

- 37 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 125.
 38 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 125.
 39 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 127.
 40 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 103.
 41 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 101.
 42 *The Brothers Karamazov*, 244–245.
 43 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 112.
 44 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 113.
 45 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 133.
 46 See Dostoevsky, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man: A Fantastic Story (April 1877)," in *A Writer's Diary*, vol. 2, 942–964.
 47 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 126. Benjamin Fondane proposed similar convergence, with reference to Heidegger's "Was ist Metaphysik?" and under the influence of Lev Shestov, in this essay "Sur la route de Dostoïevski: Martin Heidegger," in *Cahiers du Sud*, 141/VII (1932), 378–398. He would later recant this interpretation in reaction to Rachel Bepaloff's "Sur Heidegger: Lettre à Daniel Halévy." Might Patočka have known Fondane's essay?
 48 Leon Chestov, "La lutte contre les evidences," in *Sur la balance de Job* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), 29–97, here 34. See Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (1864), trans. Richard Pevar and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1994).
 49 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 103.
 50 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 104.
 51 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 104.
 52 In his brief remarks, Patočka does not pay any attention to the second part of the narrative and the Underground Man's encounter with Liza.
 53 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 104.
 54 "We have seen in Dostoevsky how this flight into anonymity is disrupted by the very tendency that carries it, by this 'distance' which leads to the fragile negativity of the 'underground man' who sees intellectually through anonymity, but remains unable really to break free from its clutches. The next level, the 'ridiculous man,' already knows 'profound boredom' and anxiety. Then comes the turning point, illustrated by Zosima's dying brother Markel, by Zosima himself on the day of his duel, or by the 'mysterious visitor' before his death, *but above all* by the 'ridiculous man' after his suicide in the dream." Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 125, my emphasis.
 55 Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 135. [German: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1992).]
 56 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 108, my emphasis.
 57 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 107.
 58 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 107.
 59 Quoted in Denis Crnković, "Christian Apatheia in Dostoevsky's 'Dream of a Ridiculous Man,'" in *Slovo. Journal of Slavic Languages and Literatures*, 53 (2012), 45–57, here 53.
 60 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 108.
 61 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 109.
 62 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 109.
 63 Shestov, "Sur la route de Dostoïevski," 73.
 64 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 110, my emphasis.

10 Fatigue of Reason

Patočka's Reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*

Ludger Hagedorn

Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna
hagedorn@iwm.at

What gives meaning to life after the end of religious and metaphysical conceptions? This is the crucial quest of Jan Patočka's final study. His "phenomenology of meaning" advocates a relative, human meaning, yet one that transcends the egotistical enclosure in oneself. The most important source for Patočka in these regards is the literary writing of Dostoevsky, esp. his novel *Brothers Karamazov*. This article relates the quest for a "new" meaning to a critical reflection on reason and the nightmarish monsters it creates.

Keywords: Dostoevsky; *The Brothers Karamazov*; reason; nihilism; madness; onto-theology

What gives meaning to life after the end of religious and metaphysical conceptions? This is the crucial question of Jan Patočka's final study that is published in this volume for the first time in English translation.¹ It was written in late 1976, just before the philosopher's commitment to the civil rights movement Charter 77, which was to significantly change, and ultimately cost him his life. As the last major work that Patočka completed, and the first one to be circulated in *Samizdat* after his death, the study turned into something like Patočka's personal legacy. It is, beyond question, closely tied to the circumstances of that time—to the tragic death, to the evacuation of all documents from his flat (in order to secure them against seizure by the secret police) as well as to the subsequent formation of an archive of his writings.²

However, the study for sure is also one of Patočka's most remarkable philosophical pieces and it deserves to be read independently of these historical and biographical circumstances. The manuscript consisted of 58 double-sided pages, closely and orderly written.³ It is thereby one of the longest and most condensed pieces within all of his work, as Patočka, generally speaking, was more of an essayistic than a systematic writer. But most of all, it is the topic itself that makes these reflections stand out as his philosophical legacy: the quest for meaning in human life amidst the onslaught of either nihilism or dogmatism. Nihilism and dogmatism defiantly negate or affirm a meaning of life, thereby paving the way for all kinds of political or religious ideologies. Yet they both resemble each other precisely in their unwillingness to bear the openness of the question as such. And it is this openness, the confrontation with the abysmal depth entailed in the question that Patočka advocates in his final study.

A similar undertaking is already characteristic of Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, which was published two years earlier (1975, also in *Samizdat*) and is arguably his most important—or at least best-known—book.⁴ Here everything is focused on the topic of history and the guiding question: Does history have a meaning? More precisely, the book is an inquiry into the philosophical foundations of modern civilization: Is the attempt to base history and politics on reason and insight, as was first formulated in classical Greek philosophy and taken for granted by most of the philosophical tradition, still a valid undertaking? Or is it perhaps all too evident that history is trapped in the dichotomy of dogmatism and nihilism? The first (dogmatism) is the hijacking of history by external ideologies (religious eschatology, political ideology of race, class, etc.), the second (nihilism)—not any less dogmatic—is the obstinate denial of any meaning. Patočka's answer to these questions is found in his somewhat grim hope that philosophical insight will prevail exactly in those moments when ideologies are unmasked, when at their deepest point they must finally show their real face as only cynical calculations of death—this is the leading conviction of his famous reference to the front fighters and their "solidarity of the shaken."⁵

Patočka's final study then somewhat radicalizes the very same question. Meaning is no longer reflected through history and with the help of history as a medium. Instead, the problem is addressed directly: Does human life have a meaning? And if it is at all necessary for human life to have a meaning, then why? The answer to this is maybe even more reluctant and skeptical than the one in regards to the meaning of history. But the whole essay is a radical quest for this answer and concludes with what Patočka outlines as a new "phenomenology of meaning."⁶ This phenomenology of meaning is a breaking-free from the metaphysical tradition and its quest for a "purpose of creation." Or as Patočka states: "The problem of meaning as the purpose of creation, which presupposes a 'true,' higher, transcendent world, is wrongly formulated. Meaning as a purpose to which man ascribes the value of eternity, on the basis of the postulate of a 'true world,' is to be dismissed as a topic for serious philosophical discussion."⁷ His own "phenomenology of meaning" is therefore the advocacy of a relative, human meaning, yet one that transcends the egotistical enclosure in oneself. The most important source for this phenomenology is the literary writing of Dostoevsky, especially his novel *Brothers Karamazov*. It is Dostoevsky's final novel, and it became the focal point of reference for an essay that also turned out to be Patočka's final piece. In the following, I will offer a closer look at this essay in interplay with Dostoevsky's novel. Before doing so, however, two further remarks should be made. The first refers to the title, the second to Dostoevsky's meaning for the late Patočka.

The title of the essay is "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion." This is unfortunately quite misleading, since neither the discussion of Masaryk nor the philosophy of religion are really the essay's central topics. Indeed, Masaryk is one of the philosophical interlocutors concerning the question of meaning.⁸ But he is for sure not the most important one; next to Dostoevsky, philosophers Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger should also be mentioned.⁹ To put it a bit polemically, one could hold that the only purpose for mentioning Masaryk in this article is to create a dummy—the philosophical position of someone who, according to Patočka, misses the question of meaning in its full-fledged dimensions and all too easily escapes into the safe haven of Christian dogma. Also misleading is the reference to "philosophy of religion": the article does

not at all deal with classical philosophy or phenomenology of religion, but only with the question of meaning, which was traditionally answered either by religion(-s) or by its philosophical-metaphysical surrogates.

Interestingly, the discussion of Dostoevsky in this last piece by Patočka is a variation, if not to say a revision, of his discussion of Dostoevsky in the *Heretical Essays*. The fourth of the *Heretical Essays* offers a short discussion of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky as the two main representatives for diverging, yet similarly dogmatic ideologies:

For Nietzsche, nihilism is rooted precisely where Dostoevsky would have us return: in the Christian devaluation of this world by a "true" world [. . .]. Dostoevsky proposes Byzantine Christianity, Nietzsche an eternal return of the same as the solution to the crisis.¹⁰

Whereas Nietzsche's offensive is considered to be "itself nihilistic,"¹¹ Dostoevsky is here portrayed as propagator for a dogmatic return, that is, for the reinstallation of Christian dogma "by appealing to traditional Russia with its broken soul and with individuals who humble themselves before the great community which weighs them down and charges them with suffering for purification."¹² In his last study, Patočka uses similar terminology when diagnosing that Dostoevsky was convinced "to have transcended the rationalism of European philosophy and to have found a way to the simple faith of the suffering and the humble."¹³ Yet, this seemingly akin statement has an entirely different undertone in stressing Dostoevsky's role as a critic of European rationalism: it is Dostoevsky who rightly diagnosed the fatigue of reason and who, as will be shown in the following, is the main inspiration for an overcoming of the fatal dichotomy of dogmatism and nihilism. Dostoevsky's novels do not only articulate a valid critique of rationalism, but they open up the path to a "new continent of hitherto unknown meaning."¹⁴

Conversation with a "Sort of Sponger"

"I feel fine now, only there's a pain in my temple . . . and in the top of my head . . . only please don't talk philosophy, as you did last time. Tell some pleasant lies, if you can't clear out. Gossip, since you're a sponger, go ahead and gossip. Why am I stuck with such a nightmare! But I'm not afraid of you. I will overcome you. They won't take me to the madhouse!"

"*C'est charmant*—sponger! Yes, that is precisely my aspect. What am I on earth if not a sponger? Incidentally, I'm a little surprised listening to you: by God, it seems you're gradually beginning to take me for something real, and not just your fantasy, as you insisted last time [. . .]"

"Not for a single moment do I take you for the real truth," Ivan cried, somehow even furiously. "You are a lie, you are my illness, you are a ghost. Only I don't know how to destroy you, and I see I'll have to suffer through it for a while. You are my hallucination. You are the embodiment of myself, but of just one side of me . . . of my thoughts and feelings, but only the most loathsome and stupid of them. From that angle you could even be interesting to me, if I had time to bother with you [. . .]."¹⁵

This is a short impression of the conversation of Ivan Karamzov with a gentleman called the devil. It takes place toward the end of the monumental novel, in the eleventh of twelve books, when everything is forcefully set to disembody into the final trial—a trial about guilt and innocence that will not solve the problem, but, rather, further complicate the whole situation. It will only demonstrate that even the longest trials and the most forceful and eloquent evidence do not reach the truth, nor are they apt to finally judge about guilt and innocence. If, as one of the most famous sentences of this book holds, everybody is guilty of everything, if everybody were to be held responsible for everything, then it is clear from the very beginning that all investigations are in vain and that the only purpose they serve is to satisfy the vanity of persecutors, judges, defenders, suspects, witnesses—in short, to once again stage the *comedia humana* with all its paradoxes and ridiculous contortions.

Dmitri Karamzov is found guilty for a murder he has not committed. Yet he is not found guilty, he is not even really accused of a kind of murder that he has committed—namely the outrageous humiliation of the father of little Illyusha, a humiliation that is so deep and insurmountable that the little boy afterwards dies because of it. There is no causal nexus, no juridical evidence for this murderous deed, just a sensory nexus, moral evidence or evidence of the heart that the novel wants to advocate. Smerdyakov, the illegitimate son of Fyodor Karamzov and his actual murderer, is hiding behind the façade of the epileptic fool whom people do not want to accuse, precisely because of a desire for justice that keeps them from blaming the seemingly stupid and childish fool. Behind this façade, Smerdyakov is a cunning little monster: selfish, egotistical, and calculating. Is he guilty? Yes—if a judge had heard him confessing the murder to Ivan and if somebody had seen the money in his hands as further evidence, Smerdyakov would have been found guilty.

Yet at the same time, it is also clear that the novel conceives Smerdyakov as a mere tool in the hands of Ivan Karamzov, a tool that Ivan himself is not aware of for most of the time and that he only comes to recognize in the end with surprise and a lack of understanding. His impact on the creation of this cunning and murderous monster is crucial, but the imposition entailed in that story is so tremendous that Ivan cannot accept or fully understand it. It is Ivan's bewilderment that leads up precisely to his madness and the appearance of the devil.

Everybody is Guilty, but Some are More

Everybody is guilty of everything, yes, but some are guiltier and more responsible. Is Ivan guilty? Funnily enough, no court in the world could sentence him for what he has done. At the very least, they would not find him guilty for the murder. What makes the setup of Dostoevsky's novel so rich, is the multi-layered structure and the variety of perspectives that tell different truths. Yet one of the novel's messages, one layer of the story that is for sure not the least important, tells us that indeed Ivan Karamzov is the real devil, that he is the guiltiest character in this story. Being a writer and an inventive mind, he is the one who, at an early point of the book, tells the famous "Grand Inquisitor" parable, a parable that also prominently involves the devil. Most of all, however, Ivan is portrayed as the incarnation of philosophy, or more precisely, of Western philosophy.

Patočka's approach is insightful in interpreting Dostoevsky's novel not only as a deeply philosophical book but, more so, as an explicit confrontation with, and an

answer to Western philosophy. In his discussion of the novel, he dedicates a surprising amount of effort to the demonstration of how and why Dostoevsky conceived of his novel in this way. Patočka brings in direct evidence such as letters wherein Dostoevsky asks for the consignment of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel's *History of Philosophy* (and conditions his request with the words: "my entire future depends on it"), but he also looks for indirect clues by quoting dialogues from the *Brothers Karamzov* that reflect Kantian arguments or sometimes even fully resemble his formulations. These bits of evidence are important for Patočka's reading of Dostoevsky, because they demonstrate the author's will to explicitly build his arguments on and against Western philosophy. From here on, Patočka will then continue to show that Dostoevsky's attempt to go beyond the rationalism of European philosophy does not necessarily have to disembody into a re-affirmation of Byzantine Christianity; it may also open up the path to a new phenomenology of meaning by providing a philosophical impulse for the debate on the meaning of life after the onslaught of nihilism.

The whole setup of the novel and the development of the story is an apparent proof for the truth of this hypothesis: The eldest son Dmitri stands for everything that is bad about the Russian soul—he is passionate and intemperate, voluptuous, lazy, and wasteful. As such, he is a "truly Karamzovian character." Among the three brothers, he is the one who is always quarreling with his father, precisely because they are so similar. He and his father both desire money and both desire the same girl. Dmitri is also portrayed as a gambler and hazard-player, thereby representing a trait of Dostoevsky's own personality. The youngest brother Alyosha, on the other hand, is the main character and positive hero of the novel. He is the most loveable and likeable person who bewilders everybody by his gentle innocence and humbleness, representing everything that, for Dostoevsky, is good in the Russian soul, and that in the end very much serves as the future hope and almost salvific promise. Dmitri and Alyosha, oldest and youngest, stand for opposite sides of the Russian character, yet there is no doubt that precisely the "Russianness" is crucial for their personalities.

Ivan, in contrast, represents what is alien to the Russian soul: he is the outsider, the Westerner, the modernizer who, of the three, is the least emotional and has the least intimacy with the people around him, including his two brothers. Fyodor Pavlovich, father of the three, says in the beginning that he is most afraid of his son Ivan, not of the ill-tempered and hot-hearted Dmitri—and, as the end shows, he is right in his concerns.¹⁶ Ivan is the philosopher who, in the end, madly yells out: "Stop talking philosophy"; he is the atheist who accuses God for all the misery in the world; he is the propagator of human freedom and responsibility, depicting the church rules of the Grand Inquisitor as a tyranny of unfreedom, yet in the end he unwillingly and unknowingly creates his own little monster that rids himself of all responsibility. Ivan is the incarnation of Reason and Enlightenment, he explicitly wants to overcome superstition and obscurity, but out of all characters, he's the one who in the end is caught up in nightmarish dreams and ghostly appearances.

Fatigue and the Dream of Reason

El sueño de la razón produce monstruos, is the title of the best-known sketch from Goya's series of *Caprichos*. One could easily imagine Ivan Karamzov sitting there in the center of that sketch in the place of the sleeping painter himself. An extra ingredient of the Spanish sentence is the double meaning of *sueño*: it could mean "the fatigue of

reason, the sleep of reason creates monsters," which would be the more enlightened version and probably the one that Goya himself had in mind. Yet *sueño* can also be understood as "dream," which would then indicate that the dream, the ideal of reason itself produces its nasty monsters, the flattering owls and bats that inhabit Goya's sketch with their blinking, devilish eyes. For the context of Ivan's nightmarish encounter with the devil and the general portrayal of his personality, it is not necessary to make a choice between these two different variants. It seems that Dostoevsky's novel oscillates between both meanings, exactly with the person of Ivan demonstrating their nexus: the enlightened vision and sunny dream of reason out of an inner necessity mutates into a frightening nightmare and general exhaustion.

When the novel approaches its end, the self-sustained propagator of reason is overcome by a fatigue that creeps into him and his whole environment, leading to madness and nightmarish visions. How does one mobilize and overcome the general fatigue? How is one still able to move when faced with a paralyzing immobility and motionlessness (moving-lessness) that Patočka nicely depicts as the outstanding characteristic in the situation of Dostoevsky's Underground-Man? How to react when facing a gentleman like this?:

Some gentleman, or, rather a certain type of Russian gentleman, no longer young, *qui frisait la cinquantaine*, as the French say, with not too much gray in his dark, rather long, and still thick hair, and with a pointed beard. He was wearing a sort of brown jacket, evidently from the best of tailors, but already shabby, made approximately three years ago and already completely out of fashion [. . .]. His linen, his long, scarflike necktie, all was just what every stylish gentleman would wear, but, on closer inspection, the linen was a bit dirty and the wide scarf was quite threadbare.¹⁷

That is the devil, or rather it is Ivan's devil—a tired person himself, his best years are over, but more than everything else, he is a very tiresome person. How to get rid of him? Meeting that type of gentleman, one might suspect that no courageous heroism will help to fight him off, no last and decisive battle for which one must mobilize. Ivan gets furious and yells at him, the sleazy guy just keeps on talking about good manners. All attempts at a once-and-for-all solution of the problem are obviously hopeless. Being confronted with that shabby existence is like fighting off moths that live off almost nothing, but permeate throughout everything. The paralyzing effect is profound. How is it possible to mobilize at all, or how to only move in that situation? At the end of the conversation, Ivan desperately throws a glass at the devil, but the sleazy guy is certainly not very impressed:

Ah, mais c'est bête enfin!, the latter exclaimed, jumping up from the sofa and shaking the spatters of tea off himself. "He remembered Luther's inkstand! He considers me a dream and he throws glasses at a dream! Just like a woman!"¹⁸

Ivan's final reaction fails as well. Yet the gesture itself is of utmost importance: it is an imitating gesture, once again an imitation of the West, recalling the one in history who stands most for the proclaimed enlightening of religion. But not only that—the reader also gets a clear response to that gesture, articulated by the shabby devil-guy himself who lets Ivan know in the aristocratic language of French: "Well, what you do, is just

stupid and childish." It is certainly not an exaggeration to take this as an answer to "the West." If Luther's legendary resoluteness¹⁹ was really apt to fight off the devil, it must have been somebody else, not this tired and tiresome, greasy and run-down existence who indignantly complains about rheumatism and bad manners.

Luther took the devil for real, while Ivan, more enlightened than Luther, tries to convince himself all the time that this guy only consists of his own feelings and thoughts (the nastiest of them, as stated in the quote from their conversation). Nevertheless, the sleazy guy is damned real for him, more real maybe than Luther's devil, who is so nice and reliable to simply disappear because of a flying inkstand. Ivan's sleazy and tired devil is as real and as frightening as the nightmarish bewilderments that overcome a person in a suicidal mood.²⁰ There might be no objective proof for the inescapability and the hopelessness of the situation that the suicidal person him-/herself feels, but the inescapability is his/her only and overwhelming reality: *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*. The monsters of sleep/dream are reality, in the same way as sleep and dream themselves are reality. An all overwhelming fatigue and exhaustion produces its own reality. Reason might want to explain it away, but what might work for the alert Martin Luther and his alert devil is a hopeless undertaking in the case of Ivan's greasy, tired, and tiresome existence.

Dostoevsky as a writer is witty enough to maintain that ambiguous and undecided situation. The devil is Ivan's reality, no doubt, and the further development proves the truth of his appearance. Yet at the same time, he certainly is a mere dream and appearance. Once the nightmarish events slowly, slowly come to an end—Alyosha has been banging at Ivan's door for a long time—Ivan awakes and everything is as it was before: the glass is still on the table, in one piece and unmoved, the wet towel that Ivan had used to cover his head and fight off the nightmare is in the other corner of the room, unused and dry. Alyosha comes in, moved and almost shaking as he brings the news of Smerdyakov's suicide. Ivan remains unmoved, motionless and emotionless: "I knew he had hanged himself," is his only answer after a while. "Yes, he told me. He told me so just now."²¹ Who is he? What is dream, what is reality? And who, above all, is dreamer and who is monster? Smerdyakov is Ivan's little monster, a monster that he created, but it is also Smerdyakov's deed that, when fully revealed, points to Ivan as the real monster. Smerdyakov's second deed, his suicide, runs in parallel, simultaneously and like a mirror reflection, to Ivan's meeting with the devil. Both of them, Ivan and Smerdyakov, are overcome by the same inescapability and motionlessness (in the double sense of not moving and not being moved), the suicidal mood. After this, Smerdyakov is dead, literally, and Ivan has also died, metaphorically.

The old Ivan who famously wanted to return his entrance ticket has died during the encounter with the devil. It is an outstanding literary depiction of what Patočka calls shaking, conversion or metanoia. It is an existential shaking, Ivan's confrontation with himself in the guise of a shabby, run-down devil. The above quoted conversation of Ivan with the "sort of sponger" ends with his saying: "if only I had time to waste on you [. . .]."²² As a sentence spoken to himself, it is a great illustration of the will to get rid of oneself, of what Heidegger calls *Verfallenheit* (fallenness), that is, an ongoing escape from the responsibility for our own being. The Ivan after this shaking is a different person. Pathetically, one might call him a better person: he starts getting involved in actively working on the liberation of his brother in prison, Mitya, and for the first time he seems to build up real human relationships of love and care. The apparent change then culminates in his testimony at court where he accuses himself of being the

murderer. For a moment people even tend to believe him, but when he is asked about a witness for this, he can only refer to the devil—and is carried out of the building as a madman.

Morality, Love, and Fundamental Ontology

It is obvious that the depiction of moral catharsis is an essential element of Dostoevsky's intention with the character of Ivan. Ivan is meant to go through his crisis and come out of it as a renewed person, showing repentance and asking for forgiveness. The pattern becomes even clearer when drawing the obvious parallel to Raskolnikov, the main character of *Crime and Punishment*, who after long and convulsive reflections finally takes over responsibility for his immoral ("extra-moral") deed of murdering the old "louse." Yet Patočka insists on the fact that *Brothers Karamazov* should not only and not merely be read under this moral (or moralistic) point of view. It is his conviction that the novel obtains a "unique kind of phenomenology,"²³ the descriptive focus of which is not morality in the traditional sense (as proper behavior or doing the "right" and "good" thing), but the overcoming of alienation, a new positivity and fullness of life.

An insightful example of this is his interpretation of Dostoevsky's *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*. Patočka fully centers his reading around the crucial scene of the delayed suicide. Instead of shooting himself, the ridiculous man sits down in his chair, falls asleep, and starts dreaming—a dream of his own suicide continued by a flight, his detaching from earth, which finally leads to a change of his overall attitude. His dream also contains the famous parable of the innocent twin earth where people cannot lie—until a single lie ruins everything. The narrator then awakens, and it is as if he embodied the counterexample of the person who has ruined the twin earth with his lie. Speaking in a moral language, the ridiculous man awakens as a "good" person: he cares, cares for himself and the people around him. He wants to make the world a better place. Sleep and dream have brought about a fundamental change of the ridiculous man. Only in sleep and dream does the ridiculous man awaken to become a "better," "fuller," true human being. There is obviously a moral dimension involved in this happening, and in fact this moral reading was probably one of Dostoevsky's own leading intentions. Patočka, however, insists that the conversion should be seen in relation to a "deeper" change. What Dostoevsky's novels offer is for him indeed the literary-phenomenological discovery of a "new continent of hitherto unknown meaning":

It is now clear that this has nothing to do with some mystical fantasy, but with a profound conversion away from existent things and their unveiling toward the illuminating truth of Being that reveals the difference between beings and Being. This is the difference that forms the proper being of the human being, the fundamental possibility embedded in the structure of human life and realized on the ground of limit-experiences that provide access to the triple alienation from oneself, from others, and from Being.²⁴

As in the case of Ivan Karamazov, it is a dream that brings about the fundamental change. For Patočka, however, the dream is far from delivering any kind of divinatory or revelatory experience. It is the literary depiction of an existential experience, an uprooting within which all worldly and egotistic (in the sense of ego-related, not as a

value judgment) relations are transcended. Therefore, the overall happening of Ivan's existential breakthrough is not a moral one, but has an ontological meaning. The proclaimed "new meaning of life" is exactly this ontological opening. The language in which this is depicted, might come close to the spheres of morality and traditional Christianity. But the opening entailed in this movement is one that transcends these established doctrines:

While it undoubtedly deals with gaining life's meaning via an overcoming of the threefold alienation, thus with approaching and connecting to other people and things in the world, the traditional Christian concepts, such as transcendent divinity and immortality, seem to represent marginal ideals here rather than the foundation on which everything rests. Rather, this foundation is positivity, openness, and love.²⁵

This love then could be further qualified by saying that it is love primarily in the sense of that "through which we love, what gives us to love, and on the basis of which we let things be what they are."²⁶ For Patočka, who only mentions the whole devil episode once, in passing and against a fully different background, the main examples for this existential happening in the *Brothers Karamazov* are the characters of Staretz Zosima and his brother Markel. The crucial episode is Zosima's long recollection of his brother's death, an experience that not only changed the dying Markel himself but also had a life-long impact on Zosima.²⁷ The highlighting of these experiences of a "breakthrough" is plausible and convincing because they serve as outstanding examples for the conversion of life. The breakthrough's dramatic peak in the novel is probably the episode of Zosima's duel as a young man; after his rival shoots at him, Zosima renounces shooting back himself and throws his pistol into the trees. All this happens after a night of true conversion, where he remembers the meek words ("am I worthy of being served?") and the humble dying of this brother. It is as if "a sharp needle" went through his soul:

How did I deserve that another man, just like me, the image and likeness of God, should serve me? [. . .] Truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone, only people do not know it, and if they knew it, the world would at once become paradise. [. . .] I was setting out to kill a kind, intelligent, noble man, who was not at fault before me in any way, thereby depriving his wife of happiness forever, tormenting and killing her.²⁸

It is true that this kind of experience leads to a new fullness, an openness to life that one might also characterize, with Patočka, as an openness to Being. After his throwing away of the pistol, the young Zosima is in an almost ecstatic mood, rejoicing at the whole world, crying and shouting:

Gentlemen, [. . .] look at the divine gifts around us: the clear sky, the fresh air, the tender grass, the birds, nature is beautiful and sinless, and we, we alone, are godless and foolish [. . .] we shall embrace each other and weep.²⁹

Zosima's ecstatic outcry breaks off and he continues his recollection with the words: "I wanted to go on but I could not, so much sweetness, so much youngness even took

my breath away, and in my heart there was such happiness as I had never felt before in all my life."

This can certainly stand for an intimate description of an existential breakthrough, a shattering or shaking that is an essential reference in many of Patočka's philosophical analyses. It is also clear that the conversion has a "deeper" dimension in the sense of offering more than a mere moral (or moralistic) point of view. Indeed, Zosima has become "a better person." But it would be shortsighted to restrict his change to good conduct. After his nightly conversion, Zosima is a completely different person; he sees the world with different eyes, and deeply resembles the ridiculous man after his delayed suicide and the awakening through and in his sleep/dream. As his ecstatic appraisals show, the whole world has turned into a different place for him. Once again, there is a moral dimension involved here, but the morality in question is not one of merit, reward, and punishment: "Each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone" is the insight of a morality that at the same time transcends morality. Its radicalized extension is entailed in the additional line: "Indeed, I am perhaps the most guilty of all."³⁰ It is obvious that this claim entails an answer to, and a sweeping rejection of, Kant's practical philosophy.

Yet, is it really convincing that Patočka wants to understand this turn independent of the Christian tradition? At any rate, the similarity of the conviction of "everybody guilty before everyone and for everyone" to the Christian dogma of primordial guilt cannot be missed. And when speaking about the "new continent of meaning," it is at least an unfortunate choice to exclusively refer to Zosima who, with his whole life as a monk, stands explicitly for Christianity, and in his teaching refers to it at any instance. For Zosima, the question of meaning has been answered. To him, meaning is service to God, the carrying out of God's will and the work for the realization of his kingdom.

This message is already entailed in the sentence that precedes the whole novel as a motto: "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."³¹ Jesus says these words just before his death. They may be seen as his consent to the following ordeal. According to the Christian doctrine, Jesus thereby takes upon himself the primordial sin, he shoulders the most innocent acts as if he were "the most guilty of all." It is not by chance that the novel has this motto and that Zosima acts like the incarnation of its inner truth.

Certainly, there might be a reading of the novel that tries to understand this sentence independent of the Christian context. This is what Patočka advocates in his study. It is an attempt at a philosophical interpretation of the novel that transcends its embeddedness in the Christian tradition or, alternatively, Dostoevsky's alleged renewal and resuscitation of that Christian heritage. Yet, precisely such an attempt should then not be based too narrowly on one person (the monk Zosima), but rather pay more attention to the variety of characters and their different answers. This is where the discussion leads back to Ivan Karamazov. If Zosima is the embodiment of Christianity, then Ivan is the devilish incarnation of philosophy. He also experiences an "awakening," but it is an awakening in nightmare that is caused by a general fatigue. The story of his conversion has different sources and it leads to a somewhat different result. It is Ivan's character who might tell us the most about the proclaimed "new phenomenology of meaning." But first of all, he has to go through his breakdown, a breakdown that also stands for the fatal and inevitable collapse of philosophy—or, at least, of a certain kind of philosophy.

The Collapse of Philosophy and/as Moral Theology

Long before Ivan has the phantasmagoric dream of the devil, he is presented as a dreamer in a different sense. It is not a fatigue of reason that speaks out of him, but quite the opposite: a very clear and distinct dream, a sober dream about a new world order where "everything is lawful," a world without God where consequently everything is allowed. We come to know this position most famously in the chapter "Rebellion," where Ivan speaks about his wish to return his entrance ticket, a chapter that he also starts with a kind of Nietzschean declaration of his "love for the farthest." Love for the farthest, love for those at a distance is the new commandment to Ivan Karamazov. The Christian concept of love for those closest to one is, for Ivan, spoiled by the concreteness of the other person, her bad smell, her ugliness, and the impertinence of her bodily being-there.

In a telling phrase, Ivan adds: "If we're to come to love a man, the man himself should stay hidden, because as soon as he shows his face—love vanishes."³² There is almost no comment on this in the novel, and there probably can be no comment since the phrase is so self-revealing. The baby-like, innocent Alyosha comes up with a little reference to his Father Zosima, but he has nothing really to answer. As always, the eloquence of Ivan, the philosopher, wins the upper hand. Yet, after having said this sentence, the indicators of a breakdown of all this eloquence are evident—up to the ultimate point where Ivan will beg for pardon and yell out to the devil: "Just don't talk philosophy"! Philosophy, at least the kind of philosophy that Ivan stands for, collapses from within. The most intriguing and dramatically enacted countermove to Ivan's viewpoint is placed at the very end of the long dialogue between the two brothers. After all of Ivan's eloquence, his talking and story-telling, Alyosha's simple response is to stand up and kiss his brother. It is an ironically broken gesture, accompanied by the brothers' laughing, and it is a direct copy of Christ's silent kiss for the Grand Inquisitor. The die is cast at an early point of the novel already.

A certain kind of philosophy (Ivan's philosophy) is shown to have failed, but before it ultimately collapses, it will bring about the refutation of another philosophy (Western philosophy). Funnily enough, it is Ivan, the westerner and the enlightener, who most heavily criticizes Western and enlightenment philosophy, until this criticism itself is finally unmasked as being guided by the same shortcomings and, at least for Dostoevsky, slumps down to an empty nothingness. Once again, Patočka's interpretation unfolds this nicely. Long passages of his undertaking are dedicated to the demonstration of how much of Kant's moral theology is the secret focus in Dostoevsky's critique. It is not simply that modern philosophy has lost the God of onto-theology, God as the proclaimed *ens maximum* or *ens necessarium*. For Dostoevsky, it is precisely Kant's attempt to overcome the dilemma with the postulation of a moral God that leads to the deepest embarrassment. God, freedom, and immortality are postulated by pure practical reason as the safeguards for morality. Yet, how can this claim be justified? Or as Patočka asks in his analysis:

Yet is it necessary for the world to have a moral meaning? Is the morality of moral worth necessary and justifiable? Once we thus enter the domain of morality, we likewise enter the sphere of a God with whom one negotiates, the sphere of a moral God with his rewards and punishments, the moral sphere as the domain of *do ut des*,³³ of merit, guilt and remuneration, of transcendental keeping of accounts.³⁴

Ivan's argumentation in the chapter "Rebellion" starts off with exactly the assumption that it is impossible to prove the moral purpose of the universe to be apodictically necessary. But not only that. It seems that the most convincing core of his criticism is not to be found in logical argumentation but in the unbearableness of existence as it is. It is revolt, rebellion against the overall setup of the world as it is:

I need retribution, otherwise I will destroy myself. And retribution not somewhere and sometime in infinity, but here and now, on earth, so that I see it myself. I have believed, and I want to see for myself, and if I am dead by that time, let them resurrect me, because it will be too unfair if it all takes place without me. Is it possible that I've suffered so that I, together with my evil deeds and sufferings, should be manure for someone's future harmony? I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion, and the murdered man rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly finds out what it was all for. All religions in the world are based on this desire, and I am a believer. But then there are the children, and what am I going to do with them?³⁵

The famous reference to the suffering of the children is Ivan's own radicalized version of theodicy: How can we cope with the suffering of the innocent who have not yet eaten the apple of knowledge? How can a God—a sort of transcendental bookkeeper that watches over reward and punishment—allow for a postponing of this justice until some infinite time? Justice should be taking place here and now and not be delayed to the prospect of some future harmony—this is maybe the kernel of Ivan's questioning of Kantian moral theology. It seems that Dostoevsky as the writer of this has a double position: he fully identifies with the criticism of the monstrosity of moral theology, yet at the same time he works out the monstrosity of Ivan's own argumentation.

It almost goes without further comment that the failure of the final trial in the book, the inability to judicially find out the truth about the murder, can also be seen as Dostoevsky's answer to Ivan's claim for justice here and now. But there is more. Ivan's statement is in such an apparent contradiction to the depiction of his character that from the beginning his rebellion itself looks like a desperate undertaking. Why should especially the most isolated, self-sustained, and self-righteous of all the characters care for the suffering of the children, when—at the same time—his brother Alyosha is very concretely taking care of the group of small Ilyusha and his friends, working on reconciliation and love amongst them?

In his study, Patočka remarks at one point: "A skeptic of Ivan's kind represents a specific variety of the 'underground' man."³⁶ Although he does not fully develop that parallel, very much of the character of Ivan can indeed be nicely related to the underground man. It is indicative, holds Patočka, that "for him others are hell, that they alienate him from himself, but that this alienation at the same time makes up the entire substance of his own life, such that he is unable to free himself from it."³⁷ This is like an echo of the unbearable threat of the other's face that Ivan spoke about in the dialogue with Alyosha. With his attempted detachment from others, the underground existence begins to feel his/her estrangement as the only reality, leading to a hypersensitivity: "The underground man is 'terribly self-loving.' He is infatuated with himself, irritable and irascible, immeasurably over-sensitive with respect to himself, even though this self is false, paltry, entirely determined by this constant competition."³⁸

If taken as a characteristic that would also be valid for Ivan, then suddenly his argumentation over the suffering of the children appears in a different light. Ultimately, his concern would not go for the suffering of somebody else, but rather for his own lonely and unrelated subjectivity; "how can God make me suffer?" would then be the real concern behind the question.

But the full collapse of his world and philosophy is still reserved for the final denouement of Ivan's tea-chat with the tired devil. Throughout the whole book, Ivan is Mr. Eloquence himself, but in the end it is the shabby existence that is more eloquent than Ivan ever was. This might be seen as yet another funny commentary on Ivan the philosopher, who in the end finds no better expression than in the words of the devil—or a devil. It is his devil, certainly, nobody else than he himself or an aspect of his personality. The guy is hellishly clever—what else would you expect? Yet Ivan keeps on insisting, even after the devil has left, that "he is terribly stupid, terribly stupid"—an attribution that is repeated several times.³⁹ The doubling of his person serves to lay bare the shortcomings of his thought. Philosophical cleverness unmasks itself as mere cleverness.

Ivan tremblingly repeats variations of the sentence "please don't talk philosophy to me." And what does the guy do? Certainly, he talks philosophy all the time:

Je pense donc je suis, I'm quite sure of that, but all the rest around me, all those worlds, God, even Satan himself—for me all that is unproven, whether it exists in itself, or is only my emanation, a consistent development of my *I*, which exists pre-temporally and uniquely. [. . .]⁴⁰

This is what the shabby and tired guy on the sofa has to offer like a starting remark of his gossiping. It once again brings the discussion back to the core subject of a critique of subjectivism and Western philosophy. Certainly, it is another funny side-story of Dostoevsky's that it is precisely the devil who denies the devil's existence. And if looked at as what he precisely is, namely a mere emanation of Ivan's thoughts and feelings, the whole situation is even less favorable as a statement on subjective philosophy. The man on the sofa is nothing but a phantasmagoric nightmare—but he starts to declare that the only thing surely existing is precisely himself.

Ivan's Breakdown and the New Beginning of "Philosophy"

Yet it is not only painful what his devil says, even more bothersome for Ivan is the tone and the effortlessness with which the devil produces his thoughts. Throughout the book, Ivan expresses his thoughts with a deep inner involvement, sometimes even with convulsive strain—and now comes this nightmarish alter ego who incessantly chatters philosophy. The deeper Ivan's fatigue, the more lively his monster becomes. Lightheartedly does he rephrase the ideas of "a most charming and dear young Russian gentleman,"⁴¹ no other than the author of a poem entitled "The Grand Inquisitor." This ardent young student once had a "dream" (the sober dream, the wake dream, not the tired nightmare)—and in his bottomless fatigue Ivan is reminded by the devil of his former dream, the fierce dream of a new man:

Once mankind has renounced God, one and all (and I believe that this period, analogous to the geological periods, will come), then the entire old world view will

fall of itself. [. . .] People will come together in order to take from life all that it can give, but, of course, for happiness and joy in this world only. Man will be exalted with the spirit of divine, titanic pride, and the man-god will appear. [. . .] Each will know himself utterly mortal, without resurrection, and will accept death proudly and calmly, like a god. Out of pride he will understand that he should not murmur against the momentariness of life, and he will love his brother then without any reward. Love will satisfy only the moment of life, but the very awareness of its momentariness will increase its fire, inasmuch as previously it was diffused in hopes of an eternal love beyond the grave.⁴²

Once again, it is full of ironic undertones that precisely the devil praises the happy acceptance of death, and projects the ideal of a world full of mutual love. However, more interesting in the present context are the references to philosophy. This passage does not only offer a proclamation of God's death or absence, but also a positive outlook at what this life without a highest being and the prospect of a future harmony might look like. It is a broken vision, indeed, a devilish vision of the man-god. But it is also a very earnest and deep search—a lot of Nietzsche could be read, not only into this passage, but into the entire book.⁴³ What it discusses is one of Nietzsche's main questions: not so much the event of God's death, but the consequences that this happening would entail.⁴⁴ And especially Ivan shares the same despair over the failure to not deal with the implications of his departure. But there is also something else in this passage: a final reference—not an accidental reference—to the concept of love.

The concept of love is Dostoevsky's positive vision that stands strikingly at the end of the novel. It is after the death of little Illyusha, when Alyosha gathers the group of all his friends (they are twelve) and gives his famous speech at the stone. The general tone of it is one of reconciliation, respect, and eternal love in memory of the deceased Illyusha. But especially the end of it, like the final message of the whole book, is much more practical. It is a call for community, togetherness, care for each other, or one could even say love: "And eternally so, all our lives hand in hand!"⁴⁵

This is almost the last line of the whole novel and it the ideal of a new community: a community in the world, outside of the monastery, a community that Ivan could only dream of ("to love the brother without any reward"). Yet for Ivan, it was an effortless dream, a dream without embodiment and suffering, a subjectivist dream as in the Cartesian philosophy that his devil ridicules. Only after his smashing fatigue and the turning of dream into nightmare (which entails his passive "being exposed" to it, not the active and somewhat disembodied envisaging) does he take part in it bodily. The whole process of his illness reflects such a development.

Alyosha, who rarely speaks about his visions or ideas, is the one to realize this ideal community practically. Most of the time he is described as being engaged in bringing messages, visiting someone, caring for others, mediating, etc. He realizes the community of love in the world and thereby also stays truthful to the legacy of his much admired Staretz Zosima, since it was he who had told Alyosha to leave the monastery and to work in the world. All of his engagement finally culminates in the new community that is portrayed at the end. The conclusive "Hurrah for Karamazov" reflects the success of Alyosha's efforts and is the ultimate acknowledgment for the conversion of the infamous Karamazov-family of ill-minded wasters and destroyers.

It seems obvious that this "new bliss" entails a religious or quasi-religious dimension. Yet with Dostoevsky, and probably beyond Dostoevsky, it might be possible to

reformulate his concept of love for a "Post-Christian" context (to use an expression from an earlier writing of Patočka).⁴⁶ "Love" could then be understood as the ultimate name for the transubstantiation of life that is brought about with the third movement of human existence, the so-called movement of "dedication" or of "giving oneself."⁴⁷ This love is obviously not meant as an objective set of rules and values, not as *ordo amoris* in the sense of Scheler, but more of a lived-through discovery of a new horizon. It is an answer that is not a pre-given but gained in the exposure to meaninglessness and nihilism. "Love" would then obtain a third meaning beyond its understanding as either instinctual love or as moral imperative. Both of these understandings "subjectivize" love,⁴⁸ as Patočka says, whereas Dostoevsky's concept of love "opens up" and is like the discovery of an entirely new meaning of the world. This is an understanding that will never be reached by a theoretical reflection in the sense of Ivan's disembodied philosophy. In his study, Patočka therefore holds apodictically:

Theoretical rationalism [. . .] will never be able to encompass the whole. That's fine, when it does not claim to be full-fledged knowledge. Yet in practice, rationalism leads necessarily into disorganization and chaos. Therefore Dostoevsky claims that society cannot become fully human without "love."⁴⁹

Trying to sum up the main insights of his reading of the *Brothers Karamazov*, the following three aspects should be outlined: (1) The novel is a philosophical answer to Kant's postulates of pure practical reason, and is an overcoming of his moral theology. (2) The novel is the literary expression of a quest that is similar to what one can find in Nietzsche; it is a parallel or better, an alternative attempt to cope with the death of God in modernity. (3) Perhaps most importantly, the novel entails an existentialist philosophy in a double sense: (a) First it is a continuous working-through of processes of existential upheaval as such, that is, processes of *metanoia*. (This is why the character of Ivan is most important: he is the philosopher, the answer to Kant and Nietzsche, but his encounter with the devil is maybe also the most intriguing existential happening in the book, namely the description of his fullest breakdown and a possible re-orientation afterward.) (b) Secondly it is the depiction of the "opening" that is entailed in this existential process, the breakthrough to a deeper realization of the world. The second component is nicely reflected in Ivan's devil-story. The story is the shaking of Ivan's subjectivist dream, his philosophical vision of the new world that disperses into a nightmarish nothingness until he comes to realize the world again—but now a fully changed world.

Ivan, in his conversation with the devil, has almost reached the end—an end that can ultimately only be understood as a new beginning. He starts trembling. The shabby existence continues with his tea-talk, the torture is not yet over. It all ends with a ridiculing of Ivan himself and, once again, a highly Nietzschean ridiculing of his ongoing belief in truth:

Anyone who already knows the truth is permitted to settle things for himself, absolutely as he wishes, on the new principles. In this sense, "everything is permitted" to him. Moreover, since God and immortality do not exist in any case, even if this period should never come, the new man is allowed to become a man-god, though it be he alone in the whole world. [. . .] There is no law for God! [. . .] Where I stand, there at once will be the foremost place . . . "everything is

permitted,” and that’s that! [. . .] If one wants to swindle, why, I wonder, should one also need the sanction of truth? But such is the modern little Russian man; without such a sanction, he doesn’t even dare to swindle, so much does he love the truth [. . .].⁵⁰

After this, Ivan has reached the point of breakdown—this is when he throws the glass, and only then slowly awakens from the whole scene, while his brother, the savior, is knocking at the door. Ivan’s nightmarish dream is over, the sleazy monster disappears, and it is as if it had never been there. Only Ivan knows it was.

Notes

- 1 Jan Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” cf. 95–135 of this volume. [Czech: “Kolem Masarykovy filosofie náboženství,” in *Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky*, vol. 12: *Češi I* (Prague: Oikumene, 2006), 366–422.] Further references cite the English translation in this volume.
- 2 The historical events before and after Patočka’s death, the atmosphere of underground seminars, secret gatherings, and the processes of publication in *Samizdat* have been nicely depicted by Ivan Chvatík, one of his students at that time and today’s head of the Prague Patočka-Archiv. See Ivan Chvatík, “Geschichte und Vorgeschichte des Prager Jan Patočka-Archivs,” in *Studia Phaenomenologica. Romanian Journal for Phenomenology* 7 (2007), 163–92.
- 3 Only the last 20 pages of these 58 are preserved in the actual manuscript. See Ivan Chvatík’s editorial note on the text in Patočka, *Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky*, vol. 13: *Češi II*, ed. Karel Palek (Prague: Oikumene, 2007), 435.
- 4 Patočka, *Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin*, in *Sebrané spisy Jana Patočky*, vol. 3: *Pěče o duši III*, ed. Ivan Chvatík and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikumene, 2002), 11–144. [English translation: *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996).]
- 5 Patočka, “Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War,” in *Heretical Essays*, 135.
- 6 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 130.
- 7 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 127f.
- 8 The chosen title has also to do with the fact that the publication of this article in *Samizdat* was planned in a volume entitled *Dvě studie o Masarykovi* [Two Studies on Masaryk], combining its publication with another article offering a more political reflection on “Czech National Philosophy and its Failure.”
- 9 I published my German translation of the same article under the title “The Question of Meaning in the Epoch of Nihilism,” reflecting the titles of Patočka’s shorter fragments and preparatory manuscripts that are in close interconnection with this long study. Cf. Patočka, “Die Sinnfrage in der Epoche des Nihilismus: Masaryk—Dostojewski—Kant—Nietzsche—Heidegger,” in *Tschechische Philosophen im 20. Jahrhundert: Klíma, Rádl, Patočka, Havel, Kosík*, trans. and ed. Ludger Hagedorn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002), 209–312.
- 10 Patočka, “Europe and the European Heritage until the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *Heretical Essays*, 93.
- 11 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 93.
- 12 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 92.
- 13 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 110.
- 14 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 113.
- 15 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 637. Hereafter *BK*.
- 16 “Alyosha, my dear, my only son, I’m afraid of Ivan; I’m more afraid of Ivan than of the other one. Only you I’m not afraid of [. . .]” Dostoevsky, *BK*, 141.
- 17 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 635.

- 18 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 649.
- 19 The whole legend of his throwing the inkstand probably just came up due to a **misunderstanding**. Luther himself never mentions the episode but says that he “tackled the devil with ink,” i.e., with his writings.
- 20 In a short reference in his *Heretical Essays*, Patočka points out the “dreadful immobility of suicides.” Human life “confronted with absolute meaninglessness” can, as he claims, only surrender and give itself up. Patočka, “Does History have a Meaning?” in *Heretical Essays*, 59.
- 21 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 651.
- 22 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 637.
- 23 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 113.
- 24 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 107.
- 25 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 113.
- 26 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 109.
- 27 In Zosima’s own words: “There was much talk even in town about his end [the wondrous change and the dying of Markel]. It all shook me then, but not deeply, though I cried very much when he was being buried. I was young, a child, but it all remained indelibly in my heart, the feeling was hidden there. It all had to rise up and respond in due time. And so it did.” Dostoevsky, *BK*, 290.
- 28 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 298.
- 29 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 299.
- 30 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 298. This is Zosima’s conviction before the duel. It is a sentence spoken to himself, individually and in a concrete situation, but its postulate is transcendental, spoken to everybody and before everybody as a human being.
- 31 John 12:24, quoted in Dostoevsky, *BK*, 390. Zosima quotes this sentence in his long dialogue with the “mysterious visitor.”
- 32 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 237.
- 33 Latin: “I give in order that you may give.”
- 34 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 102.
- 35 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 244.
- 36 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 103.
- 37 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 103.
- 38 Patočka, “On Masaryk’s Philosophy of Religion,” 103.
- 39 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 652.
- 40 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 642.
- 41 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 648.
- 42 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 648–9.
- 43 At some points the questioning is so similar that it is difficult to believe that Dostoevsky supposedly did not read and know Nietzsche, as philological sources say. Reversely, Nietzsche read Dostoevsky, though he discovered him only late (around late 1886 or early 1887). In a letter to his friend Overbeck from February 23, 1887, Nietzsche reports his recent discovery of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (in French translation) and comments: “The instinct of affinity (or what should I call it?) spoke to me instantaneously, my joy was beyond bounds.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Selected Letters by Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 261. Citation refers to Hackett edition.
- 44 Nietzsche’s “message” somewhat presupposes the announcement of God’s death. His main concern is the inability to deal with this. See, e.g., his programmatic proclamation in the *Gay Science*: “God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown.—And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 167 (§108). [German: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 3, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (München: de Gruyter, 1999), 467.]
- 45 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 776.
- 46 See Patočka, *Andere Weg in die Moderne: Forschungsbeiträge zu Patočkas Genealogie der Neuzeit*, ed. Ludger Hagedorn and Hans Rainer Sepp (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 77.

- 47 For Patočka's philosophy of the three movements of human existence, see especially the "Afterword" to his *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*. See Patočka, *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1992). [English translation: *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, trans. and ed. Eubica Učník and Ivan Chvatík, (Forthcoming: Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).]
- 48 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 110.
- 49 Patočka, "On Masaryk's Philosophy of Religion," 120.
- 50 Dostoevsky, *BK*, 649.

11 Patočka's Discussion with Dostoevsky on the Future of Science and Christianity

Eubica Učník

Murdoch University
L.Ucnik@murdoch.edu.au

In the Middle Ages, the struggle between Platonists and Aristotelians ends with the defeat of both these doctrines in favor of modern science. Kant is the first to realize the problem for human meaning and responsibility in a universe perceived as a fine-tuned machine without purpose, aim or values. His attempt is to rethink a rational theology, thereby saving theology as well as natural science. Kant's endeavor to account for human meaning in a physical world stripped of all sense is countered by Dostoevsky: Ivan Karamazov rebels against utilitarian reasoning, leading ultimately to his madness; whilst Nicolai Stavrogin's struggle between the incompatible call of conscience and utilitarian reasoning ends in suicide. Yet, is this the only way to think about scientific reasoning and human existence? Jan Patočka's heretical history of European reason and science is an answer to Kant and Dostoevsky and their attempts to rethink human responsibility in a world where objective reasoning relegates human experience to the margins of knowledge.

Keywords: theology; responsibility; science; Kant; Dostoevsky; Socrates

The hypothesis according to which modern subjectivism is essentially responsible for the skeptical crisis which deprived European society of its belief in eternity is in itself extremely dubious.

—Jan Patočka¹

Introduction

In this paper, I will present a short outline of the changes in the conception of nature and reason since the rise of modern science, as a background to my discussion of human responsibility in the modern world. I will argue that changes to our understanding of humans' place in the world are concomitant with the modern re-conceptualization of reason. In the new scientific formulation of knowledge, characterized by "objective reasoning," human meaning is considered subjective, relative and not important. As Jan Patočka says, we live in a double world: one created by science, the other, the world of our everyday living. On the one hand, we have the epistemologically secure, objective, scientific world, accessible to everyone familiar with modern science's project; on the other hand, the world of our everyday living is, supposedly, subjective and fuzzy, hence relegated to irrelevance in regard to modern