepancy between the narrator's depiction of Raskolnikov and the Napoleonic identity Raskolnikov constructs in his fantasies. Indeed, Raskolnikov constructs his identity through what he perceives to be a shared ideological similitude with other 'extraordinary men' such as Napoleon, Newton, Kepler, Lycurgus, Solon and the prophet Muhammad. The profile of the extraordinary man is not contingent upon social or physical identification, but rather consists in his ability to transgress moral boundaries for the sake of great ideas. Raskolnikov's belief in the supremacy of the extraordinary man is a form of antinomianism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2017) defines antinomianism as the belief that moral and divine law can be transgressed given that faith alone is needed for salvation. As such, Raskolnikov commits murder in an attempt to raise himself to the level of the extraordinary man, to prove his faith in his idea and thus save him from his 'louse' status. This, however, is not to be. The discrepancy between the Napoleonic act that Raskolnikov imagines he is performing and the reality of killing an old pawnbroker, forces Raskolnikov to confront that he is unable to gain a new identity, "through his own mediation," as Holquist points out (1977, p. 93). Although Raskolnikov shows no apparent remorse for his crime, he is tormented by how 'unmonumental' his idea is to kill "some ridiculous old crone" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 415). When

Raskolnikov finally confesses his crime to Sonya Marmeladova he says, “[w]as it the old crone I killed? I killed myself, not the old crone!” (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 420). Raskolnikov not only transgresses moral and judicial law, but the “psychological law of his own personality” (Jones 1976, p. 68). Raskolnikov is psychologically incapable of killing with impunity and thus, instead of stepping over his conscience, all Raskolnikov succeeds in doing is to ‘kill’ the idea of his Napoleonic identity.

Monuments and animals: non-human identity

Raskolnikov’s compulsion to establish his self-identity as an extraordinary man, manifests as a desire to become monumentalised; to stand alongside the historically monumental figures of Napoleon and Muhammed, among others. Likewise, the underground man desires to become monumental. Both want to embody a living monument/become monumental in order to gain mastery over others, and indeed life itself. The underground man fantasises, “I would triumph over everybody; naturally, they would all be prostrate in the dust and compelled to voluntarily acknowledge my perfections” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 57). The underground man’s rejection of what the Crystal Palace symbolises (forced homogenisation based on the utilitarian principle of rational egoism) contradicts his desire to subjugate others and be worshipped by them. The underground man rejects the Crystal Palace because in what he perceives to be its perfection, it does away with mankind’s freedom. Yet, he too wants to ‘compel’ others to acknowledge his perfection, calling ‘compulsion’ ‘voluntary’. It is not the ant-heap ideology represented by the Crystal Palace that Raskolnikov and the underground man ultimately reject, rather their perceived powerlessness in such a system. Both would be quite happy that the Crystal Palace impose its message of power and certitude upon society so long as they are even more monumental, so long as they have power, “[o]ver all trembling creatures, over the whole ant-heap!”, as Raskolnikov declares (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, pp. 329-330).

Raskolnikov and the underground man both desire to become ‘men of

bronze', that is, living monuments to which everything is permitted. Raskolnikov believes that everything is morally permitted for the man to whom monuments are erected. In a reference to Napoleon, Raskolnikov thinks,

The true *master*, to whom all is permitted, sacks Toulon, makes a slaughterhouse of Paris, *forgets* an army in Egypt, *expends* half a million men in a Moscow campaign, and gets off with a pun in Vilno; and when he dies they set up monuments to him - and thus *everything* is permitted. No, obviously such men are made not of flesh but of bronze! (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 274 emphasis original)

For Raskolnikov, Napoleon becomes more than a man of flesh given that, in a Machiavellian sense, all is permitted to the historical figure who is cast in bronze and immortalised in the form of a monument. Raskolnikov and the underground man's desire for power can also be read as a desire for immortalisation. Lefebvre asserts that the monument bears the mark of the will to power - power over other spaces, including the space of death (1991, p. 221). Lefebvre draws a connection between monument and its power to negate death, arguing that, "[o]nly through the monument, through the intervention of the architect as demiurge, can the space of death be negated, transfigured into a living space which is an extension of the body" (1991, p. 221). The monument becomes a substitute for or an extension of the body (the body of the architect or the body of the monumentalised figure). Raskolnikov and the underground man's desire to become monumentalised can likewise be read as a desire to substitute their body for the space of the monument which is a symbol of transcendence.

Indeed, Lefebvre asserts that a positive attribute of the monument is the way in which it embodies a sense of transcendence, of being elsewhere, of rising above "time-saturated horizontality" (1970, p. 22). The Crystal Palace represents this type of transcendence. Michael Katz points out that transcendence was a common theme in the testimonials of those who saw the Crystal Palace. Katz asks,

[a]nd the source of that transcendence? Not the biblical paradise, the Garden of Eden; nor the biblical and incomplete human edifice, the Tower of Babel; nor the spectacular contemporary religious monument celebrating men's faith, St. Paul's Cathedral - but the rapidly completed, totally secular, man-made monument to science and technology, the Crystal Palace! (2002, p. 68)

Despite the fact that the underground man rejects the Crystal Palace, in the censored part of the *Notes*, he too constructs a kind of Crystal Palace, albeit with very different symbolic meaning: the crystal *edifice* signifying a New Jerusalem.^{xiv} In the Bible, the New Jerusalem is a divine city that will be founded in Zion after a new heaven and earth is established when the former heaven and earth have passed away (Rev. 21: 21). Where the Crystal Palace is a sort of *res extensa* of the principles of rational egoism, the crystal *edifice* would be a symbol of the principles of Christ (love and forgiveness) (Frank 2010, p. 427). Joseph Frank points out that Dostoevsky intended the crystal edifice to serve as a symbol of Christian faith, representing the opposite principles of the Crystal Palace which Dostoevsky called a 'chicken coop.' (2010, p. 427). Raskolnikov also believes, literally, in a New Jerusalem, a celestial building which would unite mankind through love and not compulsion. Although Raskolnikov and the underground man's belief in a New Jerusalem appear to be at odds with their desire to become monumentalised, the impetus of these forces is the same: the desire for transcendence. Raskolnikov and the underground man want to transcend the cryptal space of the underground. Raskolnikov ultimately turns to the biblical story of Lazarus as a model for understanding his desire for transcendence/moral-spiritual resurrection, while the underground man constructs a narrative of self-transcendence based on the hero of Pushkin's poem 'The Shot'. The Lazarus story is aligned with new life and resurrection via Christ, while the story of Pushkin's Silvio is aligned with vengeance and death.

Given that Raskolnikov and the underground man's desire for power arises from their feelings of marginalisation, both characters also identify themselves with verminous creatures. Raskolnikov and the underground man tend to use zoomorphic terms to describe themselves and others. The underground man suggests that while the 'normal' man is a raging bull, an unthinking and muscular brute who is all body and action, the man of heightened consciousness is a crushed little mouse. Meanwhile, Raskolnikov divides people between the categories of man and louse. By assigning Alyona Ivanovna the status of louse, Raskolnikov debases her humanity and thereby divests himself of moral responsibility for her murder. He even declares to Sonya that he did not kill a human being but "a useless, nasty, pernicious louse" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 416). Yet, at various stages in the novel, Raskolnikov refers to himself as a louse, a spider, a dog and a turtle. In the *Notebooks to Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov was also to identify himself as a chicken and a rabbit. In the novel, Raskolnikov's identification with different animals coincides with events or moments in which Raskolnikov has transgressed his conscience. In a letter to V. A. Alekseyev, Dostoevsky wrote, "by sinning man can once again turn into a beast" (1987, p. 421). For Dostoevsky, sin bestialises the human personality and deprives it of a human identity that is grounded in the divine likeness of God; hence Raskolnikov and the underground man's identification with animals. Raskolnikov and the underground man's use of zoomorphic terms serves to debase their own humanity as well as that of others.

The seeming contradiction between the monumental and animal identities of both characters is the outworking of what Friedrich Nietzsche called *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* derives from the French word 'resentment.' Nietzsche asserts that *ressentiment* is a state of being which is characteristic of people who, embittered by their marginal social status, seek "compensation in imaginary revenge" against the powers that be ([1887] 2008, p. 22). For the man of *ressentiment*, their sense of unsatisfied revenge gives rise to a will to power "which seeks not only to master some isolated aspect of life but rather life itself" (Nietzsche [1887] 2008, p.97). For the underground man and Raskolnikov, their identification with verminous or

parasitic creatures is a means by which they further poison themselves with suffering and insult in order to justify their desire to crush and conquer others. Both characters blame other people for their ills, dredging up past insults they have suffered in order to “revel in a painful mistrust and to intoxicate themselves on their own malicious poison” (Nietzsche [1887] 2008, p. 106). Indeed, the underground man identifies that he suffers from the “poison of unfulfilled desires turned inward” (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 11). *Ressentiment* is at the basis of Raskolnikov and the underground man’s psychological vacillations between feelings of power and impotence, of ideological monumentalism and degradation, which, in turn, are symbolised in their identifications with the vermin and the monument.

Corners and thresholds

In both narratives, the spatial motifs of the corner and threshold become associated with distinct onto-existential modalities. The two motifs can be represented as an aggregate of the following components:

Threshold	Corner
Transitional	Inertial
Open	Closed
Entrance/interface	Dead end
Vision	Occlusion

In both novels, corner space is aligned with the homespaces of Raskolnikov and the underground man as well as the conditions under which their ideas are formed. V. N Toporov and Susan Knight translate ‘corner’ in *Crime and Punishment* from the Russian угол (ugol) and suggest that in the novel, narrow space or corner space signifies a blind alley for the soul of man, with Raskolnikov telling Sonya that such spaces cramp the soul and mind (1978, p. 340). The corner (literal and symbolic) is a stagnant, even mephitic space where ideas fester and circulate. By way of example, before committing murder, Raskolnikov senses that there is a connection

between the 'corner' he lives in and the formulation of his dark ideas. He thinks, "it was there, in that corner, in that terrible cupboard, that for more than a month now all *that* had been ripening" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 53 emphasis original). In his isolated corner, the idea to kill germinates and takes hold of Raskolnikov's mind and clouds his thoughts. The underground man also connects the formulation of his ideas with his homespace and states that, "I was already longing to express the *cherished little ideas* I had nurtured in my corner" (Dostoevsky [1864] 1974, p. 91 emphasis original). The real circumscribed 'corner' is a secluded or hidden area, while the psychological corner relates to feelings of being 'cornered' (Raskolnikov feels trapped in his kennel). Discussing the 'lived in' corners of the homespace, Bachelard contends that, "[a] corner that is 'lived in' tends to reject and restrain, even to hide life. The corner becomes a negation of the Universe" (1969, p. 136). Bachelard's assertion, the corner as a negation of the universe, is somewhat hyperbolic, but it indicates that the lived-in corner gives rise to a solipsism capable of rendering everything (the whole universe), a mere figment of imagination. The idea that the lived-in corner restrains, and hides life is an apt depiction of Raskolnikov and the underground man's experience of corner space. Both Raskolnikov and the underground man live in their corners, hiding from life. Raskolnikov says, "I hid in my corner like a spider" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 417), while the underground man hides in his corner like a mouse, trembling before the 'normal man'. Raskolnikov and the underground man both associate corner space with animal identities. Both feel a sense of being cornered like an animal, and this in turn gives rise to corner ideas. Corner ideas is a term I have formulated based on what Arkady, the narrator and protagonist of *An Accidental Family* says to his readers, ""My idea is the corner I live in" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 58). Arkady's 'Idea', like that of Raskolnikov and the underground man, is to become monumental. Arkady wants to embody a Rothschild and thus outstrip his marginal status, an idea I discuss further in Chapter Four. For each of these characters, corner space gives rise to fantasies of power because the corner is hidden from living life, removed from the social tensions and contradictions of what Edward Soja identifies as active spatial praxes (1989, p. 122). Soja contends that social spaces are where

ideas are discussed and challenged, where fantasies are brought to account by reality (1989, p. 122). I contend that the lack of exposure to social praxes; the state of being hidden in the corner, gives rise to non-human constructions (louse, mouse, spider) and this in turn provokes obverse constructions in the form of monumental identities.

Where the corner hides life, the threshold connects spaces in a dynamic interface of possibility and transformation. Thresholds are liminal, marking the continuity and discontinuity between two spaces and two distinct spatial positions. Historically speaking, liminal space is transformative. Once the neophyte crosses a threshold he or she is initiated into a new identity. Mikhail Bakhtin has observed that the motif of the threshold appears throughout all of Dostoevsky's fiction in the form of doorways, staircases and public squares with the threshold encounter (and its accompanying crisis time) an analogue of how dialogue is an exchange or crossing of thought processes in speech (cited in Monas 1983, p. 69). Although a nod to Bakhtin is necessary in any reading of spatial motifs in Dostoevsky's fiction, I tend to favour Richard Gill's formulation of threshold space which he explores in relation to the motif of the bridge in *Crime and Punishment*. In the urban setting of Petersburg, the bridge serves as a symbol of threshold space, while in nature, the threshold is the space where the earth and sky meet, the horizon which Raskolnikov contemplates before his 'resurrection,' a scene I discuss further below. Throughout the narrative, Raskolnikov crosses over or stands on bridges at critical junctures of his moral-spiritual development to contemplate the moral choices set before him. Gill asserts that the bridge signifies union and separation, distance and contact, joining what would otherwise remain separate; it is a threshold space symbolising transition and the state of being in-between (1982, p. 146). Gill contends that, "crossing a bridge graphically accentuates the passage from one stage to another, just as pausing on a bridge offers a vantage point for looking backward or forward, localising the uneasiness of indecision or the finality of commitment" (1982, p. 146). Gill connects the motif of the bridge with a 'transitional' state of being, the state which Dostoevsky believed was mankind's most characteristic state of being-in-the-

world.

Reflecting upon the death of his first wife, Dostoevsky wrote, "On earth man is only a developing creature, consequently one not completed but transitional" ([1864] 1975, p. 39). Carl Jung also connected the motif of the bridge with the idea that life is constituted by transitions; citing the inscription of a bridge in Schmerikon, Switzerland which reads "Alles ist Uebergang [All is transition]" (1995 [1952], p. 77). The motif of the bridge serves as the graphic representation of transition and therefore of threshold space. The bridge as threshold represents a vantage point to look in different directions; to contemplate the moral choices presented to us (Gill 1982, p. 146). According to Gill, the bridge is also associated with Raskolnikov's obsession with taking a 'new step', of transgressing moral boundaries and stepping over his conscience to become an extraordinary man (1982, p. 146). Gill touches upon an alternative definition of the threshold here which *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines as a new phenomenon or reaction that occurs when a limit or magnitude is reached (2017). Raskolnikov wants to pass beyond the limits of his own 'ordinary' identity but to do so he must exceed the limits of his conscience to concretise the identity of an extraordinary, monumental man. Although the step Raskolnikov would take is in the wrong direction, to step across or exceed thresholds, as opposed to being caught on them, is characteristic of mankind's transitional state of being in the world.

In the context of Dostoevsky's literary symbolism, the threshold can be a site of contemplation, transition and transformation, but also one of pain and deformation. Those characters that are caught on the threshold, unable to take a step or decided upon a moral course of action, become trapped in a liminal space, paralysed by the inertia of their indecision (such is the case with Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*). Transition across the threshold is necessary or the very liminality of the threshold experience causes the spectralisation of a character's world including their onto-existential possibilities. Indeed, this is the case for the underground man who allows deterministic ideas to create in him a phenomenon he experiences as

‘conscious inertia’ (Dostoevsky 1864] 1974, p. 37). Conscious inertia is a state that strips him of his free will and a sense of moral responsibility and therefore his possibility for moral-spiritual development/transformation. At the beginning of his *Notes*, the underground man says

This pleasure [conscious inertia] comes precisely from the sharpest awareness of your own degradation; from the knowledge that you have gone to the utmost limit; that it is despicable, yet cannot be otherwise; that you no longer have any way out, that you will never become a different man; that even if there were still time and faith enough to change yourself, you probably would not even wish to change; and if you wished, you would do nothing about it anyway, because, in fact, there is perhaps nothing to change to. (Dostoevsky 1864] 1974, p. 6)

Owing to the phenomenon of conscious inertia, the underground man cannot become a different man, he believes that excessive consciousness is a disease that begets inertia and inertia paralyses him from deciding upon a moral course of action or even the ability for self-individuation.

The underground man toys with the idea of determinism and is defeated by it^{xv}. He feels himself to be set in a completed form with no possibility to change or transform his character. Via the underground man, Dostoevsky dramatises the onto-existential risks of determinism upon the human personality. Indeed, recalling Dostoevsky’s notion that “man on earth is only a transitional creature and one not yet complete” ([1864] 1975, p. 39), the entrenched position of the underground man indicates that he has ceased to participate in the transitional processes of what it means to be human. According to Dostoevsky’s formulation, to be ‘not yet complete’ is an index of humanity whereas to be set in a completed form (or to feel oneself to be set) is a diminished state that leads to the narrowing of the onto-existential possibilities of freedom, individuation and psycho-spiritual transformation.

Nature versus the city: resurrection and inertia

Raskolnikov and the underground man's moral and onto-existential possibilities are aligned with their ultimate spatial positions. They can either remain in the space of the underground, which is the site of inertia and death (corner space) or choose the space of nature, which is the site of living life and resurrection (threshold space). Raskolnikov chooses life, whereas the underground man is unable to choose anything and remains in his underground. In the Epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikov is placed on a threshold between his old life and a new life as he contemplates a vast horizon:

From the high bank a view of the surrounding countryside opened out. A barely audible song came from the far bank opposite. There, on the boundless, sun-bathed steppe, nomadic yurts could be seen, like barely visible black specks. There was freedom, there a different people lived, quite unlike those here, there time itself seemed to stop, as if centuries of Abraham and his flocks had not passed. Raskolnikov sat and stared fixedly, not tearing his eyes away; his thoughts turned to reverie, to contemplation; he was not thinking of anything, but some anguish troubled and tormented him. Suddenly Sonya was beside him. She came up almost inaudibly and sat down next to him [. . .] How it happened he himself did not know, but suddenly it was as if something lifted him and flung him down at her feet. He wept and embraced her knees. (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 549)

Roger Anderson contends that for Raskolnikov, "[n]ature opens its secret infinity to him; the steppe goes on spatially forever while time loses the limitations he had known earlier. Like space, it becomes archetypal, populated with beings who had been there since before the recording of historical time" (1986, p. 64). Anderson draws a connection between Raskolnikov's sense of a spatial and temporal infinity characteristic of spiritual revelation for Dostoevsky's characters, with nature, which

is the predominant site of such revelations in Dostoevsky's fiction. Yet the vision alone is not enough. In his analysis of Raskolnikov's redemption scene, Anderson bypasses the central role that Sonya plays in mediating between Raskolnikov and the new, spiritual life signaled by the horizons of nature. Indeed, Raskolnikov's immediate reaction to the vision is one of anguish; the promise of a new, spiritual freedom is still distant and out of reach. It is not until he embraces Sonya and weeps at her feet that he can connect the vision with love, forgiveness, and an eternal life that he feels is within reach.

Sonya is one of Dostoevsky's Mother Earth/Mother of God figures who acts as an intercessory figure, mediating between Raskolnikov and Christ. Not only is Sonya representative of Mother Earth, but human suffering itself. When Raskolnikov confesses his crime to Sonya earlier in the narrative and bows down to the floor and kisses her feet, he tells her that, "I was not bowing to you, I was bowing to all human suffering" (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 322). Sonya represents an aesthetic of suffering that (often, but not always in Dostoevsky's fiction) prefigures redemption. Sonya is aligned with the prostitute of Luke 7, who anoints Jesus with perfume and kisses his feet. In the biblical account, one of the disciples repudiates the prostitute and Jesus responds by saying, "her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown" (Lk. 7:47 NIV). Sonya, like the woman of Luke 7, is given a new status and identity via Christ's forgiveness and mediation. She is given the power of the Word of God (she reads the Bible to Raskolnikov), and she acts as an intercessory figure urging Raskolnikov to bow down to the earth and ask for forgiveness of all creation. Sonya is the key to Raskolnikov's moral regeneration. Indeed, when Raskolnikov bows down to ask forgiveness, he is asking forgiveness not only of all men, but of Mother Earth as well (Chirkov 1974, p. 66). Nicholas Chirkov contends that, "[c]ontact with the earth and repentance before it, signify for Dostoevsky a return to a whole and integrated life" (1974, p. 66). To humble oneself and ask for forgiveness of Mother Earth is, in Dostoevsky's fiction, a prerequisite for spiritual rebirth. Raskolnikov's renewal begins as the story ends. At the end of the narrative, Raskolnikov is placed on a threshold between an old and

new life. The narrator says: “[b]ut here begins a new account, the account of a man’s gradual renewal, the account of his gradual regeneration, his gradual transition from one world to another, his acquaintance with a new, hitherto completely unknown reality” (Dostoevsky [1866] 2007, p. 551). Raskolnikov’s transition from one world to another is not complete, but the story ends with the hope. The spectral world of the underground and the false promise of transcendence of the monument(al) recedes in the light of the sun-bathed steppe, and Sonya is by his side.

The open spaces of nature are conspicuously absent in the spectral world of the underground man. He has divorced himself from living life, and, unlike Raskolnikov, he remains so. The underground man misses the one opportunity presented to him to reconnect with the world of the living through the mediation of Liza who, like Sonya, has been forced into prostitution from poverty. Although Liza is not depicted as possessing the same iconic qualities as Sonya, we have to bear in mind that not only is the underground man the narrator of his story, but he does not possess a spiritual optics that would enable him to perceive Liza’s role as mediating figure who could, if he allowed, facilitate his moral regeneration. Instead, the underground man heaps humiliation upon Liza. In their first meeting in the brothel he paints a vivid image of what he predicts will be Liza’s fate: once her madam has used her up, she will end her days dying in one of Sennaya district’s foul ‘corners’. The underground man attempts to drag Liza down into in a corner analogically akin to the corner space that he inhabits. He wants her to feel, as he does, the constriction of onto-existential possibilities associated with corner space. The underground man carries the image even further, envisaging that when Liza dies, she will be placed in a cheap coffin and her grave will be filled with mud and wet snow. Symbolically speaking he kills Liza’s hope for a new life beyond the brothel and buries her in the ‘underground’ of the grave.

The catalogue of images that the underground man draws upon in the portrait he paints for Liza are, as Liza points, out ‘bookish.’ Given that the

underground man's spatial and psychological habitation is aligned with the simulacra of his urban world and the spectrality of the underground, there is falsity and fantasy imbued in everything the underground man narrates. Indeed, the underground man admits to his phantom interlocutors that 'living life' weighs upon him because he is unaccustomed to it. John Jones points out that the underground man's uses of inverted commas around 'living life' indicates that it is a term that the underground man has imported, but which is foreign to him (1983, p. 184). Living life is aligned with the sites of nature, with social spaces and the onto-existential possibility of transformation and moral regeneration; all of which are foreign to the underground man. The underground man is caught in a state of conscious inertia that precludes him from the desire for change or moral regeneration. Even when Liza comes to his home and offers him her love, he says, "I longed to remain alone in my underground" (Dostoevsky 1864] 1974, p. 126). He tells his readers "to a woman love means all of resurrection, all of salvation from any kind of ruin, all of renewal of life" (Dostoevsky 1864] 1974, p. 126). He perceives that Liza's love represents a vehicle for his salvation and renewal of life and yet he cheapens her love by handing her a five-ruble note. He acknowledges that the act of handing her money is cruel, made-up and bookish and yet he does it anyway. When Liza leaves the underground man's home, she leaves the five-ruble note he handed to her on the table. He pursues her out into the street, ashamed by his cruel act and longing "to fall down before her, to sob with repentance, to kiss her feet, to plead for forgiveness!" (Dostoevsky 1864] 1974, p. 128). Yet he immediately senses the falsity of this desire, knowing only too well he would begin to despise her immediately after he had sought her forgiveness. Liza disappears into the snow and fog, signaling the complete obfuscation of the underground man's spiritual optics that has grown dim in the spectral world of his underground.

From the outset of both novels, Dostoevsky shows that the danger that besets the dreamer is the slow dissolution of their moral instincts, which are mediated and challenged in social spaces, an idea which I continue to explore in the next chapter in relation to Myshkin's (*The Idiot*) inability to triage psychically

healthy behaviours given his isolation from society. The loss of a socially mediated self can give rise to a tendency to construct imaginary identities, which are spectral and therefore not real. The space of fantasy, like the simulacra of the city, can offer only spectral representations of transcendence and moral regeneration; further it can precipitate the solipsistic collapse of anything real. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch argues that fantasy is the enemy of love and compassion which are forms of realism and that outward attention, that is attention away from the self is necessary for the moral life ([1971] 2001, p. 57). For Murdoch, the “idea of a really good man living in a private dream world seems unacceptable” given that goodness is “a form of realism” ([1971] 2001, p. 57). Indeed, Dostoevsky would have agreed, believing that the urban dreamer “completely loses that moral instinct by means of which an individual is capable of perceiving all the beauty of the real, and in his state of apathy lazily folds his hands and does not want to know that human life is the continual contemplation of self in nature and in day-by-day reality” (qtd. in Mochulsky 1967, p. 72). Reality is where moral action is performed, while nature and its vast thresholds are the sites of contemplation and transcendence, where the symbolic death and rebirth of the self occurs, patterning the cycles of nature. The ability to change, regenerate and transcend our former selves is an onto-existential possibility open to everyone. To lose this ability is to lose something truly human; we cease to be a transitional creature and, symbolically speaking, we arrive at a completed, fixed form (be it monument or animal).

Chapter Two: Prince Myshkin in the crypt: tomb space and dead Christs in *The Idiot*

Everything that would have come to maturity in the Prince is extinguished in the tomb. (Dostoevsky [1868] 1967, p. 203)

In letters Dostoevsky wrote to his friend Apollon Maikov and his niece Sofya Ivanovna, Dostoevsky indicates that Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of *The Idiot* was to represent a “perfectly good man”, embodying the love, humility and compassion that Dostoevsky perceived in the Christ-like figures of Don Quixote and Jean Valjean ([1867/1868] 1987, p. 262). Dostoevsky believed that the Christ of the Gospels was not only the moral exemplum of love, forgiveness and compassion but a salvific figure, and Dostoevsky hoped to inject these qualities into the personality of Myshkin. In the character of Myshkin, there is much of the innocence, compassion, patience and absence of sexual drive that we would expect to find in a representation of a Christ-figure. For Catholic theologian, Romano Gaurdini, Myshkin is a Redeemer figure in whom “a divine reality is revealed” and likens Myshkin to the Lamb (Christ) who “takes away the sins of the world” (1956, p. 359-370). Although we can acknowledge that Myshkin possesses the Christ-like qualities of love and compassion, he fails to fulfil the salvific role he assumes on behalf of Nastasya Filippovna. Myshkin is a failed Christ-figure in light of the view that he is aligned, not with the resurrected figure of the Christ of the Gospels, but the dead Christ depicted in Hans Holbein the Younger’s painting *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521), a replica of which hangs in Rogozhin’s home. Indeed, Sarah Young points out that the centrality of the painting in the narrative and Myshkin’s proximity to it, indicate that interpreting Myshkin as a Christ figure is problematic (2004, p. 3). The tomb represents for Myshkin, as it does for all of Dostoevsky’s characters, the termination of all onto-existential possibilities. According to Dostoevsky, the only way that tomb space and death can be decrypted is through the mediation of the resurrected Christ who defeated death (1 Cor. 15:26). Yet, the only representation of Christ besides that of Myshkin in the novel, is depicted in the Holbein painting. The dead Christ in the Holbein painting becomes symbolic of

Myshkin's inability to surmount the space of the tomb or to save others from death.

In *The Idiot* the tomb contains both literal and symbolic denotations. The literal tomb is associated with death, silence and decay while the symbolic meaning of the tomb I have appropriated from Jacques Derrida's formulation of the crypt in his foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*. The Derridean crypt is represented as false consciousness, which occurs when 'incorporated' materials are walled up inside a person in an undiscoverable place (1986, p. xii). A person may unconsciously construct a false consciousness in order to preserve the living dead (a fantasy or memory) within them, often due to refused mourning (Derrida 1986, p. xxi). Derrida describes such people as being under the 'cryptic effect'; carrying with them, wherever they go, the living dead. Much like the literal spaces of the crypt or tomb, the Derridean crypt conceals and hides, it precludes a person from seeing things clearly by reinforcing the inward space of fantasy. This inwardness constitutes a form of death. In this chapter I argue that not only does Myshkin's analogical relationship to the Holbein Christ place him within the crypt/tomb, but psychologically speaking, Myshkin inhabits the crypt of his false consciousness. What constitutes Myshkin's false consciousness is one of the central inquiries of this chapter. In this chapter I also propose that 'incorporation', a concept Derrida uses to explain how false consciousness is forged, is a useful idea for understanding the unraveling/decentering of Myshkin's self-identification upon his encounter with Nastasya's portrait. Incorporation is a process in which whole and unmediated images, or sense perceptions are assimilated into and buried in the consciousness, placing a person at risk of a loss of self. Indeed, given that incorporation is "of the order of fantasy" and that a person under the cryptic effect of incorporation will struggle to mediate between stimuli that are threatening and non-threatening to the self, incorporation can cause a person to lose their sense of reality (Derrida 1986, p. xviii). Myshkin is, according to Derrida's notion of false consciousness, under the cryptic effect of incorporation and therefore incapable of identifying that his fantasy of the innocence of Nastasya and his false notions of beauty constitute his false consciousness.

Employing Jean-Luc Marion's definitions of the icon and idol, I argue that incorporation is also aligned with the idolatrous gaze, insofar as a person under the cryptic effect of incorporation is unable to transpierce the images and stimuli which they enshrine within themselves through the process of incorporation. In *God Without Being*, Marion differentiates between the icon and idol as well as the gaze which is arrested by either the icon or idol. For Marion, the idol, whether it is a "thing, man, woman, idea or god", dazzles and arrests the gaze (1995, p. 12). Marion contends that "the idolatrous gaze exercises no criticism of its idol", and in this way the idolatrous gaze is aligned with incorporation (1995, p. 13). Indeed, when Myshkin encounters Nastasya's portrait, his gaze is filled with her image, an image he incorporates into himself and enshrines within his consciousness. In contrast to the idol, the icon directs the gaze to the face of the divine; the icon mediates between the viewer and God. Using Marion's definitions of the icon and idol, I will discuss the role these spatial motifs play in this chapter and show how these are aligned with the broader themes of the novel.

Myshkin on the threshold: an outsider figure

From his first interactions with Rogozhin and Lebedev on the train at the beginning of the narrative, and then with General Epanchin in Petersburg, Myshkin is immediately liked for his unassuming conversation and his warm and sympathetic gaze. He answers questions readily and seems to possess insight into people's thoughts that would indicate a spiritual prescience. Despite these qualities, however, there is also something ridiculous about Myshkin. The clothing he wears on the train is incongruous with the Russian weather; he is dressed in foreign clothes suitable for foreign weather. Myshkin has no understanding of Russia and he marvels that he can even remember his native language at all.^{xvi} Myshkin has spent many years abroad, disconnected from his native land. He has no clear genealogy, no land or people that he identifies with; he is an outsider 'without place'. In his work exploring the relationship between geography, transgression and ideology, Tim Cresswell

contends that 'without place' is an inherently spatial position marking not only a person's physical dislocation from a place but their cultural liminality (1996, pp. 25-26). Creswell's definition of being outside of place or without place is applicable to Myshkin's position as an outsider to Russian society as well as Russia itself. Myshkin's return to Russia at the beginning of the narrative does not, however, signal that Myshkin gains a place within Russian society rather, it only reinforces Myshkin's outsider status given that Myshkin is ignorant of the socially agreed upon, determined spatial order that governs the actions of everyday life in Russia (Slattery 1983, p. 25). Indeed, the narrator observes that everyday life is puzzling to Myshkin and his odd behaviour separates him from others, for example, when Myshkin arrives in Petersburg and seeks out his distant relation in General Epanchin's wife. Upon arriving at their home, Myshkin is let in by the General's lackey, but waits in the anteroom with the lackey instead of proceeding into General Epanchin's waiting room. Myshkin is unaware of Russian social mores (one does not wait in a lackey's anteroom) and his ignorance of these social mores marks him as an outsider.

Given that Myshkin is not embedded within a social or cultural environment that would qualify or ground a shared identity with others, we could easily claim him as liminal, threshold figure; an epithet warranted not only by his status as foreigner—a man 'without place'—but also as an epileptic. The dual meaning of the word 'threshold' is very much to the point here: not only do the thresholds refer to an interface between two spaces, they also denote an intensity that is exceeded to produce a certain reaction or new phenomenon (OED 2017). Myshkin's epilepsy constitutes an exemplum *par excellence* of both applications of the word threshold: that is, threshold as entrance into different spaces—the moment/liminal space before his fit—and threshold as maximum or intensity—the actual experience of his epileptic fits. There is no balance in Myshkin, no synthesis, such as we would expect to find in a Christ figure. Myshkin is a threshold figure, but one who is unable to decide upon a moral-ethical course of action. Dostoevsky critic Paul Fung connects the illness of epilepsy to what Bakhtin wrote of Dostoevsky's characters in general, that they are placed, at moments of crisis, upon a threshold of a final decision (2015, p.

14). For Myshkin, however, his epilepsy prohibits him from taking a step over a symbolic threshold into a new identity (the necessary step for the neophyte to gain an initiated status) given that the other appellation of threshold, an intensity that is exceeded to produce a new phenomenon, causes him to lose all sense of self and consciousness. Throughout the narrative Myshkin's state of being is always between understanding (pre-epileptic moments) and not understanding (post epileptic attack moments) and he haunts the interstice between these two states, in the same way that his experience of his epileptic attacks is constituted by the two applications of the word threshold.

Inappropriate gestures and proportions: Myshkin and the Holbein painting

Myshkin's lack of social and bodily measure and proportion is, in large part, the result of his illness. Myshkin has no sense of the measure of his gestures; his gesticulations are often wild like the contortions brought on by his illness. Myshkin admits, "[m]y gesture is always the opposite, and that provokes laughter and humiliates the idea. I have no sense of measure either, and that's the main thing; that's even the most main thing" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 552). Near the end of the narrative, when Myshkin knocks over a priceless vase in the Epanchin home, Myshkin literally destroys beauty and beauty is, as Myshkin declares, his 'main idea'. His frenzied gestures humiliate his cherished idea. Myshkin comes to believe in the representations of beauty and harmony he experiences in the moment before his epileptic fits begins, yet this sense of harmony is always, following the pattern of his illness, accompanied by disharmony and (bodily) distortion. For Immanuel Kant, the properties which constitute aesthetic beauty or ugliness relate to proportion and "harmony between the faculties of imagination and understanding" (Küplen 2015, p. 5). Myshkin's faculty for understanding and imagination has been damaged by his illness, hence why, as he indicates, his gestures are always opposite to his idea of beauty. Myshkin's epilepsy prevents him from embodying the harmony of imagination and understanding which constitutes Kant's understanding of aesthetic beauty, given which Myshkin, bodily, psychologically and spiritually cannot represent the aesthetic or spiritual ideal of a Christ-figure.

Indeed, both Myshkin and the Christ depicted in Hans Holbein the Younger's painting the *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521), do not represent an aesthetic of spiritual beauty such as we would expect to find in a representation of a Christ-figure. When Holbein painted *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*, he was influenced by a tendency popular in the wake of the Reformation which was to emphasise the human aspect of Christ, more so than his divine aspect (Oenning Thompson 2001, p. 74). The divine aspect of Christ is not depicted in Holbein's rendering, the painting portrays a "purely human suffering" (Young 2007, p. 96). The dimensions of the painting reinforce the sense of immobility that the coffin denotes; with the partitions of the coffin bearing down upon the space where the body of the dead Christ lies^{xvii}.



Hans Holbein the Younger. *Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. 1521. 30.5 cm x 200 cm. Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel.

The viewer's gaze is drawn along a horizontal plane and there is no hint of the vertical movement of resurrection in the painting. The body of the Holbein Christ is elongated and somewhat disproportionate. His body is bruised, and his fingers contorted by the first stages of *rigor mortis*, with the middle finger depicted on Christ's right hand, appearing to form an obscene gesture. Where the living Christ drew with his finger on the ground to signal the new covenant of forgiveness he was sent into the world to fulfil, the dead Holbein Christ caricatures this idea by its frozen and priapic gesture. There is no trace of the living Christ in the painting; death has distorted Christ's features and "there is not a word about beauty" in his face as the character Ippolit observes (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 407).^{xviii} The painting, like Myshkin, lacks the symbolic measure and proportions of an ideal Christ-figure. The analogical relationship between the Holbein Christ and Myshkin as a Christ-figure prompted Dostoevsky critic, Paul Fung to ask, "[h]ow could the idea of the perfectly beautiful man [Myshkin] be possibly realized with respect to this image of the dead Christ? And

why would Dostoevsky bring in the *Dead Christ* when he wants to portray Christ as positively beautiful?" (2015, p. 75). Ostensibly Myshkin was to represent a living Christ-figure which would offset the dead Holbein Christ in the tomb and yet, Myshkin's inappropriate gestures and lack of social measure are not proportionate with the moral-spiritual ideal of a Christ-figure.

When Dostoevsky encountered the original of the Holbein Christ in Basel, he was confronted by an image that challenged his faith in the resurrection event, an idea that Myshkin expresses to Rogozhin when he sees a replica of the Holbein painting in Rogozhin's home. Anna Dostoevskaya describes the real Holbein painting as her husband saw it: "[t]he face too is fearfully agonised, the eyes half open still, but with no expression in them, and giving no idea of *seeing*" (qtd. in Frank, 2010, p. 549). In the painting, Christ's eyes and mouth are open in a gesture of seeing and speaking but the image is of a lifeless corpse. His features caricature the living 'Word' made flesh in a facade of seeing and speaking, but there is no actual sense that the Holbein Christ can see; the viewer cannot enter the eyes of this figure and have his or her gaze met by the divine face—in this way the Holbein Christ is, in no way, an icon or an iconic representation of Christ. Jeff Gatrall points out that Holbein's Christ does not resemble a canonical Orthodox icon of Christ, but simply a human corpse (2004, p. 218). In the history of Russian Orthodox iconography, the true icon is an image replicated from prior icons whose prototypes were not made by human hands but through the hand of God (Gatrall, 2004, p. 218). The purpose of the icon was not only to represent historical events sacred to Orthodoxy, but to unveil their meaning (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1999, p. 27). The meaning of sacred events is ostensibly revealed to the viewer who encounters the eye of the divine via the icon. The Holbein Christ, however, is not an icon. The gaze of the Holbein Christ cannot see the divine, rather, its blank gaze rests upon the upper partition of the tomb, seeing nothing.

Encrypted vision

The darkness of the real and Derridean crypt make it impossible for a person

to see. The real crypt houses the dead, while the inwardness of fantasy which constitutes false consciousness, houses the living dead, as I indicated earlier, in a quote from Derrida. Encrypted vision is a term I have formulated based on the idea that in the real and Derridean crypt, seeing is impossible given that the dead, or those blinded by fantasy, cannot see. The Holbein painting explicitly portrays the absence of vision in the dead Christ who represents “no idea of *seeing*” as Dostoevsky pointed out to his wife when he saw the painting (qtd. in Frank, 2010, p. 549). Myshkin’s lack of vision, however, relates to his inability to see with a spiritual optics, that is, a vision able to transpierce purely cosmetic beauty and perceive the divine likeness in others. Myshkin’s lack of a spiritual optics causes him to confuse purely cosmetic beauty with spiritual beauty. Such is the case when he encounters the portrait of Nastasya. When Myshkin sees the portrait of Nastasya in General Epanchin’s home he is drawn to the icon-like beauty of Nastasya’s face. The narrator describes the portrait of Nastasya as having deep, dark, burning eyes, pale face, pensive forehead and hollow cheeks, which are descriptors commonly used to describe Orthodox icons. Yet Nastasya’s portrait only has the appearance of an icon; she is no saint and she does not direct the viewer’s gaze towards the divine. The portrait becomes for Myshkin an idol which captivates his gaze, an idea I discuss further below. Given that Myshkin treats the portrait of Nastasya as if it were an icon and fails to identify that it becomes for him an idol he worships, I argue that Myshkin does not see with a divinely illumined, spiritual optics. In arguing against a divinely illumined vision, I disagree with Vyacheslav Ivanov, who, in his work *Freedom and the Tragic Life*, argues that Myshkin has a “sunshine-clear, divinely illumined eye for all that is visible” (1971, p. 91). Ivanov grounds his contention in the fact that Myshkin is drawn to nature, children, peoples’ faces and the beauty of Nastasya and Aglaya. Although we can allow that Myshkin has an eye for beauty and is sensitive to *visible* beauty as Dostoevsky critic Malcolm Jones affirms (1976, p. 124), Myshkin’s vision never extends beyond a purely cosmetic, surface-level aesthetic. He loves beauty and believes that it will save the world, yet Myshkin admits that beauty is a mystery and a riddle to him. Myshkin confesses to the Epanchina women that “[b]eauty is difficult to judge; I’m not prepared yet. Beauty is a riddle” (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 77). Myshkin’s inability

to unpack the mystery of beauty (a representation of the Good), which has become encrypted in his false consciousness, coupled with his inability to differentiate between fantasy and reality, is key to how we understand his lack of divine vision.

Near the end of the narrative, Liza Epanchina identifies that the basis of the tragedy that unfolds in the narrative is couched in Myshkin's failure to see the difference between fantasy and reality, given that Myshkin is himself a fantasy. In Liza's first meeting with Myshkin, Adelaida Epanchina asks Myshkin to find her a subject for a painting, believing that because Myshkin had lived abroad for many years, he must have encountered picturesque scenes in nature that would make a worthy subject for a painting. Myshkin concedes that he does not know anything about painting and that it seems to him you simply look and paint. For Myshkin, to look is a purely physical action. In reference to what it means to 'look' in the context of *The Idiot*, Paul Fung contends that "to look refers not only to a physical vision but also a metaphysical reflection" (2015, p. 79). Yet, Myshkin has not learned how to look with a divinely illumed vision which would prompt metaphysical reflection. When Adelaida asks Myshkin to teach her *how* to look, he evades the question and says, "I can't teach you anything" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 58). Liza Epanchina says to Adelaida that "[i]f you don't know how to look here, you won't learn it abroad" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 58). Liza proposes that the Russian divorced from the Russian soil is himself a fantasy, a belief that Dostoevsky also held. Liza says to Evgeny Pavlovich, "all these foreign lands, and all this Europe of yours, it's all one big fantasy, and all of us abroad are one big fantasy" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 615). Liza's portrayal of the Russian abroad as a fantasy figure reinforces the general characterisation of Myshkin as a fantastic figure given that he has spent many years abroad in Switzerland. Berdyaev further reinforces the idea that Myshkin is a fantasy, arguing that Myshkin is not a man of flesh and blood and his love is insubstantial ([1921] 1966, p. 119). Although Dostoevsky intended for Myshkin to represent the goodness and love of a Christ-figure, Myshkin is merely a fantasy or a shadow of the positively good man that Dostoevsky had hoped to represent. Myshkin is not connected to the Russian soil and therefore cannot be a salvific figure for Nastasya,

let alone the Russian people.

Myshkin's illness and his idea of beauty

Myshkin's status as a fantastic figure is also constituted by the fact that his idea of beauty is grounded in the phantasmagorical beauty he encounters in the moments before his epileptic fits. Indeed, Myshkin's idea of beauty is inextricably bound to his experience of beauty forged in and by the visions brought on by his illness. The experience of his illness is constituted by two distinct movements; the first is his pre-epileptic experience, the moment before the fit begins, and the second is his epileptic experience, the moments during and after the fit occurs. In the pre-epileptic moments, Myshkin feels a sudden upsurge of "sublime tranquillity, filled with serene, harmonious joy, and hope filled with reason and ultimate cause." (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, pp. 225-226). Myshkin's experience of joy, harmony and a sense of hope, filled with an ultimate cause is similar to the ridiculous man's experience of the utopian world of his dream (which I examine in Chapter Four). Myshkin's pre-epileptic vision is a utopian vision. Utopian space however, is, according to the definition of utopia, a 'no-place' and therefore not real (OED 2017). Myshkin's utopian vision, just like the utopian world of the ridiculous man's dream cannot be sustained, and Myshkin's vision gives way to his real-world experience of an epileptic fit: he is plunged into disorder and darkness as his body convulses and he loses consciousness.

Myshkin acknowledges that the moment of harmony he encounters before the fit is a result of his illness and observes that, "then this was not the highest being at all but, on the contrary, should be counted the very lowest." (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 226). Myshkin identifies that because the highest moment of his being is always followed by the lowest, his experience of transcendence (meaning 'to climb over') can never be sustained. The moment of possible transcendence is always preceded by a painful immanency (meaning 'to remain') with his body (Hooper 2002, p. 95), an idea I discuss further in Chapter Four in relation to Arkady and the

ridiculous man's attempts to outstrip their assigned epithets as illegitimate (Arkady) and ridiculous (the ridiculous man). Myshkin acknowledges that the highest moment is only a "presentiment of the ultimate second (never more than a second) from which the fit itself began" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 226). The darkness that descends upon Myshkin in the moment after his fit occurs, obscures the path that could lead him back to the utopian space/state of his pre-epileptic vision. The path that leads Myshkin to a utopian state of tranquillity, joy and harmony can only be accessed through the visions provoked by his illness, yet the threshold (entrance) into the highest moment is also the threshold into the lowest moment.

The opposing forces of Myshkin's illness are couched in a tension between beauty and ugliness, between transcendence and entombment, and between harmony and distortion. This experience causes Myshkin to associate the ideals of harmony and joy with darkness and idiocy given that the highest moment of his being always capitulates to the lowest. Myshkin longs for an ideal of beauty such as he encounters in his visions in the moments before his fit begins, yet Myshkin's vision of beauty, harmony and joy, is encrypted. Just as utopia is an encrypted space given that utopia is a place (no-place) that cannot be realised in the world as it is, Myshkin's experience of tranquillity, harmony and joy cannot be accessed in his waking state. Myshkin's experience is encrypted in and by his illness. Because Myshkin cannot unpack the paradox of his illness, (the highest moment should be counted as the lowest moment and vice versa), Myshkin is barred access to understanding his own ideal of beauty. Like the paradox of his illness, Myshkin's ideal of beauty (an aesthetic of suffering) is a potentially transfiguring or disfiguring force.

An aesthetic of suffering

Myshkin is drawn to a beauty that has the power to transfigure *and* disfigure: an aesthetic of suffering. An aesthetic of suffering depicts "ennoblement through suffering; but it also reaches a point at which the suffering it [depicts] cannot be redeemed or transcended" (Rivers 1977, pp. 425-426). Myshkin, however, is unable

to discern the difference between the ennobling and transfiguring aspect of such an aesthetic and an aesthetic of suffering which depicts a person who is unable to transcend their suffering and be redeemed. Reflecting upon the nature of his illness and the beauty Myshkin encounters in his pre-epileptic moments, Myshkin is forced to conclude that his reasoning “undoubtedly contained an error” (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 226). The error is couched in Myshkin’s belief that for the highest moment he encounters before the fit begins, “one could give one’s whole life” (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 226). Yet one might have to give one’s whole life in order to achieve and sustain the transcendent moment in which suffering is redeemed. Myshkin believes instead in the fantasy that one, transcendent moment can sustain him from the darkness, idiocy and disfiguration, which is the inevitable outcome of his epileptic attacks. When Ippolit asks Myshkin, “What beauty will save the world?” (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 382), Myshkin cannot answer the question. If he were to answer, he would have to allow that his idea of beauty, (as an aesthetic of suffering that produces moral-spiritual transfiguration), following the pattern of his illness, carries with it the germ of its opposite; the kind of beauty that can disfigure (an aesthetic of suffering that leads to moral-spiritual disfigurement).

In the image of Nastasya Filippovna, Myshkin perceives the kind of beauty that corresponds with his understanding of beauty as an aesthetic of suffering. When Liza Prokofyvena encounters the portrait of Nastasya, she asks Myshkin:

“So that’s the sort of beauty you appreciate?” she suddenly turned to the prince.

“Yes . . . that sort . . .” the prince replied with some effort.

“Meaning precisely that sort?”

“Precisely that sort.”

“Why so?”

“There’s so much suffering . . . in that face . . .” the prince said, as if inadvertently, as if he were talking to himself and not answering a question (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 80).

In the exchange between Liza and Myshkin, an explicit connection is drawn between beauty and suffering. This is not to suggest, however, that Myshkin believes *in* suffering in itself, rather he believes in the power of suffering to be transfigured into beauty and joy. When Myshkin first sees Nastasya's portrait he says that *if* Nastasya were kind, "[e]verything would be saved!" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 36). Myshkin recognises that suffering in itself cannot produce transformation. The index of how suffering *can* lead to moral transformation is, in Dostoevsky's fiction proportionate with a person's willingness to both reflect upon the root causes of their suffering as well as their desire to change the undergirding causes of their moral suffering. What Myshkin fails to perceive is that Nastasya neither wants to confront the root cause of her suffering (the blame she places on herself for being Trotsky's 'kept woman', among other things), nor does she want to be saved. An exchange between Myshkin and Rogozhin highlights this point. Myshkin asks Rogozhin, "[o]f course, she doesn't think as badly of you as you say. Otherwise it would mean that she was consciously throwing herself into the water or onto the knife by marrying you. Is that possible? Who consciously throws himself into the water or onto the knife?" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 215). Both Sarah Young (2004, p.114) and Dennis Slattery (1983, p. 51) have pointed out that Nastasya Filippovna courts Rogozhin's knife to seek expiation through punishment; a desire that Myshkin cannot understand. Because Myshkin cannot understand the central role that guilt and shame plays in the suffering of others, his compassion is incomplete given that it ignores the possibility of a person's desire for punishment (Young 2004, p. 114). Myshkin's compassion is therefore etiolated and ultimately impotent because he attempts to bypass guilt and shame, which, according to Christian theology are necessary in the redemptive process whereby the recognition of sin and guilt are a prerequisite for forgiveness and redemption. Although Myshkin believes that suffering can produce moral-spiritual transformation, he does not understand that the process which leads to transformation (according to Christian theology) begins with the recognition of sin followed by guilt of conscience, suffering, repentance and forgiveness. Myshkin wants to save Nastasya from her suffering and therefore would inadvertently stall her in a

state of 'sin'. Given that Myshkin is unable to discern the necessary processes through which suffering can lead to an individual's moral-spiritual transformation via forgiveness, Myshkin unwittingly believes in an aesthetic of suffering that would tend to disfigure, rather than transfigure a person morally and spiritually.

The true icon: the mother and child

Throughout Dostoevsky's fiction, the Russian soil and associated Mother Earth/Mother of God figures represent the sites and figures of true faith. To be detached from the Russian soil signals a detachment from the Russian people and the Russian Christ. In a discussion between Rogozhin and Myshkin about faith and God, the Mother figure is the only example that Myshkin provides Rogozhin of true faith to be found amongst the Russian people. When Rogozhin asks Myshkin if he believes in God, Myshkin responds by providing four anecdotes⁵ that relate to faith. Each of the four anecdotes depicts a different type of faith: the atheist has no faith in God; the murderer has a fanatical faith (and can kill while saying a prayer), the soldier is indifferent to faith and uses it as a means to extort others; while the woman with the child is the perennial Mother figure, whose faith in God is sincere. The Mother with child is both Madonna and Mother Earth, symbolising the Russian heart and the soil. In the story which Myshkin tells to Rogozhin, the image of the mother with child takes on an iconic status. In *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, Robert Louis Jackson contends that "[t]he icon, particularly the iconographic 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" (1966, p. 48). It is significant that the invocation of the Mother figure first appears in the narrative after Myshkin and Rogozhin view the Holbein painting; it is as if the Mother figure provides an answer to the lack of faith that the painting provokes in both Myshkin and Rogozhin. When Myshkin and Rogozhin stop to look at the Holbein Christ, Myshkin remarks that "[a] man could even lose his faith from that painting!" 'Lose it he does,' Rogozhin suddenly agreed unexpectedly" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 218). Their encounter with the replica of the Holbein

Christ prompts Rogozhin to ask Myshkin if he believes in God. Myshkin's reply indicates that he believes in the Mother of God, alluding to the Orthodox practice of placing the Madonna in the *oranta* position in the church sanctuary, that is, in a position in which she intercedes before God for the sins of the world (Ouspensky 1978, p. 32). Unlike the Holbein painting, which is neither an iconic representation of Christ nor an icon, the Madonna figure Myshkin cites in his story takes on iconic status, as Jackson has pointed out (1966, p. 48). Yet despite this, when Myshkin encounters an embodiment of the Mother/Madonna figure in the character Vera Lebedeva, he fails to identify her iconic status and almost ignores her altogether, which further reinforces my contention that Myshkin does not have a divinely illumined spiritual optics because his vision has been encrypted by the psychological tomb space he inhabits.

The Mother figure of Myshkin's story is recast in the character of Vera Lebedev who holds the baby Lyubov. Richard Peace points out that Vera in Russian means 'faith' and she carries the baby Lyubov whose name means 'love' (1971, p. 97). In *The Idiot*, Vera and Lyubov represent not only the embodiment of the spiritual ideals of faith and love, but together represent a symbol of great importance, the iconic Madonna (Vera) with a child (Lyubov). Yet Vera and Lyubov are always on the periphery of Myshkin's vision. These figures do not captivate Myshkin's gaze and the narrator observes that Myshkin would often forget them altogether. Myshkin reflects, "what a sympathetic, what a sweet face Lebedev's elder daughter has, the one who stood there with the baby, what an innocent, what an almost childlike expression, and what almost childlike laughter! Strange that he has almost forgotten that face and remembered it only now" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 228). Even though Vera and Lyubov live with Myshkin in Pavlovsk, Myshkin pays very little attention to them. Indeed, even at the end of the narrative when Vera nurses Myshkin back to health after his epileptic attack at the Epanchins, Myshkin barely notices her presence. Myshkin remembers that, "almost all the time during those feverish hours he pictured to himself her [Nastasya's] eyes, her gaze, heard her words - some sort of strange words, though little stayed in his memory after those feverish and anguished

hours. He barely remembered, for instance, how Vera brought him dinner and he ate it" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 564). Vera and Lyubov are representative of the faith and love that the icon can inspire, yet given that Myshkin's gaze is filled by Nastasya Filippovna's image (his idol), Vera and Lyubov never assume iconic status for Myshkin.

The anti-icon and the idolatrous gaze

When Myshkin first encounters the portrait of Nastasya he is dazzled by her beauty and seems to be drawn to the icon-like features of her face. As I mentioned earlier, the narrator's description of the portrait of Nastasya (as having deep, dark, burning eyes, pale face, pensive forehead and hollow cheeks) recalls that of an icon. Indeed, the narrator's description of Nastasya is akin to that of the image of a head of an angel in the Cathedral of St. Sophia of Constantinople, as recounted by those who viewed the work (Ouspensky 1978, p. 144). Orthodox iconographer, Leonide Ouspensky describes the face of the angel as having wide, dark eyes tiredly gazing out at the viewer, with its hollow cheeks portraying an image that is a mixture of the spiritual and the sensual; a style which provoked the anger of the iconoclasts at the time (Ouspensky 1978, p. 144). For the iconoclasts, the mixing of the sensual, human aspect of a saint with the divine aspect was sacrilegious; given that in Christian theology, the flesh and sensuous body was viewed as weak and sinful and therefore should not be represented as comingling with the divine (Mt. 26:41). In the portrait of Nastasya, there is also a mixture of spiritual and sensual beauty. Myshkin sees only what he perceives to be her spiritual beauty in the portrait, while Rogozhin is drawn to her sensuality. Both the sensual and divine aspects of Nastasya's beauty are rendered in her portrait and yet Myshkin and Rogozhin perceive only what they want to see in it. The image is, for both, an idol.

The moment Myshkin sees Nastasya's portrait, a 'radical decentering' occurs in Myshkin's narrative—he becomes 'adjacent' to his own script. Myshkin loses the ability to write or direct his own narrative given that he allows the trajectory of his

narrative to be determined by Nastasya. Indeed, the narrator alludes to a six-month gap in the narrative proper where Rogozhin and Myshkin are rumoured to have pursued Nastasya to Moscow, but the narrative events as well as Myshkin's thought processes in this interlude are lost; and arguably, in the narrative which follows. 'Radical decentering' and 'adjacency' are terms I have appropriated from Elaine Scarry which she formulates in her work, *On Beauty and Being Just*. Scarry argues that adjacency equates to fairness and equality, that is, a person is closer to equality with others if they can relinquish the central position they occupy in their own private story (1999, pp. 113-114). In Myshkin's case, however, adjacency to his own narrative causes him to grant too much power to Nastasya and Myshkin ceases to have agency over his script as a positively good man (Dostoevsky's intention for the hero of his narrative). Although Scarry connects adjacency/the adjacent gaze with an ethical position of equality, Myshkin's 'adjacency' does not equate with equality between himself and others, rather it causes him to look at everything as if it were a portrait (a copy), as if things were distant and not quite real.

Indeed, the narrator suggests that Myshkin looks at people as if they were portraits, rather than as real flesh and blood beings. Myshkin's gaze does not seek the face of the divine in people (the icon), as Dostoevsky critic Ivanov may argue, rather Myshkin tends to enshrine people in a set form (the idol). Such is the case for how Myshkin perceives Nastasya and Aglaya: with an idolatrous gaze. The idolatrous gaze is characterised by a double movement: it holds at a distance that which it seeks to enclose. Myshkin's gaze attempts to outstrip the space between itself and the idol, yet, in the same movement, his gaze keeps at a distance that which he beholds, fixing it to the position the idol occupies. The position the idol occupies (be it Nastasya or Aglaya) also marks the point in which Myshkin's gaze is buried. Just as the process of incorporation buries materials within the crypt of false consciousness, the idol buries the gaze of the viewer within itself. Indeed, Marion argues that when the gaze is met by the idol, it finds a place to be *buried* (1995, pp. 13-18)^{xix}. Marion contends that "[t]he idolatrous gaze exercises no criticism of its idol, this is because it no longer has the means to do so: its aim culminates in a position that the idol immediately

occupies, and where every aim is exhausted" (1995, p. 13). Given that Myshkin maintains no critical distance between himself and the idols of his making (Nastasya, and, to a lesser extent, Aglaya) Myshkin becomes, symbolically speaking, fixed to the same position that the idol occupies. The burial or exhaustion of Myshkin's gaze marks the incorporation of the image of Nastasya and, to a lesser extent, Aglaya.

False consciousness and incorporation

In the foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, Derrida examines the nature of the crypt as it relates to a psychoanalytic discourse regarding Freud's patient, the Wolf Man. Derrida's crypt draws upon literal and symbolic elements and descriptors which pertain to the tomb/crypt in order to formulate his analogy of the crypt as false consciousness. Derrida argues that false consciousness occurs when a person incorporates materials, people, fantasies or ideas into their consciousness and walls such materials up in an inaccessible place (1986, pp. xii-xviii). Derrida suggests that while the reasons why a person may do this are varied, it is often caused by an inability to face the reality of painful memories as well as the inability to separate, discern or triage what is psychically healthy for the self (1986, p. xxi). Like Freud's Wolf Man, Myshkin's illness causes him to create a false consciousness within him; a space forged by and accessed through the violence of his fits.

Derrida contends that the crypt of false consciousness often marks refused mourning (1986, p. xxi). Myshkin's refused mourning is twofold: he cannot articulate his sense of loss of the free and innocent life he led in Switzerland and is unable to mourn the loss of Marie and Nastasya's innocence given that he has constructed what Dennis Slattery calls a 'fantasy of innocence' (Marie is the Swiss peasant who became an outcast in her town for being seduced by a travelling salesman) (1983, p. 53). What Slattery calls Myshkin's 'fantasy of innocence' is couched in Myshkin's inability to acknowledge the suffering both women feel for their sexual sins (1983, p. 53). Slattery points out that Nastasya as well as Marie are required to suffer and repent of their sin, a process that Myshkin cannot understand given that he believes blindly in

their innocence (1983, p. 53). Myshkin fails to see that for both Marie and Nastasya, suffering is a result of sins of which they are guilty (Slattery 1983, p. 56). Because Myshkin does not want either woman to feel the full force of their shame nor suffer the guilt that weighs on their conscience he denies them the kind of suffering that can lead to restitution. Indeed, given that Myshkin's fantasy of innocence marks a refused mourning, fantasy does not, as Lacanian theorist Andre Nusselder argues, function as an interface between Myshkin and the world (2009, p. 87), but rather as the means through which Myshkin elides the painful aspects of reality. By unconsciously relegating his fantasy of Marie and Nastasya's innocence to his false consciousness, Myshkin hides them in a place that he does not want to be discovered; fortifying his fantasy against penetration. Just as the partitions of the tomb allow no light to be thrown on what it hides, and the space of the tomb is hermetically sealed off from life, so too is false consciousness (Derrida 1986, pp. xii-xviii). Myshkin's false consciousness constitutes an exemplum *par excellence* of his psychological habitation of tomb space, or in Derridean terms, one who lives under the cryptic effect.

False consciousness is constituted by the process of 'incorporation.' Incorporation is an obverse process to the psychically healthy process of 'introjection.' The process of introjection entails the healthy assimilation of behaviours and materials into the psyche. The self is made up of introjections, that is, materials that allow us to enlarge or grow the self by means of adopting things from the world into our psyche such as language, social rituals, and moral-ethical frameworks (Derrida 1986, p. xvi). This process is largely unconscious and is slow, mediated and gradual (Derrida 1986, p. xvi). Unlike introjection, the process of incorporation assimilates materials in a "magical, instantaneous, and sometimes hallucinatory ways" (Derrida 1986, p. xvii). Derrida maintains that incorporation is a largely unmediated process and therefore psychically dangerous. For Myshkin, the after effects of his epilepsy have disrupted his ability to adopt sense perceptions, behaviours and other psychic material into his self, through the slow and socially mediated process of introjection. His 'idiocy', that is, the confusion and disruption wrought by his epilepsy, has caused him to create a private world and a self-inscribed

gestural system, alienating him from the world around him. He does not understand social etiquette and admits that he does not know how to be with adults. When Myshkin returns to Russia and finds himself thrown into Petersburg society, he reacts by 'incorporating' ideas and people into his consciousness. Not long after arriving in Petersburg, Myshkin encounters the portrait of Nastasya Filippovna in General Epanchin's home and almost immediately incorporates and enshrines the image within his consciousness. Myshkin's incorporation of Nastasya's image is unmediated and instantaneous and therefore psychically dangerous given that incorporation, like the idolatrous gaze, marks the burial of the gaze/psyche within the idol/incorporated image.

Aglaya Epanchina seems to understand Myshkin's incorporation of Nastasya's image and likens Myshkin's veneration of Nastasya to poet, Vladimir Pushkin's knight in his poem, 'A Poor Knight'. Aglaya detects that Myshkin has blindly chosen the image of Nastasya as an ideal that he bows down before as if she were an idol, placing him at risk of a loss of self, even to the point of madness. Aglaya observes that Pushkin's

poem directly portrays a man capable of having an ideal and, second, once he has the ideal, of believing in it and, believing in it, of blindly devoting his whole life to it. That doesn't always happen in our time. In the poem it's not said specifically what made up the ideal of the 'poor knight', but it's clear that it was some bright image, 'an image of pure beauty'. (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 249)

It is noteworthy here that Aglaya actually misquotes Pushkin. In the poem, the 'bright image' is 'like a genius of pure beauty' not itself 'an image of pure beauty' (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 625). The misquotation could indicate that Aglaya identifies that Myshkin has incorporated the image of Nastasya as one of 'pure beauty', not as a representation of beauty indicated by the simile 'like a genius of pure beauty.' When Aglaya reads out Pushkin's ballad 'A Poor Knight', she also exchanges the initials A.

M. D (*Ave Mater Dei*) written on the poor knight's shield with A. N. B. (*Ave Nastasya Barashkova*). Aglaya observes that "[i]t made no difference to this 'poor knight' who his lady was or what she might do. It was enough for him that he had chosen her and believed in her 'pure beauty,' and only then did he bow down to her forever" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 249). Although Aglaya approves of Myshkin's quest to hold before him an ideal of pure beauty, she is critical of his choice. Nastasya is no *Ave Mater Dei*, yet Myshkin uncritically accepts the image of Nastasya and bows down before it as if it were an idol. Like the poor knight of Pushkin's poem, Myshkin innocently believes in his ideal and this creates blind spots in his vision. Indeed, Myshkin incorporates Nastasya's portrait as an image of pure beauty into his consciousness and therefore he is unable to see Nastasya for who she is: a fallen woman who does not want to be redeemed. He buries Nastasya's image within his psyche and when he discovers that she does not represent an image of pure beauty, Myshkin, like the poor knight of Pushkin's poem, goes mad.

At times Myshkin's unconscious prompts him to view his fantasy of Nastasya in its proper light. In a dream that Myshkin has while dozing on a park bench, the image of Nastasya is called forth from his unconscious and appears before him in a form that Myshkin is unwilling to recognise: a criminal. The narrator observes that "not for anything did he want to recognise her as a criminal; yet he felt that something horrible was about to happen, for the whole of his life [. . .] [yet] he got up to follow her" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 424). Nastasya appears as a terrible phantom in the form of a criminal, and not the ideal that Myshkin incorporates into his consciousness. In his dream, Myshkin follows the phantom of Nastasya despite a presentiment that something horrible would happen; an act that foreshadows his ruin. Myshkin's unconsciously attempts to decrypt the fantasy of innocence he has constructed of Nastasya by portraying her as a criminal, but it is only a dream and Myshkin dismisses it. By refusing to acknowledge her 'criminal' status, Myshkin preserves his fantasy of Nastasya and walls it up inside of himself. Thus, the image of Nastasya remains entombed within Myshkin's false consciousness as the living dead (a fantasy). Myshkin's failure to discern between his fantasy of Nastasya and the

reality of Nastasya the person, is at the basis of why Myshkin goes mad when he discovers that she is neither an image of pure beauty nor an icon-like figure, but a dead body; a broken idol. It is not until the end of the novel that Myshkin's fantasy of innocence is finally dispelled when he sees Nastasya lying naked on Rogozhin's bed. The outline of her limbs can be seen under the sheet, her barefoot is poking out with her dead body still expressing something of the sensuality that had inflamed her many admirers. In the notebooks for *The Idiot* we find that Dostoevsky toyed with the idea of Nastasya dying in a brothel, an act that would have signalled Nastasya's self-fulfilment of her fallen status (Dostoevsky [1868] 1967, p. 167). While the scene that is included in the published version of *The Idiot* is less explicit in its association with the brothel tableaux, there is still a strong sense that Nastasya is a 'kept' woman; she dies from Rogozhin's priapic knife and is discovered on his bed with her clothes lying next to her.

Rogozhin's home: a cryptal space

At the end of the narrative, Myshkin crosses the threshold of Rogozhin's home and enters a cryptal space that has become both a literal tomb where Nastasya's body is secreted, and a symbolic tomb wherein Rogozhin and Myshkin's psychological collapse occurs. It is significant that when Myshkin enters Rogozhin's room, Rogozhin locks the door behind them both, barring the way out. When Myshkin first approaches Rogozhin's home on Gorokhovaya Street, he is able to guess at once which one of the houses belongs to Rogozhin based on what Myshkin calls the 'physiognomy' of the Rogozhin home. The narrator describes the home as a

big, grim, three-storied and without any architecture, of a dirty green colour [. . .] Both outside and inside, everything is somehow inhospitable and dry, everything seems to hide and conceal itself, and why it should seem so from the physiognomy of the house - would be hard to explain. Architectural combinations of lines, of course, have their own secret. (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 204)

The architecture of the home is non-descript and therefore seems to contain a secret, much like the crypt. The crypt is constructed of partitions, boundaries, inner and outer surfaces that are designed to “isolate, to protect, to shelter from any penetration, from anything that can filter in from outside along with air, light, or sounds, along with the eye or the ear, the gesture or the spoken word” (Derrida 1986, p. xiv). The Rogozhin home is also aligned with the silence of a crypt. Rogozhin’s mother is a silent spectre who sits in the same chair every day in the darkness, while Rogozhin’s brother occupies the rooms at the end of a corridor in the home, but we neither hear from him nor see him. Myshkin observes that the Rogozhin home has the “physiognomy of your whole family and of your whole Rogozhin life” (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 207)—the home is peopled by the living dead, and therefore is a crypt of sorts.

It is noteworthy too that the Rogozhin name is associated with death. Richard Peace points out that Rogozhin’s father is connected to the Castrates, a radical religious offshoot of the Flagellates, while the Rogozhin name recalls the schismatics *Rogozhinki*, a sect of Old Believers associated with the Rogozhskoye Cemetery in Moscow (1971, p. 86).^{xx} The Rogozhin name is likened to a cemetery and the Rogozhin home to a tomb. Indeed, earlier in the narrative Nastasya remarks that she would not be surprised to learn that there was a dead body walled up inside the house, while Ippolit likens the Rogozhin home to a cemetery. Similarly, Myshkin identifies that the house seems to hide and conceal something, like a tomb. All of the characters who confirm the status of the Rogozhin home as a tomb are characters that are aligned with entombment of various types. At the end of the narrative Nastasya and Ippolit are dead, Myshkin is entombed within a sick consciousness, and Rogozhin undergoes a psychic collapse which leads to unconsciousness and is then thrown into prison for murdering Nastasya.

At the end of the novel, Nastasya has become one of the dead that populates the Rogozhin home. Her death marks the collapse of both Myshkin and Rogozhin’s

ideal of beauty. Myshkin and Rogozhin lie next to one another, face-to-face, a position that recalls their first meeting when they sat face-to-face on the train; a tableau foreshadowing their shared terminus: the tomb. The shock of Nastasya's death precipitates the psychological collapse of both Rogozhin and Myshkin. When others discover the two men, Rogozhin is unconscious and Myshkin is only barely conscious; the narrator remarking that "he [Myshkin] no longer understood anything of what they asked him about, and did not recognise the people who came in and surrounded him" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 611). Myshkin's psychological collapse was predicted by Aglaya Epanchin in the prophetic relationship she had observed between Myshkin and the Poor Knight of Pushkin's poem: Myshkin pursues his ideal of beauty to the point of madness. Indeed, when Evgeny Pavlovich describes Myshkin's reunion with his old doctor after the scene in the Rogozhin home, Doctor Schneider diagnoses that Myshkin has undergone a, "total derangement of the mental organs" (Dostoevsky [1869] 2001, p. 613). Myshkin has passed beyond all thresholds of understanding and becomes entombed within a psyche and body that he can no longer control.

Myshkin's spatial position at the beginning of the narrative (in the cramped train compartment) and then at the end of the narrative (in the tomb-like Rogozhin home) can be read as the literalisation of the metaphor of Myshkin's habitation of tomb space. It is significant that the Rogozhin name and home are aligned with death, given that the home is the site of Nastasya's literal death, and Rogozhin and Myshkin's psycho-spiritual death/collapse. Throughout the narrative, Myshkin undergoes little deaths with each epileptic attack, and each attack reinforces the inward space of fantasy which, for Myshkin, becomes a false consciousness where incorporated materials such his false notions of beauty, his fantasy of innocence and his idol, Nastasya are encrypted and buried. Just as Myshkin cannot understand the riddle of beauty, he cannot identify Nastasya's 'fallen' status because he cannot see with a clearly illumined vision; the crypt allowing no light to be thrown on what it hides. The literal tomb signals the literal end of all onto-existential possibilities for a person, while the symbolic, Derridean crypt/tomb signals the constriction of onto-existential

possibilities to the fortified and constricted space of false consciousness. In either case, Myshkin's onto-existential possibility of embodying a Christ-figure is, as Dostoevsky indicated in his notebooks for the novel, extinguished in the tomb.

Chapter Three: The collapse of all meaning and value under the aegis of nihilism: the distortion of body space and language in *Demons*

The devils had entered into a man and their name was legion, and they asked Him: suffer us to enter into the swine, and He suffered them. The devils entered into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and was drowned. When the people came out to see what was done, they found the man who had been possessed now sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and those who saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Exactly the same thing happened in our country: the devils went out of the Russian man and entered into a herd of swine, i.e., into the Nechayevs, the Serno-Solovyoviches, etc. These are drowned or will be drowned, and the healed man, from whom the devils have departed, sits at the feet of Jesus. It could not have been otherwise. Russia has spewed out all the filth she has been fed and obviously there is nothing Russian left in those spewed-out wretches. And bear this in mind, my dear friend, that a man who loses his people and his national roots also loses the faith of his fathers and his God. Well, if you really want to know – this is in essence the theme of my novel. It is called *The Devils* and it describes how the devils entered into the herd of swine. (Dostoevsky [1871] 1987, p. 343)

Of the people in the town where *Demons* is set, Edward Wasiolek wrote, “[t]he body politic is sick, and the sickness has palsied the people’s actions, corroded their social relations, twisted their bodies, clouded their thoughts, and confused their feelings” (1968, p. 1). Wasiolek conjures up the image of the demon-possessed man of the biblical Gospels, whom Dostoevsky refers to in his letter to his friend, Valerian Maikov quoted above. In the biblical story, demons had palsied and twisted the demon-possessed man’s body, clouded and confused his thoughts, cut him off the world of the living and forced him to run about naked amongst the tombs. For the

demon-possessed man, language was fragmented, hysterical and animal-like. He lived amongst the dead because the living could no longer bind or subdue him. He broke the chains put on him and was driven by the demons to an isolated place where he cried out and cut himself with stones. The demon-possessed man had no name or identity, but was identified by what possessed him, a legion of demons. His body and personality had been distorted by the demons and he spoke, not with his voice, but with the polyphonic voice of the demons.

In *Demons*, Dostoevsky uses the demon-possessed man as metonym and an allegory for the body politic of the town where the novel is set, and Russia more generally, both of which had become a habitation for demons. As Wasiolek points out, the inhabitants of town have become sick; possessed of ideologies which confuse their feelings and cloud their thoughts. In the novel demons are, for Dostoevsky, not literal demons but rather ideas or ideologies which, like demons, can possess a person. To be possessed of an idea or demon signals a loss of identity and freedom for the possessed individual. Employing aspects of Terry Eagleton's exploration of terroristic ideology as well as his ideas relating to the concept of freedom in *Holy Terror*, I argue that in *Demons* nihilism is a demonic force which seeks firstly to colonise sacred space, be it a church, icon or a human body, and then destroy that space through violent means. Nihilism is an ideology of negation and destruction, prompting its adherents to destroy, both literally and symbolically, sacred spaces in an attempt to reduce meaning as well as the lived, existential freedoms and possibilities of its enemies, to naught. Throughout the novel Dostoevsky demonstrates that just as the possessed swine of the biblical story plunge over an abyss to their death, the possessed of his novel share the terminus of the swine and plunge into an (ontological) void.

In the *Demons*, nihilism is represented as an ideology of negation arising from an indifference to the value of sacred spaces and institutions. In the chapter 'At the End of Utopia - Indifference', Josep Ramoneda argues that the conditions for the propagation and spread of nihilistic ideology is born of indifference to established

value systems. In this chapter I employ Ramoneda's twofold definition of nihilism which, "on the one hand [. . .] means the end of values, that is to say, the end of limits; on the other hand, it means the adoption of the destructive drive as the only logic of salvation, according to which one kills for the sake of killing, using violence as a means of purification" (2012, p. 124). Ramoneda's definition, 'end of values', relates to an aspect of nihilism which seeks the end of moral valuation by making everything permissible, even complete destruction. Ramoneda's other definition of a 'logic of salvation' implies that by adopting a destructive drive and having faith in its power, a salvation of sorts will be granted to the believer. These two definitions of nihilism contain a paradox which Ramoneda alludes to. The ostensibly 'salvific' logic that would employ violence as the means through which everything is reduced to nothing in order for an establishment-free world to emerge in its wake, cannot be employed indifferently. While violence might be used indiscriminately, it is not used indifferently. In Dostoevsky's novel, the young ideologues of nihilism do not seek to destroy that which they do not recognise as containing value and meaning. Rather, in *Demons*, the nihilistic characters who either seek to create terror through the profanation of sacred spaces and violence (Pyotr Stepanovich and his group of 'sneerers and jeerers'), or reduce everyone to a herd of animals under the threat of violence (Pyotr Stepanovich and Shigyalov) or who kill themselves (Stavrogin and Kirillov) do so because they recognise the value of the social, symbolic or bodily spaces they would seek to attack or destroy.

In this chapter I argue that Dostoevsky analogises traits of the demon-possessed man, such as the denigration of language and the loss of identity, in the 'possessed' characters of his novel and leads his characters to the brink of a symbolic abyss upon which they must either choose to turn back towards Christ and be healed, or plunge over the cliff like the demon-possessed swine of the biblical tale. I contend that Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and, to a lesser extent, Shatov flee from Christ and in doing so, turn towards a false Messiah of their own making. In this chapter I examine why each of these characters constructs a Messianic figure or messianic idea to replace the rejected Messiah figure of Christ and what form each character's

Messianism assumes. For Dostoevsky, the consequence of believing in an idol, ideology or false Messiah figure is to be led to an alienating destination: a symbolic abyss separating a person from the divine. I argue that Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov construct their messianic idea as well as their identities under the influence of Stavrogin via a process akin to what Jacques Lacan called the “mirror stage” ([1949] 2002, p. 4). Lacan’s mirror stage theory is drawn from his observation of how an infant interacts with an image of itself in a mirror. Lacan contends that the image an infant sees in the mirror appears to it as a *gestalt*, that is, the image is regarded by the infant as a whole ([1949] 2002, p. 4). The mirror image is, however, an illusion of wholeness and subject-hood, a mere projection ([1949] 2002, p. 4-5). When we employ Lacan’s insights about the mirror-stage to *Demons* we can see that Stavrogin functions as the mirror through which Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov construct an image of themselves as a perceived ideological *gestalt*. This *gestalt*, however, is essentially ‘other’, just as each character’s Messianic idea is ‘other’ insofar as it is a distortion of the Messianic image of Christ. I argue that not only does Stavrogin function as the mirror in Lacan’s mirror stage process of identification but also what Jean-Luc Marion calls the invisible mirror of the idol, a mirror which can only produce self-idolatry and therefore, like the perceived *gestalt* that the (ideological) infant encounters in the mirror, an illusion.

The rise of the nihilist

Dostoevsky was prompted to write *Demons* when he read about the murder of the student A. I. Ivanov in a Russian paper while he was living abroad. Ivanov had been involved with a small group of political extremists led by Sergei Nechaev, a fanatic and anarchist who demanded blind submission from his followers (Mochulsky 1967, p. 418). Ivanov broke with Nechaev’s circle after a sobering of his extremist views. Nechaev used Ivanov’s defection as the justification for murdering him with the purpose of uniting the other members of the group through their shared bond of culpability. Ivanov was killed in Petrine Academy Park and his body thrown into an ice-hole in a nearby pond (Mochulsky 1967, p. 406). The murder inspired

Dostoevsky to take up arms, in a literary sense, against a new type of ideologue in Russia in the 1860s and 70s, the nihilist. In a letter to his friend Mikhail Katkov (October 8th, 1870) Dostoevsky is, however, explicit about the creative licence he takes with the real-life figure of Nechaev. He wrote to Katkov, "My fantasy can in the highest degree differ from the reality that took place, and my Pyotr Verkhovensky may in no way resemble Nechayev" (qtd. in Mochulsky 1967, p. 409). The nihilistic protagonist of the novel, Pyotr Stepanovich, bears an ideological, rather than psychological, resemblance to the real-life figure of Nechaev (Mochulsky 1967, p. 418). Where the real-life Nechaev was very much a serious figure, an ideologue and leader of political extremists, Pyotr Stepanovich appears in Dostoevsky's novel as a semi-comical figure who Stavrogin describes as his clown. Although Pyotr Stepanovich is Dostoevsky's caricature of Nechaev, Pyotr Stepanovich, retains Nechaev's impulse for destruction. Pyotr Stepanovich too wants to instill terror in others by attacking the social and symbolic structures of society. Dostoevsky critic and biographer, Konstantin Mochulsky quotes Nechaev in *The Relationship of the Society to the People*, "Our business is terrible, complete, universal, and merciless destruction" (1967, p. 421). Likewise, Pyotr Stepanovich's programme is complete destruction.

The main characters, Pyotr Stepanovich and Stavrogin (Pyotr Stepanovich's ideological father), inherit ideological roots not only from Nechaev, but from Ivan Turgenev's character Bazarov (*Fathers and Sons*), as well as the real-life literary critic and contemporary of Dostoevsky, Dmitri Pisarev. As mentioned in Chapter One, Pisarev worked for Nikolai Chernyshevsky as a critic at *The Contemporary*. Pisarev was indoctrinated into Chernyshevsky's belief in rational egoism which Chernyshevsky formulated under the influence of English utilitarian philosophers Bentham and Mill (Peace 2010, p. 119). One aspect of Chernyshevsky's rational egoism was a denigration of aesthetics (art, literature, architecture and music) in favour of science and ethics. Chernyshevsky believed that art does not have value in itself rather is valuable only when it possesses ethical content (Peace 2010, p. 120). Pisarev took Chernyshevsky's critique of aesthetics further and called for the

breaking apart of all established value systems and, when given the task of reviewing Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, Pisarev found in the characters Bazarov and Bazarov's disciple Arkady, ideological counterparts. Just as Pisarev took Chernyshevsky's anti-aestheticism to its extreme, in *Fathers and Sons* Arkady extends the philosophic principle of Bazarov's nihilism (a refusal to accept any principle on faith) into practical application. Arkady shows that Bazarov's principles require action through the 'clearing of ground' or breaking apart of the old order (Peace 2010, p. 124). Just as Arkady is willing to break apart established value systems through destructive action, so too is Pyotr Stepanovich in *Demons*. Destructive action is the praxis of the nihilistic principle to break apart the established order, along with its meanings and symbolisms.

Boredom and indifference: a breeding ground for nihilism

The novel's action centres on events orchestrated by Pyotr Stepanovich. His appearance in the narrative, along with that of Stavrogin, heralds the collapse of order in the town. Indeed, prior to Stavrogin and Pyotr Stepanovich's reappearance in their hometown, the narrator describes the town as "hitherto not remarkable for anything" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 7), with the town's provinciality serving as a metonym for Russia's isolation and ideological vulnerability (Lounsbery 2007, p. 213). The conditions for nihilism in the town are largely attributed to isolation and boredom, which gives rise to excess and moral indifference. Through Pyotr Stepanovich's influence a group of youths turn the town into a vaudeville of debauchery and profanation. The narrator says that this group "were called sneerers and jeerers, because there was little they scorned to do" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 320). For example, the group goes to see the body of a suicide and while the group gawks at the dead body, one member of the group eats the dead man's grapes while another helps himself to the dead man's champagne. The narrator notes that one of the ladies in the group was heard to have remarked that "everything has become so boring that there's no need to be punctilious about entertainment, as long as it's diverting" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 326). In *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky argues that in times of peace and excess, people grow coarse in their boredom, cynicism and

indifference and pleasure becomes carnivorous ([1876] 1994, pp. 453-454). Indifference is at the basis of the nihilistic belief that nothing matters, or as Kirillov, Stavrogin and Pyotr Stepanovich each repeat in the narrative, 'it makes no difference to me'. Indifference causes the boundaries between what is good and evil to become blurred, which signals the weakening of moral, and therefore social, bonds.

In Dostoevsky's novel, boredom can be likened to a state of moral paralysis in which neither pleasure nor pain excites a person. Indeed, Pyotr Stepanovich's group of 'sneerers and jeerers,' as well as Stavrogin, pursue entertainment and distraction in whatever form it takes in order to divert them from their boredom. In the notebooks for *Demons*, Dostoevsky connects boredom to the constriction of onto-existential freedom and says, "'Boredom! What is boredom?' A sensation of unfreedom" (1968, p. 411). For Dostoevsky, the sensation of unfreedom is represented not only as a lack of power or desire for moral action but an indifference to 'living life'. Such is the case with Stavrogin whose boredom with life is an unfreedom that anticipates the absolute negativity he encounters in death (Eagleton 2005, p. 71). Stavrogin's boredom is couched in the fact that his desires have become weakened through excess. The narrator catalogues a number of debauched and violent acts committed by Stavrogin, who had perpetrated them with the sole aim of overcoming his boredom. Yet, at the end of the narrative, he can find no further pursuits to excite or divert him. Boredom becomes for him a totalising phenomenon. This totalising state, is, for Dostoevsky, the opposite state characteristic of people on earth: 'transitional'. Stavrogin, consumed by boredom, has lost all desire to enact any onto-existential possibility, good or bad, and thus becomes paralysed, like a living idol, completed in its form. The only escape from the totalisation of boredom is death, thus Stavrogin kills himself, an act which signals the self-termination of any future, onto-existential possibility of moral transformation/transition.

The mirror stage and Stavrogin's mask

The narrator of *Demons* informs the reader that prior to the narrative events,

Stavrogin had profoundly influenced the ideological development of Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov. I argue that each character, in their ideological infancy, has constructed their identity via Stavrogin through a process which Lacan calls the mirror-stage of an infant's development. Essentially the mirror-stage is a process in which an infant recognises itself as a totality or *gestalt* when it perceives an image of itself in a mirror. In forming his theory of the mirror-stage, Lacan draws on Freud's notion that the "ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" with the ego born in its identification with the mental projection of the image of the body (Nusselder 2009, p. 86). I contend that Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov, each construct their ideological view of themselves through what they see reflected back to them in Stavrogin. Stavrogin functions as the mirror in which each character sees an image of themselves, which Lacan calls the ideal-I ([1949] 2002, p. 4). Lacan explains that the image the infant perceives in the mirror is an image in its primordial form "prior to it being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" ([1949] 2002, p. 4). The infant moves out of the mirror stage of development as it becomes aware of the difference between itself and the image of itself in the mirror and the difference between itself and the other; differences which become articulated more fully as the infant acquires language. Yet in *Demons*, Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov are neither able to perceive themselves as Other from Stavrogin, nor are they able to access a socially mediated language outside of the ideological language each appropriates from Stavrogin. Therefore, each become stalled at the mirror-stage of their (ideological) development.

My application of Lacan's mirror-stage process to Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov's ideological development through Stavrogin who functions as their mirror, is fitting considering that Stavrogin is described, throughout *Demons*, as wearing a mask. The mask, like the Lacanian mirror, is all surface and suggestibility. It appears differently to different people. The narrator describes Stavrogin's appearance as "the very image of beauty, it would seem, and at the same time repulsive, as it were. People said his face resembled a mask" (Dostoevsky [1872]

2006, p. 43). In *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work* Konstantin Mochulsky contends that the function of the mask, in its “very flatness and lack of personalised expression [is to] open the imagination to a limitless reference, thus allowing a maximum of immediate suggestibility to the beholder” (1967, p. 101). In *Demons*, Stavrogin’s mask-like face is simultaneously an absent and a limitless referent that allows each character to formulate an image of themselves, while, at the same time not really knowing who or what Stavrogin is. For Shatov, Stavrogin is the champion of Russian Messianism. For Kirillov, Stavrogin is the prototype for his man-god who has transcended law and language, and for Pyotr Stepanovich he is the false Tsarevich who will rule the world when it has been destroyed and built anew. Pyotr Stepanovich confesses to Stavrogin, “I’ve been inventing you since abroad; inventing you as I looked at you” (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 423). Pyotr Stepanovich explicitly connects the idea of looking at Stavrogin to the formation not only of his fantasy of Stavrogin, but also an image of himself he sees reflected back to him.

The metaphor of vision, of Pyotr Stepanovich inventing Stavrogin as he looks at him, calls to mind the gaze directed towards the idol. Marion points out that the gaze which rests upon the idol can only ever produce self-idolatry (1995, p. 28). The idol is, as Marion indicates, an invisible mirror (1995, p. 12). In differentiating between the visibility of the icon and idol, Marion contends that while the icon summons the viewer’s gaze to pass beyond what is purely visible (the world of material phenomena) and on towards the invisible (God/the noumenal), the idol, on the other hand, focuses the viewer’s gaze on what is purely visible; as if frozen in an invisible mirror (1995, pp. 17-20). To be fascinated by the idol, signals the limit and absorption of the gaze at a fixed point which is both extrinsic to the self, yet a projection/reflection of an image of the self. Lacan theorist, Andre Nusselder points out that “fascination implies an (unconscious) absorption in something (a virtual image) that the subject itself is not” (2009, p. 88). Indeed, Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov are fascinated by Stavrogin as idol (Pyotr Stepanovich calls Stavrogin his idol), and Stavrogin as the ideal-I they see of themselves, an ‘I’ that is specular given that the virtual image they perceive in Stavrogin is not in fact themselves. The onto-

existential consequence of being absorbed by the specular ideal-I perceived in the Lacanian mirror or the invisible mirror (the idol), is alienation from the very self. Nusselder cautions that “in fascination, we identify with something that we are not: alienation” (2009, p. 88). To be alien to oneself is caused when there is a disjunction between a perception of the real self (whatever that may be) and a projected image of the self (the specular ideal-I).

The reason why Stavrogin functions as both an absent and limitless referent and why Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov each identify with different aspects of Stavrogin is due to Stavrogin’s protean shifts throughout his ideological development. Indeed, Mochulsky likens Stavrogin to Proteus (1967, p. 426). In Greek mythology, Proteus was able to assume different shapes and forms, both animal and elemental (Murray 1994, p. 146). Likewise, Stavrogin has embodied various ideological beliefs, which have then been appropriated by his ideological offspring, who wear Stavrogin’s discarded ideas/bodies as an armour which reinforces the illusion of an ideological *gestalt*. Lacan suggests that the pre-linguistic notion of a bodily or ideological *gestalt* is orthopaedic (it hides a deformity). If a person is unable to psychologically enlarge their world (grow up) and learn to differentiate between the specular-I, which the (ideological) infant apprehends in the mirror, and the socially-mediated I, which becomes aware of itself through social and linguistic matrices, a person will continue to wear, the “armour of an alienating identity” (Lacan [1949] 2002, p. 4). The alienating identity is an orthopaedic identity given that the orthopaedic aid (the ideological armour) can never be real, like a prosthetic leg. Stavrogin’s kinship with Proteus relates not only to his ideological shape shifting but to the prosthetic nature of the identities which are assumed or appropriated by his ideological offspring and then incorporated instantaneously into their psyche, rather than formed over time (as is the case with the psychically healthy process of introjection).

In relation to his Protean abilities, Mochulsky argues that like Proteus, Stavrogin is able to assume different forms, but does so hiding behind a mask and

never relinquishing his ego (1967, p. 426). Even under the guise of repentance and confession, Stavrogin's ego, coupled with his desire to test his strength everywhere, is a manifestation of a self-will. Stavrogin wears the mask of repentance when he confesses his crimes to Bishop Tikhon in the censored chapter of *Demons*, 'At Tikhon's'. Stavrogin reads Bishop Tikhon his confession detailing his abuse of the child Marytrosha and her suicide as well as all of the debauched encounters of his life, but, as Tikhon observes, the 'Christian thought' of repentance is absent in his confession. According to Tikhon, Stavrogin portrays himself as coarser than what he is in his confession and thus, it is stylistically exaggerated and performative. Bakhtin says of Stavrogin's confession that "[h]e strives to present his word without a valuational accent, to make it intentionally wooden, and to eliminate all human tones in it. He wants everyone to look at him, but at the same time he makes his confession wearing a deathly, motionless mask" (1973, p. 207). Stavrogin cannot drop his mask and thus his confession, like the mask, is all surface. Both Tikhon and Shatov (in the narrative proper) identify that Stavrogin's word, like the mask he wears, is wooden. Earlier in the narrative, Shatov implores Stavrogin to "[a]t least for once in your life speak in a human voice" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 246). Stavrogin, however, cannot speak in a human voice. He has divested himself of all moral responsibility and therefore the ability to even articulate a moral valuation; his voice and his words are wooden and empty, as he is.

Language and the fragmented body: the loss of the living Word

The largely ideological language used by many of the characters in *Demons* is hysterical and unreflective. It is represented as a cacophony, the polyphonic voice of a legion of demons from the biblical tale; a Babel language which is neither dialogic nor dialectical. In his introduction to the *Notebooks of The Possessed*, Wasiolek points out that there are no true dialogues between the main characters, no communion of ideas given that language is "fed by poisoned spiritual sources, [and] has begun to disintegrate" (1968, p. 1). Wasiolek identifies Stavrogin as the wellspring of this poison of language in *Demons*. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre asks if the

misuse or misunderstanding of language can cause fragmentation between a subject's ego and its body? (1991, p. 204). Lefebvre's answer to this question is very much to the point of the fragmentary nature of identity and language in *Demons*. Lefebvre answers that

[t]he Ego's practical relationship to its own body determines its relationship to other bodies, to nature, and to space. And vice versa: the relationship to space is reflected in the relationship to the other, to the other's body and the other's consciousness. The analysis - and self-analysis - of the total body, the way in which that body locates itself and the way in which it becomes fragmented, all are determined by a practice which includes discourse but which cannot be reduced to it. (1991, p. 204)

Lefebvre acknowledges that although the ego's relationship to its body and the body of the Other is determined by language, it is not reduced to it. Healthy spatial relationships, including the body's relationship (the embodied ego) to the body of others and to itself, are dialectical insofar as spatial relationships are concerned with and act through opposing or approximate forces as well as distance and proximity, location and situation. The relationship between bodies is also dialectical given that we (as embodied egos) are always situated within the world of language and discourse. Fragmentation between the body and ego occurs when the specular image of the ego/*I* does not cohere with the language of the real (socially and symbolically mediated) ego/*I*, hence why, in the biblical story, the demon-possessed man attacks his own body. When the relationship of the ego to its own body ceases to engage in a dialectic of self-analysis, when the mind and body are viewed as ontologically distinct, and the pre-linguistic specular image of the self becomes a fixed image, the specular *I* becomes the social *I* and the subject is no longer able to differentiate between the two (Lacan 1977, p. 7).

In the context of *Demons*, the specular *I* for Kirillov, (the *I* as man-god), is viewed as distinct from the *I* of his body, which he seeks to destroy, and this leads to

a fragmentation between his ego and body. Dostoevsky translator and critic Richard Pevear affirms Lefebvre's contention that a bad relationship between the body and ego is in part determined by language. Pevear contends that Kirillov's agrammatical Russian indicates that moral language is dying out in him (2006, p. xxiii). Stavrogin's language is also agrammatical; his Russian grammar is poor despite his European education. Meanwhile Stepan Trofimovich switches from French to Russian, often mid-sentence. As Lefebvre contends, the misuse or misunderstanding of language is one of the reasons why a bad relationship between our body and ego and the body of others, can occur. Words have power to affirm and articulate truths, but also to denigrate or deceive, hence why a language which is not couched in a social, cultural and symbolic order, as is the case with the pre-linguistic (ideological) infant, can cause a disjunction between the body and ego. I argue that if language remains stalled at the mirror stage, as is the case with Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov, entry into a symbolically-mediated sociality is barred and the specular, and therefore illusionary, self is reinforced.

In Dostoevsky's Christian world-view, language must have recourse to the symbolic, living Word embodied Christ or else be at risk of becoming a language of absent referents. In John 1:1-4 it is written that "[i]n 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" (Jn. 1:1-4 NIV). According to John, Christ is the Word that spoke creation into existence. He is both a distinct aspect of God but also one of the three persons of the triune God-head through whom all things were made. Lacan contends that the first acts of creation by the God-head, were acts of separation (1993, p. 109). God separated the light from the darkness, the heavens from the earth, assigning names to the separate bodies he created. Separation is necessarily an act of creation given that without separation, the world would be without order, merely chaos and flux, a space of undifferentiated forms. In this context, Stavrogin and Kirillov's inability to separate the notions of good and evil can be read as a loss of moral and symbolic language, which establishes

a moral order and defines its laws. Kirillov says to Stavrogin that, 'everything is good,' an inversion of what Christ said, "No one is good except God alone" (Mk. 10:18 NIV). Kirillov also explains that he sees no qualitative difference in worshipping a spider or venerating an icon; his is a sophisticated amorality (bordering on mysticism) that collapses the boundaries between good and evil as well as the sacred and the profane. Moral language is dying out in Kirillov, and it is Stavrogin who prompts Kirillov's degeneration. Shatov reproaches Stavrogin when he points out that "he's [Kirillov] your creation" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 248). Stavrogin is a creator unable to take responsibility for his creation. According to Dostoevsky's Christian worldview, Stavrogin is one who has lost the living Word and there is no life outside of the Word; to lose the Word is to lose the life impulse. Indeed, both Kirillov and Stavrogin take their own lives. For Stavrogin and Kirillov, theirs is an ego and body out of sync and this disjunction, in Dostoevsky's worldview, is caused by their inability to reconcile themselves to a symbolic language embedded/embodied in the living Word of Christ.

The destruction of body space

Kirillov, Stavrogin and Pyotr Stepanovich's indifference to the corpus of symbolic language (the Word of God) translates into an indifference to body space and its meaning. Indeed, moral and symbolic language defines and separates sacred and profane spaces and undergirds social, cultural and moral mores. If language no longer functions in differentiating between the sacred and profane and between good and evil, the value of body space, is likewise denigrated. In *Performativities of Space*, Barbara Hooper quotes Mary Douglas who contends that the body is "always treated as an image of society [. . .] If there is no concern to preserve social boundaries, I would not expect to find concern with bodily boundaries" (2002, p. 136). Such is the case in the society of the unnamed town in *Demons*. The lack of a town name would suggest it is a town without an identity (the post mirror-stage, socially mediated *I*) or fixed topography (a body). In the town, the transgression of social boundaries is translated into a denigration of body space. Murder, suicide, and physical violence literally destroy many of those who populate the town, as well as the town itself.

Indeed, in Book Five of Chapter Two in the novel, the narrator catalogues a whole array of moral and social transgressions perpetrated by Pyotr Stepanovich and his group of 'sneerers and jeerers' that centre on the profanation of social, physical and symbolic spaces which are sacred (Lefebvre's spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces respectively). A marriage is ruined, an icon is stolen, the group mocks a holy man, eats the food of a dead man and sets the town on fire. Nothing is sacred to the group, and their acts of profanation degenerate rapidly, culminating in what Dostoevsky considered to be the most grievous act of all forms of iconoclasm: murder. For Dostoevsky, to kill a person is to destroy the image and likeness of God in man.

Stavrogin's appearance in the town some years before the time of the narrative proper, foreshadows the destruction of social, physical and symbolic spaces that occur in the town under Stavrogin and Pyotr Stepanovich's nihilistic influence. Stavrogin's transgression of social boundaries is explicitly connected with his disregard for the body space of the Other. Indeed, the narrator catalogues an array of social transgressions which Stavrogin performs through the transgression of spatial/bodily boundaries. At a time prior to the narrative proper, the narrator tells the reader that Stavrogin had gone to the town's club and, overhearing a respected member of society repeat a phrase he was known to use: "No, sir, they won't lead me by the nose!", Stavrogin apprehended the man by the nose and pulled him two or three steps across the room (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 45). Stavrogin's wilful misinterpretation of the metaphor used by the man indicates that symbolic language is distorted in Stavrogin. He makes the metaphor literal and forces the man to perform it. Stavrogin's indifference to his transgressive act causes outrage amongst the townfolk, barring a few people who later become Pyotr Stepanovich's 'sneerers and jeerers'. Liputin, excited by Stavrogin's performance at the club, invites Stavrogin to his home, who, after chatting with Liputin's wife, kisses her three times on the mouth (a parody of Chernyshevsky's rational society where husband and wife are at liberty to conduct sexual relations with whomever they desired). The town's mayor, concerned by the rumours of Stavrogin's brazen behaviour, decides to counsel the

young man only to have his ear bitten by Stavrogin on the pretence of telling him a secret. The narrator also alludes to Stavrogin's sexual relations with Darya Pavlovna as well as Lizaveta Nikolaievna, as well as duels he had fought in which he was rumoured to have killed two men. In the expurgated chapter, 'At Tikhon's' we also learn that Stavrogin, like Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment*, had sexually abused a child which led to her suicide; a suicide Stavrogin could have prevented given that he knew her intention. Stavrogin's transgression of social boundaries is enacted via his transgression of bodily boundaries. His indifference to the bodies of others points to his moral degeneration. Nothing is sacred to Stavrogin, even his own body space.

Stavrogin's indifferent (and at times self-destructive) relationship with his own body forms the basis of his indifference to the body space of others. Stavrogin's need to control any outward display of emotion or pain manifests as an appearance that his body, like the 'mask' he wears, is wooden and unaffected by normal bodily rhythms (he does not flinch when Shatov publicly slaps him). Lefebvre identifies that the body deploys itself in space through a diverse series of rhythms, punctuating our experience of, as well as sustaining, our embodied consciousness. Lefebvre differentiates between the easily identifiable rhythms such as heartbeat, breathing, thirst, hunger and the more obscure rhythms such as sexuality, fertility, social life and thought patterns which are distilled into desires (1991, p. 205). The normal, bodily rhythms of hunger, thirst and breathing are ostensibly present in Stavrogin (although no narrative details are provided concerning these rhythms), but the more obscure rhythms that are distilled into sexual, social, and moral desires, have (as the narrator describes) become weakened through excess. In his life, Stavrogin has sought all manner of experience to excite him out of his boredom, but to no avail.

The narrator describes Stavrogin as someone who has lost all desire and, at the end of the novel, Stavrogin confesses to Darya that he feels no difference between debauchery or some noble act because his desires are too weak. In a conversation between Shatov and Stavrogin, Shatov asks him whether or not "it is true that you insisted you knew no difference in beauty between some brutal sensual stunt and any

great deed, even the sacrifice of life for mankind? Is it true that you found a coincidence of beauty, a sameness of pleasure at both poles?" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 254). For Stavrogin, there is no difference between the pleasure of a great deed or a base act given that both poles of experience elicit the same mundane sensation: a momentary escape from the banality of his boredom. Stavrogin's inability or unwillingness to differentiate between beauty and ugliness or of a moral or immoral act, leads to the collapse of all boundaries or signifiers between good and evil within him. Stavrogin's moral impotence is translated into a sexual impotence with women (alluded to by the narrator) which also becomes (literally) a bodily impotence when his lifeless body is found hanging from a threshold at the end of the narrative.

Pyotr Stepanovich is Stavrogin's most devoted disciple, inheriting from Stavrogin a disregard (and even desire for the destruction) of the body space of others. This disregard arises, in part, from his belief in Shigalyovism. Shigalyovism is a formulation of Shigalyov's; a social system which anticipates the world of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Under Shigalyov's system, a small minority of chosen people would rule over the mass of humanity controlling them under the threat of violence and death. The goal of Shigalyovism was to make people into something resembling a herd of animals, docile and unthinking. In the novel, the use of the word 'herd' recalls the biblical story that Dostoevsky cites in the epigraph to the novel. Dostoevsky draws a connection between the demons that drive the herd of pigs over the cliff in the biblical story and the proponents of Shigalyovism. The herd of pigs (in the biblical story) or the herd as humanity (in Shigalyov's system) can be led anywhere, even to its death. The lame man at Virginsky's (where Pyotr Stepanovich's group meet to discuss political ideas) explains Shigalyov's system:

He [Shigalyov] suggests, as a final solution of the question, the division of mankind into two unequal parts. One-tenth is granted freedom of person and unlimited rights over the remaining nine-tenths. These must lose their person

and turn into something like a herd, and in unlimited obedience, through a series of regenerations, attain to primeval innocence, something like the primeval paradise. (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, pp. 403-4)

Pyotr Stepanovich includes himself as one among Shigalyov's one-tenth of people who will rule with unlimited freedom and power over the remaining nine-tenths. In Shigalyov's formulation, the nine-tenths must become a herd, obedient and submissive, living in a protracted state of innocence under the despotic rule of the one-tenth. Echoing Shigalyov, Pyotr Stepanovich declares that "[s]laves must be equal: there has never yet been either freedom or equality without despotism, but within a herd there must be equality; and this is Shigalyovism!" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 417). Pyotr Stepanovich's 'equality' is achieved by removing individual freedom and identity. Pyotr Stepanovich declares that under the aegis of Shigalyovism, "Cicero's tongue is cut off, Copernicus's eyes are put out, Shakespeare is stoned" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 417). The violence of Shigalyovism (the forced loss of the person) would be carried out in actual violence deployed against the very bodies of those of genius who, by their very nature, cannot submit to becoming one amongst an undifferentiated herd. Pyotr Stepanovich would murder or mutilate anyone who would challenge the status quo of the herd to ensure that all people would, through force, become subsumed into a homogenous collective. The proposed purges of intellectuals, the doctrine of 'equality' through slavery, along with the anti-intellectualism of Shigalyov's system, portended post-1917 Stalinist Russia.

Kirillov's disregard for the space of his body arises from his idea that only through death can the fear of death be overcome. Kirillov's idea, like that of Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*), the underground man (*Notes from Underground*) and Arkady (*An Accidental Family*) is couched in a desire to transcend his spatial (embodied) form by constructing a supra-human identity, the man-god. Kirillov believes that in killing himself he will transcend the fear of pain and death which he believes has led mankind to create the idea of God. Kirillov believes that God must be overcome in order for the man-god to appear, an idea which calls to mind

Nietzsche's Zarathustra who also maintained that both God and man must be overcome in order for the Übermensch to appear ([1891] 2002, p. 41). To overcome God, God must be killed. God is, in Kirillov and Zarathustra's view, an invention and therefore mankind must go beyond the fear of death which led it to create God by outstripping this fear by becoming death itself. Indeed, both Kirillov and Zarathustra propose that an escape from the body is necessary for the soul to escape the contingency of the body (Nietzsche [1891] 2002, p. 42). Barbara Hooper argues that

[t]o escape the body; to transcend death and still space and time; to drive away all contingent presences and see as you will, are actions requiring murder [. . .] 'Killing' the body is what enables 'mind' to be pure and purely ideal; killing it again and again is what preserves the fantasy of ideality. (2002, p. 445)

Kirillov overcomes the fear of mortality by killing the body; if there is no body, there is no longer consciousness of the fear of death. Kirillov likens the fear of death to knowing that there is a huge boulder hanging above you which will, at any moment, come crashing down. Iris Murdoch's assertion that the "pain of contingency [. . .] is a shadow of death" is very much to the point of Kirillov's concern with contingency and mortality (1992, p. 111). Kirillov can only preserve his fantasy of the man-god who has transcended space and time by overcoming all contingent presences through death. Kirillov's fantasy of the man-god, like Pyotr Stepanovich's idol or Shatov's confused Russian messianism, becomes for him a false Messiah which he believes can save him from the irreducibly contingent nature of his being-in-the-world.

False Messiahs and groundless freedom

Stavrogin is a false Messiah who sends his demons into the swine. Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov all become possessed with Stavrogin's aborted ideas, ideas which drive them towards the brink of an abyss which leads to their moral-spiritual destruction. In light of Dostoevsky's Christian world-view, the final

consequence of believing in an idol or false Messiah was death (literal and moral-spiritual), for no one outside of Christ could offer mankind the promise of resurrection. Dostoevsky believed that to deny God and Christ, was to lose the ground for our freedom that was bought by Christ's sacrifice and rooted in the grace of God. Just as the swine in the biblical story lose the ground from under their feet as they flee from Christ and into an abyss, so too do, Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov lose the ground for their freedom as they flee from Christ, towards false Messiahs/Messianisms. Throughout his fiction, Dostoevsky reiterates that if God and Christ are dismissed another ideal will replace them, but these will always be secondary ideas. In the notebooks for *Demons*, Shatov was to voice an idea that Dostoevsky develops in his next major work, *An Accidental Family*. Shatov was to say

You, negators of God and Christ [. . .] haven't even thought how everything in the world would become filthy and sinful without Christ. You judge Christ and laugh at God, but yourself, for example, what models do you present; how petty, depraved, greedy and vain you are. Setting aside Christ, you are removing the inaccessible ideal of beauty and good from mankind. In its place, what do you propose that is of equal force? (qtd. in Mochulsky 1967, p. 416)

Shatov's admonitions never made it into the published version of *Demons*. In the published work, Shatov wavers in his faith in God and makes Stavrogin an idol and therefore Dostoevsky's intended polemic against atheism and nihilism would have sounded somewhat empty if voiced by Shatov. Indeed, Shatov, along with Pyotr Stepanovich and Kirillov not only constitute their identities through Stavrogin, but their Messianic ideas; ideas that, like the ideal-*I* they perceive in Stavrogin, lead to an alienating destination: an abyss.

Pyotr Stepanovich explicitly connects his Messianism to idolatry and confesses to Stavrogin, "I love beauty. I am a nihilist, but I love beauty. Do nihilists not love beauty? They just don't love idols, but I love an idol! You are my idol!" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 419). Pyotr Stepanovich identifies that the true nihilist

cannot love beauty or worship an idol, unless it is the beauty which Dmitri Karamazov (*The Brothers Karamazov*) calls the beauty of Sodom: the beauty of the incendiary, of chaos, destruction and death. Indeed, Stavrogin embodies (inward) chaos, (self) destruction and (spiritual) death. He is Pyotr Stepanovich's profane Messiah. In a conversation he has with Stavrogin, Pyotr Stepanovich likens Stavrogin to the mythologised figure of Ivan the Tsarevich who usurped the throne of Russia. Pyotr Stepanovich's Messianism is couched in a desire to see Stavrogin deified as the leader of a new world order based on Shigalyovism and claim not only the throne of Russia, but the seat of power of the new world which would emerge after everything had been destroyed. For this new world order to emerge, complete destruction is necessary; all of the old gods must disappear so that the false god (Stavrogin) alone remains. Fedka the Convict accuses Pyotr Stepanovich of seducing others into believing in a false idol and points out that Pyotr Stepanovich has also become witless like an idol because he has ceased to believe in God the true creator (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 560). The idol marks the limitation of Pyotr Stepanovich's messianic vision because the idol, like the mirror, can only reflect back to him an image of his own cathected desires. Pyotr Stepanovich's idolatry as well that of Kirillov and Shatov, never extends beyond self-idolatry (Marion 1995, p. 28). Each reifies their own idea and makes it into a false idol.

Shatov's Messianism is based on the idea that Russia is the only true god-bearing nation, an idea that he appropriates from Stavrogin. Shatov wants to believe that the Russian people are the body of Christ (Rm. 12:5), that is, a symbolic body of people united through Christ. Yet, given that he cannot believe in God, he cannot believe in the divine purpose of Christ and therefore in the divine purpose of the Russian nation. When Stavrogin asks Shatov if he believes in God, Shatov says

'I believe in Russia, I believe in her Orthodoxy . . . I believe in the body of Christ . . . I believe that the new coming will take place in Russia . . . I believe . . .' Shatov babbled frenziedly.

'But in God? In God?'

‘I . . . I will believe in God’ (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 253).

Shatov hesitates in his answer concerning God. He believes that he *will* believe in God and yet given that Shatov still believes ardently in Stavrogin, he cannot fully believe in God. Shatov laments to Stavrogin, “why am I condemned to believe in you unto ages of ages? [. . .] I cannot tear you out of my heart” (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 255). At the heart of Shatov’s messianic ideal is a negation, he cannot believe in God because he believes in Stavrogin, who is himself a negation^{xxi}. Given that God is not at the centre of Shatov’s messianic ideal, the Russian nation as the body of Christ can only ever be a (spiritually) dead body incapable of saving other nations with its truth and its god.

In a conversation with Stavrogin, Shatov proffers that the movement of all nations has been driven by the desire to seek God, its own God, and “the stronger the nation, the more particular its God” (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 250). Here Shatov contradicts a thought he expresses in a prior conversation with Stavrogin in which he says that God is the unknown and inexplicable force that drives man to seek an end (the affirmation of a divine life after death), while at the same time denying the end (the perceived finality of death). If God is the unknown and inexplicable, he cannot be reduced to the particular god of a particular nation but must remain a universally accessible thought. Shatov wants to believe in a particular, contingent God (in the Russian God) in order to reduce the indeterminacy of the ‘unknown and inexplicable,’ but in wanting to believe in a particular god, Shatov reduces God to an idol of his own making. Shatov contends that if a nation does not believe that the truth is in it alone, their God is reduced to a particularity, a synthetic person among its people and this, according to Shatov, signals that nation’s extinction. Thus, Shatov cannot believe in the messianic purpose of the Russian nation to resurrect and save all other nations with *its* truth and *its* God given that he does not (yet) believe in the universally accessible thought of God as the unknown and inexplicable, but in Stavrogin who is a particular god/idol of his own making.

Kirillov's Messianism arises from a belief that he is the man-god and that his messianic purpose is to declare that everything is good and that the fear of pain and death is a deceit. In Kirillov's view, "[h]e who overcomes pain and fear will himself be God" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 115). Kirillov formulates this idea based on his belief that the attribute of his divinity is his self-will. Kirillov explains this idea to Pyotr Stepanovich, declaring that

'[i]f there is no God, then I am God.'

'Now, there's the one point of yours that I could never understand: why are you God then?' [Pyotr Stepanovich]

'If there is God, then the will is all his, and I cannot get out of his will. If not, the will is all mine, and it is my duty to proclaim self-will.' [Kirillov]

'Self-will? And why is it your duty?' [Pyotr Stepanovich]

'Because the will has all become mine. Can it be that no one on the whole planet, having ended God and believed in self-will, dares to proclaim self-will to the fullest point? [. . .] It is my duty to shoot myself because the fullest point of my self-will is - for me to kill myself.' [Kirillov]" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 617)

Kirillov believes that if there is no God then will (self-will) belongs entirely to him and that it is his duty to proclaim his self-will to its fullest point by killing himself. Kirillov says to Pyotr Stepanovich that, "[t]he attribute of my divinity is—Self-will! That is all, by which I can show in the main point my insubordination and my new fearsome freedom. For it is very fearsome. I will myself to show my insubordination and my new fearsome freedom" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 619). In the notebooks to *Demons*, Dostoevsky indicates that it would not be enough for Kirillov to acknowledge self-will as divinity, but to manifest it as the highest phenomenon by killing himself (1968, p. 396). In Dostoevsky's view, our self-will and autonomy are attributes of our divinity; they are traits which embody something of the likeness and image of God. If a person is made in the image of God, destroying this image is, according to Dostoevsky, the highest expression of metaphysical revolt (Kirillov's metaphysical insubordination). Eagleton affirms that Kirillov's act of self-

termination has a smack of immortality about it, albeit an ironic one (2005, p. 97). For, “what more breathtaking form of omnipotence than to do away with yourself for all eternity?” (2005, p. 97). Death is the high price that Kirillov pays for his insubordination, and what is at stake is his freedom, for, “the consequence of this act of freedom is the end of freedom”, as Eagleton points out (2005, p. 96). Berdyaev also affirms that Kirillov’s type of freedom ends up eroding the notion of freedom itself, arguing that “when freedom has degenerated into self-will it recognises nothing as sacred or forbidden [. . .] he lets himself get obsessed by some fixed idea, and under its tyranny freedom soon begins to disappear” ([1921] 1966, p. 96). Indeed, the highest expression of Kirillov’s self-will is not an act based in the boundless liberty of God’s grace but in the annihilation of the very image of God in man, that is, Kirillov’s freedom and autonomy (Eagleton 2005, p. 68).

Kirillov is a messiah of radical finitude (the man-god), and not the divine plenitude of Christ (God-man). Like Christ, Kirillov chooses to die to ‘save’ mankind from (the fear of) death, but unlike Christ he does not offer the promise of resurrection. Christ renounced his self-will for God’s will (Lk 22:42); Kirillov renounces God for his own will. Although Kirillov attempts to embody an opposite ideal to that of Christ, Kirillov believes in Christ as the highest man on all earth, explaining to Pyotr Stepanovich that

[t]here has not been one like *Him* [Christ] before or since, not ever, even to the point of miracle. This is the miracle, that there has not been and never will be such a one. And if so, if the laws of nature did not pity even *This One*, did not pity even their own miracle, but made *Him*, too, live amidst a lie and die for a lie, then the whole planet is a lie, and stands upon a lie and a stupid mockery. Then the very laws of the planet are a lie and a devil’s vaudeville. (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 618 emphasis original)

Pyotr Stepanovich observes that Kirillov believes in *Him* more than any priest. Kirillov denies this claim given that he, like Ippolit (*The Idiot*), does not believe that

Christ overcame the inexorable laws of nature (death). In Dostoevsky's formulation, the law of nature is death while the law of Christ is resurrection. Kirillov believes in the laws of nature which for him are a vaudeville of fear and deceit, a fear that is overcome *only* in death by killing the body.

Kirillov reifies his self-will and attempts to incarnate his idea of the man-god and thus Kirillov's Messianism takes the form of self-idolatry. Indeed, Kirillov's self-idolatry manifests as a bodily resemblance to an idol. Just before Kirillov takes his own life, Pyotr Stepanovich observes Kirillov's resemblance to an idol, with the narrator describing that "it [Kirillov] did not even move, not even stir one of its members – as if it were made out of stone or wax. The pallor of its face was unnatural, the black eyes were completely immobile, staring at some point in space (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 624). The conspicuous absence of the pronoun 'he' to describe Kirillov indicates that Kirillov no longer resembles a man, a 'he', but a stone idol; an 'it' which occupies a fixed position and stares at a fixed point in space. Romano Gaurdini likens Kirillov to a puppet or marionette, arguing that Kirillov's decision to kill himself causes him to become a lifeless abstraction (1956, p. 360) The narrator's description of Kirillov recalls an earlier illustration of Stavrogin who is also said to have black eyes, an unnatural pallor, bearing a resemblance to an inanimate wax figure (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 560). Kirillov and Stavrogin's resemblance to a stone or wax idol is a physical manifestation of their loss of humanity. Stavrogin and Kirillov, like the idol, have assumed a fixed form. Insofar as Dostoevsky characterises man's position/situation-in-the-world as being 'transitional,' to assume a fixed form, be it a monument, idol, or verminous creature, signals the loss of humanity and freedom itself.

On the other end of the spectrum of the Messianism of Kirillov, is Stavrogin, who, unlike Kirillov, neither believes in a Messiah figure nor in the strength of his self-will. The tragedy of Stavrogin is that he has no guiding ideal; he is a character who has ceased to believe in anything, good or bad. Originally Dostoevsky had intended that Stavrogin be healed of his demons, and seated at the feet of Christ, but

as Dostoevsky's work on the novel progressed, he realised that repentance was psychologically beyond Stavrogin's strength (Dostoevsky [1871] 1968, p.182). At the end of the novel, Stavrogin confesses to Dasha that he has tested his strength everywhere and that his strength has proved to be boundless, but therefore meaningless. Stavrogin says to Dasha,

I am as capable now as ever before of wishing to do a good deed, and I take pleasure in that; along with it, I wish for evil and also feel pleasure. But both the one and the other, as always, are too shallow, and are never very much. My desires are far too weak; they cannot guide. (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 675)

Stavrogin's desires have become diminished, not through the renunciation of his will and his ego, but because he perceives no further test or goal for his ego. The boundlessness of his will is caused by his lack of conscience. Without conscience, everything is permissible but therefore ultimately meaningless because the conscience serves as a morally valuating presence which ascribes meaning and order, both permissive and prohibitive. Stavrogin admits to Dasha that "[w]hat poured out of me was only negation, with no magnanimity and no force. Or not even negation. Everything is always shallow and listless" (Dostoevsky [1872] 2006, p. 676). Moral indifference has killed every force and desire in Stavrogin, both the desire to do good and the desire to do evil or to negate. Having lost all desire, Stavrogin plunges into an abyss of non-being and his freedom becomes meaningless. Stavrogin kills himself, not to negate life, but because he can neither find any further test of strength for his ego nor a guiding ideal to believe in.

The plunge over the abyss: the onto-existential consequence of nihilism

Dostoevsky maintained that only through a belief in Christ and the resurrection event could people be truly free, the ground of this freedom being God's grace. To fall outside of God's grace is to lose the ground for our freedom. Eagleton asserts that within religious contexts "[t]o fall out of his [God's] hands [is] to lapse

into nothingness" (2005, p. 69). According to Dostoevsky, if there is no God, then there is no ground for freedom, but merely a finite principle of the idea of freedom—a fearsome freedom that ends in death. Dostoevsky believed that the onto-existential consequences of nihilism were akin to the fate of the demon-possessed swine in the biblical story: the swine would be drowned after their plunge over the cliff. If, as I contend, Stavrogin, Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov represent, in their different ways, the demon-possessed man, their onto-existential possibilities are limited to two outcomes: either they remain possessed, living among the tombs with the dead, or they are healed and seated at the feet of Christ. If, however they are representative of the demon-possessed swine, then their only possibility is termination; for the demons cannot bear the presence of Christ and drive the herd of pigs over a cliff.

Whatever Dostoevsky intended the analogy to be, it is evident that Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov have been led to the cliff edge by Stavrogin, a profane Messiah who has spread demons (nihilist ideology) amongst the swine. Kirillov consciously runs over the cliff, plunging toward an abyss of non-being. Pyotr Stepanovich disappears at the end of the narrative, but his trajectory is already marked: he too flees from Christ and therefore his fate will be the same as that of Kirillov. Ostensibly, Shatov is the only exception. Unlike Pyotr Stepanovich and Kirillov messianic ideas, Shatov's Messianism never becomes for him an idol. The narrator intimates that Shatov experiences moral-spiritual renewal just before he is murdered. Although the narrator does not go into detail regarding the nature of this transformation, the narrator indicates that upon meeting his estranged wife's baby (Stavrogin's child), Shatov begins to talk of the existence of God and declares to his wife that he will set out upon a new path; one which leads away from the ontological abyss of nihilism.

In *Demons*, the nihilistic collapse of boundaries and limits can be traced back to the failure of Stavrogin, Pyotr Stepanovich, Kirillov and Shatov to enter the social and symbolic order of the 'other', that is of a socially mediated language and law. Each

fails to make the transition from the mirror-stage recognition of an illusory wholeness perceived by the (ideological) infant, into the world of language, and therefore a coherence between the ego and body. Under the aegis of nihilism, language must remain at the level of unintelligible babble. In *Demons*, a language that has meaning and a code is a language that threatens the illusory self that is constituted in the mirror-stage, along with nihilism itself. Within the context of *Demons*, nihilism can be read as an extreme absorption in the illusory self, the ramifications being identification with the non-identity of a specular self. The ontological consequence of being absorbed in an idol or the specular ideal-I perceived in the 'mirror' is a final alienation from the self. The ideal-I is a projection, a secondary image, just as utopia meaning 'no-place' (a concept I explore in the next chapter), is a projection of an ideal place, but is itself an illusion. Indeed, in *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* Dostoevsky dramatises the consequences of replacing a guiding idea, with a secondary idea. In both *An Accidental Family* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, secondary ideas arise in the form of utopianism: the idea that man can create an earthly paradise in lieu of a heavenly one. Although Dostoevsky believed in the 'principle of hope' that utopian ideals are grounded in, he also believed that a secular paradise could only ever manifest as ant-heap ideologies with the aim of making mankind into a herd, much like Shigyalovism in *Demons*.

Chapter Four: In search of a guiding ideal: utopias and idols in *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*

It is impossible to be a man and not bow down and worship. A man cannot tolerate himself, no man can. And if he rejects God, then he will bow down before an idol – a wooden one or a gold one or one made of ideas. - Makar Ivanovich (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 396)

In *An Accidental Family* Makar Ivanovich's admonition concerning mankind's tendency to create idols in lieu of God, points to the idea that if the universal thought of God is put aside, the conceptual void must be filled with something. Yet, as Makar cautions, what fills this conceptual space must necessarily be a low watermark of the divine, taking the form of an idol, be it a person, idea or material object. Makar's admonition is directed towards his legal son, Arkady Makarovitch as well as Arkady's biological father, Versilov both of whom reduce the universal thought of God to a particularity (an idol) of their own making. In this chapter I examine what form Arkady and Versilov's conceptual idols assume and why the idol represents the limits of a person's onto-existential possibilities. Makar's observation concerning mankind's tendency to construct idols also explains the aftermath of the 'Fall' of the people in the ridiculous man's dream (*The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*), who construct idols to worship in place of God. In *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, idols take the form of what Dostoevsky calls 'secondary ideas,' that is, ideas that bastardise the universally accessible thought of God (a universalism) or the ideals of Christ, by regionalising them and thus limiting them to a conceptual idol (a particularism), specific to one place or time. In *An Accidental Family*, Arkady and Versilov's 'secondary ideas' take the form of a utopian or *eutopian* vision they reify in order to transcend their realities, while, in an odd reversal, the ridiculous man's dream of a utopian world ultimately leads him back to a waking life filled with a desire to enact his newfound love and moral

responsibility for the real world, as it is.

Utopia is a Greek word meaning ‘not-place’ or ‘no-place’ (2017 OED) and was coined by Sir Thomas More in his literary work *Utopia*. Utopia is an imagined or hypothetical place, system or state of existence in which everything is perfect (2017 OED). It is, as its name indicates, a non-place; an ontologically impossible and uninhabitable space. It is an ideal or what utopian theorist Ernst Bloch calls a ‘principle of hope’ (Franco de Sá 2012, p. 28). Yet, as a place, system or narrative, it is historically empty. Indeed, Dostoevsky critic Gary Saul Morson argues that any utopian world or ideal is both historically empty and plot-less in its narrative given that the Utopian seeks to render a utopia as a completed picture of a perfect world (1981, p. 83). For Dostoevsky, such a world cannot be sustained. People are transitional creatures and while we can turn our gaze towards the ideal of Good, we are yet unable to realise it in a utopian or Christian praxis of a perfect society. *Eutopian* vision also relates to the utopian impulse to imagine an ideal state of being. *Eutopia* is a ‘good place,’ a vision of an ideal state of existence, without the ‘non-place’ connotation of utopia^{xxii}.

I begin this chapter by unpacking Dostoevsky’s relationship to utopian thinking and how this informs his critique of utopian socialism and populism, ideologies he believed were grounded in ‘secondary ideas’, that is, ideas that bastardised the ideals of Christ. Dostoevsky believed that the utopian goal of virtue without Christ was unattainable given that mankind has not evolved to desire what is good and virtuous and that any attempt to construct an earthly paradise or utopia would devolve into an ant-heap^{xxiii}, Dostoevsky’s term for a totalitarianism. In this chapter I argue that although the principle of hope which inspires utopian thinking is a positive impulse (and one which is universally salient), utopia belongs to the order of spatial imaginary and therefore must remain at the level of ideal given that an aporia necessarily exists between the word (the sign) and the idea/ideal (the symbolic). Indeed, the plot, people and topography of the utopian world cannot be adequately depicted using language. Arkady, Versilov and the ridiculous man each

encounter the problem of expressing their utopian dream or vision given the disjunction between the symbolic idea and language. Although utopian and *eutopian* elements appear throughout much of Dostoevsky's fictional and non-fictional works, I have chosen to focus on *An Accidental Family* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* for, in both narratives, a Christ-figure appears when the utopia vision begins to falter. The intervention of a Christ-figure in the ridiculous man's dream and Versilov's vision, along with the transmutation of Arkady's 'Idea' (to embody a Rothschild) into the 'Idea' of embodying Christ, signifies a rupture in their utopian as well as *eutopian* visions and a return to waking life. I also argue that akin to the idol, utopia represents the limitation of a person's onto-existential possibilities, given that both are literally or conceptually representative of a fixed, and therefore limited state. I examine this idea in light of Dostoevsky's Christian worldview and his belief that mankind is yet in transition, not yet evolved to desire what is Good and therefore incapable of realising utopia on earth.

Utopianism and populism: secondary ideas

Dostoevsky's relationship to utopian ideals and thinking began in his early twenties, a time when he was infatuated with utopian socialism. In its nascent form, utopian socialism was strongly informed by Christian morality and values and therefore Dostoevsky was naturally drawn to ideas that upheld the freedom of the individual, with Christ as the symbol of mankind's moral-spiritual freedom (Frank 2010, pp. 120-125). However, utopian socialism was introduced into Russia at the same time that Left Hegelian ideologues, such as Ludwig Feuerbach, began to level their critique against established religion; the effect of their critique was to call into question the foundations of utopian socialism (Frank 2010, p. 120). Feuerbach was a philosopher who argued that it was the task of mankind to "reclaim from the transcendent all the qualities that rightfully belonged to humanity and to realise them on earth by incorporating them into social life" (qtd. in Frank 2010, p. 121). Feuerbach believed that for too long religion had caused people to look outside of themselves to find God, and argued instead, that people should look within

themselves to find their own god-like qualities, such as love and understanding (Frank 2010, p. 121). Unlike the nascent form of utopian socialism, which was grounded in the principles of Christ, Feuerbachian socialism was materialistic and atheistic, despite its ostensibly mystical underpinnings. Utopian socialism became aligned with the new atheism of Feuerbach and the Left Hegelians and thus, utopian socialists began to imagine systems and programmes to bring about an earthly paradise. Feuerbach's atheistic form of utopianism also informed a later ideological movement that swept through Russia in the 1870s, populism.

Populism was, in part, a reaction against the utilitarian morality and materialism of rational egoism (Frank 2010, p. 684). It was a movement grounded in the idea that true morality was to be sought amongst the Russian peasantry and thus educated, middle-class youths 'went to the people' to find a "morally superior form of life, a Socialist Arcadia" (Frank 2010, p. 684). Utopian socialists and populists tended to idealise the moral life of the 'people,' while at the same time dismissing the basis of their moral life: Christ. Dostoevsky believed that virtue without Christ was a secondary or bastard idea. Using the family unit as a microcosm of Russia, in *An Accidental Family*, Dostoevsky explores the effect that illegitimate, or 'secondary' ideas have upon Russian society. Dostoevsky believed that secondary ideas arose in times of ideological confusion and disorder. Such ideas were 'accidental,' or particular to the cultural and ideological climate of a certain time and place and therefore not universal ideas applicable to all people or capable of uniting humanity as a whole. Dostoevsky believed that any human attempt to unite people would end in the creation of a second Tower of Babel. Indeed, when he encountered the Crystal Palace in London, he asked the readers of his *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, "Can this really be the accomplished ideal? – you think; – is not this the end? Is not this really the 'one herd'? Will we not have to accept this really as the whole truth and remain silent once and for all?" (Dostoevsky qtd. in Frank 2010, p. 376). For Dostoevsky, both the Crystal Palace in London and Chernyshevsky's Crystal Palace in *What is to be Done?* represented the utopian socialist ideal of the 'ant-heap'. Although Dostoevsky was influenced by the

nascent, Christian form of utopian socialism, in later years he was to conclude that, “socialism and Christianity are the antitheses of one another” (1987, p. 371). In Dostoevsky’s view, socialism attempts to create an earthly paradise while Christianity maintains that an earthly paradise is impossible given that mankind, in its present condition, is ‘fallen’.

Universal thought versus particular thought

Early on in *An Accidental Family*, Arkady, the narrator and protagonist of the narrative goes along to Degrachev’s house where a group of young ideologues are discussing utilitarian and socialist ideas. Arkady challenges the group’s ‘rational’ attitude toward their idea of a utopian society and asks them:

You deny there’s a God and any possibility of performing noble deeds, so what deaf, dumb, mindless dead weight is going to make me want to act properly if it’s more to my advantage to do otherwise? You say: ‘A rational attitude to humanity is also to my advantage’ - but what if I find all these rational ideas are irrational, all these communal barracks and phalansteries and so on?” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, pp. 60-61)

In the vein of the underground man, Arkady rejects the idea that rationality alone can compel a person to be good. For the Dergachev group, the idea of God is replaced by the idea of mankind loving itself in a secular paradise (utopia), but one that demands all of a person’s freedom and individuality. Arkady rejects their utopian fantasy arguing that, “for that little bit of average good which your rational society promises me, for a bit of bread and warmth, you take in exchange all my individuality!” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 61). Indeed, the phalanstery (Fourier’s system of communal barracks) offers the solution of the ant-heap via the collapse of individuality and freedom into forced homogeneity. For Arkady, the ant-heap, however ‘rational’, is a deaf, dumb and mindless concept that cannot compel people to act rationally and thus, paradoxically, it ends up eroding the very rationality it

claims to uphold.

The phalanstery is representative of an ant-heap insofar as it is a hypothetical enclave that protects itself by excluding difference and diversity. Alain Badiou contends that while “every truth procedure collapses differences, infinitely deploying a purely generic multiplicity, [this] does not permit us to lose sight of the fact that, in the situation (call it: the world), *there are differences*” (2003, p. 98). The truth-value of a universalism (the goal of utopia) must also recognise the real and illimitable cultural, social, political and philosophical differences that exist between people yet, utopia is impatient of contingency, as Iris Murdoch suggests (1992, p. 378). Badiou points out that a universal idea *must* expose itself to all differences and “show, through the ordeal of their division, that they are capable of welcoming the truth that traverses them” (2003, p. 106). That is to say, it is “*an Indifference that tolerates difference*” (Badiou 2003, p. 99). Utopia seeks to exclude differences and diversity (to preserve its perfect state or space), whereas a truly universal thought must traverse these.

If utopian imagination cannot aspire to the status of a universal, ‘guiding ideal’, then it follows that the practical application or deployment of utopian formulas in the social realm, is likewise fraught. In *Performativities of Space*, Barbara Hooper contends that “[t]o produce the ideal requires the transcendence and the repudiation of matter, and yet to make the ideal function in the realm of the social as ‘truth,’ repudiated matter must be present. Thus, what has been repudiated as other not only constitutes the desired identity but ‘haunts’ it” (2002, p. 111). Utopia is a specular space haunted by and constituted by that which it attempts to transcend; be it a system, state, situation or the world itself. Utopia can only function “in the realm of the social as ‘truth’” in relation to a particular imagining and in reaction to a particular context and therefore must always be a secondary idea (Hooper 2002, p. 111). Indeed, Dostoevsky critic Tat’iana Kasatkina points out that if the idea of God is abandoned, “the only thoughts that remain are secondary ones that are capable of uniting parties but never humanity as a whole” (2004, p.

39). Via Arkady, Dostoevsky contends that, “[i]t’s no big deal to overturn a fine idea, what you must do is put an equally fine one in its place” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 57). Secondary ideas will not do. Only an ‘idea-feeling’ of equal strength can replace a ‘great idea’, as Vasin suggests to Arkady in a conversation between the two after the meeting which they both attend at Dergachev’s home.

Hooper’s thesis can also be applied to the populist ideal of virtue without Christ. The Russian Populists of Dostoevsky’s time, wanted to dismiss Christ, yet what constituted the very framework of their ideal were the principles of Christ; given which we could say that Christ ‘haunts’ their ideal. Christ is the repudiated matter that must be present in the ideal, for, without Christ there would be no principles of Christ to be appropriated as a basis for a populist social ‘truth’. This is the irreconcilable paradox that confronts any process of producing the ideal: the need for the repudiated matter to produce it. The ideal arises in reaction to an undesirable situation. Utopia therefore is an ideal in its most essentialist form. It is the imagined better place that has no-place outside of the situation called the world, and yet in-the-world, the ideal of utopia is unrealisable. Utopia, as that which gives rise to a principle of hope, is *only* a principle of hope, and a corruptible one at that. Indeed, a praxis of utopia could only be deployed in the form of phalansteries or communal barracks imagined by Fourier and other utopian planners. Utopia cannot unite humanity as a whole, and therefore cannot lay claim to the ontological status of a universalism. What the Socialists and Populists had envisioned as a universalism can never be thus; it can only inevitably be a particularism and this matters because, as I have shown, a particularism is insufficient as a guiding ideal.

Transcendence and isolation: the utopian ‘elsewhere’ and the utopian enclave

In Chapter One I examined Raskolnikov and the underground man’s struggle to assert their spatial identities and their use of folly and crime to undermine systems (judicial and utilitarian) that both characters perceived as impinging upon their right to individuation. The space of the underground, while ultimately

impotent and inertial, serves as the stage upon which both characters mount their revolt against utilitarian hegemony. Despite their revolt, Raskolnikov and the underground man fail to actualise their identities in active social/spatial praxis, and this leads to something I referred to as the spectralisation of their worlds and their selves. Both characters construct space according to their own ideas and determinations, leading to an obfuscation between the real world and their fantasy worlds. In their fantasies, they imagine themselves as monumental figures (men of bronze) that have power over others and over death. Raskolnikov's and the underground man's desire for monumentalism is the outworking of a deeper desire for transcendence; to pass beyond death, space and time and into an 'elsewhere'. Yet both fail to transcend the underground through their own impetus. The underground man remains 'underground' in a world full of spectres while Raskolnikov is resurrected through the love of the iconic Mother of God/Earth figure, Sonya.

The same tropes of identity and transcendence arise in this chapter, albeit peripheral to or circling around an absent referent: utopia, the no-place space. Arkady and the ridiculous man both want to transcend the particularity of their embodied identities and do so through their fantasies and daydreams in which they envision alternative utopian/*eutopian* realities. Arkady's 'Idea' is to become a Rothschild and is therefore aligned with the monumentalism of Raskolnikov and the underground man; Arkady also wants to gain power over others, through money. It is worth noting that Arkady also lives in a *podpol'ya* space, the interstice between the roof and the house below, a space that is referred to as a 'coffin' and a 'corner'. As mentioned in Chapter One, 'corner space' breeds corner ideas which lead to ideological monumentalism. Indeed, Arkady admits that, "[m]y idea is the corner I live in" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 58). The ridiculous man also lives a solipsistic existence in a cramped homespace, and this causes the spectralisation of his world, with him contemplating whether or not the whole world would simply disappear if he ceased to exist. Psychologically speaking, Arkady and the ridiculous man inhabit corner space, much like Raskolnikov and the underground man. In the corner,

Raskolnikov and the underground man imagine themselves as monumental figures, while for Arkady and the ridiculous man, the corner gives rise to their utopian imaginings. Yet, the impulse that prompts these imaginings is the same for all characters: a desire for transcendence.

Indeed, Arkady and the ridiculous man both express a desire to transcend the reality of their position in-their-worlds. Their assigned epithets as ridiculous (the ridiculous man) and illegitimate (Arkady), prompt them to seek a means of overcoming these identities, including their very bodies, much like Kirillov in *Demons*. Hooper argues that the way to defeat the bite of matter and corporality (embodied reality) is to get rid of an attachment to body matter for, “[t]he body, solid, heavy, gravely physical, cannot escape the becomings of time and space” (2002, p. 95). Only through the mind is transcendence possible. Hooper affirms that “[t]he body remains, low to the ground, while the mind climbs out, ascends” (2002, p. 95). The difference between the mind and body is indicated by the definitions of immanence (‘to remain’) and transcendence (‘to climb over’) (Hooper 2002, p. 95). Both the ridiculous man and Arkady attempt to eliminate the ‘bite’ of space and time by eliminating their identification with their bodies. For the ridiculous man, this manifests as a desire to kill himself and thereby escape his solipsistic reality. For Arkady, illegitimacy (a body without the right blood) bars his admission into the Versilov family; he is Dolgourky by name. Arkady attempts to outstrip his reality by giving himself over to the “fiercest kind of day-dreaming” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 93), imagining himself as a Rothschild, a position that would enable him to live the good life (*eutopia*) and cancel out his illegitimate status through the power of money. Arkady suggests that, “money is the only means of taking even a nonentity *right to the very top*” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 93 emphasis original). The ridiculous man also imagines an alternative reality. In his dream, he dies and takes an incorporeal form that is able to “skip over space, time, and the laws of being and reason, pausing only at points the heart feels like selecting” (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 116). Through their fantasies and dreams, Arkady and the ridiculous man transcend their bodies to envision the “defeat of what is”, Theodor Adorno’s

definition of utopia (qtd. in Hooper 2002, p. 95). Adorno's formulation of utopia as a "defeat of what is" implies that something has been overcome, that a victory has been won. For Arkady and the ridiculous man, it is a victory over the body that is subjected to the bite of space-time; a body inextricably linked to an undesirable social status.

Arkady's and the ridiculous man's desire for transcendence is complicated by the presence of an accompanying desire for isolation. Isolation gives rise to spatial, mental and emotional distance from others as well as the social matrices which, in large part, constitute our identities. Isolation is, for Arkady and the ridiculous man, a totalising feeling that is heavy, corporeal and encrypted. For the ridiculous man, isolation causes his world to become spectral and uncertain and he begins to question whether or not the whole world is just an emanation of his mind. He says, "I realised that it *would not matter* to me whether the world existed or whether there was nothing at all anywhere. I began to intuit and sense with all my being, that *there was nothing around me*" (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 108 emphasis original). The ridiculous man's solipsism is at the basis of his moral indifference. The ridiculous man's indifference to the world causes everything around him to lose meaning, a feeling that is totalising, and assumes a "hegemony over all aspects of experience," as Dostoevsky critic Michael Holquist has pointed out (1977, p. 157). For Arkady, isolation is something he employs consciously and actively. His self-formulated 'Idea' requires monastic withdrawal from social spaces, the milieu in which ideas are brought to account or tested in social praxis. By isolating himself, he believes he can protect his 'Idea' from the critical gaze of others. Arkady identifies that if he were to share his idea with others, they might demolish it. Arkady informs the reader that his 'Idea' is not just about power, but isolation and describes his 'Idea' as the 'corner' he lives in. Indeed, both characters vacillate between transcendence and isolation as the means through which they attempt either to eliminate their social identity (the ridiculous man) or to gain a new social identity (Arkady). Both characters seem unwilling to deal with the reality that "[t]o function in the realm of the social requires the incorporation of an identity, even if this

identity carries a negative valence; not to be a subject with an identity is tantamount to living outside the social: it is being no one, nowhere” (Creswell 1996, p. 112). To have no identity is to have no-place (utopia), an inversion of the utopian ideal of a collective and shared identification. The state of being isolated can be likened to a utopian enclave that protects itself by remaining hidden. In the social realm, such a state is akin to having ‘no-place’ and therefore the person who isolates himself or herself could be said to have no identity in the social realm.

The problem of writing: how to complete the utopian picture

The problem Arkady and the ridiculous man face in attempting to crystalise their utopian visions is, in part, caused by the aporia that exists between the word (the sign) and the idea (the symbolic). Arkady and the ridiculous man both alert their readers to the problem of writing and the problem they face in attempting to translate their utopian visions into words. The ridiculous man says, “but how to construct paradise - I don’t know, because I can’t convey it in words” (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 127), while Arkady also identifies that he cannot find the words for his impressions “because they’re all fantasy, just poetry, after all, and therefore nonsense” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 144). Philologist, Ferdinand de Saussure contends that the word (signifier) is always the trace of an absent (or disappearing) referent (the signified) ([1916] 2010, p. 858), while Lacanian theorist, Andre Nusselder argues that the concept itself, being the Signified (or for our purposes, utopia), is constructed by signifiers (2009, p. 61). The question arises: do signifiers construct utopia or are signifiers incapable of accessing the “already present concept” of utopia? (Nusselder 2009, p. 61). Whatever the case, it is evident that the signifier (utopian imagination) and Signified (Utopia) are, to use a geometric term, asymptotic; they are ever approaching but never meet. Any attempt to produce an artistically finished picture of utopia, belongs to the workings of fantasy for utopian fantasy is devoid of any lived reality or historical narrative; it offers a vision of a completed picture which is an illusion.

In *An Accidental Family*, Arkady's mentor, Nikolay Semyonovich, addresses the problem of the illusion of a 'completed picture' which he maintains is the goal of the typical Russian novel. Arkady sends Nikolay Semyonovich his 'notes' detailing events concerning his accidental family, the same 'notes' that constitute the narrative. Nikolay reads Arkady's notes and replies to him with the advice that if the novelist wants to make a good impression, they must draw inspiration from the Russian nobility, for in their society beauty and refinement of living can be found, which is, he argues, essential to the novel. However, Nikolay also asserts that such a novel "would provide an artistically finished picture of a Russian mirage, but one that really existed so long ago that no one guessed it was a mirage" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 595). Nikolay alludes to the idea that the 'historical' Russian novel is paradoxically historically empty insofar as the artistically complete picture it produces never existed; an observation made in reference to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Arkady's mentor also indicates that perhaps one day Arkady's notes could achieve the seemliness of an artistically finished picture, "a future picture of a disorderly but already vanished epoch. Oh, when what is topical has ceased to be and the future has arrived, then a future painter will seek beautiful forms even for depicting all the past discord and chaos!" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 596). Nikolay facetiously alludes to the idea that disorder and chaos can be rendered as aesthetically pleasing because people want to believe in the illusion of a historical Golden Age. Yet such novels are an illusion of a finished picture, and therefore, as Versilov says of the Golden Age, the "most implausible dream of all" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 492).

In *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky examines why it is that the idea of a Golden Age can only exist as a dream. Dostoevsky identified that utopian or Golden Age visions cannot be experienced by anyone other than the original visionary. Dreams, along with spiritual or utopian visions are highly personal and subjective; they can neither be accurately reproduced, nor can someone else feel the 'idea-feeling' of the original vision in the same way. In 'The Golden Age in Your Pocket', Dostoevsky imagines what it would be like if everyone, even for a moment, desired to become

sincere and honest. Dostoevsky believed that if it were possible, in that moment everyone would recognise how beautiful, pure, joyful and noble they are. Dostoevsky asks his readers, “Do you know that each of you, if you only wanted, could at once make everyone in this room happy and fascinate them all? And this power exists in every one of you, but it is so deeply hidden that you have long ceased to believe in it. Do you really think that the golden age exists only on porcelain teacups?” ([1876] 1993, p. 308). Dostoevsky concludes that people cannot believe in the still-frame images of a past Golden Age in view of the fact that they cannot believe that they can be good. Thus, the Golden Age is reduced to a pretty picture, an aesthetic ideal painted on porcelain; a fragile palimpsest which can be broken or reinscribed. Dostoevsky indicates that the construction of a Golden Age picture or a utopian world cannot just be the fantasy of the completed picture, it has to be a *living image*, or what Bakhtin calls a ‘living possibility’ ([1968] 1981, p. 48) with intersubjective potential. The living possibility is an onto-existential possibility that can affect transformation. The power of the living image exists within each person, that is, to imagine utopia or a Golden Age or a better quality of existence, but this cannot be a reproduction; it must be an individual imagining that transforms a person through a living or lived through image of an ideal.^{xxiv}

The ridiculous man’s dream of utopia

The Dream of a Ridiculous Man contains utopian and Golden Age elements that are ultimately resolved by a Christ-figure willing to sacrifice himself to ‘save’ humanity. In the short story, the ridiculous man’s dream prompts a moral response within him to assume responsibility for the prelapsarian world he corrupts. The ridiculous man describes his life before the dream as one consumed by indifference and ennui. He lives alone, in a solipsistic world in which he has divested himself of all moral responsibility for others. Like the underground man, he never identifies himself by a proper name, but resigns himself to an identity that marks him as a marginal figure: the ridiculous man. On his way home one night, the ridiculous man resolves to take his own life. He also encounters a little girl on the same night who pleads with him to help her dying mother. Although the ridiculous man chases the

girl away, the encounter is the indirect cause of him deferring his death. Before he is able to shoot himself, he falls asleep and has a dream.

The dream begins with his intended suicide. He shoots himself and is placed in a coffin and buried in the ground. After spending some time in his tomb, an unknown being opens his grave and carries him through time and space to the lost planet of a prelapsarian world. He arrives on a planet peopled by an innocent race who live in communion with each other and the world around them. He recalls that

[t]hey had no shrine but they did have a kind of consonant, vital, living communion with the universal Whole; they had no religious creed, instead they were secure in the knowledge that when their earthly joy reached the utmost limit of earthly nature, there would come for both the living and the dead a still ampler breadth of contact with the universal Whole. (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 121)

The people of the lost planet live in an ideal state, a truly human utopia in which the idea of God is distilled into the idea-feeling of a universal whole. Michael Holquist points out that the ridiculous man's vision of utopia is a "whole that admits no independent parts, where men, animals, even stones and stars are subsumed in a great sameness - is merely an extension of a fundamental trait of the activity of dreaming: the laws of utopia derive not from politics but from the dreamwork" (1977, p.163). Holquist suggests that the possibility of a utopian world in which people live in harmony with all of creation can only exist as a dream; for dream matrices elide those aspects of reality that tend towards difference and fragmentation, offering the dreamer a complete world or image (1977, p. 163). The utopian world of the ridiculous man's dream is an historically empty, albeit beautiful illusion, and one which he disrupts by his very presence. His appearance in the prelapsarian world causes its 'Fall'.

The ridiculous man corrupts the people of the lost planet, but we are not told how. Rather, the ridiculous man describes the aftermath of their 'Fall', beginning with the division that occurs amongst the people. The ridiculous man observes that

the people began to move apart and divide against one another: “The struggle began for separateness, isolation, personal identity, what’s yours and what’s mine [. . .] when they became wicked, they started talking of brotherhood and humane values and grasped these concepts” (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 124). Ideology replaces theosis (divine union); theories of virtue and brotherhood replace the people’s living communion with the Whole. The ridiculous man observes that the people could no longer live as if they were innocent and free. The very idea of their innocence becomes encrypted in the forgotten symbols of a fairy tale they no longer believe. The ridiculous man observes that

[t]hey retained only the faintest recollection of what they had lost and had no desire to believe that they had once been innocent and happy [. . .] having lost any credence in their former happiness, calling it a fairy tale, they so longed to be innocent and happy once more, all over again that, childlike, they fell down before this, their heart’s desire, deified it, built temples, and began to worship their own idea, their own ‘desire’, and tearfully bowed before it in adoration, while at the same time utterly discounting its feasibility or the possibility of its realisation. (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 124)

Here Dostoevsky identifies one of mankind’s most profound onto-existential dilemmas: our desire to believe in the Universal Whole/theosis, while at the same time denying the feasibility or possibility of its realisation here on earth. Because we cannot truly believe in the revelation of the universal (God), we turn to the particular (the idol). Indeed, in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, the desires of the corrupted people take the form of idols they worship, a poor simulacrum of the living communion they once enjoyed. To reiterate, in *An Accidental Family*, Makar Ivanovich asserts that, “it is impossible to be a man and not bow down and worship. A man cannot tolerate himself, no man can. And if he rejects God, then he will bow down before an idol – a wooden one or a gold one or one made of ideas” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 396). If God is rejected, mankind will turn to the low watermark of the divine, that is, to an idol of its own making. Jean-Luc Marion

contends that the conceptual idol “freezes the divine in a concept, an invisible mirror” (1995, p. 29). The people of the ridiculous man’s dream deify their own desires, and thus their idolatry is self-idolatry. They can no longer believe in the divine, universal Whole they once participated in, and instead, worship their own, particular desires. The ridiculous man, pained by their blindness, assumes responsibility for their degeneration. He pleads with them to crucify him, offering himself as a Christ-figure to save them and tries to teach them how to make a cross, yet they dismiss him as ‘ridiculous’ and the dream ends.

Upon returning to a waking state, the ridiculous man finds it difficult to construct the world he encountered in his dream. He says, “but how to construct paradise - I don’t know, because I can’t convey it in words. After the dream, I have lost the words” (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 127). The utopian vision belongs to a discourse that Badiou identifies as miraculous or mystical, an “unutterable’ discourse” (2003, p. 52). The event of the dream cannot be constructed with words, for to do so would relegate the vision to the world of the sign. There is a disjunction between the symbolic thought of the vision and its representation. The utopian ideal must remain on the level of symbolic thought (or what Badiou calls unutterable discourse) or else be at risk of becoming a completed image (subject to appropriation by totalitarianisms). The ridiculous man laments that he cannot recount the details of the utopian world he encountered, yet the idea-feeling (the symbolic thought) remains. He says, “its *living image* has filled my soul forever” (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 127 emphasis original). The ‘living image’ connotes an image that is dynamic and therefore yet to assume a fixed form. Although the ridiculous man’s living image of utopia has ‘no-place’ (or space) other than in his spatial imaginary, as a living image (as opposed to fixed tableaux or completed image), it has the power to affect moral transformation. Although the ridiculous man can neither create paradise on earth nor reconstruct the topography of the utopian world of his dream, utopia as a *topic* (not topography) can be the subject of a discourse that explores the possibility of a better world (Marin 1984, p. 115). The ridiculous man discovers that mankind could achieve something approximate to a state-of-being-in-utopia, if people *wake up from dreams*, and assume moral

responsibility for the *real* world as it is.

The Dream of a Ridiculous Man is a parabolic exemplum of moral responsibility. Through the ridiculous man's dream, Dostoevsky shows that it is not in a fabled Golden Age or a utopian future that mankind was/is made good, instead, individually and collectively we must assume moral responsibility for the earth in its present, 'fallen' condition. The short story of the ridiculous man anticipates Zosima's key maxim in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "that each of us is guilty in everything before everyone, and I most of all" ([1880]1990, p. 289). Dostoevsky maintained that assuming responsibility for our sin and moral degeneration, is the necessary first step on the path to moral-spiritual regeneration; individually and collectively. The ridiculous man's vision of utopia and the subsequent corruption of his utopia leads him, upon awakening, to assume responsibility for the real world. The ridiculous man asks himself:

If I had formerly lived on the moon or on Mars, and had there perpetrated the most shameful and dishonourable action one could possibly imagine [. . .] and if, once finding myself back on earth, I were to preserve the awareness of what I had done on that other planet, and moreover knew that I would never go back there under any circumstances then, looking up at the moon from earth, would I be indifferent or not? Would I feel shame for that action or not? (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 113)

The dream provides him with an answer to this question. The ridiculous man returns to waking life filled with a new-found moral responsibility for all people. The ridiculous man's narrative concludes with the following:

In one day, *in one hour* it [utopia] could all be brought about at once! The chief thing is to love others as oneself, that's the main thing, and that's it - absolutely nothing more is necessary: you would immediately discover how to bring it about. (Dostoevsky [1877] 2009, p. 128)

The ridiculous man's closing words reiterate Dostoevsky's thought in 'The Golden Age in Your Pocket' in which Dostoevsky imagines what it would be like if everyone, even for a moment, desired to become sincere and honest: the impossible-possibility of utopia. The story of the ridiculous man is an anti-utopia utopia. It is an anti-utopian utopia insofar as it highlights that the socialist utopian vision is a dream which admits no independent parts, whereas the ridiculous man's dream of utopia leads him back to reality to enact his new-found moral agency in *real life*.

Versilov's Golden Age and utopian vision

Throughout the narrative of *An Accidental Family*, Versilov maintains two distinct visions or ideals that he associates respectively with an historical Golden Age and a future utopia. The two visions represent two distinct temporal and spatial topographies: one is of a time past, in the Grecian archipelago, and the other is placed at the end of European civilisation, in a future, utopian, 'not-yet'. 'The Golden Age' is the name that Versilov gives to a painting by Claude Lorrain entitled, 'Acis and Galatea'. Versilov appropriates the images of the painting to construct his vision of a Golden Age, yet, like Stavrogin's vision of a Golden Age in the censored chapter of *Demons*, Versilov's dream is a misreading of the myth of Acis and Galatea depicted in Lorrain's painting. Dostoevsky critic, Richard Peace, argues that the myth of Acis and Galatea is not consonant with Versilov or Stavrogin's dream of a Golden Age. Peace points out that the setting of the painting is not the Grecian archipelago, but the slopes of Mt. Etna in Sicily and that the scene in Lorrain's painting does not depict man living in communion with nature rather a man and a woman unaware of the world around them, with the Cyclops, Polypheme (the ogre of jealousy) lurking in the background (1982, p. 67)^{xxv}. Versilov, however, sees in the painting an image of human paradise. He wants to be consoled by the idea that at one-point people were able to live in harmony with one another and with the gods. Yet the Golden Age is nothing but a consoling dream, and, as Iris Murdoch contends, almost anything that consoles us is a fake given that it attempts to elide the more painful aspects of reality ([1971] 2001, p. 58). The Golden Age cannot be a

guiding ideal. As a dream, a past age or a pretty picture, it contains no universal truth value in the real world. While the idea that a Golden Age once existed might console us at a given moment, to cast our vision back to an illusionary past, is a movement which directs our attention away from seeing the real and present world as it is (and *seeing* is necessary to moral vision and action) (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 36). Versilov concedes that his Golden Age ideal is the “most implausible dream of all” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 492). Versilov is in search of a universal, guiding ideal, and, unable to find it in a nostalgic past Golden Age, he looks to the future in the hope that there, in a utopian world, he might find his longed for ideal.

In Versilov’s utopian vision, utopia is brought about by the death of God (in a Nietzschean sense). In the vein of Feuerbach, Versilov proffers his belief in the idea that if mankind could reclaim the virtue of love and understanding from the transcendent, that there would be no need for belief in God or immortality and that humanity would direct its love toward itself. Versilov imagines that if mankind were left alone in the world and that if the idea of God and immortality were forgotten, mankind would be seized by a love of itself and of the earth. Versilov tells Arkady that in the future “the great idea of immortality would have gone for good and would have to be replaced, and all the great abundance of earlier love for what had been immortality would have become directed by men towards nature, towards the world, towards people and every blade of grass” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 497). In Versilov’s vision, people would hurry to love and embrace one another knowing that their days were short, with the idea that others would remain after they are gone, replacing the idea of meeting beyond the grave.

Versilov envisions the possibility of a material utopia or what utopian theorist Adriana Benzaquén calls a “truly human society in which the negation of suffering is the goal replacing religious notions of an afterlife” (2012, p. 152). If there is no suffering, including the suffering of the fear of death, the notion of the redemption of suffering in an afterlife would become outmoded. Versilov’s vision dramatises a type of secular resurrection, “a moment of fulfilment and redemption without a God guaranteeing its realisation. [Versilov’s] utopian thinking borders on

mysticism, a worldly mysticism, a mysticism without God” (Benzaquén 2012, p. 158). Indeed, Versilov describes himself as a ‘philosophical deist’, that is, he does not reject the idea of God outright, but he does not believe that God intervenes in the world. He is a worldly mystic, while Makar Ivanovoich, Arkady’s ‘other’ father, is an otherworldly mystic. The two fathers also represent two possible paths which Arkady can choose to follow, an idea I discuss further below in relation to the transmutation of Arkady’s ‘Idea’. Returning to Versilov, his claim of being a philosophic deist is undermined by Versilov himself, who introduces Christ into his vision. In his vision, Christ asks of the people of Versilov’s utopian world, “How could you have forgotten about Him [God]?” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 498). Although Versilov believes in the utopian principle of hope that humanity can resurrect itself through love, his ‘nostalgia’ for God prompts him to *complete* the utopian image with the figure of Christ. If we recall Barbara Hooper’s thesis regarding how an ideal is always haunted by the repudiated matter it seeks to transcend, and apply it to Versilov’s populist utopian vision, the appearance of Christ in Versilov’s vision, is a haunting of sorts. In his vision of a secular utopia, Versilov would dismiss the need for God and Christ on the grounds that mankind had learned to be virtuous and loving of its own volition, and yet his ideal of a truly human utopia is an ideal grounded in Christ’s principles and therefore Christ haunts his ideal.

Versilov is in search for a higher ideal, the ideal that the individual can love others as they love themselves and of their own volition but, as Versilov points out, it is a fantasy, an abstraction he has created and one that he cannot believe. Versilov says to Arkady

It is impossible to love one’s neighbour and not despise him. In my opinion, it is physically impossible for a man to love his neighbour. From the very start there’s been a kind of verbal confusion at work here. The words ‘love of humanity’ should be understood as only applying to the image of humanity one has created for oneself in one’s own soul - in other words, you have created yourself and so you love yourself - but it has never existed in reality

and never will. (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 229)

Versilov neither believes in his own utopia nor the image of humanity he has constructed, for both are, as Makar Ivanovich maintains, an idol “made of ideas” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 396). Versilov’s utopian vision is only an image of self-love and therefore belongs to the domain of the idol (Marion 1995, p. 28). If it were not for the intervention of a Christ figure in his utopia, Versilov’s vision would simply be an idol made of ideas. Only Christ, the moral exemplum of responsibility and love *par excellence*, can embody the goal of perfect brotherly love (shared by Christians and Utopians) and thus *complete* the vision. Dostoevsky indicates that without Christ, we have no-place in a utopian world or a heavenly world. Without the mediation of Christ, utopia and heaven are literally and symbolically inaccessible spaces.

The transmutation of Arkady’s ‘Idea’

Like Versilov, Arkady is in search of a guiding ideal and formulates his ‘Idea’ in lieu of the ideological inheritance or guidance he had looked to receive from Versilov. When Arkady asks Versilov, “What is the Great Idea?”, Versilov answers by saying, “[w]ell, turning stones into bread, that’s one . . . It’s a great one, but of secondary importance and only great at any given moment because a man will eat his fill and then forget about it.” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 227). Versilov touches upon the problem of the utopian socialist and *eutopian* aim: when the material needs of man are met and man has had his fill of bread (or money, as would be the case with Arkady’s ‘secondary idea’), what is next? (Kasatkina 2004, p. 39) Turning stones to bread is an inversion of Christ’s injunction that, “man does not live by bread alone”^{xxvi} (Matt. 4:4). Indeed, turning stones to bread is not *the* great idea because it can only be a great idea at a given (particular) moment and is therefore a secondary idea. Kasatkina points out that “the basic constituent trait of inversions is that they are secondary, in the sense that they are incomplete, for even after they have been achieved, one is still left asking “what next?” or “what for?” (2004, p. 39).

Versilov is unable to answer Arkady's question: 'What is the Great Idea?' because he does not know what *the* Great Idea is. Versilov is unable to provide ideological or spiritual guidance for Arkady given that Versilov himself has no guiding ideal.

As Arkady begins to piece together Versilov's history and attempts to discover what motivates his father, Arkady realises that Versilov is simply an illusion, an idol that he has created from his childhood memories. Arkady admits, "it had turned out that this man was only an illusion of mine, a day-dream left over from childhood. I had invented him, but in fact he had turned out to be someone else who had fallen short of my fantasies about him. I had travelled to find someone pure, not *this* man" (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, 77 emphasis original). Arkady realises that his image of Versilov is one that he himself has created. He has idolised his father, fantasised about him and when he finds out that Versilov is not a pure man guided by a higher ideal, he turns to the iconic figure of his legal father, Makar Ivanovich. Arkady's dual parentage points to two paths set before him. Indeed, Kasatkina observes that,

Arkady's dual parentage gives rise to confusion regarding his patronymic: sometimes he is called Makarovitch and sometimes Andreyevitch, and the two appellations indicate the two paths between which the hero must choose. Since Arkady derives from Arcadia (the blessed land, bliss), Arkady Makarovitch is the blessed land, the bliss of the blessed—or, in other words, *paradise*, and Arkady Andreyevitch is the bliss of man—or *passion*. (2004, p. 58)

Throughout the narrative, Arkady straddles the two paths indicated by Kasatkina. Arkady must choose between the bliss of man (*eutopia*) or the bliss of the blessed (heavenly paradise). The fact that Arkady's name derives from Arcadia aligns him with the utopian principle of striving toward a perfect state, but also that he, like the lost world of Arcadia, has no-place. Arkady's lack of place relates to his lack of belonging within the Versilov family; he is Dolgoruky by name. In Makar Ivanovich,

Arkady finds the spiritual parentage he had sought in Versilov, and, under Makar's influence, Arkady's 'Idea' of embodying a Rothschild (the bliss of man or *eutopia*) is transformed into a desire to embody Christ (the bliss of heavenly paradise).

At the end of his Notes, Arkady anticipates the reader's query about his 'Idea', proffering that

[t]he reader may like to know what happened to my 'Idea,' and what my new life is, the one beginning for me now which I have talked about so tantalisingly. But this new life, this path which has opened up before me, *is* my 'Idea', the very same one as before though in a completely different form and therefore unrecognisable. (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 591)

The evolution of Arkady's 'Idea' is not detailed. There is no indication that his 'Idea' has been changed into another form and yet at the end of his 'Notes' Arkady informs the reader that there is a *new life* and a *new path* that has opened up before him. Kasatkina quotes from Lada Syrovatko who contends that "the 'idea transmuted into feeling' of 'becoming a Rothschild'—that is, *of embodying that image in oneself*—is replaced by the idea of embodying a different image—the image of Christ" (2004, p. 42). The very language Arkady uses to describe the change in his 'Idea' recalls Christ's description of himself as the way and the life (and also the truth) (Jn. 14:6). Arkady's new 'Idea' is the same as his old 'Idea' insofar as both ideas require monastic discipline in order for Arkady to transcend his self-identity/identification. Yet, his former idea to become a Rothschild is replaced by a desire to become *like* Christ, to begin upon a path that leads to a new life. The promise of following the way of Christ is access to the Father. Christ said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6 NIV). Arkady's desire to be recognised as a son by his biological father (Versilov) is transmuted into a desire to be recognised by his spiritual father (Makar), and by extension, God the Father.

In the fatherless worlds of *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, Dostoevsky develops the idea that if God and Christ are put aside, only secondary ideas remain. Indeed, the novelistic trope of illegitimacy not only pertains to familial illegitimacy, but to ideological illegitimacy as well. As Arkady says, “It’s no big deal to overturn a fine idea, what you must do is put an equally fine one in its place” (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 57). In *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, Dostoevsky dramatises the consequences of replacing a guiding idea/a universalism, with a secondary idea/a particularity. In both *An Accidental Family* and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, secondary ideas arise in the form of utopianism. Utopia as a place (no-place) or as a thought (the fantasy of creating a secular, earthly paradise) is a secondary idea. It is the idea that humanity, of its own volition, can create a paradisiacal place to inhabit on earth. Although Dostoevsky believed in the ‘principle of hope’ that utopian ideals are grounded in, he also believed that secular utopias are begotten of ant-heap ideologies that aim to make humanity into a herd. When utopian imagination is appropriated by ideology, utopias can take the form of totalising (totalitarian) systems that demand the eradication of all differences and identity. Such systems attempt to find a formula for the unification of all people, while denying the living soul of the person and the living ideal of Christ. Such was the case with the Feuerbachian socialism of Dostoevsky’s time, as well as the Euclidean Church of the Grand Inquisitor, which I examine in the next chapter.

Active love: the ideal of Christ

Dostoevsky believed that utopias could not be realised on earth because humans are transitional creatures, not yet evolved to desire what is good. If, as Dostoevsky suggests the “final goal of humanity” is an earthly paradise, and if we achieved this goal, Dostoevsky believed that humanity would cease to be; no longer engaged in an elemental struggle to develop towards this ideal. Indeed, this final goal of humanity would signal the teleological end of all narratives and the apocalypse of the human personality as it is. Thus, the onto-existential possibilities

of the citizens of utopia are not *our* possibilities, given that we have not yet evolved to desire purely what is virtuous and good. The utopian ideal shares the Christian ideal of a brotherhood of mankind united in love, with the law of individuality (the *I*) as the barrier to its realisation. Yet, while Christianity replaces the *I* with Christ, utopia would collapse the *I* into the collective. After his first wife's death Dostoevsky wrote

To love a person *as one's own self* according to the commandment of Christ is impossible. The law of individuality on earth is the constraint, 'I' is the stumbling block. Christ alone was able to do this, but Christ was eternal, an eternal ideal toward which man strives and the laws of nature should strive. Meanwhile, after the appearance of Christ, as the *idea of man incarnate*, it became as clear as day that the highest, final development of the individual should attain precisely the point (at the very end of his development, at the very point of reaching the goal) where man might find, recognise, and with all the strength of his nature be convinced that the highest use which he can make of his individuality, of the full development of his *I*, is to seemingly annihilate that *I*, to give it wholly to each and every one wholeheartedly and selflessly [. . .] But if the final goal of humanity (and have attained it, it would no longer be necessary to develop, that is, to attain, to struggle, to glimpse the ideal through all one's falls and eternally strive towards it, - consequently it would not be necessary to live), then it follows that man attaining it would also end his earthly existence. Thus, on earth man is only a developing creature, consequently one not completed but transitional. (Dostoevsky [1864] 1973, p. 39)

The law of individuality, the *I* of the ego is a constraint that limits humanity to an earthly existence for we are not yet capable of annihilating the ego and becoming like Christ, the eternal ideal. For Dostoevsky, it is not utopia that offers the promise of a state of union and brotherly love for all mankind through the annihilation of the 'thine' and 'mine' (as is the case in the ridiculous man's dream), rather the hope to

see God's kingdom come on earth. Dostoevsky believed that if people made themselves responsible for others and loved others as they love themselves, that something akin to a utopian universalism *could* unite mankind. Dostoevsky maintained that one *can* believe in universal brotherhood so long it is grounded in the principles of Christ. Christ set a precedent for humanity in the wholehearted and selfless giving of his *I* in which the abnegation of his ego paradoxically equated to the fullest expression of his self-will. For Dostoevsky, the ideal of Christ must compel us towards the highest expression of our humanity, which is achieved in active love for another person *as one's own self*. When we love others as we love our self, the boundaries between the self and Other are collapsed, equating to 'non-identical', ontological freedom.^{xxvii}

What is fundamental to Dostoevsky's Christian worldview is that we can grow in goodness by looking towards the guiding ideal of Christ. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, Iris Murdoch contends that

[t]he argument for looking outward at Christ and not inward at Reason is that the self is such a dazzling object that if one looks there one may see nothing else [an idol]. But as I say, so long as the gaze is directed upon the ideal the exact formulation will be a matter of history and tactics in a sense which is not rigidly determined by religious dogma, and understanding of the ideal will be partial in any case. Where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and grow by looking. ([1971] 2001, p. 30)

This idea of 'growing by looking' at the ideal is key to how we understand Dostoevsky's belief that a guiding ideal is necessary to man, or else he will believe in "an idol – a wooden one or a gold one or one made of ideas." (Dostoevsky [1875] 1994, p. 396). For Dostoevsky, Christ is *the* guiding ideal *par excellence*. Without Christ, there could be no earthly utopia or access to a heavenly world. In the utopian and *eutopian* visions of Arkady, Versilov and the ridiculous man, a Christ-figure

intervenes to 'complete' the vision. Christ represents the impossible ideal of perfect love and forgiveness, ideals that can never be 'complete' in man while he is on earth. Dostoevsky maintained that the human personality is still in transition; we are yet on the threshold between moral action and inaction, between our baser desires and higher virtues, between order and chaos and between good and evil. We cannot yet overcome the 'I' through a socialist utopian eradication of individuality, or in the Christian striving to annihilate the ego, and thus in this life we can only ever be on a threshold looking towards the ideal.

Although the idea of utopia keeps alive the 'principle of hope' that humanity could realise utopia on earth, the human personality and its unruly freedom is not amenable to utopian existence. The onto-existential possibilities of the citizens of a utopia are not our possibilities. The space of utopia is not our space because it represents a completed picture, a dream that elides reality. Indeed, Dostoevsky believed that any system which attempts to create the illusion of a completed picture while denying the freedom of the individual, is a morally dangerous fantasy. If the individual cannot assume moral responsibility for themselves and the world, we are prey to totalitarian ideology and all of the horrors of hell (the gulags, concentration camps and systematised genocides of the twentieth century). Indeed, in Ivan Karamazov's thought experiment, the 'Grand Inquisitor', Dostoevsky shows that the logical conclusion of ideologies which permit no alternative epistemological or ontological frameworks, is the complete evisceration of the human personality and spirit, unto death. In the next chapter, I explore the foundations of Ivan Karamazov's thinking which is grounded in the axioms of Euclidean geometry, and show why, spatially and conceptually, Ivan's Euclidean thinking represents the limit of his onto-existential possibilities.

Chapter Five: Ivan Karamazov's Euclidean epistemology and its onto-existential significance in *The Brothers Karamazov*

There are some philosophers and geometers who doubt that the whole universe and the whole of being is created purely in accordance with Euclidean geometry and even dream that two parallel lines could meet in eternity, impossible according to Euclidean geometry. If I cannot understand even that, then it is not for me to understand about God. I humbly confess that I do not have the ability to resolve such questions, I have a Euclidean mind, an earthly mind, and therefore it is not for us to resolve things that are not of this world. And I advise you never to think about it, Alyosha my friend, and most especially about whether God exists or not. All such questions are completely unsuitable to a mind created with a concept of only three dimensions. (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 235) - Ivan Karamazov

In my view, *The Brothers Karamazov* is Dostoevsky's most spiritually profound work in which the 'eternal questions' concerning God, immortality and human suffering and freedom are the central forces around which the novel revolves. In their different ways, each of the Karamazov brothers explores the eternal questions and their respective explorations inform, in part, how they construct their identities. The narrative action is centred around a 'whodunit'. Fyodor Karamazov, the profligate father of Dmitri, Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov is murdered, and Dmitri, his eldest son and rival for the affections of Grushenka, is arrested and subsequently condemned as a murderer. However, as the narrative unfolds, we learn that it is Smerdyakov, the illegitimate son of Fyodor, who commits parricide under the influence of Ivan Karamazov's ideas. Although the structure of the narrative centres upon events leading up to and after Fyodor's murder, Dostoevsky uses this to structure his exploration of the 'eternal questions'. Long

before he began working on *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky had hoped to write a novel dealing explicitly with the existence of God. In a letter to A. N. Maikov March 25/April 6, 1870, Dostoevsky wrote, “The main question which will run through all the parts of the novel is the question that has tormented me either consciously or unconsciously all my life – the existence of God^{xxviii}” ([1870]1987, p. 331). In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky deploys all of his creative power and offers a monumental *pro et contra* to the question of God’s existence and essence. Dostoevsky platforms this exploration by contrasting two distinct onto-existential frameworks of meaning that are grounded on the axioms of Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry, respectively.

Euclid of Alexandria was a fourth century Greek mathematician whose five geometric axioms became the unchallenged geometric system up until the nineteenth century when proponents of non-Euclidean geometry challenged Euclid’s fifth postulate. The five postulates of Euclidean geometry are as follows:

- 1) A straight line can be drawn joining any two points.
 - 2) Any straight-line segment can be extended indefinitely in a straight line.
 - 3) Given any straight-line segment, a circle can be drawn having the segment as radius and an endpoint as centre.
 - 4) All right angles are congruent.
 - 5) If two lines are drawn, which intersect a third line in such a way that the sum of the inner angles on one side is less than two right angles, then the two lines must intersect each other on that side if extended far enough.
- (Ravindran 2007, p. 27)

Euclidean space is two or three-dimensional and consists of plane surfaces where curvature everywhere is less than zero. On plane surfaces, parallel lines cannot meet (Ravindran 2007, pp. 26-27) Non-Euclidean geometry differs from Euclidean geometry only where the fifth postulate (the parallel postulate) is concerned. In curved spaces (elliptical, spherical or hyperbolic) the parallel postulate is violated, and parallel lines can intersect in such spaces, or, to put it more accurately, the very

notion of parallel lines ceases to exist^{xxix}.

Although some Dostoevsky critics (Knapp 1978, p. 108 and Terras 1981, p. 219) have assumed that Dostoevsky became acquainted with Bolyai-Lobachevskian (non-Euclidean) geometry in the course of his studies at the Academy of Military Engineers, this could not have been the case. Alexander Brookes points out that it is highly unlikely that Dostoevsky encountered these non-Euclidean theories during his time at the Academy of Military Engineers as Dostoevsky's teachers were unlikely to have introduced non-Euclidean geometry to their students because at that time (late 1830s and early 1840s) professional mathematicians did not take Lobachevsky's geometry seriously (Brookes 2013, p. 20). János Bolyai and Nikolai Lobachevsky were the first mathematicians to independently explicate a non-Euclidean variant to Euclid's universally accepted axioms, but it was Carl Fredrich Gauss, a friend of Bolyai's father, who first propounded (though never published) non-Euclidean postulates (Torrentti 1978, p. 50). Gauss was reluctant to explicate a non-Euclidean geometry given that he believed that human understanding was unable to comprehend the essence of space (Torretti 1978, p. 50). Roberto Torretti quotes Gauss, "I am ever more convinced that the necessity of our geometry cannot be proved, at least not *by*, and not *for*, our HUMAN understanding. Maybe in another life we shall attain insights into the essence of space which are now beyond our reach" (1978, p. 55 emphasis original). Dostoevsky would also come to view the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean geometry in a similar light. Much like the concept of an afterlife, in a yet unknown spatial reality, non-Euclidean space was likewise beyond human understanding.

Dostoevsky did not encounter Bolyai-Lobachevskian geometry directly, rather, he was introduced to non-Euclidean geometry by his friend Nikolai Strakhov who had read Hermann von Helmholtz's article, 'The Origin and Meaning of Geometrical Axioms' in which Helmholtz engages with Bernhard Riemann's analytical geometry (Riemann was a student of Gauss). In this article, Helmholtz rejects the unchallenged instrumentality of Euclidean geometry as the only model

for conceptualising space. Helmholtz argues that, “geometrical axioms must vary according to the kind of space inhabited” (1876, p. 305). By way of example, Helmholtz imagines how a surface/plane-dwelling being (as opposed to a sphere-dwelling being) would determine what the shortest or straightest line between two points would be. For the surface/plane-dweller this line would be straight or geodesic, for the sphere dweller, an arc of a great circle. The surface/plane-dweller would understand the concept of infinite parallel lines extended over their two-dimensions; the sphere-dweller would know nothing of parallel lines because any two straight lines of a certain length, would eventually cut, at least at one point if not two (Helmholtz 1876, p. 305). Helmholtz imagines multiple and distinct spatial realities (he also refers to elliptical or pseudo spherical space) and considers the significance of how those who inhabit these spaces would conceive of their worlds. The notion that the term ‘parallel lines’ would not occur to the sphere-dweller indicates a qualitative ontological difference in how they would view their world compared to that of the surface/plane-dweller. Although Strakhov rejected the ideas in Helmholtz’s article, along with the possibility of a non-Euclidean geometry, it is through Strakhov that Dostoevsky first encountered these theories and “subsumed the philosophical implications of non-Euclidean geometry into his ontological beliefs concerning the existence of God and the structure and nature and laws of space in the universe,” as Brookes points out (2013, p. 24). Like Helmholtz, Dostoevsky identified that a non-Euclidean geometry could have profound significance on how people perceive space. For Dostoevsky, the possibility of alternative spatial realities indicated that our three-dimensional perception is limited and, by extension, likewise, our understanding of the material reality of our world. If we can imagine, a ‘higher space,’ which is multidimensional, infinite and open (as the early non-Euclidean geometers and twenty and twenty-first physicists would do) the idea of God and his heavenly worlds would become, likewise, conceptually less abstract.

In this chapter I argue that in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky explores the ramifications of belief in either a Euclidean or a non-Euclidean worldview via

the dilation and constriction of the psychological and spiritual lives of characters who hold (explicitly or implicitly) to either worldview. These worldviews cannot be reduced to the assertion or denial of Euclid's fifth postulate (two parallel lines cannot intersect), rather they represent, for Dostoevsky, finite or infinite spatial realities and their attendant onto-existential possibilities. I argue that in the novel, a non-Euclidean ontology upholds the primacy of freedom, moral responsibility and infinite spatial and therefore onto-existential possibilities, while a Euclidean ontology becomes aligned with slavery, egoism, and finitude. Ivan Karamazov is the champion of 'Euclideanism' and grounds his argument against God upon the belief that mankind was created with a Euclidean mind capable of understanding three-dimensions only, hence metaphysical questions are not suitable to earthly minds^{xxx}. Ivan excludes the possibility of the fourth dimension (time, specifically infinite time) and multiple other spatial realities, despite cherishing a hope that there is a future 'eternal harmony' where suffering is redeemed in eternity. The Elder Zosima is the champion of a non-Euclidean worldview and believes that all people share a living bond with heavenly, infinite worlds which grows through a mystical contact with these worlds. Zosima's non-Euclidean worldview connects multiple, spatial dimensions with spiritual realities that are largely incomprehensible, yet interpenetrate with our material reality.

In this chapter I explore the foundation of Ivan's worldview, which is first established in a conversation that Ivan, along with Fathers Iosif, Paissy and the Elder Zosima have about an article Ivan, prior to the narrative proper, had written on ecclesiastical courts and the roles of the Church and State in society. In his article, Ivan employs biblical language and imagery to construct a Euclidean Church/State; the purpose of which is to force the criminal to subsume his conscience to a law that is judicial *and* ecclesiastical. Ivan's article contains the nascent form of the Grand Inquisitor's Church/State. In this chapter I examine how Ivan constructs his idea of God according to a Euclidean ontology and why the epistemological framework he employs enables him to place himself in an apodictic position of reasoning, which makes a non-Euclidean response to his arguments

against God (ostensibly) impossible. I also interrogate the plausibility of Ivan's 'Euclideanism' which arises from his desire to contain and control the contradictions that he perceives as a flaw in the moral architecture of the world (the suffering of children for a future eternal harmony). By symbolically limiting his epistemological horizons to the flat planes of Euclidean geometry, Ivan attempts to establish a closed system of axioms which, on an onto-existential level, alleviates suffering and organises man so that he can be happy, but for this life only. Finally, I will turn to what Ivan Karamazov calls his poem of the Grand Inquisitor and look at how the Inquisitor/Ivan's appropriation and control of biblical language is used to construct a Euclidean Church. The Inquisitor's Euclidean Church retains biblical nomenclature as a metalanguage but one that has been emptied of its divine and transcendental meaning, thus shifting people's allegiance from Christ to the totalitarian theocracy of the Church without them even knowing it.

Ivan's article on the Church and State: an introduction to his Euclidean thinking

Early in the narrative, the Karamazov family gathers in the Elder Zosima's cell at the monastery with the purpose of seeking Zosima's arbitration. Zosima is Alyosha Karamazov's Elder, his chosen spiritual guide for his life as a monastic. Even Fyodor Karamazov defers to the wisdom of the Elder, agreeing to allow Zosima to arbitrate between him and his first son Dmitri (albeit with the intention of playing the buffoon). While the group waits for Dmitri to arrive, Fathers Iosif and Paissy along with the Elder Zosima question Ivan about an article he had written on ecclesiastical courts and his proposed marriage of the Church and State. In his article, Ivan argues that the State should be wholly transformed into the Church, rejecting any aims that do not align with the Church. This, Ivan proposes, would in no way lessen the grandeur and glory of a great State, but rather direct the State on to a path that leads to eternal goals. Ivan acknowledges that the essences of the Church and State are incompatible and that compromise between the Church and State on the matter of the courts is impossible, yet he maintains that if the State

were subsumed into the Church, the goals and essences of both would become aligned.

At first glance, Ivan's article appears to be in support of the Church's claim to higher ideals and aims than those of the State. Indeed, the narrator informs the reader that the Christian readers of Ivan's article (in the novel) believe that Ivan is arguing *for* them. Father Paissy affirms the narrator's observation and agrees with Ivan insofar as he also believes that it should be the aim of the Church to subsume the State into itself in order that society might be transformed into a truly Christian society. Zosima, however, does not take Ivan's contention at face value, instead he asks Ivan in what 'sense' should the separation between Church and State be rejected? (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 60). Both Zosima and Father Iosif identify that the argument can cut both ways. Because Ivan claims a Euclidean worldview, the Church/State that Ivan imagines would lead to the formation of a totalitarian theocracy, and this constitutes how his social system would cut the other way. Ivan and his Inquisitor do not in fact believe in the eternal goals of the Church but parade under the banner of the divine authority of the Church, knowing that people need to believe in something higher than the State (Alulius 2009, p. 211). Ivan does not believe in immortality, freedom or God, and therefore Ivan's Church/State does not uphold eternal goals, rather the very opposite: the creation of a circumscribed, homogenous world, which recalls the utopian socialist vision of the phalanstery, or Chernyshevsky's Crystal Palace discussed in previous chapters.

In his article, Ivan proposes that judicial and ecclesiastical law should be the same, for then the criminal would, in Ivan's terms, have nowhere to go and be confronted with the fact that not only has he, the criminal, committed a crime punishable by the judiciary, but that he has also sinned against God and Christ. In the separation of the judicial and ecclesiastical systems, the criminal can yet bargain with his conscience, reasoning that although he may have committed a crime, he had not sinned against the Church. Upon Ivan's reckoning, the marriage of Church and State would create a world wherein a crime committed against the State is also a crime committed against the Church, and "unless he means to reject the Church all

over the earth”, as Ivan suggests, the criminal must concede that he has committed a crime against the Church/State and, by extension, humanity itself (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 63). Although Ivan presents his Church/State as a source of restoration and salvation for the criminal, in eliminating the possibility of a person excusing oneself by appealing to one’s conscience, Ivan diminishes their capacity for individual moral valuation. If a person were forced to outsource their conscience to the Church/State, and submit to an ecclesiastical and judicial ruling, crime, violence and suffering could be mitigated but at the cost of individual freedom, which includes the free-working of the conscience. In the same way that the Inquisitor employs a metalanguage to restrict the terms used to conceptualise ontological questions in the world over which he rules, Ivan would merge the Church and State to restrict the freedom of the criminal to bargain and reason with his conscience before God.

Zosima, sensing the authoritarian tendency of Ivan’s proposed system, cautions against the joining of Church and State, upholding the agency of the conscience as the only means through which the criminal might be truly rehabilitated. If the judicial and ecclesiastical law became the same law, a law based on justice (laws written in stone) and not on Christ’s law (love and forgiveness), there is no hope of redemption or rehabilitation for the criminal. Zosima cautions against the unification between the Church and State arguing that such a union could only occur if society/humanity was already transformed by the principles of Christ. Zosima acknowledges that if all of society turned into the Church and was inwardly transfigured into the image of Christ, then Ivan’s proposed system could be realised. But to force society to conform to the Church through subjugation is to establish a totalitarianism (Frank [1985] 2010 p. 857). Indeed, Ivan would grant the Church/State absolute authority over the criminal who previously might have turned to the Church when civic law had cut him off. Zosima asks, “And what would become of the criminal, oh, Lord, if Christian society, too - that is, the Church - rejected him in the same way that civil law rejects him and cuts him off?” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 64). Zosima believes that the Church must be like a mother, tender and loving and withholding further punishment from the criminal

who is already cut off from society under civil law. Based on this idea, Zosima argues that the Church cannot mix with any other type of judgment or law, a point which Ivan also makes in his article (albeit with a very different tone or 'sense').

Indeed, although Ivan says that the State subsumed into the Church would realign its aims so that it would also have eternal goals, Ivan does not believe in eternal goals because he does not believe in God or what he calls a 'future eternal' (immortality). Indeed, the character Misuov, tells the group gathered in Zosima's cell, that previously Ivan had expressed his belief that "[t]here is no virtue if there is no immortality" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 70). If Ivan does not believe in immortality he cannot believe in the Church/State's eternal goals. Such aims belong to a non-Euclidean ontology which Ivan ostensibly disavows. Zosima remarks that Ivan is blessed if he believes that there is no immortality or else most unhappy. Ivan would be happy if he did not believe in immortality given that he would be free of the moral limitations that his conscience would enforce, and be free, like Kirillov, to exercise the attribute of his divinity to its fullest, his 'self-will.' However, Ivan is unhappy if he does not believe in his unbelief given that it would indicate that the question of immortality and virtue is not yet resolved in him. Ivan asks the Elder if the questions of God and immortality can be resolved in a positive way and Zosima replies, hinting at a non-Euclidean answer:

Even if it cannot be resolved in a positive way, it will never be resolved in a negative way either - you yourself know this property of your heart, and therein lies the whole of its torment. But thank the Creator that he has given you a lofty heart, capable of being tormented by such a torment, 'to set your mind on things that are above, for our true homeland is in heaven.' May God grant that your heart's decision overtake you still on earth, and may God bless your path. (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 70)

Zosima observes that Ivan cannot reject the idea of God and immortality all together and advises that only in setting his mind on things above, outside of his Euclidean reasoning and imagination, can Ivan find a positive resolution to the eternal questions. A positive resolution to the question of God's existence or immortality

cannot be apprehended in the form of a definitive answer; a positive resolution must be couched in a thought which begins with an acknowledgment that imagination and reason can only operate within its own limits (Chesterton [1908] 2005, p. 25). Zosima points to the way of meditative thought, where rationality is put aside, where a person ceases to engage in the circularly entropic process of intellectual bricolage (the piecing together of materials/ideas to form a completed picture), and simply *is*. Zosima points Ivan towards a path which leads to an alternative psychological reality and life beyond our empirically observable world; a path which begins with the thought that God cannot be understood or imagined; only sensed through its mysterious contact with other worlds.

Ivan's Euclidean worldview and his non-Euclidean mind

The basis of Ivan's Euclidean worldview is further developed in conversations Ivan and Alyosha share in the chapters 'The Brothers Get Acquainted' and 'Rebellion.' The whole conversation between the brothers in these chapters tends towards Ivan's desire to answer the metaphysical questions of God and immortality, 'negatively' by attempting to establish an irrefutable argument against the essence of a good God: the suffering of children. The conversation between the two brothers begins with some perfunctory remarks about their desire to get acquainted before turning to the eternal questions: is there a God and is there immortality? Despite having previously disavowed belief in God, Ivan, in the tavern, tells Alyosha "[w]ell, imagine that perhaps, I, too, accept God" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 234). Ivan's admission of the possibility of God's existence cannot be taken at face value. Ivan needs God as the conceptual basis for his 'rebellion' against God. Ivan tells Alyosha that he accepts God with the caveat that if God created the world he did so according to Euclidean geometry. Ivan also indicates that the human mind is capable of understanding Euclidean geometry only and thus Ivan's rejection of the world God created is based upon his belief in a circumscribed spatial world which permits a Euclidean geometry and epistemology, only. Ivan says to Alyosha, "imagine now that in the final outcome I do not accept or admit God's world even though I know it exists - it's not God I do not accept, it's this world of God's"

(Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 235). Ivan's conclusion "it's not God I do not accept, it's this world of God's" does not constitute a negative answer to the existence of God, but a negative view of God's essence. If God exists, God's essence is flawed (Kaladiouk 2006, p. 424).

Ivan wants to believe that God exists and that his essence is good and that his Euclidean reasoning is limited, yet, for Ivan, suffering is an insurmountable 'fact' and one that undermines any notion that God is good. Ivan confesses to Alyosha that he desires that the offensive vaudeville of human suffering would disappear "like a pitiful mirage, a vile concoction of man's Euclidean mind" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 235). He wants to believe that at the world's finale something will be revealed to allay all anguish, redeem humanity and which will justify everything that has happened, but he cannot believe because he cannot accept the 'fact' of the suffering of children. Simone Weil argues that there is no answer to the 'why?' of suffering and affliction because "the world is necessity and not purpose" ([1950] 1998, p. 69). Or, as Dostoevsky would say, the laws of this world are not the laws of infinite worlds and thus, as Ivan concludes (from existential despair, not faith) that suffering cannot be comprehensible to the "human heart here on earth" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 238). The disjunction which Ivan perceives between God's existence and essence is, in Ivan's view, insurmountable. Hence, this is why he cannot accept the world God created because in it, suffering is permitted. Dostoevsky critic Anna Schur Kaladiouk argues that "if in creating and running the universe God follows only his own perfectly free will, he can create things and cause events that disrupt patterns and regularities which to human reason might appear as expressions of inviolable and eternal natural laws" (2006, p. 431). Unable to allow for a reasoning beyond his Euclidean understanding, Ivan attempts to understand God's essence via a Euclidean reasoning which limits God to a finite framework of understanding. Ivan's need for a theology of immanent justice undergirds his Euclidean argument against "reasoning from another world," reasoning which is incomprehensible to the "human heart here on earth" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 238). Ivan argues that if the world is created according

to three dimensions only and if there is no 'future eternal', justice, not forgiveness, must be the law of the world^{xxx}.

Ivan uses the spatial image of the parallel lines as a metaphor to indicate the incompatibility of God's love and mercy with the world God created: a world in which children are tortured as a prerequisite for eternal harmony is not a world created by a God of love and mercy. Ivan declares, "Let the parallel lines even meet before my own eyes: I shall look and say, yes, they meet, and still will not accept it" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 236). For Ivan, the suffering of even one child must prevent the parallel lines from meeting (eternal harmony), even if he were to see the lines meet before his very eyes. Ivan drives this point home by cataloguing a series of historical anecdotes of the suffering of children beginning with the image of Turkish soldiers impaling infants before their mother's eyes, to the last example of a young house-serf torn apart by dogs in front of his mother for accidentally injuring his master's (the General's) favourite dog. In the *Notebooks* for the novel, Dostoevsky explicitly connects the impossibility of the mother forgiving the General with the idea that parallel lines cannot meet. Originally, Ivan was to ask Alyosha: "Can you accept the fact that the parallel lines will meet? Can you understand how a mother can embrace the general and forgive him?" (Dostoevsky [1879] 1971, p. 72). Ivan even goes so far as to assert that the mother has no right to forgive the General, even if the child himself did. No one can forgive the General on the child's behalf, not even Christ. Ivan wants retribution here and now on earth and not "somewhere and sometime in infinity" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 244). Indeed, just as Ivan anticipates that he would not accept the non-Euclidean meeting of the parallel lines even if he were to see it, Ivan cannot accept the suffering of children even if he were to witness the redemption of suffering in some future, eternal realm.

Although Ivan acknowledges the possibility of a non-Euclidean view of the world and universe, he chooses not to explore or understand its metaphysical implications. Ivan wants answers to the eternal questions; he wants to know why God allows suffering on earth and how this is compatible with God's 'loving nature' and yet Ivan also maintains that the pursuit of even contemplating the eternal

questions is fruitless. Ivan admits to Alyosha, “I don’t understand anything [. . .] and I no longer want to understand anything. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I wanted to understand something, I would immediately have to betray the fact, but I’ve made up my mind to stick to the fact . . .” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 243). By sticking to the fact, (what is empirically observable) Ivan confronts Alyosha with an irrefutable argument by which he rejects the world God created: suffering. Because Ivan is convinced that no adequate theodicy exists, he removes God from the conceptual place he occupies as Sovereign, and collapses theodicy into moral permissibility. Indeed, although Ivan attempts to establish an apodictic argument against God based on the suffering of the world, his own Euclidean ontology allows suffering to be permissible, according to the laws of determinism. Ivan is in a state of bad faith, an idea I discuss further below. Indeed, under the aegis of determinism, no one is responsible for that suffering, “and that, to his [Ivan’s] mind, would amount to the betrayal of the suffering of the individual, or in his words, to being ‘false to the fact’” as Kaladiouk points out (2006, p. 428). Ivan can no more accept human suffering as a prerequisite for a future eternal harmony, than he can accept the moral implications of determinism, which also permits human suffering (but excludes the possibility that it might one day be redeemed). Ivan wants to stick to the fact of what is empirically observable in order to hold God to account for allowing suffering. Ivan holds God to account for suffering by choosing not to understand that “the reality of being is not covered by what is conceivable to the mind” (Rozanov qtd. in Kaladiouk 2006, p. 425). Reason and rationality cannot serve as *the* epistemological authority regarding the eternal questions (Kaladiouk 2006, p. 419). The question then of why a good God would allow suffering on earth, is conceptually beyond Ivan’s Euclidean reasoning and epistemology. By subscribing to a purely finite, empirically observable world and epistemology, Ivan symbolically forecloses the possibility of an answer to suffering and its redemption in a ‘higher’ reality/space which is yet beyond human comprehension.

Throughout the conversation between Ivan and Alyosha, there is a strong sense that Ivan wants to believe in God and a future eternal, but his Euclidean

reasoning prevents him from taking this step of faith. Ivan's conversation with Alyosha reveals that Ivan is in a state of what French existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre calls 'bad faith.' Bad faith occurs when a person is unable to synthesise their desire for transcendence with their facticity or recognise either one for what it is (Sartre [1943] 2008, p. 650)^{xxxii}. Bad faith causes people to appropriate symbolisms or attitudes which are not native to them in an attempt to deceive both themselves and others (Sartre [1943] 2008, p. 72). Such is the case with Ivan. It is as if Ivan is play-acting at being an atheist, as the Sartrean waiter plays at being a waiter^{xxxiii}. Ivan has appropriated the language and symbolisms of the atheist while at the same time cherishing a desire for transcendence and the hope of a future eternal aligned with a non-Euclidean spatial reality. Indeed, Zosima says to Ivan that from your despair and torment (to resolve the 'eternal questions') you toy with "magazine articles [on the marriage of Church and State] and drawing-room discussions, without believing in your own dialectics and smirking at them with your heart aching inside you" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 70). Because Ivan is unable to synthesise his desire for transcendence with the insurmountable reality of suffering in the world, Ivan, in his despair at finding no definitive answer, dismisses the eternal questions all together. Ivan's bad faith also undergirds the reason why he proffers a doctrine of moral relativism while also maintaining a desire for a universally binding moral justice. Ivan's doctrine 'everything is permitted' and Ivan's desire for justice in the world, are at odds and this, in part, causes his ontological uncertainty. Gubailovskii affirms that the conclusion of Ivan's reasoning ends in the notion that there can be no "immanent moral axioms [. . .] [and yet] he wants justice in the world, but it must be a sublunary justice, manifest and enclosed within the finite bounds of time and space" (2007, p. 72). Ivan wants an answer to the questions of suffering and justice. He wants to know if there are universal moral axioms or not and therefore whether suffering has a purpose or if everything is a vaudeville of pain and deceit unto death. Yet, Ivan also asserts that even if suffering and pain were redeemed and justified by a future eternal harmony, the price of suffering is too high. Unable to believe in a sublunary justice operative within the enclosed bounds of a Euclidean time and space, Ivan, in bad faith, proffers a

doctrine of moral relativism which permits suffering and evil. Ivan does not want suffering to be allayed or redeemed, because it would betray the 'fact' of suffering itself.

For Ivan, there is no bridge between suffering and the loving nature of God, and therefore no positive answer to the eternal questions and so advises Alyosha *not* to think about them. In lieu of a good God who intervenes in the world to prevent suffering, Ivan would reify his own will as the highest will and asserts the primacy of his 'I' to which, he declares, 'everything is permitted', an idea I explore in the next chapter. Dostoevsky's moral dialectic is on full display in the either/or choice that besets Ivan: he must, ultimately, choose between the self and God, as Edward Wasiolek has pointed out (1964, p. 56). In *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction* Wasiolek argues that "[t]here is no bridge between these two natures, and man is poised in fearful anxiety with every choice before him" (1964, p. 80). This choice, Wasiolek argues, is between "nihilistic freedom and God" (1964, p. 58). While I agree with Wasiolek insofar as, in Dostoevsky's fiction, the final onto-existential choice that besets each character is between the voluntarist self-will and God, Dostoevsky *does* present a bridge between the natures of God and mankind in the form of Christ. Indeed, Alyosha's response to Ivan's sophistry is to present Ivan with the figure of Christ who, according to Alyosha, has the right to forgive everything, "forgive all *and for all*, because he himself gave his innocent blood for all and for everything" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 246 emphasis original). According to Christian theology, Christ is the perfect synthesis of the two separate natures of God and man and therefore an intermediary figure *par excellence*.

In *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, Joseph Campbell maintains that Christ is an example of what he calls a 'threshold figure.' Campbell argues that in mythology threshold figures are those who have mastered the art of losing oneself and the world, of being able to transcend the psychological primacy of the 'I' ([1986 2002, p. 40). Dostoevsky also maintained that the fullest expression of the 'I' was paradoxically to overcome the 'I', not through nihilistic self-destruction, but through love for others and the whole of creation. Campbell's depiction of threshold figures

also calls to mind the icon, which is a mediating object between people and the divine. Christ is the living icon in which the separate natures of God and man, meet. Alyosha attempts to direct Ivan's gaze to the living icon of Christ, yet Ivan's Euclidean reasoning, grounded in his belief that the two parallel lines cannot meet, prevents him from perceiving that Christ along with the symbol of the cross, constitutes a meeting of the parallels of sorts. Christ is the bridge between God and mankind and between God and suffering, while the cross is a symbolic and literal representation of two lines meeting. Ivan, however, rejects Alyosha's Christ and declares that Christ did not alleviate mankind's suffering but added to it. Christ is the cause of all suffering because he prized mankind's freedom and conscience over happiness and thus added to its burden, a topic which I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter.

To reiterate, throughout his conversation with Alyosha, Ivan maintains that he has a Euclidean mind in order to establish for himself an apodictic position of reasoning. Vladimir Gubailovskii points out that Ivan acts as a mathematician would, examining space as a closed system that can be elucidated according to a set of axioms with logically correct rules of inference (2007, p. 69). From the outset of his disquisition, Ivan makes a non-Euclidean response to his argument impossible by grounding his argument in Euclidean geometry, hence this is why Alyosha must concede that he could not create a world that requires the suffering of even one child in view of the fact that Ivan forecloses a non-Euclidean response to his argument. Despite inducting Euclidean geometry as the framework for understanding the spatiotemporal structure of the world, Ivan's mind is not Euclidean (Gubailovskii 2007, p. 69). Gubailovskii argues that "[t]he Euclidean mind cannot reflect on its own Euclideanity. Ivan is already poisoned with doubt as to the singularity of Euclid's description of the world. For that to have happened, he must have become conscious of the possibility (albeit theoretical) of another, non-Euclidean variant" (2007, p. 69). Indeed, Ivan is aware of a non-Euclidean variant, given that he identifies that there *are* philosophers and geometers who doubt that the world was created in accordance with Euclidean geometry. Even if Ivan cannot understand it, as he claims, he permits that an understanding of a non-Euclidean

geometry is possible, an acknowledgement that a mind created with a purely Euclidean understanding could not admit. Despite this, Ivan maintains his epistemological position as a 'Euclidean' because the homogeneity of Euclidean space serves Ivan's argument against an infinite, other world and the metaphysical and onto-existential implications associated with alternative spatial realities. Ivan's argument, like Euclidean geometry, defines its concepts and its system using terms that reinforce the system itself (Lefebvre 1991, p. 11). Under the aegis of Euclidean geometry, the onto-existential possibilities of humanity are "literally flattened out, confined to a surface, to a single plane" (Lefebvre 1991, p. 313). On such a plane, two parallel lines can never meet, the suffering of children cannot be redeemed and the onto-existential possibility of union with God, cannot be comprehended.

The Grand Inquisitor and his Euclidean Church

Believing the eternal question of God's existence and essence to be incomprehensible to a Euclidean mind, Ivan, in a thought experiment (which follows the line of reasoning he articulates in his article about the marriage of Church and State) creates a world in which suffering is allayed, but at the cost of human freedom. In his poem 'The Grand Inquisitor' Ivan shows why, according to his Euclidean reasoning, the only bridge between God and mankind (Christ) must be dismissed. By dismissing Christ, Ivan is able to stick to the fact that human suffering cannot be redeemed.

The Grand Inquisitor is the fictional protagonist of Ivan Karamazov's poem, which depicts an exchange between Christ and a sixteenth-century Inquisitor of the Catholic Church. Ivan's poem begins with Christ's appearance in Seville at the height of the Inquisition. Christ appears quietly, just for a moment, to visit his children in the same human image in which he had appeared fifteen centuries earlier. Everyone recognises him and is drawn to him. Love and power stream from his eyes and he blesses the people, restoring sight to a man and raising a little girl from the dead. The people weep and sing, 'Hosanna,' assured in their spirit that it is truly Christ returned to them. The Grand Inquisitor observes the commotion and commands his

guards to arrest Christ. That night, the Inquisitor comes to Christ's cell and what follows is essentially a monologue in which the Inquisitor asks Christ a series of questions which he forbids him to answer.

In the poem, the Inquisitor accuses Christ of adding to mankind's burdens by allowing us our moral and existential freedom. The Inquisitor cites the biblical account of the temptation of Christ by the devil in the wilderness as *the* example of Christ's failure to relieve people of their suffering by accepting the devil's terms. The temptations of the devil were: turn these stones to bread, throw yourself down from a high place on a temple and God will command his angels to rescue you and bow down before me and I will give you power over all of the kingdoms of earth (Mt. 4:1-11). The first temptation is an appeal to Christ's power (to transform stones to bread), the second temptation to God's power (to intervene in the laws of nature and save Christ from death), while the third temptation displays the devil's power (to grant Christ authority over all the earth). Ivan/the Inquisitor believes that Christ's rejection of the devil's temptations was a rejection of the three powers he calls 'miracle, mystery and authority'. The Inquisitor reproaches Christ for rejecting the devil's terms, arguing that mankind needs material bread, and instead you offer us spiritual bread; we need an indisputable figure to bow down to, and you offer us freedom to choose who we bow down to; we need a kingdom of mankind to unite us all, and instead you promise a heavenly kingdom. But, no matter, for we have corrected your work. In God's name, the Inquisitor accepts the temptations of the devil and creates a Euclidean Church over which he rules, confessing to Christ that his Church serves the devil and not God. The Inquisitor admits that Christ's name is still necessary, for people still need to believe that there is life beyond the grave, but Christ himself, the living Word, is dismissed.

The Inquisitor's control of language and meaning

The appropriation of biblical language, including the name of Christ, is the cornerstone upon which the Inquisitor is able to build a purely Euclidean Church.

By stripping biblical language of its divine content and meaning, the Inquisitor constructs a metalanguage that redefines and obscures the true meaning of the biblical lexicon, and by doing so limits the world of language accessible to the masses over which he rules. In *The Road to Serfdom*, F. A. von Hayek argues that

[t]he most effective way of making people accept the validity of the values they are to serve is to persuade them that they are really the same as those which they [. . .] have always held. [. . .] The people are made to transfer their allegiance from the old gods to the new [. . .] and the most efficient technique to this end is to use the old words but change their meaning. (1944, p. 117)

By retaining biblical nomenclature, the Inquisitor uses the old words of identification but changes their meaning and thus, transfers the people's allegiance from God to himself. By restricting the horizons of meaning via control of language and narrative, the Inquisitor limits the rules of inference accessible to the masses and creates a self-enclosed world. Gubailovskii contends that the Inquisitor

[c]onstruct[s] for the majority a self-enclosed and uncontradictory world, an easy world, where faith in mystery and authority comes to replace freedom. The chosen ones formulate the axioms, the rules of inference, and the descriptive language of the world inhabited by the majority. They operate with statements that are couched in a *metalanguage* relative to the logic of the masses. (2007, p. 77)

The ideological language which upholds the Inquisitor's Euclidean Church, is grounded in a language of axioms that are absolute and closed, a language formed by the Inquisitor and a select few who hold a monopoly on the truth and biblical hermeneutics (Gubailovskii 2007, p. 78). The success of any totalitarianism is couched in its ability to control language and its meaning. Iris Murdoch, discussing the Chinese cultural revolution, suggests that "concept-starvation makes it easier for a few leaders to turn their citizens into a centrally directed herd" (1992, p. 364).

If language can be limited to a set of pre-packaged statements and knowledge reduced to one epistemological framework, people lose the ability to challenge the powers that be and are transformed into a concept-starved herd.

Another means by which the Inquisitor exerts control over the masses, is by appropriating the triumvirate powers of ‘miracle, mystery and authority’ to serve purely finite aims, while parading under the banner of the Church and its eternal goals (goals outlined by Ivan in his article on the merging of judicial and ecclesiastical law). While the Inquisitor lays claim to ‘miracle, mystery and authority’, the divine ‘sense’ of these words has been excoriated and *magic*, *mystification*, and *tyranny* come to replace them, as Roger Cox has pointed out (1969, p. 195). For example, the word ‘miracle’ retains its membership in the nomenclature of biblical language, but the meaning is changed. In the world of the Inquisitor, miracle is not the *intervention* of the divine, but an *invention* of man, a sleight of hand. The Inquisitor says, “we take from them the bread they have procured with their own hands, in order to distribute it among them, without any miracle” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 258). There is no miracle, merely a magician’s trick. Indeed, *miracle* is reduced to a magician’s trick, the *mystery* of God and the Incarnation is replaced by the encrypted metalanguage of the Inquisitor, while the *authority* of God becomes the tyranny of the Inquisitor who rules the masses through fear. By appropriating miracle, mystery and authority and perverting their divine meaning, the Inquisitor further reinforces his control over the masses who live under his rule.^{xxxiv}

Not only is the language that the Inquisitor deploys used to constrain, limit and control the world over which he rules, but his silence is too. Malcolm Jones points out that Dostoevsky designates two different words for the silence of Christ and the silence of the Inquisitor in the exchange between the two in Ivan’s poem. The silence of Christ is translated from тишина (*tishina*) as tranquillity or absence of sound and this is different to the self-imposed silence of the Inquisitor, which is translated from молчание (*molchanie*) as the absence or cessation of speech or

conversation (Jones 2005, p. 140). *Molchanie* is the silence of restraint and limitation, whereas *tishina* relates to what is ineffable; to divine quietude and tranquillity (2005, p. 146). While the Inquisitor's silence is that of restraint, limitation and control, Christ's silence is the silence of what is ineffable, what cannot be communicated to or understood by a purely Euclidean mind; namely his divine identity. Indeed, the Christ of Ivan's poem remains silent before the Inquisitor just as the Christ of the Gospels remained silent when Pontius Pilate asked him to confirm his identity. Christ's only answer, in the biblical account and in Ivan's poem, would be ineffable - an identification and similitude with God, an admission that would be incomprehensible to the purely Euclidean mind. The Inquisitor's silence as well his silencing of the masses (by limiting the language and concepts accessible to them), is deployed to suppress meaning and true identification. To force a person to remain silent or to wilfully remain silent oneself, constitutes a kind of death of language, with language being the primary tool and medium whereby meaning is conferred and expressed.

The Inquisitor's formula of the ant-heap

The main thrust of the Inquisitor's disquisition directed against Christ is informed by the Inquisitor's belief that people's desire is for happiness more than it is for freedom and that happiness and freedom are fundamentally incompatible. To the Inquisitor, human happiness and freedom are, in geometric terms, asymptotic. If human happiness is represented as the x and y axis in the Cartesian coordinate system (bar graph), then human freedom is a curve that comes arbitrarily close to meeting the axes, but never coincides. Human happiness is the asymptote of human freedom; it is always approximate, ever approaching, but never coinciding. Believing happiness and freedom to be merely approximate, the Inquisitor removes the oblique curve of freedom altogether and all that remains is an x and y axis running horizontally or vertically through zero. Human happiness remains, but happiness without freedom is an empty graph. The Inquisitor says to Christ "nothing has ever been more insufferable for man and for human society than freedom!" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 252). The Inquisitor contends that

mankind's moral and existential freedom has precluded it from being happy. Only God's elect can bear their freedom but for the majority of people, the weight of moral responsibility is too burdensome. The Inquisitor declares to Christ that

they will submit to us gladly and joyfully. The most tormenting secrets of their conscience - all, all they will bring to us, and we will decide all things, and they will joyfully believe our decision, because it will deliver them from their great care and their present terrible torments of personal and free decision. (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 259)

Essentially, in the world of the Inquisitor, the masses would outsource their conscience to the Inquisitor and his elect in the manner that Ivan proposes in his article about the marriage of Church and State. The Inquisitor's Church/State strives towards the actualisation of a social ant-heap that would make people happy, but at the cost of individual identity and freedom.

In *A Writer's Diary*, Dostoevsky asserts that a social formula for the organisation of mankind does not exist; contending that while the bee knows the formula for its hive, the ant its formula for the ant-heap, "humans do not know their formula" ([1880] 1994, p. 1317). Dostoevsky believed that any attempt to impose a social formula upon people would end in the bestialisation of the human personality and the removal of all onto-existential freedom. The formula for the ant cannot be the formula for the human. Totalitarianisms which parade under the banner of utopian social ideals and a love of mankind (as is the case with the Inquisitor's Church), seek to crush and exclude diversity and difference and, "contain the world within a homogenous conceptual whole" (Gardiner 1992, p. 24). Just as Euclidean geometry relies on the assumption that space is homogenous to function as a geometrically valid system of inference, the Inquisitor reduces all epistemologies to one epistemology in order to maintain control over the masses. Spatially (and therefore, as I argue throughout my thesis, onto-existentially) the Inquisitor's world must be closed and finite, excluding non-Euclidean variants and all other

epistemologies to reinforce the unchallenged instrumentality of his Church. Thus, in Ivan's poem, the appearance of Christ in Seville threatens to disrupt the Inquisitor's carefully maintained social system. Christ embodies the non-Euclidean meeting of parallels. He is a threshold figure connecting our world with a heavenly world, mankind with God, the Church on earth with the Church in heaven. Although the Christ of Ivan's poem is not the Christ of the Gospels, Ivan's Christ poses a threat to the Inquisitor's Euclidean Church and his ant-heap formula for controlling mankind, and thus in the poem, Christ is dismissed.

Ivan's Euclideanism, his adherence to empirical phenomenon, undergirds every aspect of his worldview. It is an onto-existential position that attempts to outstrip the contradictions and paradoxes of divine or metaphysical concepts by limiting its horizons of meaning to the flattened planes of Euclidean space. Ivan chooses not to think about whether or not God exists and thus, he limits himself to an epistemological framework that compasses empirical, phenomenal experience only. Despite this, Ivan claims a false position in asserting that he has a Euclidean mind. As Zosima points out, Ivan *is* tormented by God and the question of whether he exists or not given, that Ivan has a lofty heart whose true homeland is in heaven. Ivan wants to resolve the irresolvable and therein lays his torment. Much like Kirillov in *Demons*, Ivan wants to believe in God, wants to believe that the vaudeville of human suffering will end and that everyone will be reconciled to God and each other in a future eternal harmony, but neither Kirillov nor Ivan can believe that they believe in God (a God beyond their conceptual idols and therefore beyond their understanding). Despite the 'irrefutability' of Ivan's argument against God (the 'fact' of suffering), in Ivan's psychological unravelling, Dostoevsky shows that a purely Euclidean mind is ill-equipped to manage the psycho-spiritual forces that the eternal questions can unleash.^{xxxv} Ivan's inability to resolve the eternal, questions, negatively or positively, or to deal with the guilt on his conscience (a conscience he ostensibly does not believe in), gives rise to the bifurcation in his psyche, a dramatisation which I will explore in my next chapter.

Projecting beyond Dostoevsky's lifetime, twenty and twenty-first century physicists and mathematicians would discover a number of things that would have appealed to Dostoevsky's spiritual and literary imagination. Einstein's discovery of quantum mechanics showed that uncertainty was written into the very fabric of the universe and that determinism (a philosophy which Dostoevsky vehemently rejected on religious and philosophical grounds), did not in fact explain the complex spatiotemporal mechanics of the universe, at least not on the sub-atomic level. Quantum particles (atoms and photons) do not operate according to determined laws, rather they are unpredictable; "complementary qualities of a particle, such as position and momentum, cannot be known simultaneously, problematiz[ing] the very notion of determinism, which is intrinsic to the Einsteinian four-dimensional spacetime" (Gomel 2014, p. 317). Despite discovering quantum mechanics, Einstein could not accept the implications of his findings as they did not cohere with his previous theory of four-dimensional space-time, in which Einstein had postulated a closed space-time manifold. The laws of quantum mechanics validated Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle which affirmed that the "fabric of spacetime [. . .] is stitched together by probability fluctuation rather than by anything 'solid'" (Gomel 2014, p. 44). We can hazard a guess that Dostoevsky would have viewed the fact that contingency was written into the very fabric of spacetime, as a validation of his belief that human beings were likewise not the product of determinism but are contingent beings whose assumption or divestment of moral responsibility has metaphysical implications.

Indeed, if uncertainty and contingency were true of spacetime, as Dostoevsky believed prior to the discoveries of quantum mechanics, then people have free will and therefore ethical and moral responsibility as free agents. For Dostoevsky, this freedom was given to people by God and affirmed by Christ's rejection of the temptations of the devil. According to Dostoevsky, Christ's refusal to ensnare mankind's conscience and take away its freedom by accepting the devil's terms (to bow down to him) signalled two things concerning the onto-existential position of mankind. First, that the individual possesses an inherent spiritual

dignity and moral responsibility for others and the world, and second, that a person will be held to account by God for how they comport themselves on earth. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky platforms his exploration of human freedom, suffering and moral responsibility by employing geometric motifs that form the basis of a Euclidean or non-Euclidean worldview.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Ivan Karamazov uses the parallel lines as a spatial symbol of the incompatibility of the suffering of the world with a good God. According to Ivan, if we cannot see the parallel lines meet here on earth (or in infinity, according to Euclidean geometry), then the idea that God is good, is incompatible with the suffering he allows on earth, even if it is according to an 'incomprehensible wisdom' or a reasoning from another world. For Dostoevsky, the metaphysical implications of Euclidean geometry were spatial and onto-existential constriction and limitation and for non-Euclidean geometry, spatial and onto-existential freedom. Non-Euclidean geometry pointed to the possibility of infinite worlds and, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, becomes aligned with a worldview that allows for the possibility of God, immortality and a transcendental 'higher space.' A non-Euclidean world-view, as represented by Dostoevsky, is couched in moral responsibility and the preservation of individual spiritual dignity through freedom of conscience; ideas I explore in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Zosima's theosis and the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean ontology in *The Brothers Karamazov*

Thus far I don't seem to have an answer to all these atheistic arguments, and an answer is indispensable [. . .] What is offered here is a world view that stands in direct opposition to the one that was previously presented, but again, the opposition is not made point-by-point but, so to speak, in the form of an artistic picture. (Dostoevsky [1879]1987, p. 486) – Dostoevsky to K. P. Pobedonostsev

As indicated in this excerpt from a letter Dostoevsky wrote to Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Dostoevsky was concerned that he would be unable to provide an adequate answer to Ivan Karamazov's atheistic arguments. The Elder Zosima's non-Euclidean 'response' to Ivan's Euclideanism is not presented as a direct refutation of Ivan's ideas, as Dostoevsky asserts, rather it takes the form of an artistic picture at the centre of which is the "undistorted image of Christ", that is, the figure of the resurrected Christ (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 313). Zosima maintains that through Christ, union between God, mankind and all creation was made possible and that all creation grows through contact with the infinite and divine worlds of God. Zosima's worldview is non-Euclidean insofar as he senses that there is a higher world/space and reality beyond three-dimensional space and linear time. Although Zosima does not explicitly employ the language of non-Euclidean geometry as Ivan draws upon the language and concepts attendant to Euclidean geometry; Zosima's non-Euclidean worldview is revealed in his belief in a spatial and conceptual multiverse. Zosima maintains that there exists a connection between our finite world and the infinite worlds of God which is beyond human understanding; infinite worlds which can be analogised as the alternative and multiple spatial realities

proffered by non-Euclidean geometry.

When Dostoevsky first encountered non-Euclidean geometry, he was excited by its metaphysical implications and these implications are implicit in Zosima's worldview. In his doctorate on *Non-Euclidean Geometry and Russian Literature*, Alexander Brookes quotes Dostoevsky

The actual world is finite, and the immaterial world is infinite. If the parallel lines meet, then the law of this world would have expired. But in infinity they come together, and the infinite exists necessarily. For if there were no infinite world, there would be no finite world, it would be unthinkable. But if there is an infinite world, then there is a god and another world, with its own laws, separate from those of the actual world. (Dostoevsky qtd. in Brookes 2013, p. 24)

Dostoevsky differentiates between the law of this world and the law of an immaterial world and connects the law of this world with Euclidean geometry and the law of an infinite world with non-Euclidean geometry. Dostoevsky asserted that the laws of our world are not the laws of an infinite world, but that a connection exists between them given that the finite cannot exist without the infinite^{xxxvi}. Indeed, Dostoevsky did not reject the principles of Euclidean geometry, rather he projects beyond them, and in non-Euclidean geometry he finds ideas and motifs that are analogous to the concepts of infinity and God.

For Dostoevsky, a non-Euclidean ontological view of space required a spiritual optics capable of perceiving the connection between finite and infinite spatial realities. These other spatial realities could not necessarily be empirically proven, rather they were 'sensed' and perceived as a spatial possibility (an onto-existential possibility) of a more complex reality than what Euclidean space could define. For Dostoevsky, the matrices that comprised the chthonic, shifting structure of the dream world (the unconscious) and its psychic phenomena, represented a veritable debunking of the spatial and symbolic limitations of Euclidean space. Indeed, in Ivan Karamazov's encounter with his hallucinatory devil, Dostoevsky

exposes the fallibility of a purely Euclidean epistemology. Ivan is ill-equipped to deal with the non-Euclidean content of his psyche because, as he admits to Alyosha, he has no desire to understand it; thus, when Ivan is forced to confront his devil, he undergoes psychological collapse. Ivan's Euclidean logic fails when he encounters the psychic phenomena of his unconscious. Indeed, given that the space of the unconscious, as well as its phenomena, do not conform to the laws of Euclidean space, Ivan's devil psychologically and symbolically belongs to a non-Euclidean spatial order; undermining Ivan's belief in his Euclidean worldview (Brakel 1994, p. 40).

The appearance of Ivan's devil not only precipitates his psychological collapse and the collapse of his Euclidean epistemology, but reduces him to a state of unconsciousness, with the unconscious serving as an analogue of non-Euclidean space. The notion that the unconscious can be likened to a non-Euclidean spatial configuration was popularised by Jacques Lacan's rereading of Sigmund Freud's theory he proffered for mapping the psyche. Lacan criticises Virginia Blum and Anna Secor point out that while Freud recognised that a topographical or Euclidean spatial approach was an inadequate model for understanding the psyche, he nevertheless persisted in his attempts to map a topography of the unconscious (2011, p. 1034). Blum and Secor contend that "the problem that topography posed for Freud arose because the psychic space that Freud was mapping has non-Euclidean topological properties. Euclidean geometry employs a metric understanding of space [which is] topographical; it refers to mappable, graphable, measurable space. Yet this is not the only way that space works" (2011, p. 1034). The human unconscious cannot be treated as a topographical surface that can be mapped; rather as an analogue of topological objects such as the Mobius strip or a Kleinian bottle. Indeed, Lacan analogised the human unconscious as a Mobius strip given that "the subject is formed through internal exclusion and external inclusions" (Blum and Secor, 2011, p. 1031). A Mobius strip has two or more distinct faces, but only one surface and boundary which is non-orientable, a metaphor for the non-orientable space of the psyche. Topology and topological objects are not defined by distances between points in space but by how a spatial configuration maintains its

form in the process of distortion and transformation (Blum and Secor 2011, p. 1034). By employing topology for understanding psychic phenomena, Lacan allowed for a spatial account of the psyche “inexplicable (not to mention unmappable) within a Euclidean metric” (Blum and Secor 2011, p. 1031). Euclidean geometry can only be applied to two- or three-dimensional physical spaces and is therefore limited in its application both to the unconscious and the other spatial realities proffered by non-Euclidean geometries. Indeed, just as Henri Lefebvre contended that no limits had been set on the unconscious (1991, p. 3), no limits have been set on the hypothetical spatial realities proffered by non-Euclidean space, hence their analogical compatibility.

In this chapter, I examine the components of Zosima’s worldview which form the basis of his indirect response to Ivan’s Euclidean reasoning. Employing the notions of attention and moral imagination which Iris Murdoch explicates in her moral philosophy, I examine Zosima’s notion of bearing witness to creation, with Zosima maintaining that a moral vision and imagination is necessary in order to perceive the divine in all things and that only in bearing witness to the divine can a person hope to achieve a state of theosis. I argue that theosis is an analogue not only of paradise, but of the parallel lines meeting in an alternative, non-Euclidean spatial reality. Ivan’s assertion then, that even if he saw the parallel lines meet before his eyes he would not admit it, points to his lack of moral imagination which, according to Murdoch, begins with *seeing*, or what I have elsewhere called spiritual optics. In this chapter I explore the themes of paradise and isolation, arguing that for Zosima paradise is a state of theosis while isolation is a state of hell, and that the spatial connotation of these separate states or positions are associated either with a non-Euclidean or Euclidean ontology, respectively. I also argue that Zosima’s belief in active love and moral responsibility is an answer to the moral promiscuity of Ivan’s doctrine, ‘everything is permitted.’ Indeed, although Ivan presents his Euclidean axioms as “absolute imperative, their substantiation is relative and immanent” (Gubailovskii 2007, p. 72) with Dostoevsky exposing the undergirding contradictions in Ivan’s reasoning via his hallucinatory devil who proves that to the Euclidean mind, absolutes can only ever be partially apprehended from a limited

perspective. Through Ivan's confrontation with his devil and his subsequent psychological unravelling, Dostoevsky shows that Ivan's Euclideanism is grounded in an epistemological and onto-existential framework ill-equipped to deal with the spatially and conceptually infinite questions of God, eternity, suffering and freedom. Finally, I summarise and compare Ivan's Euclidean worldview with the non-Euclidean worldview of Zosima in order to support my claim for the primacy of a non-Euclidean ontology in *The Brothers Karamazov*. I argue that a non-Euclidean ontology establishes a framework of meaning that provides people with a conceptual structure for grappling with the mysteriousness of God and the infinite, as well as the problem of human suffering and freedom.

Union with the divine (theosis): paradise

Zosima's formulation of the concept of paradise is influenced by his brother Markel who dies when Zosima is a boy and the 'mysterious visitor' who Zosima becomes acquainted with as a young man. Both Markel and the mysterious visitor connect the idea of paradise with union and moral responsibility, while both also maintain that paradise is within each person. The notion that paradise is within each person is grounded in Jesus' admonition to the Pharisees in the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus asserts that "[t]he kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:20-21 KJV). Jesus indicates that the kingdom of God is neither empirically observable nor limited to one place or space, rather that it is perceived with a spiritual optics and experienced as an individual, spiritual revelation of the indwelling of God's love. Elsewhere Jesus indicates that his kingdom is not of this world, and nor is his origin (Jn. 18:36). This seeming contradiction between the (symbolically) spatial within and without of the kingdom of God, is bridged through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, an idea I discuss further below. Through Christ, the living image of paradise was implanted within our hearts and became a "living possibility" here on earth (Bakhtin [1968] 1981, p. 48). The spatial connotation of an immanent/imminent but yet otherworldly kingdom of God points to the idea that the finite experience of the kingdom of God (paradise) within us, cannot occur

unless there is a kingdom of God, yet beyond us. As Dostoevsky argued in relation to the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean geometry, if there were no infinite world there could be no finite world. Only through theosis can an otherworldly paradise be apprehended; a state or concept which outstrips the spatial and temporal limitations of Euclidean space by symbolically raising a person to the level of the divine via Christ (1 Cor. 6:17).

In Christian theology, Christ's death and resurrection made theosis possible. Christ and the resurrection event belong to a non-Euclidean ontology which defies logic or Euclidean reasoning, with the cross upon which Jesus died signalling that the cipher of sin and death had been broken. Through Christ's sacrifice, the old formula, "the wages of sin are death" (Rom. 6:23) was replaced by the symbol of the cross (+), the sign "not yet emptied of its power" (1 Cor. 1:17), a power, Alain Badiou argues, which is incalculable (as opposed to the formulas and laws stipulated in the Old Testament) (2003, p. 50). The cross is a symbol with two intersecting lines, pointing to the meeting of the finite and infinite, of the earth and the heavens and the meeting of parallel lines in eternity. Simone Weil argued that the cross is the "point of intersection between creation and Creator" and that through the cross the "soul can traverse the whole of space and time and come into the actual presence of God" ([1950] 1998, p. 55). For Dostoevsky, Christ collapsed the spatial and temporal distance between mankind and God, bringing those who choose the way of the cross into and immanency with God (theosis). The cross was the instrument of the death of Christ, who, being nailed to the cross "pierced through all of creation, through the dense screen which separates the soul from God" (Weil [1950] 1998, p. 55). Through Christ's death and resurrection, the insurmountable distance between mankind and God was outstripped and sin, which leads to death, was decrypted.

In *Dostoevsky: Myths of Duality* Roger Anderson points out that Zosima's consciousness is able to perceive the unity between all of creation and God which is, an undifferentiated unity that extends laterally without exception,

connecting each individual to all other manifestations of existence. Included are not only all other people but vegetable life and inanimate objects (rocks and soil) as well. The union also extends vertically to join all forms of existence to God. (1986, p. 120)

Theosis, like topology is not defined by distances between objects in space (between God and mankind and all creation), but by how a person paradoxically maintains their personhood while being in a state of transformation (and transition) through contact with the divine (Blum and Secor 2011, p. 1034).

Zosima's concept of unity (theosis) is not the same as the forced unity (homogeneity) of the Inquisitor's world. Anderson's 'undifferentiated unity' refers to an *undiscriminating* unity between each form of existence, extending horizontally and vertically, through which not only is the righteous man united with God, but the sinner, the rock, the tree and the air. Nothing is outside of God's domain and nothing lives and grows without contact with the Creator. Zosima believes that although much on earth is mysterious, God planted within each of our hearts a sense of our "living bond with the other world, with the higher heavenly world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 320). Such a bond can only be established through a non-Euclidean belief in alternative spatial realities that are infinite but also imminent, analogous to the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of Luke. Zosima exhorts his fellow monks to "love all of God's creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 319). Zosima maintains that in doing so, a person will perceive the mystery of God in all things and come to love His creation with a universal love.

For Zosima, without the universal love of God and the living image of Christ to guide people there is no paradise (or secular utopia), only separation and spiritual isolation. Zosima's contention can be traced back to the biblical story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In the Book of Genesis, the loss of paradise is not only represented as a physical exodus from the ideal/idyll paradise of Eden but spiritual isolation from God. Divorced from divine union with

God and all creation, mankind became alienated from itself and from God. Markel, Zosima and Alyosha take their kinship with Adam's Fall from grace by disobeying God quite literally and ask forgiveness of the trees, animals and the earth. Markel begs forgiveness of all creation, declaring "that each of us is guilty in everything before everyone, and I most of all" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 289). If we do not take responsibility for our actions, if we do not seek to transcend our former selves, moral stasis and much worse (hell on earth) can ensue. Each of us has been guilty at some point of not taking moral responsibility to better ourselves and by extension, others and the world. Markel's confession, and Zosima and Alyosha's iterations of Markel's confession, echo the impossible-possibility outlined in the New Testament for people to be like the kenotic Christ who divested himself of his will for the will of God and made himself responsible for the sin of the world. In Christian theology, the emptying of the will is called kenosis. It is a state of being in which one's own will is relinquished for the will of God. We become as nothing, emptied of our will in order to be filled by God's divine and perfect will. Although it is impossible for us to become fully like the kenotic Christ (we are yet transitional creatures), what is possible is an orientation of the soul towards Christ; to grow in goodness by looking to him and, by degrees, to become like him (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 30). Via Zosima, Dostoevsky indicates that to become like Christ is an onto-existential possibility accessible to all people and one which leads to union with God^{xxxvii}.

Spiritual isolation from God and others: hell

The idea that isolation is the obverse of paradise is developed through a series of conversations between Zosima and the mysterious visitor and echoes ideas Dostoevsky explores in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, which I discussed in Chapter Four. To reiterate, in the ridiculous man's dream, the 'Fall' of the innocent people is marked by their newfound desire for isolation and separation. The ridiculous man observes that after their 'Fall', the people in his dream began to isolate themselves while at the same time proclaiming the virtues of brotherhood and humane values. Theories of brotherhood replace actual brotherhood, and the union with a living 'Whole' that the people had previously enjoyed, becomes an abstract idea. In *The*

Brothers Karamazov, the mysterious visitor also observes this same dual tendency at work in the generation of his time (the 1870s) that is, to espouse the principles of brotherhood meanwhile being isolationist in practice. True brotherhood must be couched in moral responsibility and love for the other, not in abstract theories of unity or social formulas proffered by the ideologues of rational egoism, populism and utopian socialism. The mysterious visitor argues that, “[u]ntil one has indeed become the brother of all, there will be no brotherhood” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 303). Until a person is able to love others in practice, and not just in theory, brotherhood is an empty word and people remain isolated from one another.

Such is the case for Ivan Karamazov who espouses the notion of (abstract) love via his Inquisitor while also admitting to Alyosha that he finds it impossible to love people up close. Ivan constitutes an exemplum *par excellence* of what the mysterious visitor identifies as an isolationist tendency. Not only is Ivan unable to love others up close, as he admits to Alyosha in the chapter ‘Rebellion’, but Ivan is also isolated within his own logical framework (Anderson 1986, p. 128). Ivan has created for himself a self-enclosed framework of meaning that admits no higher reality or space outside of what he understands according to his Euclidean epistemology. Like Raskolnikov, the underground man and Kirillov, Ivan’s reasoning and logic are disassociated from real life. Ivan’s idea of love is merely a theory and his Euclidean framework defines its concepts using terms that reinforce the framework itself (Lefebvre 1991, p. 11). Ivan’s disassociation from life and from others also precipitates the manifestation of a spectral ‘Other’ in the form of a devil. The appearance of Ivan’s hallucinatory devil suggests that Ivan, like his devil, is in a state of metaphysical isolation from God (hell), a state which is the devil’s own-most state-of-being. For Ivan, this is a psychological, not a literal state. Indeed, the mysterious visitor contends that isolation is primarily a psychological state, and therefore isolation and alienation can only be overcome if people turn onto a different “path psychically” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 303). Ivan’s isolation is primarily a psychical isolation that has caused him to become trapped in a state which permits no alternative epistemological or ontological horizons. Ellis Sandoz’s

contention that “the man turned radically inward falls into the abyss of his own nothingness” is very much to the point of Ivan’s psychological isolation (1964, p. 366). Ivan must turn onto a different “path psychically” as the mysterious visitor asserts and as Alyosha intimates at the end of the narrative, or be at risk of inhabiting a psychological state akin to hell. Indeed, Zosima likens the inability to love others to a form of isolation that is experienced as hell. Like the kingdom of God or paradise, hell is not limited to one place or space, but is a state-of-being, which is characterised as spiritual, psychological and existential alienation both from God and other people.

By way of analogy, Zosima draws upon the biblical story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 to explain his understanding of what constitutes a state of being-in-hell. Zosima explains that the rich man by nature of his spiritual being, was given the ability to say to himself, “I am and I love” and yet rejected this gift and was therefore separated from the source of active, living love (God) (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 322). In the biblical story, the rich man dies and is sent to Hades, with Zosima explaining that for the rich man, Hades is a state of an awareness of being unable to experience or give love. In the parable, the rich man looks towards paradise and sees Abraham and asks him to send a dead man to earth (Lazarus, whom he scorned in life) to warn his five brothers of the torment that awaits them. Abraham replies by pointing out that even if Lazarus appeared before the rich man’s brothers, it would not convince them to repent. The appearance of a dead man cannot, as Ivan’s devil indicates later in the narrative, prompt the rich man’s brothers to repent because it is impossible to prove the otherworldly with empirical evidence (Gubailovskii 2007, p. 70)^{xxxviii}. In relation to Ivan’s devil, Gubailovskii points out that empirical proof of a non-empirical or non-Euclidean entity cannot persuade the person who holds to a Euclidean worldview of the validity of a non-Euclidean variant, given that the Euclidean would subsume the miracle into their ontology, and thus divest the miracle of its status as *miracle* (2007, p. 70). Gubailovskii’s observation can also be applied to the biblical story of the rich man and his plea to Abraham to send the ghost of Lazarus to his five brothers. As

Abraham points out, if the brothers are not convinced by empirical proof (the words of the Prophets), they will not be convinced of non-empirical proof (the appearance of a dead man). The rich man's brothers' inability to be convinced of the reality of hell is analogous to the idea that if Ivan cannot be convinced of the validity of loving people up close, neither can he believe in his abstract love. Like the rich man in the biblical parable, Ivan is in a state of being-in-hell characterised as an awareness of being unable to love.

The biblical parable of the rich man along with Zosima's interpretation of it, also calls to mind Ivan's admission to Alyosha that even if he were to stand upon the threshold of the gates to paradise he would "return his ticket" and choose his self-created hell (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 245). Ivan chooses to stick to the fact of human suffering and rejects the notion that suffering can be redeemed just as he chooses a Euclidean ontology and dismisses the notion of a non-Euclidean ontology. By limiting his worldview to a purely Euclidean ontology, Ivan forecloses the ontological possibility of metaphoric (or literal) resurrection. Indeed, according to the agricultural motif employed by Zosima to understand resurrection, which I explain below, it is imperative that the seed die in order for it to be reborn in a new form (or, in Ivan's case, a new, non-Euclidean ontology). Yet because Ivan is unable to admit that the parallel lines could meet, even if saw it, Ivan cannot conceive of the possibility of paradise, only hell.

A non-Euclidean model for moral-spiritual regeneration

Zosima grounds his notion of spiritual regeneration upon Jesus' admonition in the Gospel of John. The biblical excerpt from the Gospel of John, is also the epigraph of *The Brothers Karamazov* and reads as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jn. 12:24 KJV). This verse contains the key to how we understand both Dostoevsky's view of what is required for humanity's moral-spiritual regeneration and of what constitutes humanity's isolation from God and others. The metaphor of the corn of wheat points to the idea that for spiritual transformation to occur, the death of the primacy of the 'I', which abides alone, is

necessary for a person to bear spiritual fruit; fruit which is not the by-product of efforts of the will but of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If a person is unable to 'die to the self' they remain alone within the self, which denotes spatial and existential alienation from others and God. Symbolically, we must die to our former, sinful self, which is separated from the ground of God's grace, in order to be resurrected in a new form (Rm. 6:6). The excerpt from the Gospel of John points to the onto-existential possibility of each of the brothers Karamazov for either moral-spiritual regeneration (to die to oneself and be reborn) or isolation and moral stagnation (to abide alone). These two onto-existential possibilities and the choice between them is, for each of the brothers, prompted by an encounter with the psychic phenomena of their unconscious.

Although Dmitri Karamazov has a dream which leads to his desire to assume moral responsibility for all creation, I have chosen to focus on Alyosha Karamazov's dream, and subsequent revelation and Ivan Karamazov's hallucination, and subsequent psychological collapse. However, I will briefly outline the nature of Dmitri's dream and the revelation it provokes. Essentially, Dmitri's dream and the moral regeneration it prompts, occurs "through the awakening of his aesthetic sensibility", as Robert Louis Jackson has pointed out (1981, p. 341). Dmitri's moral-spiritual regeneration is represented as a moral-aesthetic awakening to an aesthetic of suffering (depicted in the Madonna figure of his dream), which leads to repentance, an idea I discussed in relation to Myshkin's confused aesthetic sensibility in Chapter Two. In Dmitri's dream, both the aesthetic of Sodom (the burnt-out village) and the Madonna (the peasant woman with the baby) are depicted and merge in the dreamscape. The dream prompts him to make a moral-aesthetic choice between what he believes are the two ideals of beauty capable of captivating a person's gaze: the ideal of Sodom (the beauty of destruction and death) and the ideal of the Madonna (the beauty of creation and life). Dmitri's choice to assume responsibility on behalf of the mother and child and all the 'wee ones' who suffer, signals Dmitri's moral regeneration. At the end of the narrative, Dmitri maintains his desire to suffer on behalf of all people, accepting his prison

sentence for the murder of his father, despite his innocence of the crime.

Alyosha's spiritual regeneration is prompted by a dream that occurs after the death of his Elder. From the very beginning of the narrative the narrator makes it clear that Alyosha is the hero of the narrative, albeit a "figure of an indefinite, indeterminate sort" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 3). Like Arkady Dolgourky, Alyosha is no longer a boy but not yet a man and, like Myshkin, he possesses Christ-like qualities that mark him as 'odd,' and somehow out of place in the world. What precisely is 'indefinite' about Alyosha was to be elaborated in a second novel, a sequel which Dostoevsky never wrote because he died shortly after the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, early in 1881. For this reason, Alyosha is a somewhat etiolated figure compared to his two brothers, who possess an intellectual (Ivan) or aesthetic (Dmitri) voluptuousness, which Alyosha lacks. The main sense we have of Alyosha's character and worldview is that he believes in directing one's attention to what is good and worthy, evidenced in his exhortation to the school boys to remember being young and good, for such memories can save a man for his whole life.^{xxxix} The narrator indicates that Alyosha's childhood memory of his mother holding him before an icon of the Mother of God is his memory that 'saves' Alyosha later in life; a memory which also anticipates Alyosha's connection with Mother Earth/nature, which is the site of his spiritual regeneration that occurs after his dream.

Alyosha's dream occurs upon returning to the monastery from Grushenka's where he had sought his moral ruin at the hands of a loose woman only to discover a sister and true friend in his time of anguish over the death of Zosima. Upon returning to the monastery, Alyosha goes to Zosima's tomb to find Father Paisy reading the story of Jesus' first miracle of the transformation of water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana (Jn. 2:1-12). Listening to Father Paisy read the story, Alyosha falls into a hypnagogic state in which he envisions Zosima at a great wedding feast in paradise. In his dream, Alyosha sees the resurrected figure of Zosima who tells Alyosha that he has been welcomed to the heavenly feast where the guests are

drinking a “new wine of a new and great joy” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 361). Zosima’s declaration relates to his belief that just as Jesus transformed water into wine, Jesus became a man and died to save mankind from its sins in order that all people could be transformed into heavenly creatures, purified of sin. Jesus’ transformation of water to wine also relates to the metaphor indicated in the epigraph of the novel: the necessity of the corn of wheat to fall to the ground and die to bear (spiritual) fruit. Indeed, for Dostoevsky, only through Christ can mankind be united with the divine via a process of spiritual metamorphosis; a process that can only occur after a death of sorts (death of the ego, the death of worldly desires and/or the literal death of the body).

Upon waking from the dream, Alyosha leaves Zosima’s tomb in search of “freedom, space, vastness” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 362). Alyosha’s desire for spiritual and existential freedom manifests as a yearning for spatial freedom *from* the mephitic space of Zosima’s tomb.^{xi} Alyosha leaves the monastery and steps out into nature where he encounters the boundlessness of the heavenly dome of the earth’s zenith and horizon and senses a cosmic link between the earth and God’s infinite worlds. Alyosha’s sense of the cosmic link between the earth and heavens is experienced as a state of theosis, which is conceptually (and spatially) impossible within a Euclidean framework of understanding. The narrator describes Alyosha’s revelation as the merging of the “silence of the earth [. . .] with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 362). Malcolm Jones connects Alyosha’s experience of the silence of the heavens and the mystery of the earth with the apophatic strain in Orthodox theology. Apophatic silence is what cannot be spoken; it is an ineffable sense of God’s presence and goodness (2002, p. 171). For Simone Weil silence (what is ineffable) *is* (paradoxically) the Word of God and

[w]hen the silence of God comes to the soul and penetrates it and joins the silence which is secretly present in us, from then on we have our treasure and heart in God; and space opens before us as the opening fruit of a plant divides in two, for we are seeing the universe from a point situated outside of

space. (Weil [1950] 1998, p. 70)

Weil suggests that when the silence of God joins the silence within us, space opens up before us and we are able to perceive creation as God does, from a point situated outside of space itself. For Weil, transcendence, the ability to ‘climb over’ the universe and see it from a “point situated outside of space”, entails the dislocation of the ego from its point ‘at the centre of the universe’ (Weil [1950] 1998, p. 70). Alyosha’s desire for “freedom, space, vastness”, is a desire to relinquish his space (the ego’s space) and be connected, through divine union, with all spaces and all creation.

Just as Dmitri’s dream awakens his moral-aesthetic sensibility, enabling him to assume moral responsibility for others, Alyosha’s dream illuminates his spiritual optics, allowing the otherworldly paradise he sees in his dream to become a revelation of paradise within him (“behold, the kingdom of God is within you”). After his dream, Alyosha seeks the promise of onto-existential freedom contained in the vast spaces of nature. He experiences the opening of a spatial infinity diffuse with the Word/silence of God, with the narrator describing Alyosha’s revelation of theosis as “threads from all those innumerable worlds of God came together in his soul, and it was trembling all over, ‘touching other worlds’” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 362). Alyosha’s ability to perceive a transcendental, other-world not only requires a spiritual optics that is able to transpierce purely material phenomena, but a non-Euclidean mind capable of imagining alternative spatial realities; where the very notion of parallel lines ceases to exist. No longer are finite (Euclidean) and infinite (non-Euclidean) worlds seen as parallel realities, but as a spatial and temporal plenum comprising the whole of space and reality. Only within a non-Euclidean ontology (which encompasses dream-matrices and the psychic content of the unconscious) can the idea of innumerable worlds and spatial realities be comprehended even theoretically, an idea that Ivan ostensibly disavows.

Ivan’s devil

The narrator indicates that Ivan's devil begins to appear to him as he becomes aware of his guilt feelings over his father's death. Fyodor Karamazov is murdered by Smerdyakov under the influence of Ivan's doctrine and when Smerdyakov confesses his crime to Ivan, he implicates Ivan as an accomplice. When Ivan begins to realise that he no longer believes in his Euclidean ideas -but is forced to acknowledge that these ideas have caused Smerdyakov to commit parricide- Ivan attempts to disassociate himself from his Euclidean doctrine, precipitating the manifestation of his hallucinatory devil. The devil is "one side" of Ivan's bifurcated psyche (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 638). Indeed, Ivan says to his devil that he (the devil) is one side of himself, that which Ivan finds most "stupid and banal", his Euclidean ideas (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 638). Even though the devil states that he belongs to a non-Euclidean equation, the devil himself is a Euclidean at heart because Ivan is. The devil declares to Ivan, "I love your earthly realism. Here you have it all outlined, here you have the formula, here you have geometry, and with us it's all indeterminate equations!" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 638). The devil expresses a desire not only for a geometry (Euclidean geometry) but a desire to become incarnated in the form of a fat merchant's wife. The devil would rather choose to be embodied in a finite form and light candles to God, preferring earthly realism (Euclideanism) and faith (even in an illusionary God) to the indeterminacy of being an 'x' in an unknown equation within a non-Euclidean geometry. The devil parodies Ivan's rejection of the indeterminacy of immortality and God by expressing a desire for a determined form, with the devil's desire for embodiment, akin to Ivan limiting himself to a Euclidean worldview. To choose one form (the merchant's wife) is analogically akin to choosing a clearly determined worldview that rejects all other worldviews.

Despite expressing his frustration at being an 'x in an indeterminate equation,' if the devil, and by extension, Ivan, were true Euclideans, then according to Euclidean geometry to have knowledge of x denotes a knowledge of the function of y which points back to the function of x . Yet because Ivan does not in fact believe in a Euclidean arithmetic, knowledge of 'x' (the devil) does not denote knowledge of

'y' (God) and so, as the devil points out, "who knows whether proof of the devil is also a proof of God?" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 637). Indeed, the devil implies that Ivan's Euclidean way of thinking is "inadequate for comprehending the otherworldly, where the familiar spatio-temporal grid underlying 'the realism of earth' becomes inoperative," as Anna Schur Kaladiouk has pointed out (2006, p. 433). The devil forces Ivan to acknowledge that a Euclidean framework of understanding fails where metaphysical concepts are concerned. When Ivan asks the devil whether or not there is a God, the devil confesses that he does not know. The devil declares that, "all those worlds, God, even Satan himself - for me all that is unproven, whether it exists in itself, or is only an emanation, a consistent development of my *I*, which exists pre-temporally and uniquely . . ." (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 642 ellipsis original). The devil cuts short his conclusion, implying that what is unknown, unproven, and beyond the comprehension of the *I* must remain so, or be subsumed into a particularistic framework of reference that serves to reinforce the very structure of the individual's (Ivan's) ontology.

Ivan's doctrine of moral relativism

In the previous chapter, I argued that the foundations of Ivan's Euclideanism arises from his belief in the need for imminent justice in a finite world order. Ivan believes that the incompatibility of a good God with the suffering in the world is akin to the geometric impossibility indicated in Euclid's parallel postulate (the meeting of parallel lines). Ivan demands an equation of justice, here and now, and not in some 'future eternal', rejecting the indeterminacy of God, immortality and 'eternal harmony' as well as Christ, arguing that Christ added to mankind's suffering by allowing us our freedom. Ivan believes in a Euclidean epistemology because it provides a closed framework of meaning that does away with the contingency of human freedom and suffering along with the metaphysical concepts attendant to freedom and suffering. For the majority of the narrative Ivan ostensibly succeeds in affirming the logic of his Euclidean arguments against God and convinces Alyosha to reject the moral structure of the world God created, albeit briefly. Ivan rejects the idea of immortality and eternal harmony, given that the price for harmony, (the

suffering of children) is too high. In place of God and immortality, Ivan, via his devil, proselytises the vitality of the man-god to whom 'everything is permitted'.

Ivan's doctrine is a butchered version of the Apostle's Paul admonition to the Corinthians, that "[e]verything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial" (1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23 NIV). By appropriating the first part of Paul's admonition only, Ivan abandons the caveat "not all things are beneficial", Paul's warning against the abuse of moral freedom under the aegis of God's grace. Paul's admonition occurs in two separate places in his first letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10:23, the context of Paul's admonition concerns the freedom of the believer to eat and drink whatever he/she wants (hitherto forbidden in Jewish law) so long as he/she is not seeking his/her own good alone, but that of others. Paul indicates that each person should listen to the inner-workings of their own conscience, for the free working of conscience is the believer's freedom. The other context of Paul's admonition appears in 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul's disquisition on sexual immorality. In this excerpt from his letter to the Corinthians, Paul argues that the body is holy and a member of the body of Christ (the Church) and therefore should not be used for sexual promiscuity. Once again, Paul draws attention to the believer's freedom and moral agency with the caution that although God's forgiveness and grace frees us from sin, not every action is beneficial for our spiritual development. Paul uses the example of sexual union with a prostitute as an example in which moral permissibility is not beneficial for the spiritual health of the believer. Considering the biblical origin of Ivan's butchered doctrine of moral permissibility, by abandoning Paul's caveat in the formulation of his doctrine, Ivan proffers a credo of moral promiscuity; it can be wed to any ideology to serve as a justification for any action/crime.

In the interview between Ivan and the devil, the devil traces the ideological formulation of Ivan's doctrine to a poem which Ivan wrote as a young man called 'Geological Cataclysm'. In the poem Ivan/the devil proffers that in the future, a new phase of human evolution would begin with the death of the idea of God. In his poem, Ivan maintains that if the idea of God is destroyed, mankind's former love of

God would be replaced by a love of mankind, in a vein similar to that of Feuerbach's atheistic socialism which I discussed in Chapter Four. Ivan/the devil says, "Once mankind has renounced God, one and all (and I believe that this period, analogous to geological periods, will come), then the entire old-world view will fall of itself" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 648). Ivan/the devil likens the collapse of the old-worldview to a geologic, tectonic restructuring that displaces the old moral topography (the idea of God and immortality). In place of God, mankind would rise up and be exalted with the "spirit of divine, titanic pride, and the man-god will appear" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 649). In the vein of Raskolnikov and Kirillov, Ivan asserts that for the person who is capable of stepping over the idea of God and immortality, as well as their conscience, everything is permitted; for such a person has become the man-god. Ivan/the devil concludes that "[t]here is no law for God! Where God stands - there is the place of God. Where I stand, there at once will be the foremost place . . . 'everything is permitted'" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 649). The universal God, a God who transcends time and space, a God who is simultaneously inside and outside of Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry, is displaced by the man-god; a purely Euclidean god who, in God's absence, gains the foremost place. Like Kirillov, Ivan believes that if there is a God then God's will is the highest, but if there is no God then his will is the highest. Based on this belief, Ivan attempts to destroy the idea of God in order to reify his self-will as the highest and become the man-god. Ellis Sandoz argues that "in the dreamworld of the superman, everything prohibited in the real world is permitted, and the lie in the soul can be both believed and disbelieved simultaneously [. . .] the lie being that the 'I', the reified self-will is the sum total of existentially relevant being *even if* the 'Thou' is real" (1964, p. 366). The idea that the individual, reified 'I' can surmount the idea of a *causa sui* universal God requires a Herculean mental effort and one that can only be sustained as a fantasy, a lie or a delusion. Where God transcends time and space, time and space are the limits of the man-god, hence it is only in the dreamworld of the man-god that the reified 'I' is the sum total of meaning and being.

If God and immortality are removed from the equation, what remains is the will of man and a thirst for life or death, without caveats or prohibitions; which puts

us to mind of Nietzsche's Zarathustra and his concept of the *Übermensch*. Without caveats, 'everything is permitted' does not affirm the freedom of the individual but expedites an onto-existential trajectory that leads to moral-spiritual suicide, the logical outcome of Ivan's doctrine. By displacing God and immortality from the symbolic space which they occupy as divine ideals, all that is left to Ivan is a conceptual and ontological void and thus his doctrine collapses into nihilism. The moral vacuum created by the removal of God and the deification of the man-god's will, signals that the logical outcome of 'everything is permitted' is complete lawlessness and the manifestation of all forms of violence (physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual). Indeed, when Liza Khokhlakov tells Ivan that she can imagine herself crucifying a child and watching it die while eating pineapple compote, Ivan responds by saying that the image is 'good.' If everything is permitted, the suffering of children is permitted. If everything is permitted the distinction between good and evil collapses into moral relativism or worse, nihilism.

Despite the moral relativism Ivan proffers in his doctrine, he cannot logically dismiss the real dichotomy and distinction that exists between good and evil. Indeed, if Ivan were a true Euclidean (a mathematician) he would dismiss the duality of good and evil altogether, not by collapsing moral valuation into moral relativism but by employing the less emotive language of cause and effect, of action and reaction. Outside of human law and society, in the natural world, everything is permitted *if* it is possible and everything is possible because it is permitted (according to the laws of cause and effect). The fact that Ivan does not ground his doctrine in causality or the laws of determinism points to his lingering concern with morality. Anna Schur Kaladiouk argues that "[l]ike the Underground Man, Ivan is caught between his rational understanding of the workings of determinism and his emotional rejection of its moral implications" (2006, p. 428). Ivan cannot reason himself out of the idea of God (or a teleological purpose for suffering) so long as he reasons within a Judeo-Christian framework of understanding. Within a Judeo-Christian morality, the Ontological Proof of God (proffered by Anselm of Canterbury) must always remain a barrier for Ivan; that is, God as that which nothing greater can be thought (Lenzen 2017 p. 86). Ivan is neither a true atheist

nor a true Euclidean. God remains the highest thought which must be overcome but can only be overcome through the lie of the man-god: the reified 'I' as the highest thought and the sum total of meaning and being.

Ultimately what we find is that it is not the *causa sui* thought of God that Ivan rejects, but *his* idea of God. In *Fifth Business* by Robertson Davies, the main character Dunstan Ramsay says to his friend, "You created a God in your own image, and when you found out he was no good you abolished him. It's a quite common form of psychological suicide" ([1977] 2001, p. 227). Ivan's God and man-god are one and the same. Both are for Ivan that which nothing greater can be thought, but as Ivan's thought, they are created in Ivan's image. Both Ivan's God and the man-god, are, according to Ivan, permitted everything, for theirs is the highest will. Ivan replaces the idea of God with the idea of the man-god because he believes that God is not good. Yet the problem of morality without God is, as Ivan realises, chaos in lieu of an absent universal law (Kaladiouk 2006, p. 431). Indeed, when Ivan is forced to confront the fact that he is culpable and morally responsible for his father's murder, he discovers that he cannot live up to the doctrine 'everything is permitted' because Ivan *is*, like Raskolnikov, concerned with morality. When Ivan finds out that he (as man-god) is not good, Ivan's idea of the man-god, like his idea of God, is abolished; a revelation which precipitates Ivan's psychological collapse and onto-existential despair.

Ivan's psychological collapse

Ivan's commitment to empirical fact is undermined by the appearance of his hallucinatory devil. The devil prompts Ivan's psychological collapse by blurring the boundary between what is real and fantasy. Throughout the exchange between Ivan and his hallucination, Ivan wavers between a belief of the devil's existence and a belief that the devil is simply an illness of his confused mind. In either case, to affirm the literal reality of his devil would indicate Ivan's acknowledgement of the non-Euclidean world from which the devil ostensibly comes, while to affirm the psychological reality of his devil would also constitute an acknowledgement of the reality of a non-Euclidean spatial reality given that the unconscious and its

phenomena have “non-Euclidean topological properties” (Blum and Secor 2011, p. 1034). Ivan wants to dismiss his devil as a fantasy or believe that the devil is an empirically real, extrinsic entity to himself given that Ivan does not have the psychological strength to confront what he calls the most loathsome side of himself: the manifest lie of his Euclidean doctrine, a non-Euclidean devil who desires a Euclidean form.

Topologically speaking, it could be said that the devil is a homeomorphism of Ivan. In *The Oxford English Dictionary* a homeomorphism translates as similar shape or form; it is a topological space or object which can be distorted or stretched to create a new shape while retaining the same topological properties through a continuous inverse function (2017 OED). In their work on applied mathematics John H. Hubbard and Beverley H. West cite an old joke amongst mathematicians, being that a topologist cannot tell the difference between a coffee mug and a donut given their topological equivalence as homeomorphisms (1995, p. 204).



How a mug and a torus be equivalent if the mug is chiral? Mathematics Stack Exchange.
www.math.stackexchange.com.

Ivan alludes to the topological equivalence between himself and the devil by suggesting that the devil is simply himself only “with a different mug” (face) (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 638). Like the interminable surface of the Mobius strip, Ivan’s devil is one face (or ‘one side’ of Ivan) of the non-orientable surface of Ivan’s disturbed psyche or, Ivan with a different ‘mug’ (face). The homeomorphic connection between Ivan and his devil not only supports the claim of topology as a metric for understanding non-Euclidean spatial configurations, such as the content of the psyche, but undermines Ivan and his devil’s shared desire for a clearly determined Euclidean form (or ontology).

After the encounter with his devil, Ivan is reduced to a fevered, unconscious state and Alyosha intimates that if Ivan wakes, he must choose to believe in something other than his Euclidean ontology or be left with the ontological void he has created in lieu of God.^{xli} Given that Ivan can no longer believe in the truth value of his Euclidean ontology, he must expand his ontological horizons beyond the “limits of [his] own space” (Brookes 2013, p. 29) that is, his self-will, or else be limited to his space, which, at the end of the narrative is akin to the Derridean crypt of false consciousness which Myshkin inhabits at the close of *The Idiot*. Indeed, Ivan’s Euclidean ontology becomes for him a false consciousness. As quoted from Derrida in Chapter Two, a person may construct a false consciousness in order to preserve the living dead (a fantasy or memory) within them (Derrida 1986, p. xxi). Ivan has constructed a false consciousness within himself in order to preserve his fantasy of the man-god; to enshrine the dream of the superman whose reified ‘I’ supersedes the reified ‘Thou’ of God. Ivan buries the man-god and Grand Inquisitor within his consciousness. He wants to preserve them as the fictional gods of a purely finite, Euclidean world and yet he no longer wants to acknowledge them as his own creations. He even forbids his devil to mention the Grand Inquisitor to him. Ivan’s psychological collapse occurs, in large part, because he is unable to find a positive or a negative answer to the eternal questions which torment him. He can neither believe in his aborted thought experiment (the man-god/Grand Inquisitor of a Euclidean world), nor in a God who can allow suffering. Ivan is unable to resolve the eternal questions of human freedom and suffering, as well as God’s existence and essence, positively or negatively and thus Ivan collapses under the ontological weight of having nothing left in which to believe.

Ivan’s isolation and Zosima’s theosis

Given that Zosima does not offer a point by point refutation of Ivan’s arguments, Dostoevsky feared that Zosima’s mystical discourse might fall short as an adequate response to Ivan’s Euclidean arguments as well as Ivan’s Grand Inquisitor. Dostoevsky’s monumental creation of the Grand Inquisitor and Ivan’s rebellion against God is ideologically far more complex than the simple, earthy

mysticism of Zosima. Whether or not Dostoevsky and his critics felt that the artistic picture which forms Zosima's worldview is ultimately convincing or not, in Ivan's psychological collapse Dostoevsky exposes the fallibility and contradictions of Ivan's self-enclosed worldview. Indeed, Ivan shifts back and forth between ideas and symbolisms because he is uncertain as to where the truth lies (Sandoz 1971, p. 135). Ivan, in bad faith, appropriates the language and symbolisms of the atheist in order to confront Alyosha with an irrefutable argument against God based on the suffering of children, yet he also allows suffering to be permissible if there is no God. While Ivan claims that he has a Euclidean mind and rejects the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean geometry, he also desires transcendence and is tormented by the eternal questions. Unable to find a positive resolution to the eternal questions, Ivan creates a self-enclosed ontology that extends no further than the boundary, and therefore the limitations of his self-will. Ivan's state of unconsciousness at the end of the novel can be read as the manifestation of his onto-existential isolation within his reified self-will.

Ivan's self-will is the boundary of itself, given that it excludes what it cannot subsume into itself.^{xlii} G. K. Chesterton remarks that many people contend that the will of man is, "something that expands and breaks out. But it is quite the opposite. Every act of will is an act of self-limitation. To desire action is to desire limitation. In that sense, every act is an act of self-sacrifice. When you choose anything, you reject everything else [. . .] every act [of the will] is an irrevocable selection and exclusion" ([1908] 2005, p. 25). Ivan's "existentialist-style voluntarism" is the boundary of its own limited moral vision (Murdoch 1992, p. 458). In choosing the reified will of the man-god which is himself, Ivan rejects the will of God. The *I* of the man-god becomes like an idol confined to the boundary of a fixed self. In Chapter Four, I quoted from Iris Murdoch whose argument against looking inward at reason is couched in her belief that the self can become such a dazzling object, that the person who looks inward might not be able to see anything else ([1971] 2001, p. 30). Just as the idol dazzles and captivates the gaze, so too does the gaze which is directed inward, towards the self. The voluntaristic will belongs to the order of fantasy given

that it maintains the illusion that the self is the most important and central thing which should concern us (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 65). For Murdoch, fantasy is a system of self-centred aims, language and images which proliferate within us and blind us to the outward attention of seeing and loving ([1971] 2001, p. 65). Indeed, Ivan's inability to love others up close is the result of his lack of moral vision or what I have called, spiritual optics. He is unable to extend a moral effort and vision towards other people to have real compassion and love for them. His inability to love others constitutes, in Zosima's view, a state of being-in-hell. At the end of the narrative, Ivan's vision has quite literally been turned completely inward and his whole consciousness suspended in a state of isolation/hell.

Zosima's entire worldview tends towards a non-Euclidean theosis. He is able to perceive the world via a spiritual optics in which he sees every blade of grass and little ant bearing witness to and enacting the divine mystery of God. Zosima proclaims that God sowed seeds from his heavenly worlds on earth and that these seeds ripen and grow through contact with God's heavenly worlds. He exhorts others to love everything, every plant and animal and person, even in their sin, for in doing so the mystery of God will be revealed in each living thing and mankind might at last come to love the whole world with an active, universal love. Zosima's notion that even the ant bears witness to and enacts the divine mystery of God, is a lesson that the individual must learn if they to want to understand the mystery of theosis. Bearing witness, with attention and consideration, forms the basis of a moral vision which, beginning with 'seeing', extends into a practice of moral responsibility. Murdoch argues that I can only choose "within the world I can *see*, in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort. There is also of course 'distorted vision', and the word 'reality' here inevitably appears as a normative word" ([1971] 2001, p. 36). We can see clearly only with attention and moral effort. Moral effort and moral imagination are necessary for clear vision, entailing not only a moral and ethical 'seeing' but a spiritual optics capable of perceiving the divine and god-like qualities in every person, ant, blade of grass and everything that lives.

Zosima's notion of bearing witness is similar to Murdoch's notion of attention, while Murdoch's reference to 'distorted vision' recalls Zosima's admonition to his fellow monks that the ideal towards which all people should strive is the *undistorted* image of Christ (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 313).^{xliii} Ostensibly a distorted image of Christ would resemble the Christ in the tomb of Holbein's painting which I examined in Chapter Two. Holbein's Christ is an image of a dead Christ whose body has begun to decay and whose empty gaze rests upon the upper partition of the tomb, seeing nothing. For Zosima, the undistorted image of Christ must be an image of the resurrected Christ, who is the bridge between our world and God's infinite worlds, who is the living icon that mediates between mankind and the divine. Christ is a threshold figure embodying a symbolic interfacing of two natures and two temporal and spatial realities; the temporal and the infinite, the Euclidean and non-Euclidean (Campbell [1986] 2002, p. 40). If Christ is the universally accessible and applicable ideal of love and forgiveness *par excellence*, as Dostoevsky maintained, it would morally benefit a person to make Christ a figure of moral attention and contemplation. For, as Murdoch argues, we can grow in virtue by looking towards the ideal of Christ ([1971] 2001, p. 30), as I mentioned at the end of Chapter Four.

Both Dostoevsky and Murdoch have argued that *seeing* or what a person directs their gaze towards (in a moral sense), indicates an onto-existential choice to assume moral responsibility for others or to divest ourselves of it. Robert Louis Jackson affirms that, what he calls, an 'ethics of vision' is essential to Dostoevsky's notion that people cannot ignore suffering; arguing that "Dostoevsky's point is that one cannot, one must not, turn away, however painful the sight, or one separates oneself from humanity and the drama of suffering and salvation" (1993, p. 53). Clear moral vision is the first step on the path to moral responsibility and the assumption of moral responsibility is an act of love. Murdoch equates love with the ability to see, with the "just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality [. . .] the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent" ([1971] 2001, p. 33). In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Markel, Zosima, Alyosha and Dmitri all profess a desire to assume moral responsibility for others. Each acknowledges their complicity in the

drama of human suffering which occurs, in part, because people are unwilling or incapable of *seeing* others up close and loving them. The loving gaze that extends outwards, away from the self, is a mark of a person's onto-existential freedom (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 36). It is a freedom from the limitations of a vision directed wholly inward, a vision which can lead to solipsism and the fantasy that the self and its desires are more important than anything else. Such is the case with Ivan Karamazov (along with Raskolnikov, Kirillov and the underground man, among others of Dostoevsky's nihilistic characters).

Zosima's appeal for people to assume moral responsibility for all creation, including the ant, bee and every blade of grass is an appeal for people to *see* that there is an "undifferentiating unity" which connects every living thing to other manifestations of existence and that this unity also joins "all forms of existence to God" (Anderson 1986, p. 120). By loving creation, we love God and in loving God the spatio-temporal limitations of all Euclidean and non-Euclidean worlds collapse into a transcendent and immanent relationship with the Creator of all life (Jesus's exhortation that the kingdom of God is within you). Onto-existential freedom is a state of grace which is experienced when one is able to *see* God in all creation and love it all. Yet in order to live in this state of grace, one must be able to marvel at the mystery of life and accept the limitations of human understanding and insight. Indeed, just as mathematician Carl Fredrich Gauss argued that non-Euclidean geometry cannot be proved by or for human understanding, neither can the temporal and spatial infinity of God (Gauss qtd. in Torretti 1978, p. 55). All we can do, Dostoevsky suggests, is position ourselves towards the undistorted ideal of Christ.

Conclusion

My aim for this study was to explore the various spaces and spatial motifs of Dostoevsky's post-Siberian fiction in order to understand the connections between space and the onto-existential possibilities and potentialities of being open to Dostoevsky's characters. What I have found is that while certain spaces, sites and objects become, like Bakhtin's chronotopes, associated with certain events, symbolisms or onto-existential possibilities, space is ultimately the site, medium and milieu of moral and existential transitions. Indeed, when taking into consideration Dostoevsky's claim that man is yet a transitional creature, one not yet able to embody its highest ideal, space (physical, social and mental) is *the a priori* palimpsest of all our onto-existential possibilities of being; marked by transitions from one place, state or condition of being to another. One of the characteristic traits attending the trope of transitions and transitional states of being, is the modality of liminality; to be in transition, is to inhabit a liminal space. Transitional spaces are often demarcated by literal and symbolic thresholds (doorways, bridges, crossroads, initiation rituals). It is a vantage point for contemplating two distinct spaces, or, morally and existentially speaking, two distinct states of being. Thresholds must necessarily be crossed in order for a new space or state of being to be attained or inhabited. To be caught on the threshold, is to be caught in a liminal state. This study has shown that for Dostoevsky's characters, to be trapped in a liminal state can lead to the solipsistic 'spectralisation' of their narrative worlds, signalling the diminishment of reality and therefore their ability to perform moral action.

Dostoevsky's characters are constantly in transition, in space and as a space,

attempting to see where they are and where they are going. Where we are going (morally and existentially) and what we are moving towards (the realisation of a posited ideal), is a question entailing an answer that has a spatio-ontological basis but begins with what captivates our gaze. For Dostoevsky, what captivates our gaze are, symbolically speaking, idols or icons. The idol and icon represent two possible modes of being for beings (Marion 1995, p. 8). These modes of being can, generally speaking, be understood as onto-existentially open or closed (much like threshold space as opposed to corner or tomb space or, non-Euclidean space as opposed to Euclidean space). Where the idol fixes and buries the gaze within itself, the icon provokes the gaze to go beyond what is purely visible in search of a transcendent ideal. In Dostoevsky's fiction, the motifs of the idol and icon carry a heavy cargo of symbolism. The idol pertains to what is particular, while the icon to what is universal, or, psychologically speaking, the idol is representative of the reified self-will, while the icon, the kenotic will. Idols and icons populate Dostoevsky's fiction, taking the form of ideas (ideology or the reification of rationality itself) or of flesh (the idolatrous worship of the self or others or the iconic Mother figures who point the way to the moral life). Ultimately Dostoevsky's characters believe either in an idol of their own making, or in an ideal that is yet beyond them.

Throughout his post-Siberian oeuvre, Dostoevsky shows that although it is tempting to want to erect or induct an epistemology, ideology, god or any number of conceptual idols as *the* truth (which many of Dostoevsky's characters do in the attempt to centralise meaning and dispel the thought that they are contingent beings), these can only ever be provisional or "limited wholes"^{xliv}, particular to a specific time and place or even to a specific individual (and therefore a fantasy of sorts). The sustained polemic which Dostoevsky engaged in with the various ideologies which arose throughout his lifetime was couched in his rejection of the ideologue's assertion that by following this or that formula for the organisation of humanity, that a complete (and therefore totalitarian) picture of an ideal society would take shape. Dostoevsky rejected any ideological or religious dogma which would sacrifice the individual's freedom for the rational good of the ant-heap;

whose ideologues espoused theories of unity and brotherhood but would seek the unification of humanity through forced homogenisation. Dostoevsky believed that any totalitarianism was a morally dangerous fantasy and one which sought the constriction not only of individual freedom, but language, thought and space itself. Where dogmas, ideological or religious, seek to compass reality through epistemological constructs (a particularity), a universal truth transcends reality; it is "*an Indifference that tolerates difference*" (Badiou 2003, p. 99), an idea I employed in Chapter Four in relation to the failure of utopian formulas to claim the status of a universal (a universal must be indifferent to difference). Fantasy, on the other hand, could be described as something very opposite, a particular imaging which attempts to outstrip difference, contingency and even death itself.

Those of Dostoevsky's characters who are intellectually, ideologically or religiously dogmatic, all encounter the various moral risks associated with an isolationist onto-existential way of being. Such characters inhabit spaces and forms which ultimately lead to solipsism or nihilism. In their spectral and limited psychological habitations, such characters become embittered by or even hateful towards living life, reality and all being and therefore isolate themselves from the world and give themselves over to the fantasy of the extraordinary man, the man made of bronze or the man-god (the reified self-will). The moral danger which besets those of Dostoevsky's characters who believe that their reified self-will can occupy the conceptual void created by their removal of God, is solipsism (which leads to nihilism); the reified self-will believes that it is the sole valuating power of what is real and what is not, and thus all extrinsic spaces and spatial objects can be viewed as mere projections of the mind. Such characters imagine themselves in completed forms, as living monuments before whom all people bow down. Such fantasies crystallise in the corners and underground spaces into which they retreat. The isolationist tendency present in many of Dostoevsky's 'underground' figures, works towards reinforcing the dominance of an unmediated and unchallenged self-will. The ability to see (or at least imagine) beyond the limits of one's own will and epistemology is the mark of a person's onto-existential freedom and, conversely,

“when freedom has degenerated into self-will it recognises nothing as sacred or forbidden [. . .] he lets himself get obsessed by some fixed idea, and under its tyranny freedom soon begins to disappear” (Berdyayev [1921] 1966, p. 96). For Dostoevsky, the self-will, like ideas or demons, can possess a person, and under its tyranny, freedom disappears. Dostoevsky believed that the reified and isolated self-will, relentless in its desire to contain and control, was the enemy of the moral life. The *I* becomes the boundary and limit of its world and thus space (symbolically speaking) becomes closed, as does the ontological and existential possibilities of the individual if they fail to see beyond self-will.

To overcome the isolation and separation which characterises the reified will (ego), an emptying of the will (kenosis) is necessary, a state of being which Dostoevsky believed Christ was able to embody. Kenosis is a threshold state which leads to union with God (theosis). Although Dostoevsky believed that theosis was *the highest* of our potentialities of being as transitional creatures, our re-union of our spiritual state with its divine origins is a difficult journey, problematised by the fact that people are a “compound of a mixture of the heavenly and the earthy, an unnatural creature because our spiritual nature has been isolated from its divine origins” (1961, p. 3). Isolation, and the proclivity for the ego to want to enforce its will and desires on the world, must be relinquished as the precondition for theosis. The reunion of our spiritual nature with its divine origins cannot be achieved through an Icarian ascent towards the heavens, but in the laying down of the will, or, to draw upon the agricultural motif of moral regeneration in *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is the death of the corn of wheat that falls to the ground to be reborn in a new form (Jn.12:24). Through theosis, separate spaces, sites and objects are deterritorialised, not in a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, but insofar as that for the person who lives under the aegis of theosis, space becomes deterritorialised by the grace of God and all sites and all spaces can be seen as a living whole, or the Universal Whole of the ridiculous man’s dream. In order for us, as transitional creatures, to individually and collectively move towards the ideal of theosis, we must possess the moral imagination to see it as a living, onto-existential possibility

within our material, spatial world. For, as I have argued quoting Heidegger, “inasmuch as any entity within-the-world is likewise in space, its spatiality will have an ontological connection with the world” ([1927] 1962, p. 134). How we comport ourselves within space and as a space, instantiates our moral, existential and ontological connection with our world.

Indeed, this study has shown that given that space is the precondition and condition for all moral and existential action, our spatial possibilities *are* our onto-existential possibilities, both good (towards moral regeneration/transformation) or bad (towards moral blindness/deformation). The metaphors of vision which Dostoevsky employs throughout his fiction, reinforce his contention that we must firstly *see*, in a moral sense, within our world of possibilities (Murdoch [1971] 2001, p. 36). We cannot see if our vision is turned wholly inward or arrested at a fixed point (the culmination of the gaze in/at the idol). Indeed, when moral vision and moral imagination are absent in Dostoevsky’s characters, moral blindness and fantasy possesses and corrupts their very being, reinforcing the alienation of their spiritual nature from its divine origins. In each chapter I have given examples of positions or habitations within space that are better vantage points for a character to see the divine (nature and its horizons, thresholds, icons, dreams) as well as positions or habitations which obscure a character’s vision (simulacra of the city, the underground, tomb and corner spaces, the idol, hallucinations and fantasies). This study has shown that the spatial habitation (both literal and psychological) of a character, as well as the way in which a character views specific spaces or spatial configurations, inform what onto-existential possibilities and potentialities of being are open to them.

From the outset of this study I wanted to distance myself from a Bakhtinian reading of space and spatial motifs in Dostoevsky’s fiction. Where Bakhtin privileges temporality over spatiality in his formulation of chronotopes (the nodal points for his genre-based reading of Dostoevsky’s fiction), I chose to focus on an ontological reading of space. Although I maintain that time is a second order construct in

Dostoevsky's narrative worlds, temporality, or more specifically, the fear of temporality, is a recurring trope throughout Dostoevsky's fiction. The fear of temporality *is* the fear of death and one that drives a number of Dostoevsky's characters to kill themselves in order to transcend this fear. Although there have been some Dostoevsky critics who have examined the role which time plays in the formation of a character's moral and existential worldview (Liza Knapp, comes to mind), further inquiry following a moral, existential and ontological line of questioning (rather than a teleological or ideological line) would, I think, yield a more rounded analysis of Bakhtin's chronotopes as well as my own inquiry of space in Dostoevsky's post-Siberian fiction. Given that time and space are *a priori* and that our spatial connection with the world informs our ontological connection with the world, it follows that an understanding of how a character views their being-towards-death would further illuminate the basis of a character's ontological connection with their narrative world and by extension, our own. If our experience of contingency is the shadow of death, and if to accept death is to accept our own essential nothingness (the futility of self-will) as Murdoch has argued ([1971] 2001, p. 100), to enact symbolic deaths (kenosis, the death of the ego/will) could constitute an outstripping of the fear of death. Indeed, the temporal distortions which many of Dostoevsky's characters experience (Myshkin, Kirillov, Ippolit, Alyosha Karamazov, the ridiculous man, Raskolnikov, among others), can be read as the wrestling of their unconscious with the problem of time. Yet, while many of Dostoevsky's characters experience moments of 'eternal harmony' (the dissolution of the constraints of time) most of them fail to understand that these moments alone do not constitute an effectual escape from the bite of space and time. Such moments are, for Dostoevsky's characters, merely a presentiment of an infinite time which is transcendent. However, the moral work which constitutes the basis for the possibility of attaining such a state, must be done within the confines of space and time, here and now, in the real world as it.

Endnotes

i When Dostoevsky was only eighteen, he wrote to his brother Mikhail, "Man is a mystery. One must solve it. If you spend your entire life trying to puzzle it out, then do not say you have wasted your time. I occupy myself with this mystery because I want to be a man" (qtd. in Mochulsky 1967, p. 17).

ii Works on chronotopes in Dostoevsky's fiction include: Sarah J. Young, *Dostoevsky's "The Idiot" And The Ethical Foundations Of Narrative: Reading, Narrating, Scripting*. Joe Andrew's, 'Same time, same place': Some Reflections on the Chronotope and Gender in Dostoevsky's "White Nights." Caryl Emerson's, 'Word and Image in Dostoevsky's Worlds'. Dean M. Britton's, 'Crime and Punishment: Existential Kenosis and Revelation in the Iconographic Chronotope.' James Curtis', 'Spatial Form as the Intrinsic Genre of Dostoevsky's Novels.' and V. N. Toporov's 'On Dostoevsky's Poetics and Archaic Patterns of Mythological Thought'.

iii The Topography of Terror: The Real and Imagined City in Dostoevsky's 'Besy'. *Dostoevsky Studies*. 18 (2014): 59-85.

iv 'Dostoevskii's Geography: Centers, Peripheries, and Networks in *Demons*'. *Slavic Review*. 66.2 (Summer 2007): 211-229.

v Raskolnikov's City and the Napoleonic Plan'. *Slavic Review*. 35.1 (Mar. 1976): 37-47.

vi 'Staraia Russa and Petersburg; Provincial Realities and Metropolitan Reminiscences in The Brothers Karamazov.' *Dostoevsky Studies*. 7. (1986): 81-86.

vii 'The Bridges of St. Petersburg: A Motif in *Crime and Punishment*'. *Dostoevsky Studies*. 3 (1982): 145-155.

viii Gubailovskii, Vladimir. Dostoevsky's Geometry: A Study Proposal'. *Russian Studies in Literature*. 43:1 (2007): 61-90 and Brookes, Alexander. *Non-Euclidean Geometry and Russian Literature: A Study of Fictional Truth and Ontology in Fyodor Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov, Vladimir Nabokov's The Gift, and Daniil Kharm's Incidents*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC, 2013.

ix Although I am aware of the Marxian connotations attached to the term 'false consciousness', my appropriation of Derrida's usage of the term is quiet literal and refers to a false mode of consciousness or more simply, a false way of thinking.

x Modern day Haymarket

xi In *A Writer's Diary* Dostoevsky likens the chaos of the marginalised 'corners' of Russian society not only to an impoverished and disintegrating social state, but of a spiritual impoverishment in which the chaos of such corners prevents those who inhabit them from forming a guiding ideal ([1877] 1994, p. 847).

xii In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Irish Murdoch distinguishes between "trapped egoistic *fantasy*, and *imagination* as a faculty of transcendence" (italics original 1992, p. 86). Raskolnikov and the underground man's fantasies are of the egoistic type identified by Murdoch.

xiii Sidney Monas affirms that the Dostoevsky hero of the Petersburg tale is always caught on a threshold between fantasy and reality as well as their conscious and unconscious selves (1983, p. 71).

xiv In the original end of Part 1 of the *Notes*, the underground man was to contemplate the figure of Christ and a New Jerusalem as a response to the totalitarian edifice of the Crystal Palace as well as the underground. However, this was censored, much to Dostoevsky's chagrin, and never appeared in the final

version. William Leatherbarrow suggests that the paradox of the figure of Christ would be to the underground man's taste, but the censors did not want the Gospel message to be voiced by the 'blasphemous' underground man (1981, p. 68).

^{xvi} In *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience*, Malcolm Jones points out that Myshkin is unable to remember his Russian roots and his memories are mixed with those of Protestant Switzerland (2005, p. 16).

^{xvii} Julia Kristeva suggests that the peculiar dimensions of the tomb in Holbein's painting intensify the feeling of permanent death. The painting contains no promise of transcendence or resurrection (1989, pp. 110-111).

^{xviii} Liza Knapp points out that "the Holbein painting impedes faith in one of the most important religious tenets of Christianity, that 'all creation will be set free from the law of decay' (Rom. 8:21)" (1996, p. 90).

^{xix} Unlike the idolatrous gaze, the gaze directed towards the icon seeks to outstrip distance all together and enter the eyes of the icon which is diffuse with the divine. In Orthodox iconography, the icon is intended to be visible to the gaze only as that which gives rise to an infinite gaze, it is not an object for worship in itself (Marion 1995, p. 18).

^{xx} See William Corner's journal article 'Rogozhin and the 'Castrates': Russian Religious Traditions in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*' *The Slavic and East European Journal*. 40.1 (Spring 1996): 85-99 for a detailed examination of the Castrates.

^{xxi} In the *Notebooks for Demons*, Dostoevsky indicates that because Stavrogin believes in nothing, he is himself a nothing ([1871]1968, p. 182).

^{xxii} In contrast to corner space or underground space, utopia (as an imagined better place or state) is spatially open, given that it has no set topography.

xxiii 'Ant-heap', as well as 'one herd', were terms Dostoevsky used in relation to any ideology that sort to create a society that demanded social homogeneity at the cost of an individual's freedom (Frank 2010, p. 376).

xxiv In 'Dostoevsky and the Golden Age' Richard Peace indicates that the living ideal of the Golden Age is couched in a "pure, all-permeating love which links man with the whole of nature, the whole of the universe" (1982, p. 66). Peace's Golden Age points ahead to the Elder Zosima's (*The Brothers Karamazov*) notion of theosis (divine union) which can only be activated by a love of all creation. Yet unlike the notion of theosis, the time of the Golden Age is always in the past. The paradox of the Golden Age is that it cannot exist historically if we do not believe that it is possible contemporarily, but we cannot believe that it was a living possibility without some historical evidence.

xxv The story dramatises the destructive power of jealousy, which is re-narrativised in the plot of *An Accidental Family* in Versilov's jealousy of Katerina Akhmakov, the aristocratic widow with whom he has a love/hate relationship. In Arkady's narrative, Versilov takes the form of Polypheme, lurking in the background, willing to crush any rival for Katerina Akhmakov's affection, including his son. Versilov's dream of the Golden Age hides the myth of Acis and Galatea, just as Versilov hides behind his love for Sonya (Arkady's mother) even as he jealously pursues Katerina Akhmakov. Dostoevsky uses the myth of Lorrain's painting to mirror the narrative plot and dispel the notion that ideology can prompt people to live in harmony.

xxvi In the bible, the devil tempts Christ to use his power to turn stones to bread and thus satiate humanity's material needs only.

xxvii In tracing Adorno's influence on Fredric Jameson and the difference between these theorists, John Pizer points out that Adorno's vision of utopia is couched in the qualitative experience of the individual who is unique and non-identical (1993, p.

142). That is, utopia can only be thought of as an individual imagining of utopia and therefore 'non-identical'.

xxviii Although Dostoevsky was referring to the unwritten novel, *The Life of a Great Sinner*, he transferred many of the ideas and themes of his intended novel to *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as *Demons*.

xxix Roberto Torretti wrote,

We usually assume that space has three dimensions and, if this turns out to be wrong, space will have four, five or another integral number of dimensions. By contrast, empirically verifiable hypotheses concerning the metric relations of space are necessarily imprecise, and they can hold only within a certain range of experimental error. Thus, the statement that space is Euclidean, that is, that its curvature is everywhere exactly zero, is not admissible as a scientific conjecture [. . .] This conclusion, unstated by Riemann but clearly implied by his remarks, has considerable importance, for the geometry of a manifold is non-Euclidean- either spherical or BL [Bolyai-Lobachevskian]- once its constant curvature deviates ever so slightly from zero [. . .] [this anticipates] Einstein's theory of gravitation, of a four-dimensional space-time manifold, whose curvature changes from point to point at the macro- physical level. (1978, pp. 104-105)

xxx 'Euclideanism' is a term I will use to indicate an epistemology that is grounded in ideas associated with Euclidean geometry.

xxxi Iris Murdoch contends that "[a] proper understanding of contingency apprehends chance and its horrors, not as fate, but as an aspect of death, of the frailty and unreality of the ego and the emptiness of worldly desires. So, our evil part is condemned 'not to suffering but to death'" (1992, p. 107). Ivan perceives suffering as a flaw in the moral architecture of God's world, when suffering is, according to Murdoch, more like the manifestation of our contingency and fragility

unto death. Ivan categorises suffering as a phenomenon which theodicies must provide an answer for, yet, in reality, Ivan's inability to understand contingency is caused by the pain of an ego that wants to believe it has control over its fate.

xxxii Facticity: the concrete fact or condition of being (Sartre [1943] 2008, p. 650).

xxxiii In explaining his term 'bad faith', Sartre uses the example of a café waiter whose "movement is quick and forward, a little too precise [. . .] a little too solicitous for the order of the client [. . .] he is playing at being a waiter in a café" ([1943] 2008, p. 82). The waiter performs the mannerisms and duties of a waiter, in the same way Ivan performs the role of atheist.

xxxiv Dostoevsky critic Robert L. Belknap points out that later in the narrative a school boy, Kolya Krasotkin, wields the same triumvirate power of the Inquisitor (miracle, mystery and authority) over the group of boys that he benevolently tyrannises (1990, p. 149). Belknap points out that Kolya *magically* brings the dog Zhuchka back to life (all of the boys thought he was dead), he exploits the *mystery* of who founded Troy (keeping the knowledge to himself) and he has absolute *authority* over the other boys (he tells Alyosha that the boys look to him as a god) (Belknap 1990, p. 149). By refracting Ivan's grand ideas through the boy Kolya, the image of the Inquisitor is somewhat diminished, who, like a stubborn and egotistical child, wants everyone to obey him (Belknap 1990, p. 150).

xxxv In a letter to N. A. Lyubimov (May 10 1879), Dostoevsky wrote of Ivan Karamazov, "My hero chooses an argument that, *in my opinion*, is irrefutable – the senselessness of children's suffering – and from it reaches the conclusion that all historical reality is an absurdity" (1987, p. 465).

xxxvi Vladimir Gubailovskii points out that, "Dostoevsky's interpretation of non-Euclidean geometry separates mathematical propositions into a worldly and otherworldly binary" (2007, p. 62).

xxxvii Matthew 7:13-14

xxxviii Ivan's devil asks Ivan "what good is faith by force? Besides, proofs are of no help to faith, especially material proofs" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p.636).

xxxix We can conjecture that the Apostle Paul's exhortation in Philippians 4:8 would appeal to Dostoevsky's young hero: "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

xl As discussed in Chapter Two, tomb space is encrypted by death and is only outstripped through the vertical movement of (a symbolic or literal) resurrection, which, in Dostoevsky's fiction, is almost always dramatised in nature.

xli The narrator indicates that Alyosha believes, that "He [Ivan] will either rise into the light of truth, or . . . perish in hatred, taking revenge on himself and everyone for having served something he does not believe in" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, p. 655 ellipsis original).

xlii Jean-Luc Marion argues that the condition or possibility of valuating the world is man's will to power. "To valuate is to measure a thing according to our will to power. But the will to power is limited in its valuating power by its own essence" (2001, p. 41).

xliii Malcolm Jones argues that "[w]ith a distorted ideal or no ideal at all man is spiritually crippled" (1976, p. 126).

xliv 'Limited whole' is a term I have borrowed from Iris Murdoch in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992).

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