

ROBERT S. VUCKOVICH (Waterloo)
A Devil under the Guise of a Good Conscience

Abstract

Buried within Fyodor Dostoevsky's works are glimpses of corrupt individuals who rise to the fore every now and then. Without these occasional revelations, not many would notice how diabolical an ordinary person really is. Although Dostoevsky does generalize that human nature can be quite vile, a character like the mysterious visitor from The Brothers Karamazov displays that nature without striving to be extraordinary as Dostoevsky's other prolific characters. Something troubling still lurks within this mundane type. Relying on moral dilemmas presented by ancient thinkers will help this project expose and elaborate on the unsavouriness behind the activities and dispositions of Dostoevsky's minute character. With the mysterious visitor as the prime focus, we discover how an individual distorts one's personal development and decent relations with other humane beings.

Key words: Dostevsky, Glaucon, impunity, impulses, public confession, private confession

Getting away with a brutal offence, especially when one is the instigator, serves as a bonus or a crowning achievement for a course of actions. This characterization of impunity may, ideally, be sought after when one has committed the offence, but in reality, there is no guarantee that an individual will achieve this desired end. Should one acquire impunity through extensive thought, external resources, or fluke circumstances, the offender must hope that the offensive event escapes all detection so as to make any thought that the offender is the culprit deserving of punishment a grave injustice. A scenario like this one plays out as though the initial offence remains a matter of unfinished business.

Presenting such injustice as ongoing seems out of line with one's receipt of impunity, for it gives the impression that an individual wants to bask in the glory of never having to ever pay for some misdeed, but should be rewarded for it instead. It also oddly gives the individual a sense of justification, in that since there was no punishment or corrective response to what was done, no wrong can ever be traced to its source. Offering someone impunity, however, implies that one's deed ceases to be an issue, for it will be purposely overlooked. Any individual who commits offences likely experiences a sense of privilege when the threat of punishment is reduced significantly or eliminated entirely. For this rea-

son, Plato's brother, Glaucon, in the *Republic* favours such benefits arising from injustice. So tantalizing, and maybe even fulfilling, are impunity's benefits that practically everyone, when in the context of an appropriate situation, forms misgivings about acting justly. Stressing that appeal, Glaucon assesses the contrasting mindsets of a noble person and an ignoble one and determines that "wherever either person thinks he can do injustice with impunity, he does it" (Plato 1992, 360c). This apparent gamble to commit an offence involves a calculative effort on the part of the offender to seize an opportunity at the most favourable time for one's own interest. Regardless of an individual's moral fibre, most people in Glaucon's estimation would covet impunity for protecting one's standing as though one had acted correctly all along. Establishing this self-centered, rational inclination in people not only presents them as constantly conniving, it puts them on continual guard against those other individuals plotting to take advantage of their covetous accomplishment.

People's preference to commit offences on the condition that they, operating on an individual basis, have impunity indicates a rooted flaw in how one thinks for oneself and presents oneself to others. So disparaging is Glaucon's summation of people that it is no wonder that individuals need to adopt a veiled persona when mingling within a social framework. Referring to the Myth of Gyges thus presents that one example of how a particular individual of low social standing would run immorally amok when impunity is under one's control (Plato 1992, 359e-360b). Impunity in this case would not work so conveniently in a less fable-like context, for there is in Glaucon's myth a magical factor to using a device with such powers. What stands out in Glaucon's account of people, whether they are just or unjust, is that they have a common interest in committing offences unnoticed.

Glaucon's generalizing of everybody's willingness to commit injustices comes across as intensely cynical, so much that even those who share a similar view may take exception. Could so many people be so bad? For Fyodor Dostoevsky, the common folk can be quite horrible. In his notes for *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky intimates that "the Russian people cannot be good because they are not civilized" (Dostoevsky 1971, 151). This seemingly derogatory generalization hints at ordinary people being deficient in their moral, social, and mental development. Pairing Plato's thoughts (under the guise of Glaucon) with Dostoevsky's show strong affinities with their views on human nature, for, according to Isaiah Berlin, they "relate everything to a single central vision" (Berlin 1994, 22). However, instead of relying on a modified myth like Glaucon's, Dostoevsky provides a compelling narrative with a challenge testing the moral limits of Glaucon's position. Glaucon has presented a moral issue on a civil stage, while Dostoevsky casts a suspect character to act it out. Dostoevsky's dramatic stage is set up elsewhere in the character. Varying dispositions demonstrate how Dostoevsky's creations function as "*free* people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him"

(Bakhtin 1994, 6). Even Dostoevsky's own moral standing may very well be tested by his creations.

Being a minute character in a Dostoevsky novel, big or small, might seem insignificant, but when that character makes a first appearance it typically is quite revealing as well as baffling. As brief as the reveal may be, an unrecognizable and unsettling quality about an individual usually surfaces, startling those who spend time to notice. It becomes even more concerning when a whole lot more still stays unearthed. With impunity for one's misdeeds serving as the starting point for this examination, one should focus on the chief literary figure who, in the Dostoevskian literary world, benefited from impunity. Mikhail, the mysterious visitor, having a seemingly modest role in *The Brothers Karamazov*, has the dubious distinction of being a troubled individual, even though the first impression he gives is not the least bit ominous--just odd. His personal relations and social accomplishments garner him notable respect in his community. No one knowing about such merits would have any reason to be afraid of the man or believe him to have done any wrong. Yet the intimate interactions that develop between a young Father Zosima (hereafter Zinovy), a prominent religious figure in Dostoevsky's story, and this mysterious visitor gradually lay open an unpleasant history as well as an apparent character flaw in the latter.

1. A Self-Made Man

The discussions that Zinovy and the mysterious visitor have play out like a confession, one that has been brewing, and continues to brew, for some time--as though parts of it have been rehearsed. There is a notable awkwardness and hesitancy surrounding the latter as the former tries to make sense of why this "elderly man" wants on a daily basis to engage in serious talk. A certain degree of trust develops between these interlocutors before the visitor gradually expounds on a moral perspective on the scope of individual responsibility. Dostoevsky here provides some details of the visitor's inner musings in order to build up something momentous about the character. Incidentally, the visitor's position not only touches on Dostoevsky's long standing concern over individual responsibility, it methodically ties in with what Glaucon advocates.

Establishing oneself involves an individual's sensible pursuit of what is deemed beneficial for one's own interest. Taking advantage of another becomes a matter of contention for an individual when that interest intensifies to the point where upsetting someone else's interest, or well-being, becomes a part of one's initial interest. The visitor admits, quite out of the blue, to having ruminated on such undertakings for some time. Comparing the ideal where all individuals are responsible for the activities of every single individual with the practical notion that one individual is solely responsible for one's own actions

invites an engaging mind to assess which conviction is the noblest to follow. Should the ideal be so lofty that it would likely be found "in a dream," then perhaps the practical and self-centred conviction will be most sensible to adopt. Expressing sentiments that, at first glance, might garner Glaucon's disapproval, the visitor rationalizes:

Know [...] that this dream [...] will undoubtedly come true [...] though not now, for every action has its law [...] No science or self-interest will ever enable people to share their property and their rights among themselves without offense. Each will always think his share too small, and they will keep murmuring, they will envy and destroy one another...That which is not reigning everywhere, especially in our age, but it is not all concluded yet, its term has not come. For everyone now strives most of all to separate his person, wishing to experience the fullness of life within himself, and yet what comes of all his efforts is not the fullness of life but full suicide [...] For all men in our age are separated into units, each seeks seclusion in his own hole, each withdraws from the others, hides himself, and hides what he has, and ends by pushing himself away from people and pushing people away from himself. He accumulates wealth in solitude, thinking: how strong, how secure I am now; and does not see, madman as he is, that the more he accumulates, the more he sinks into suicidal impotence. For he is accustomed to relying only on himself, he has separated his unit from the whole, he has accustomed his soul to not believing in people's help, in people or in mankind, and not only trembles lest his money and his acquired privileges perish [...] But there must needs come a term to this horrible isolation, and everyone will all at once realize how unnaturally they have separated themselves one from another. Such will be the spirit of the time, and they will be astonished that they sat in darkness for so long, and did not see the light. (Dostoevsky 1992, 303, 304)

Presenting an untouchable optimistic dream alongside a dreary reality of withdrawn individuals complicates matters for the visitor, in that these disparaging views conflict with his holding "a prominent position [...] universally respected, wealthy, well known for his philanthropy" (Dostoevsky 1992, 301). Which of these two approaches seem most beneficial? Favouring this dream gives one the impression that the visitor is a moral visionary, for he does long for it, even more than the slightly sceptical Zinovy. From his rant, making a public spectacle enables the visitor to distance himself, in a non-spatial sense, from his contemporaries who keep themselves separate from others. This manoeuvre signifies an ideological desire to liberate oneself from the stagnant isolation of covetous beings and join a community of cooperative and compassionate people, a group accepting of others despite their weaknesses or flaws. Attempting to fit in as such would also result in the visitor's undoing, because he, as a pioneer in pursuit of such a dream, would stand out from those types whom he hopes to distance himself from, making himself a possible target by any adventurous agent to come out from hiding and offend him. Still, his actions must stand out.

Taking this bold step forward into the light, a limelight as it were, should elevate the visitor, from his own assessment, to a more righteous state or dignified level. It seems like an odd move given his reputation. Can anyone act even more righteously? What would be the point of doing so? By way of a response, Dostoevsky's visitor acts to "only individually [...] set an example, and draw the soul from its isolation for an act of brotherly communion [...]" (Dostoevsky 1992, 304). Promoting this ideal functions as the best thing he can do. It would appear that the visitor has nothing to hide. A mitigated suspicion builds up in Zinovy who considers that his loquacious confidant has a stinging need to disclose something relevant, most likely personal but still unknown, to the topic of their discussion. Here Dostoevsky has the visitor continually vacillate what he has in mind, because being upfront and direct may always not express the entirety of his distress. Is the visitor genuinely committed to this dream? Perhaps some probing thoughts about this dream make him doubtful as to whether it is worth it. Pursuing such a noble venture, when factoring Glaucon's supportive stance on injustice, does come with some worries, in that the rewards associated with just deeds are "hard and onerous" (Plato 1992, 364a). Could the visitor's lofty plan not go hopefully as planned?

Zinovy assumes a pivotal role in this plan with what the visitor hopes to accomplish. Not only being admired by the visitor for sparing the life of a rival suitor for the affections of a woman in a duel prior to their encounter, but serving as a concrete voice for feedback and possible guidance, this young man has developed a conscience. The extent of Zinovy's maturity in a moral capacity remains unclear, because he represents, especially in the visitor's mind, a new standard for how an individual conducts oneself after a personal conflict where one refuses to punish those for offences, all fabricated in one's own mind, directed at him. These two men do not possess the same qualities or passions. It is as though, through to their rivalrous discussions, the visitor wants to gain the upper hand on someone who is morally recognized and possibly superior. Sizing each person up describes how these exchanges between the visitor and Zinovy initially operate, for they eventually lead to a sudden break in their ongoing, almost theoretical, dialogue because of a shifty admission.

Inserting a question, though not fully articulated--which may have been overlooked by Zinovy, midway through the start of the visitor's scandalous reveal supplies his intimate with a brief look into the guilty man's cleverness. Probing into the possibility that a rumour may have circulated within their community about the visitor's past, his inquiry seeks clarity about himself in the eyes of others and deliberately tests the trust that has been formed with Zinovy during their private meetings. Worth noting is that maintaining privacy has been an issue for the visitor before, for it was eventually discovered that he "did many good deeds in private, without publicity, all of which became known later" (Dostoev-

sky 1992, 301). Yet, the unexpected admission of a violent offence confuses Zinovy's perception of this man whom he has begun to consider a friend. For Dostoevsky, exposing a character's sinister dimension stirs up tensions, in others and even in oneself. These tensions become even more unsettling as the visitor's little known personal history is finally revealed.

Confessing a murder for which no one ever suspected him of doing situates the visitor in both an awkward and notorious light, in that others can now pass judgment on the person, critiquing who he was believed to be in relation to the person who he has become--despite being the same person. Renouncing impunity at this moment would label the visitor, according to Glaucon, as "wretched and stupid" (Plato 1992, 360d). Intricate details of his offence, however, demonstrate that the visitor through stealth, boldness, and careful calculation performed deeds that led to a wickedly favourable set of consequences which benefited the offender (Dostoevsky 1992, 305). Philosophically, these calibrated intentions of Dostoevsky's character guide him on a path to a seemingly self-satisfying end. It is no mystery then that the visitor initially sought to accomplish an "injustice without paying a penalty" (Plato 1992, 359a). Instead of leaving an injustice unpunished, the visitor wilfully directs suspicion at others, getting them accidentally involved in his undertaking. Incorporating others, even someone in particular who garners much contempt--though not deservedly in this particular case, to his crime allows the visitor to hide, isolating himself in obscurity. With an innocent individual being held accountable for the injustice, anyone with Glaucon's particular mindset cannot help but appreciate how good fortune appears to shine on the visitor. As fate would have it in a Dostoevskian reality, the purported prime suspect, most likely resulting from his own neglect, dies abruptly of apparent ordinary causes, thus conveniently killing any further investigation by the authorities. Now another deceased victim absolves, not in a lawful sense, the visitor for his wily efforts and deeds (Dostoevsky 1992, 306). It would in hindsight be a shame to let such a meticulous crime go unrecognized all for the sake of impunity.

The visitor's confession now drives a wedge between Glaucon's positive attitude towards impunity and the ideological notion that an individual can find peace in being honest about oneself after having committed these transgressions. Impunity remains as important to Dostoevsky as it does for Glaucon with the main difference being that it torments the visitor as opposed to providing any relief or satisfaction. Again, the death of the apparent suspect, Pyotr, almost ensures that no one will discover his offence. Though the visitor's concern lingers for years, Dostoevsky's character shows no signs of having a guilty conscience for what transpired immediately after the murder. Mildly bothered by Pyotr's false accusation and his sudden death, the visitor reassesses how his framing of an innocent person for an offence could not have contributed to that person's unexpected demise while in

custody (Dostoevsky 1992, 306). Pyotr's plight leaves no lasting impression on the visitor's conscience, for in James P. Scanlan's examination of Dostoevsky's moral scope of individual responsibility, there are "reasonable limits to it" (Scanlan 2002, 100). Rationalizing that he had no hand in what befell that unpleasant servant of the woman whom he murdered amounts to the visitor's disregarding any sense of justice; not just for the murder victim whom he directly targeted, but for the unsuspecting victim whom the murderer indirectly framed for the murder. Partial credit for this injustice must also be directed at the authorities who deemed it unnecessary to conduct a thorough investigation and helped actualize the visitor's receiving impunity. Any semblance of sympathy in this offender fizzles out because no direct connection between the two unsavoury characters can ever be established. Pyotr's death, as one might rationalize, is a fitting end for someone of his character. Even the murdered woman wanted to do away with him, though not in murderous fashion. It is so strange for Dostoevsky to allow this ancillary crossing of paths between the real offender and a false victim so as to benefit the former and ruin the latter, especially when neither character at the time of the murder appears good at heart. Even more peculiar is how the visitor begins to re-evaluate his good fortune for starting to live a content and charmed life.

Unclear moral tensions intensify in the visitor's conscience as he contrasts how he is both responsible for just and unjust deeds. Carrying out several charitable acts and settling down to raise a family, years after committing a murder, are intentional attempts to bury the visitor's past. This strategy mirrors what Glaucon claims about the practice of an unjust individual who provides "himself with the greatest reputation for justice. If he happens to make a slip, he must be able to put it right" (Plato 1992, 361a-b). Putting it right, in Glaucon's estimation, would not involve any confession. Yet, this first step at confessing helps unearth the visitor's tensions to a single person, Zinovy. If confession is good for one's soul--as the expression on catharsis goes, it does not ease the visitor's tormented mind in the slightest. Instead, the Dostoevskian case study becomes more critical about how his one brutal act towards another human being marks the point where the one responsible for that act is able without issue to turn over a new leaf. Dostoevsky, through the rational musings of Ivan Karamazov, poses a troubling question about the source of one's later accomplishments by asking, should "evil deeds and sufferings [...] be manure for someone's future harmony" (Dostoevsky 1992, 144)? Answering in the affirmative would make the visitor's life much easier so he may continue on with life without regret for what has been done; he is, though, not of such a mindset. His rationalizing that he was responsible for giving life, but taking a life spoils all that he subsequently does (Dostoevsky 1992, 307). In particular, the visitor's fondness for children, most notably his own, enables him to understand innocence beyond some inculpatory dimension, for he would never deem his own creations as corrupt. His children are indeed innocent, for they could never have had any involvement in

the murder of a woman who once was the target of their father's affections. What stands out as a matter of conflict for the visitor is that a surreptitious murderer has transformed himself into a caring father. The visitor is incapable, using his own words, of "pushing himself away" from what he has created, not just his children, but himself. Furthermore, establishing a socially acceptable livelihood lacks any redeeming qualities when the individual responsible has still been acting surreptitiously throughout that operation.

Exposing this terrible nature in Dostoevsky's visitor helps breakdown the façade he has concocted. Vasily Rozanov in his examination of the main moral and spiritual themes in *The Brothers Karamazov* brings up a valid point that strips away at what makes the visitor mysterious. Probing specifically into the inner workings of the human soul and its relation to the production of suffering, one locates that which compels an individual to carry out a particular deed. "When a man commits a crime," Rozanov writes, "his action is only a secondary act of lesser importance, whereas what is primary and of greatest importance is the spiritual impulse that preceded it and from which the criminal act was born" (Rozanov 1972, 110). Acting on that impulse transforms a man into a criminal. Rozanov's point shows that there is a deontological dimension, albeit a flawed one, to how the visitor has established himself at the time of his murderous episode and afterwards. From the visitor's confession, his stealth and forethought intentionally perpetuates the original unjust act with possibly that same impulse, or perhaps a variant of it, to include his evading detection and thus creating a new respectable life, a guarded life of crime. Even Glaucon's ring wearer performs, always invisible, a series of misdeeds one after the other (Plato 1992, 360a-b). This impulse has stuck with the visitor through the years; and he knows it. The so-called "future harmony" that Ivan mentioned has not yet become a reality for the visitor, for his deeds continue to ferment.

Concern for his family introduces a different sort of impulse within the visitor as if it were trying to break his shady past apart. Several visits with Zinovy after the initial private confession, the visitor asks: "Would it be just to ruin them along with myself" (Dostoevsky 1992, 309)? Punishing himself for his crime seems in his mind justified, but punishing those with neither knowledge nor direct involvement would be a perversion of justice, extending beyond its punitive limits. His family are not accomplices; they have merely functioned as the visitor's protective, conspicuous shield. This mental anguish over how to apply fairness to those supposed noble deeds which succeeded that one violent deed raises more concern about the visitor's conscience, in that it is pertinacious with the matter at hand, but is interested in acquiring some recognition for his assuming full responsibility for the initial offence. What becomes most fascinating about Dostoevsky's detailing of the visitor's tension at this point is that one gets to observe, as Rozanov would see it, the deliberative stage where the visitor contends with a new impulse. In spite of his urgent desire to

resolve this dilemma, the visitor is far from being at ease. Everything that the visitor deems important hinges on some forthcoming public confession--but mainly for how he wants the public to notice it.

Selectively ignoring certain parts of the past characterizes how unrefined the visitor's conscience is. It is not clear whether his conscience wants to assume full responsibility for what he has done, including his raising of a family, or to detach the initial offence from everything that succeeded it so as to spare unnecessary punishment to those he truly cares about, as if that latter option is irrelevant or construed as a redeeming act. The visitor is clearly admitting guilt for the obvious crime, but the spiritual impulse behind his confession, indicating that it is a work in progress, shows signs of hesitancy and doubt. Acknowledging responsibility has always been problematic for a Dostoevsky character to determine, for certain offences and the aftermath of those offences on the lives of others are not so apparent to them--and if they are, these characters tend to avoid taking the blame entirely. For example, the case of Prokharchin, in Dostoevsky's early short story, *Mr. Prokharchin*, demonstrates that one's conscience can eventually fathom how widespread one's responsibility can be, but determining where the limits are still perplexing anyone overcome by guilt. Mistreatment of a single individual typically has residual effects that carry over to other individuals; yet, how aversely they suffer from someone else's mistreatment may vary. Prokharchin, a covetous sort of fellow who resided in a boarding house along with other "mysterious individuals" separated "behind their screens" (Dostoyevsky 1988, 225), displays a less than charitable demeanour towards a financially struggling co-worker who has fathered seven children. His conscience, "a mysterious dimension to Prokharchin's guilt," reflectively kicks in and takes into account the deprived man's charges, because while Prokharchin cannot assume procreative responsibility for "their existence" (Scanlan 2002, 104), he does bear some influence over their circumstances, such as not contributing to their having food to eat and an older child's opportunity to receive an education because money was withheld (Dostoyevsky 1988, 230). Talk of this procreative responsibility does come across as Prokharchin's way of deflecting some blame at the devil-may-care father for being overly fruitful. Joseph Frank observes that even though Prokharchin "is capable of feelings of pity and remorse [...] they have no effect on his conduct" (Frank 1976, 317). The strength of Prokharchin's impulses favouring greed forbids his conscience to get the better of him, compelling him to remain actively unresponsive to the plight of those whom he directly and indirectly offends. An individual fraught with guilt will, as Glaucon stated above, put forth an effort to present oneself as innocent in whatever way possible.

Frank's comment about Prokharchin should neatly apply to the visitor as well--and to plenty more unsavoury souls in Dostoevsky's reality. Although Prokharchin's vice relates to avarice, the visitor emits an unsettling instability about him despite his showcasing posi-

tive vibes to others through his conduct and most of his accomplishments which have been plain to see by people in his community. Some surprising revelation, though, is and has been brewing within the man, and may erupt unexpectedly--a great deed as Zinovy believes it to be (Dostoevsky 1992, 304). Suggesting that the visitor is still consulting his conscience to see whether his confession should expose everything signifies an underlying weakness. As opposed to committing an undetectable offence, the visitor must become upfront about himself and set up a public stage for his seemingly reformatory reveal. Such a feat would not, in practice, require him to be as calculative as he was when committing the murder and cover-up. Then why such a delay? What the visitor has formulated to do, based on his conversations with Zinovy, seems simple enough. Perhaps having concealed his offensive past for so long makes him think that there are unforeseeable, unpleasant consequences awaiting him. Has the visitor not been tormented enough by his guilty conscience? Or, perhaps he is incapable of acting in a manner contrary to how he has acted in the past and continues to act as such, thus affirming Frank's observation here as he had with Prokharchin. Attempting to act in accordance with a weak conscience is parallel to one's being morally indecisiveness.

Dostoevsky not only creates impressive characters, but he invents some memorable allegories too. To address and assess the visitor's moral indecisiveness, one only needs to look back at how Dmitri, the sensualist Karamazov, identifies what takes place in an unhinged conscience. Hidden within his spiel on beauty, he discusses that violent tensions linger about like a parasite within each person, so that "all contradictions live together" (Dostoevsky 1992, 108). What stands out in this binary relation of opposing forces is the brief mention of the devil and God engaged in strife. Ascribing this rudimentary core to an individual's being enables Dostoevsky to establish in one's conscience the moral tensions that contribute to or prevent one's acting on a specific impulse. Even though there is no elaboration on how these standard figures of evil and good in a Christian sense find a home within a single person, on how long does a struggle between the two last, on what is the outcome when one figure defeats the other, or on whether the losing figure can regain strength to fight again in the hope of changing the outcome, the human individual is left to flip-flop throughout the course of one's life during pressing situations, making every person out to be, in Dostoevsky's estimation, morally enigmatic. It is a consistent theme in his other works as well, for, as George G. Strem notes, it is "a struggle between good and evil, or God and the Devil [...] He repeats ... again and again ... because he is immensely concerned with the problem dealing with the purpose of life and of man's destiny" (Strem 1957, 19). It becomes readily apparent that anyone who encounters one of Dostoevsky's minor characters should not be surprised at what one does or might have done.

A fidgety visitor is likely an indication that the devil and God have once again become actively involved in an intense struggle inside his heart. It is even more likely that ever since the murder of this nameless woman remained "stuck so fast to his heart" (Dostoevsky 1992, 307), a refreshed, or unripe, impulse has been forming so as to properly punish him for his offence. Exposing himself out in public for having covered up the offence and duping others waives the impunity that befell him. At this stage, one can chalk one up for what is just. What counts as the appropriate form of punishment for this unjust soul is still uncertain, for the rational behind the visitor's guilty conscience takes exception to what the visitor has been going through since the murder. Believing that he deserves punishment for his crimes runs contrary to what he says about the suffering that he endured after committing the offence. The visitor in a threnodic tone admits that "No one was condemned, no one was sent to hard labor because of me, the servant died of illness. And I have been punished by my suffering for the blood I shed. And [...] I am ready to suffer still, all my life, for the blood I have shed, only so as not to strike at my wife and children" (Dostoevsky 1992, 309). From this odd plea, the offender is most concerned with administering what he deems the most appropriate form of justice, which may either soften or eliminate his current suffering and, specifically, any suffering or punishment directed at his family after his confession. The whole notion of confessing the truth becomes pointless if safeguarding his family is not possible. Highlighting this concern may be the reason why the visitor's inner struggle festers. Since he has suffered because of the offence and deserves, so he claims, to continue to suffer, why not leave everything as is? Besides, he would, as desired, continue to suffer for his crime and spare his family any unnecessary grief. Then again, part of the visitor's *guilty* conscience may be exploring other options.

Before addressing the visitor's true confession, which might present itself as the most honourable deed of his life, one must revisit the visitor's more climactic encounter, the second last visit, with Zinovy, for there is a glaring omission in that confession "to the whole gathering" (Dostoevsky 1992, 310). As discussed earlier, the visitor takes an interest in Zinovy for having "great strength in character" (Dostoevsky 1992, 302). Whether it is the visitor's admiration in or envy of his confidant, it appears that the budding spiritual figure has a role in the offender's *great deed*. Due to continued suffering and a faint-hearted conscience, the visitor is in need of support; for while "a man is weak and afraid of suffering, he will always seek someone whom he can make responsible for his actions" (Pachmuss, 1963, 104). Though Temira Pachmuss does not have the visitor in mind here, her point on responsibility relates to individuals whose consciences have become overwhelmed by assuming too many responsibilities and desire to pass responsibilities on to someone else. Worth noting in the visitor's treatment of Zinovy is the building up of trust and respect between the two. As though it is a part of a well-thought out future plan, the visitor is hope-

ful that "God wills that" he and Zinovy "become more closely acquainted" (Dostoevsky 1992, 302). Their personal conversations, having gone on for a long while, are a testament to that. Bringing God's involvement in the formation of their acquaintanceship aims to solidify that relation as if it were indispensable. So, if Dmitri's account of those contradictions dwelling within an individual is accurate, then the God within the visitor's heart will most assuredly get the upper hand in this final struggle with the devil with Zinovy's assistance.

2. Fool you once, shame on me; fool you twice, shame on you

The Dostoevskian drama contained in the visitor's striving to make this confession is so multilayered that one may overlook that the offender provides two of them; one for the public and the last one in secret (for those counting, however, there are three). Too much focus is drawn to the details about the visitor's providing proof of his guilt; the community's disbelieving that one exemplary member would commit such a brutal crime undetected, the authorities' reluctance to officially pursue the matter in the courts; and the subsequent, mysterious "heart ailment" afflicting the offender (Dostoevsky 1992, 310, 311). Ignoring the final agitated moments when the visitor surprisingly comes to Zinovy before the public reveal looks to be a decisive moment. Though brief, it showcases an unimportant verbal exchange where the visitor makes a stern, but simple plea for Zinovy to remember *this* occasion. Something profound, according to the visitor, has taken place, but it is not out in the open--not yet, however. Something else may be building up as well as winding down. Referring back to Rozanov's earlier view, one has to consider that since some action did occur, was the impulse that preceded it criminal?

At the final meeting between Zinovy and the visitor, there is an intimate reveal where the offender acknowledges that God has been merciful towards him, so his legacy "will remain untainted" (Dostoevsky 1992, 311). It is mission accomplished for the visitor. The devil seems to no longer have any influence over this man. Still, there is a need--since no truth need not be hidden, no secret conflict need not be concealed--to explain what occurred on that night to be remembered. Zinovy is given a circumstantial account of the visitor's last attempt to offend, to keep, perhaps, his mystery alive. Learning, later, that he was a target for murder that one evening must not only have tainted Zinovy's budding friendship with this man, it has likely altered his perception of how one man can morally reconfigure himself in an instant. Indeed, Dostoevsky would like everyone to believe that the grace of God will bring about peace in troubled souls and transform a corrupt individual into a trustworthy one. Sparing the life of another human being seems like the just thing to do, especially when the one being targeted for death has done no wrong. Establishing con-

firmation of such a belief is as simple as the visitor testifying that "my Lord defeated the devil in my heart" (Dostoevsky 1992, 312). Without viewing his words as a lie, the visitor has exposed those intrinsic forces responsible for his having acted in a particular manner.

Defeating the visitor's devil should not mean a complete eradication of devilish impulses. Consider that in all the years the visitor earned respect by those in the community for how he conducted himself, his devil must have maintained the upper hand on his God so as to prevent him from confessing early on his offences to anyone. Perhaps the visitor's God took notice of an opportunity to defeat his devil through an association with Zinovy, while his devil saw a different opportunity in the visitor's making that man's acquaintance. Nothing overly impulsive was developing as the visitor sized up Zinovy. Both God and the devil in quiet times were probably engaged in petty squabbles, suggesting the possibility that these two Dostoevskian figures are inseparable soul mates. Missing in Rozanov's talk on spiritual impulses is whether they, assuming that each impulse differs from another by their very nature, generate conflict continually, whether these two impulses must always be present, and whether the intensities of these impulses dissipate should one impulse dominate another. Articulating that each person has this potential for "criminality," he does mention that through suffering--a term which he does not clarify there, people find relief as "something criminal leaves us" (Rozanov 1972, 112, 113). Perhaps this purging of the criminal might include the purging of one's God or devil. The impulse that drove the visitor to kill the woman, as well as create the illusion of a robbery and his just character, is definitely his devil's handiwork. His God did not intervene to prevent her death; back then, it could be said that his divine impulse was either inactive, or not mature enough to defeat his devil, or not even there to begin with. Presumably, though, this devil could not even gather enough strength to vanquish the visitor's God at any point after the murder. Regardless of what the visitor did or which spiritual figure commandeered the visitor's impulse, Dostoevsky ensures that this human depiction displays an imbalanced demeanour, whereby one's conscience flip-flops in its moral selection of one of two opposing deeds to perform. Instability in an individual's heart, the epicentre of such transformative impulses, suggests that what is so deeply rooted tends to lean to the most unpleasant side of human nature. Regardless, the battle within rages on.

Dabbling into this binary arrangement and its mercurial tendencies is not only Dostoevsky's preoccupation. Rozanov alludes to the stoic, Seneca, as being intrigued by criminal behaviours (Rozanov 1972, 50). In a discussion about virtues, which includes a look at human vices, Seneca recognizes "an evil mind" by its "unsteadiness, and continued wavering between pretence of virtue and love of vice" (Seneca 1989, 393). Tying the stoic notion of the mind to Dmitri's account of where the devil and God thrive, one discovers that they are housed in the same location. Examining that which made humans tick by philosophers

from the Aristotelian and Stoic traditions, the Roman physician, Galen, describes how the formation of a living agent starts at "the deliberative part of our soul [...] situated in the heart" (Long 1997, 314). Those viewpoints feature an individual's ability to rationalize what is in one's best interest regardless of whether that impulse is just or not. Since the visitor has been described at the scene of the crime as exercising "infernal and criminal calculation" (Dostoevsky 1992, 305), it is obvious that the visitor's devil is not intellectually deficient. How an individual applies reason does vary in accordance to one's interest and the circumstance that one finds oneself in. One standout difference between Dostoevsky and Seneca, though, is the Russian's reliance on religious figures to illustrate those opposing, but naturally occurring, forces within an individual, whereas "Seneca reminds us that the distinction between good and evil, which every man perceives deep in his conscience, was not invented by Christianity [...]" (Faro 2017, 281). One might surmise then that there is, despite one's philosophical perspective, an impulsive lure that captivates an individual, appealing to or blinding one's rational, so as to adopt a particular approach or cater to and follow a specific passion.

The influence of an impulse on an individual stirs up concern when it becomes so concentrated. The "extraordinary boldness" associated with one's deed demonstrates how dedicated one is (Dostoevsky 1992, 305). Using the visitor as Dostoevsky's criminal model, one notices that the murder of the woman is swift and without scruple. It is the typical jealous, murderous frame of mind where if a man cannot have that woman, no other man can. The visitor's offence is without doubt compulsive in nature and is seen as purely vindictive. Rejection of the visitor's advances harms his heart so much that it is in his heart where it is determined that the woman's response to his feelings for her is unacceptable and she will be punished, lethally, for it. Seneca would regard the visitor's plan of actions as his forming "the impression of having received an injury and to long to avenge it [...]" (Seneca 1994, 169). Reasoning out this process in stages clearly makes the offence premeditated, even though the act seems spontaneous. Further reasoning is then required to cover up the work of the previous impulse, so that misleading others from the truth just perpetuates the initial crime. Summarizing the visitor's boldness in this fashion enables one to recast Glaucon's point that no person "believes justice to be a good when it is kept private" (Plato 1992, 360c) by saying that no person believes injustice to be a good when it is made public.

Diverting the public's attention from the visitor's unjust deeds to those philanthropic deeds helps the visitor's devil preserve all his injustices, presenting him as flawless. It becomes in principle the mission for the visitor's God to undo that deceitfulness through an admission of guilt, a declaration of the truth. The visitor even acknowledges that a divine impulse, something that has been under development for some time, will give rise to an ordinary representative to function as "an example, and draw the soul from its isolation"

(Dostoevsky 1992, 304). For that event to take place, however, there must in the visitor's heart be a victor--or dare one say, another murder. The murder does not directly involve Zinovy. Instead, there is a desire to kill one of two conflicting impulses before it compels the visitor to act. Perhaps, as a way of redeeming a person at the psychological level, killing any wicked impulse before it commissions any further deeds is what the divine impulse hopes to accomplish. In short, stop the spread of injustice at its roots. Only the visitor's devil would have a vested interest in killing Zinovy, an act that, according to Rozanov's account of impulses, is first formed in the private arena and then actualized in the public arena, for Zinovy is the only one whom the visitor, seemingly having second thoughts about exposing himself in public, exposed his awful secret to. It is indeed odd for the visitor's devil to allow a preliminary confession to seep out in the first place. Maybe the visitor's divine impulse has been gaining an advantage over the visitor's devil since the inception of his talks with Zinovy. Frequent private meetings between the two men have brought about "a mutually beneficial influence upon one another" (Pachmuss, 1963, 164). Surprisingly, even Zinovy reveals that there are details about his own life that he has "not yet told to anyone" but tells the visitor (Dostoevsky 1992, 302). An interpretation like the one Pachmuss gives appears to be naïvely auspicious, for the visitor's devil, too, has benefited from making private things public.

It is plainly obvious that the visitor's divine side seeks to expose an individual's own inner demon as a way to alert those fooled by unseen treachery and to prevent the offender from engaging in further injustices. His devil, on the other hand, has nothing to gain from exposure, except maybe coverage, rhetorically speaking. The last meeting in Zinovy's quarters, where the visitor told him to "Remember it", is presented calmly; no real discussion between the two develops (Dostoevsky 1992, 310). Unlike earlier in the evening, where the visitor was most agitated, he now behaves with a certain sang-froid. From this display and given his order for Zinovy to exercise his memory, one gets the impression that it is at that moment of calmness that the visitor had resolved not to kill again. Perhaps killing one's own impulse is all that is needed. Dostoevsky is engaged in his own flip-flopping here, because the importance of this moment is not brought up when the visitor confesses to plenty of people attending his birthday party the next day; rather, that order is revealed to Zinovy in private. Showcasing the pieces of evidence from the crime scene confirms that the visitor is an obsessive thief, while claiming that God has come to him highlights the second confession as his desire to be properly punished for the crime; but as fate would have it, no one in the community "believes the confession of this model citizen" (Frank 2002, 628). It is only in the next, final confession that the offender reveals something more.

Being hyperbolic in not offering a full confession to the public, the visitor surrounds himself with an air of suspicion as opposed to a sense of salvation. Nevertheless, the visitor must be believed, or tell a lasting truth. Dostoevsky has saved a last tidbit about the visitor that should serve as the most revealing dimension related to this man. Most people, who likely see the good in everyone, are inclined to believe that the visitor has undergone a moral conversion, acknowledging the wrongs from his past, and is now imbued with the divine spirit and only that. In his assessment of this part of Dostoevsky's novel, Gary L. Browning insists that this character "has finally found paradise, at least in his own soul" (Browning 1989, 520). Is there anything in his public confession to make anyone think that it is not an elaborate con job, another front to his criminal ways? Dostoevsky's return to a private setting with just the visitor and Zinovy is very much like that seclusion where one, as the visitor discussed earlier, withdraws into a realm of private despair and possibly comfort. Bringing a "friend" into his inner sanctum, the visitor is now in a confined domain to supply Zinovy with one last important piece of truth. Put otherwise, Zinovy is at the visitor's mercy. Since the "Lord defeated the devil" within the visitor's heart, it was him who ensured that Zinovy had "never been closer to death" (Dostoevsky 1992, 312). These words, despite implying a smidgen of reassurance that Zinovy did not get killed, still convey a confusing, ominous tone. Does such a confession originate from someone whose heart is under the influence of a divine impulse? Here lies the visitor's greatest mystery.

Whether it is better to disclose this final revelation becomes a matter of taste, for one thing is most evident; sparing one's life is not on the same righteous level as sparing one from the news that one's life was spared by the individual who was ready to take one's life due to a change of heart. Remembering this drawn-out affair becomes Zinovy's way of accepting that he had been in close proximity to a human devil for so long. Applying Pachmuss' point about the influence each character has on one another would suggest that Zinovy realizes how he was used as an unknowing patsy in the visitor's purging of his devil. The visitor's relation with Zinovy is assuredly imbalanced and suspect, for, using Aristotle's views on relations based on utility, an association "between a bad man and one good" may pass as a friendship, even though the bad one takes it upon himself to reap "some advantage from" the other (Aristotle 1990, 1157a16-19). Zinovy, seemingly tolerating a certain degree of mistreatment, assumes the role of a stepping stone rather than a spiritual guide. All the talk prior to their last exchange and the visitor's curt reveal does not really amount to much of a friendship. Calling what they have a mock friendship would be apropos.

No wonder an older as well as wiser Zinovy arrives at the following: "most important lesson about [...] guilt--not only is our bad example corrupting [...] our *good example* is imperfect and lacks the power to liberate [...]" (Browning 1989, 521). To consider

the visitor as this "good example" one should remember that the original goal of the visitor is to break free from seclusion and announce to the world his guilt. He basically accomplishes what he set out to do. This little private reveal, though, occurs after the grand public one. The visitor, by his own admission, has slid back into that comfort zone he has occupied for so many years withdrawn from others. Indeed, in his first attempt at liberating himself, the mysterious man has ventured out from solitude, made an acquaintance, seen the full extent of the errors of his ways, and found inner peace; but, in the end, he reverts back to his old self by hiding. Keeping his intentions silent about his wanting to kill another person, a close acquaintance in fact, a day before his confession from the public runs counter to Glaucon's assertion that no justice should be kept private. Dostoevsky is not writing a counter example to Glaucon's unjust person; he merely provides a different type of character, a troubled heartfelt soul who gets away with murder and intends on murdering another but gets away from appearing to be a real bad guy. Clearly this final mindful confession to Zinovy, since he should always remember it, can be best understood as the visitor's confirming that this one particular man, being true to his heart, was only a moment ago in cahoots with the devil.

There is no denying that the mystery surrounding one man's devil at the end of the mysterious visitor's tale is technically indistinct. Even "the whole town" where this drama took place refused to accept the visitor's confession, and, only after the visitor's death from the heart ailment, sought out Zinovy to discover and understand "the truth" (Dostoevsky 1992, 312). Just because the visitor's God defeated, that one specific time, the devil in his heart is not a confirmation that the divine impulse has thoroughly eradicated its demonic opponent. Only the visitor can attest to that--and that might be the case whenever that impulse wants to come out from hiding. The insinuation here is that the visitor has taken Glaucon's presumption on everyone's willingness to offend with the promise of impunity to task. The visitor could, in Glaucon's desired estimation, have gone on with life without every being discovered, but with a nagging guilty conscience. Yet, his conscience pressured by his divine impulse cannot let that happen. Thinking that the devil in his heart may be too passive so as to not let the visitor go unpunished underestimates his ability to perform some "criminal calculation" when required (Dostoevsky 1992, 305). Just imagine, as an experiment, that the visitor announced to the whole town that it was his devil that defeated the God in his heart. As shocking as that sounds, it would unlikely evoke thoughts that the man is not mad, but someone to be feared. Saying that, though, would count as a genuine admission of guilt. It not only characterizes who he was at the time of the murder, it identifies him also as the one who grew to "hate" and wanted "revenge" on Zinovy "for everything" (Dostoevsky 1992, 312). Dostoevsky has the visitor think out this predicament as he "wandered about the streets [...] and thought for a whole minute" at Zinovy's place (Ibid.). Does

a demonic impulse always have to resort to acting out destructively when upset or when it does not get what it desires? Why not stay hidden? Don an alias instead so as to convince others that one has seen the error of one's way. Make them believe that the devil responsible is no longer around to be punished. This approach, less aggressive than killing another person, resembles what Seneca says when analyzing "a picture of virtue", for "evil things have sometimes offered the appearance of what is honourable, and [...] vices which are next-door to virtues [...] can resemble that which is upright" (Seneca 1989, 385, 387). Seneca's offering presents the visitor's whole ceremony relating to every one of his confessions as staged. The sincerity behind them, if any, is only a mockery of what is genuine. The visitor has not changed his ways; he has changed how his ways are recognized. Putting his heart on display, figuratively speaking, functions to flip any misconceptions of what others may think. Consider too that the items he purloined from the scene of the crime were used to prove, unconvincingly though, his involvement in the murder, which, back then, were set up to help "divert suspicion" (Dostoevsky 1992, 305, 310). This same evidence aims to divert the minds of other people into believing that deep in the heart of a murderer, the visitor has changed. Remnants of one crime just carry over to the next one and so on, albeit quite craftily. Simply put, the visitor's demonic impulse has facilitated his surrendering impunity in exchange for personal redemption. What Dostoevsky accomplishes with the mysterious visitor is a demonstration of how "extreme [...] injustice is [...] believed to be just without being just" (Plato 1992, 361a).

Robert S. Vuckovich, Wilfrid Laurier University,
canvuckphilzam[at]gmail.com

References

- Benjamin, Walter. "Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*." In *Selected Writings, Volume 1*. Edited by Marcus Bullcock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Bennington, Geoffrey. "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation." In *Nation and Narration*. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by H. Rackham. London: Harvard University Press: 1990.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and Translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

- Berlin, Isaiah. *Russian Thinkers*. Edited by Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly. Introduction by Aileen Kelly. London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Browning, Gary L. "Zosima's 'Secret of Renewal' in *The Brothers Karamazov*." *Slavic and East European Journal* Vol. 33, Nr. 4 (1989): 516-529.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*. Edited and Translated by Edward Wasiolek. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1992.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. "Mr Prokharchin: A Story." In David McDuff (Trans. with intro) *Poor Folk and Other Stories*. London: Penguin Books, 1988: 215-248.
- Faro, Giorgio. "A criminal's confession: comparing rival ethics in crime and punishment (F. Dostoevsky)." *Church, Communication and Culture* Vol. 2, Nr.3 (2017): 272-283.
- Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet 1871-1881*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Long, A.A. and D.N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Vol. 1. Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary by A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1997.
- Pachmuss, Temira. *F. M. Dostoevsky: Dualism and Synthesis of the Human Soul*. Prefaced by Harry T. Moore. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963.
- Plato. *Republic*. Translated by G. M. A. Grube. Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992.
- Rozanov, Vasily. *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. Translated and with an Afterword by Spencer E. Roberts. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Scanlan, James P. *Dostoevsky: The Thinker*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Seneca. *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales: Books XCIII-CXXIV*. Translated by Richard M. Gummere. Vol. III. London: Harvard University Press: 1989.
- Seneca. *Moral Essays*. Translated by John W. Basore. Vol. I. London: Harvard University Press: 1994.
- Strem, George G. "The Moral World of Dostoevsky." *The Russian Review* Vol. 16, Nr. 3 (1957): 15-26.