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## **The Centrality of Human Freedom in Dostoevsky and Huxley**

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## Introduction

This thesis will examine the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Aldous Huxley for their shared arguments for the centrality of human freedom and the inextricable role of suffering in the exercise of freedom. Moreover, this thesis will attempt to argue that each author's works affirm that, along with suffering as an adjacent reality, freedom from constraint and the freedom to strive towards a goal are essential for human wholeness.

Each major work examined in this thesis uniquely demonstrates the centrality of human freedom. Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House*, a semi-autobiographical account of his transformative Siberian imprisonment, places particular emphasis on the value of freedom from constraint and the redemptive power of suffering. His final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, not only presents suffering as a necessary component of human freedom, but also emphasizes the critical need for human beings to possess the freedom to strive towards a goal—particularly active love—and embrace suffering as the process through which one achieves freedom in its highest forms. In *Brave New World*, Huxley's argument for human freedom's centrality mirrors much of Dostoevsky's belief in the necessity of freedom from constraint as well as the freedom to strive towards a goal, which often takes the form of a moral ideal. In addition, the critical role of suffering in the intellectual, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the human life in *Brave New World* appears primarily in suffering's absence within the novel's dystopian World State; a circumstance resulting in "millions of happy babes" (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers*, 259), but also a few "misanthrope[s]" (Dostoevsky qtd. in Jackson 4) within the World State's confines.

The next two chapters will focus on the two major types of human freedom as well as suffering as an inextricable part of human freedom's activation in *Dead House* and *The Brothers*, respectively, and the final body chapter will focus primarily on similar themes in *Brave New*

*World*. However, each major chapter will establish connections between the two authors' arguments for the centrality of human freedom. Despite their chronological distance and differing religious beliefs, both Dostoevsky and Huxley stand in agreement that one cannot live as a full human being without individual freedom: freedom from excessive physical, psychological, and spiritual constraint, and the freedom to strive towards a chosen ideal—and suffer for it.

Dostoevsky's mature concept of human freedom arguably took its roots during his Siberian imprisonment. Although he is regarded today as one of the most compelling anti-utopian and anti-utilitarian authors of all time, his youth and earlier adulthood reflected a much different attitude from his mature views – an attitude that would send him to a place that in many ways represent an ironic fulfillment of his early socialist ideology. In April 1849, he was arrested by order of Nicholas I on charges of conspiracy against the government, allegedly because of his involvement in the Petrashevsky Circle, a secret socialist society of young men who gathered to “discuss all those great issues of the day that the muzzled Russian press was forbidden to mention” (Frank, *The Years*, 4). After going through a mock execution designed to instill shock and terror in the convicts, Dostoevsky was sent to Siberia, where he would spend the next four years of his life in a hard labor camp with a menagerie of fellow prisoners vastly different from himself. It was here, as Dostoevsky later said, that his beliefs about the world slowly began to change from the liberal humanism of his early years to an embrace – not without struggle – of the Christian faith and its understanding of humanity.

He wrote of this gradual transformation in a letter to his brother Mikhail shortly after his release from Omsk: “What was the most important to me in the recent past? When I reflect, I see that even to tell that, this sheet is far too small. How can I impart to you what is now in my mind

– the things I thought, the things I did, the convictions I acquired, the conclusions I came to? I cannot even attempt the task. It is absolutely impracticable” (Dostoevsky, *Letters*, 52). He does, however, shed slightly more light on his changing inner life later in the same letter: “I won’t even try to tell you what transformations were undergone by my soul, my faith, my mind, and my heart in those four years . . . Still, the eternal concentration, the escape into myself from bitter reality, did bear its fruit. I now have many new needs and hopes of which I never thought in other days” (59). Dostoevsky emerged from the prison fortress having passed through a furnace of suffering and self-confrontation—conditions under which his understanding of human nature and the need for individual freedom began to grow and mature. Indeed, this “inner transformation” appears to bring Dostoevsky a newly-developed awareness of his own soul’s unmet needs—and, moreover, of the agency required to fulfill them.

One of Dostoevsky’s earliest books, *Notes from a Dead House*, is heralded by many as his first, and one of his most significant, commentaries on human freedom. Yet *Dead House* does not function as a straightforward treatise on freedom; rather, in Dostoevsky’s usual fashion, the work displays freedom’s role in the lives of the characters in a subtly complex manner. While much of *Dead House* focuses on the psychological and social consequences of denying people personal autonomy, the work also points to a higher ethical and moral freedom that serves as a major focus of Dostoevsky’s final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as a significant point in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Dostoevsky refrains from spelling out his reasoning for the centrality of human freedom in favor of allowing his characters to live out different experiences of freedom in both of his major works examined in this thesis. Although he never quite gives his readers a definitive answer to every question raised within his novels, his treatment of freedom

therein expresses the idea that personal freedom is a fundamental component of human nature and essential to spiritual maturity.

Dostoevsky's argument for the centrality of human freedom remained as relevant as it was compelling during the twentieth-century spike in the publication of dystopian fiction. One such work that echoes Dostoevsky's ideas on human flourishing is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a novel whose fictional government demands order and stability through the sacrifice of personal freedom and individuality. In addition, the World State of *Brave New World*, with some differences, mirrors the one presented in *The Brothers*' well-known chapter "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." The arguments in favor of individual freedom within these novels are strikingly similar due their fictional governments' (specifically the Inquisitor's state in *The Brothers*) suppression of individual freedom under the guise of benevolence. Yet, *Brave New World*'s moral and philosophical ties to *The Brothers* are not limited to "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," as questions surrounding personal freedom's relationship to human nature surface throughout many parts of *The Brothers* as well as *Dead House*. Despite their chronological distance, the works of both Dostoevsky and Huxley ultimately affirm that freedom is central to the moral and psychological aspects of human life.

The first body chapter of this thesis will focus on human freedom as a psychological necessity in Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House*. During his four-year imprisonment in Siberia following charges of participation in a secret socialist circle, Dostoevsky underwent a long, painful spiritual transformation that would later influence his greatest novels as his faith continued to mature. In his essay "Socialism, Utopia, and Myth," James P. Scanlan notes that "[t]he great irony of Dostoevsky's four years in the Siberian prison is that a patriotic Russian, schooled in utopian-socialist values and plans, and seeking a more humane future for his fellow

countrymen, should find himself in leg-irons” (41) and stuck in the “hellish dystopia” (41) of the Russian criminal-exile system of his time. His experiences in prison, however, would inform major elements of his future novels as well as his view of humanity and human freedom (41-42). Through the perspective of *Dead House*’s narrator, Alexander Petrovich, prison for Dostoevsky became a place where his views on the necessity of human freedom began to take shape. Over the course of his time in prison, the narrator—and the author—experiences life with minimal opportunity for physical autonomy, self-expression, and virtually every form of self-realization. Like his fellow convicts, he desires freedom from the oppression of confinement and forced communalism (among other prison deprivations). When unbridled, however, this desire to be free leads to chaos among the prisoners—a frequent consequence of their severely curtailed autonomy. But the reality that the narrator is ultimately forced to recognize is that the prisoners’ desire for freedom, along with full expression of their emotions, passions, and other aspects of their inner lives, cannot be eliminated by institutions; the irrational parts of their humanity always manifests itself in social chaos or internal disintegration —what Dostoevsky frequently refers to as “convulsions” (*Dostoevsky passim*). The prisoners, the narrator observes, must feel free in order to feel like full human beings—a rare experience under total constraint.

In *Dead House*, the phenomenon of money, or “coined freedom” (13), reveals the power of the prisoners’ psychological need for individual freedom. The prisoners carry money around in their pockets, even though it does not stay there long, because it confers real freedom for them. While they can spend it (against prison rules) carousing—another type of freedom for the prisoners—they primarily enjoy the sound of the coins “jingling in their pockets” (13); in this sense, freedom is tangible.



Prison work and encounters with the natural world also play a role in providing the prisoners with glimpses of freedom. The narrator describes two kinds of prison work in Siberia: the first is the compulsory, monotonous labor inflicted on the prisoners by their superiors, and the other is nightly (and illegal) work the prisoners set up according to their individual skills as well as their desire for spree money. The prisoners' own work serves as an outlet for exercising free will and, in many cases, provides a creative outlet that affirms their individuality; even the labor enforced by the prison guards, to an extent, often serves as a distraction from the forced close-quarter living—the worst part of prison, according to the narrator. Although the prisoners do not complete forced labor as quickly or as skillfully as they would perform free work, it nonetheless offers a mild respite from the more constrictive aspects of prison life. Yet, the narrator admits that prison labor is not intrinsically freeing; much of the work is dull, monotonous, difficult, and done solely in obedience to the prison supervisors, and thus holds no personal value for the prisoners.

But forced labor in the spring and summer months, although more physically strenuous, is undertaken with better spirits simply because it brings the prisoners into contact with nature at its seasonal peak. In addition to possessing and spending money, encounters with nature provide the prisoners with a distant, perhaps illusory, taste of freedom. Nature embodies the hope of freedom for the prisoners—an idea also present in *Brave New World*, where nature is contained and people are conditioned to abhor it. Not only do the prisoners encounter the beauty of nature in the form of outdoor foliage and landscapes, but they also take a special interest in animals that frequent the prison. One noteworthy animal is a dog named Sharik. During the first few months of Alexander's imprisonment, Sharik is the only being with whom he experiences anything resembling friendship or love. Through his interactions with Sharik, the narrator is briefly free

from having to endure the typical rough natures of his fellow prisoners, especially the prejudice endured by his nobleman's status. Another animal is an injured eagle that the prisoners find wandering around the outskirts of the fortress. Ironically, the prisoners appear to take far more interest in the injured eagle than they do the much friendlier Sharik and other prison dogs, but this unusual interest is a product of their empathy; they see their own spirits in the eagle who similarly longs for freedom, and they eventually let him go so he can "die in freedom" (248). Moreover, the scene of the eagle's release essentially functions as a metaphor for the prisoners' desire to be free in *Dead House*.

However, the "Christmas" and "Performance" chapters display the prisoners' experience of freedom in its highest form in *Dead House*. Not only do they participate in a chance to act on their own volition in putting on the performances and to celebrate Christmas, but they collectively reach a moral height by showing genuine kindness and compassion for one another as well as reverence for the Christmas holiday. Through preparing for and participating in these performances, the prisoners have an opportunity to exercise self-expression, creativity, and brotherly communion. Both the actors and the audience (which includes some of the sergeants) abandon the proverbial fetters attached to their convict identities and temporarily see themselves as equals in the eyes of God. Just as the actors go through the act of "shedding" their identities in taking on the identities of their characters, the audience also undergoes a nearly identical engagement with ultimate reality simply through participating in the performances as active observers. This time of celebration affords them a short respite from their usual patterns of living as a herd in a perpetual state of boredom and meaninglessness, and through their communal participation in the performances, they become part of something that transcends the walls of

their prison. As some of the constraints are temporarily lifted, the prisoners are more apt not only to behave more civilly with one another, but to actively love one another as well.

The theme of freedom's necessity is carried throughout *Dead House* by the human experience of severely restrictive living conditions. In the temporary absence of his ability to live as a full human being, the narrator endures almost unbearable emotional, psychological, and spiritual suffering. Although the harshness of prison life takes a significant toll on the prisoners, the narrator admits that the worst aspect of prison life is the walls—the physical boundaries and surveillance imposed on the prisoners and, consequently, the difficulty of finding ways to preserve their individuality and exercise their cognitive faculties. Their own nature opposes the features of their living conditions, and this ultimately results in despair and chaos for them. Despite the torment of prison life, the temporary nature of the narrator's prison sentence enables him to embrace the suffering and endure his prison years until his release. The hope of his all but inevitable re-entry into the freedom withheld from him as a prisoner enables him to withstand his present torments. Without freedom or at least the "illusion" or "dream" of freedom, the narrator says, human beings will fall into convulsions of despair because an essential and in many ways uncontainable part of their humanity is smothered.

Although *Dead House* is a work that revolves around the lives of people in prison, where confinement is acknowledged as punishment, Dostoevsky's personally-inspired insights into the complex relationship between freedom and humanity resurface and mature throughout his later works. However, his final novel and most powerful text on the subject of freedom's centrality to human wholeness is *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on Dostoevsky's answer to the "problem" of freedom in *The Brothers*. In his poem, "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," Ivan Karamazov

presents human freedom as a problem that needs to be solved through the creation of a world state that eradicates suffering at the expense of Christ's gift of freedom. While its citizens' personal freedom is sacrificed for the stability of the state, the Inquisitor and his group of "morally superior" rulers take on the "burden" of freedom. The ruling body is "unhappy" because of its freedom, while the ruled-over are happy because of their "relief" from what the Inquisitor touts as an unbearable burden. Thus, the Grand Inquisitor exercises control over humanity by providing people with "Mystery, Miracle, and Authority" (*The Brothers*, 254) in place of the intellectual and spiritual freedom endowed to them by Christ after he resisted the three corresponding temptations in the wilderness. As long as the people have "bread," the Grand Inquisitor declares, they will not rebel; they are content in their bondage given that their physical needs are met. Freedom is replaceable with happiness and security according to Ivan's fantastical theory—a notion that carries disturbing implications about human beings' fundamental nature.

For Dostoevsky, the advent of a government described in "The Grand Inquisitor" not only raises the question of the governing body's impoverished view of mankind, but also demonstrates the destructive consequences of abolishing human freedom. In a letter to his editor, Liubimov, during the serial publication of *The Brothers*, Dostoevsky compares Ivan's ideology with that of the Russian socialists of his time:

For our Russian socialism, stupid but terrible (for the young are with it)—there is a *warning*, and I think a forcible one. Bread, the Tower of Babel (i.e. future kingdom of socialism), and the completest overthrow of conscience—that is what the desperate denier and atheist arrives at. The difference only being that our socialists . . . are conscious Jesuits and liars, who will not confess that their idea is the idea of the violation of man's conscience and the reduction of . . . mankind to the level of herd cattle. But my

socialist (Ivan Karamazov) is a sincere man who frankly confesses that he agrees with the “Grand Inquisitor’s” view of mankind, that Christ’s religion (as it were) has raised man much higher than man actually stands. The question is forced home: “Do you despise or respect mankind, you, its coming saviors?” (qtd. in Sandoz, “Philosophical Anthropology,” 356)

The Inquisitor’s—and Ivan’s—plan for humanity does, in fact, arise at least partially out of humanitarian concern. According to Ellis Sandoz, “Ivan’s (dream) begins in outrage and indignation rooted in humanitarian pity for his fellow man, particularly for the guiltless, for children” (“Philosophical Anthropology,” 362), although Ivan speaks of them only in general, abstract terms. Ivan has great difficulty accepting a God that allows children, or the innocent, to suffer unjustly, and he turns to an idyllic dream of a world order powerful enough to eliminate suffering through a neutralization of mankind’s free will. However, Dostoevsky condemns the atheistic, socialist, and even nihilistic foundation that belies Ivan’s humanitarian dream in large part because it denies humanity’s capacity for an identity of freedom in Christ—an identity that certainly elevates humanity above “herd cattle” (365). While Ivan presents the “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” as a treatise against God, freedom, and Creation, the poem simultaneously illustrates the problems of taking away human freedom, and it also reveals the spiritual turmoil of its author.

Dostoevsky’s answer to the “problem” of human freedom, which spans the rest of *The Brothers*, is rooted in humanity’s need for active love. Following his usual literary fashion, “Dostoevsky’s thought, of course, does not find expression in abstractions” (Sandoz, “Philosophical Anthropology,” 358); he chooses instead to show his readers ideas carried out by the people in his works as if to demonstrate such ideas’ viability in real life. In doing so, he also

allows for his characters—especially those such as Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor, who express many ideas he personally opposes—to have their forum, which in turn gives them the opportunity to fully represent their ideas and, in many cases, their flaws. In this respect, it is easy and, in one sense, accurate, to place *The Brothers* in the category of the polyphonic novel, but not to such a degree that the central authorial goal is undermined, as scholars such as Joseph Frank and René Wellek observe. Nonetheless, many diverse voices comprise the novel's plot and drive the action, and Dostoevsky, although selective with the views he lets dominate the larger portion of the novel, constructs the moral and philosophical framework of *The Brothers* with the interactions of these voices. Chapter 2 will thus touch briefly on the extent to which Bakhtin's theory of polyphony applies to *The Brothers*.

Finally, this chapter will examine how Dostoevsky responds to the “problem” of freedom presented in “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” through transformative experiences of central characters as they embrace suffering and individual freedom as agents of active love. These experiences include Alyosha's inner conflict about leaving the monastery and Father Zosima's “corruption,” Dmitri's dream of the “wee one” (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers*, 507) and his subsequent resolve to freely embrace suffering during his arrest and trial, and Ivan's dream with the devil. But to confine Dostoevsky's moral and philosophical response to human freedom in *The Brothers* to only a few specific textual moments is to do the novel the injustice of oversimplification; the complexity of this novel's support of freedom as central to humanity demands a holistic evaluation of its content.

The third and final body chapter of this thesis will connect the thought of Dostoevsky to that of Aldous Huxley in his dystopian novel *Brave New World* on the basis of their shared arguments in favor of human freedom and the necessity of suffering as a means of striving

towards an ideal. Although Huxley's *Brave New World* was published nearly fifty years after Dostoevsky's death, its themes bear traces of Dostoevsky's ethical, moral, and philosophical defenses of human freedom. Various literary connections between the two authors appear across all three of the major texts this thesis will analyze (*Dead House*, *The Brothers*, and *Brave New World*), and these connections will comprise most of this chapter's focus after a brief analysis of Huxley's position on the nature and role of human freedom in *Brave New World*.

Chapter 3 aims to uncover Huxley's argument in favor of human freedom within *Brave New World* along with his shared affirmations of human freedom's centrality and necessity of suffering as an agent of moral and intellectual growth with Dostoevsky. In *Brave New World*, the similarities between the novel's World State and the world state of "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" are striking. First, both states' ruling bodies severely curtail their citizens' autonomy. For instance, the World Controllers in *Brave New World* have total control of their citizens and maintain that control by means of conditioning and eugenics. The State features a rigidly stratified caste system that eliminates individuality and personal freedom in what Brad Congdon calls "a planned society wherein the mythology and organization are easily recognized as Fordism and consumerism" (96). Each "category" of citizen, with a few exceptions, is virtually uniform in appearance, intelligence, and ability, although the superior class is granted slightly more privileges than the others. In *The Brothers*, Ivan Karamazov's design for society is similar in terms of an abundantly free ruling body controlling a completely submissive nation, and the means of control bear similarities as well; the people willingly give up their freedom for "bread," and guaranteed nourishment wins over freedom with the possibility of suffering. In *Brave New World*, the people are conditioned to prefer physical provisions and sensual pleasures to personal freedom and individuality. However, the World State in *Brave New World* keeps its subjects

from rebelling by attempting—successfully, in most cases—to prevent the individual will from feeling any need to question the way society operates, simply by keeping people too content, more or less mindlessly, to desire change.

Rather than asserting control over the population by brute force, the World Controllers manipulate and condition people so that they theoretically have no need to change their environment or act outside of their designated roles in society. Each class is conditioned to fill a specific purpose in the State's mission of enforcing "Community, Identity, [and] Stability" (Huxley 1). *Brave New World's* society affirms societal stability as the highest good, yet the sacrifice for maintaining such a state of equilibrium is a loss of individuality and personal freedom. Due to the nature of their conditioning, virtually none of the people within the World Controllers' states desires to be free. Not only are they "decanted" and conditioned to accept their government's prescribed philosophies and guidelines for behavior, but they are also provided with access to enough comfort and happiness to prevent the vast majority from suffering or wanting anything more than what they have been given by the State. With neither the means nor the desire to rebel to any significant effect, the citizens of the World State generally live in accordance with their society's expectations.

But despite the scientific effectiveness of, and mostly good intentions behind, *Brave New World's* social conditioning-based government, the implementation of such a community has nightmarish consequences for humanity. As Huxley acknowledges in *Ends and Means*, "For the means employed inevitably determine the nature of the result achieved; whereas, however good the end aimed at may be, its goodness is powerless to counteract the effects of the bad means we use to reach it" (59-60). In spite of the State's design, which aims to eliminate suffering and guarantee happiness, the absence of suffering has a stifling effect on human potential. Not all



characters in the novel are at peace with the realities of their situation, and the tension arising from their clashes with society drives the moral and philosophical conflict of the novel. Thus, *Brave New World* ultimately demonstrates that freedom is central to the whole human being—an idea that largely manifests itself in the absence of suffering and, consequently, freedom throughout the novel.

The final chapter of this thesis will compare each major text's assertions about human freedom, focusing on Dostoevsky and Huxley's shared thought on the subject of its centrality. *Dead House*, heralded by many scholars as Dostoevsky's first great work with human freedom as a primary theme, communicates its author's maturing views through memories of his own prison experience. He shows the effects of freedom's absence on the narrator and his fellow prisoners as a means of advocating for its necessity, a literary technique that also enables him to subtly distinguish between certain types of freedom (mainly freedom *from* and freedom *to*) through concrete depictions of the realities of living in confinement. Throughout this semi-autobiographical prison memoir, Dostoevsky states explicitly that the lack of freedom, even more than the suffering the prisoners endure from hard labor, is the worst aspect of prison life.

Dostoevsky's view of living in such a rigid state of confinement strongly influences his later works, and *The Brothers* is no exception. Among its many moral and philosophical themes, freedom's place in the *imago Dei* is a large part of this work's central focus, and the questions raised about the problematic nature of freedom are answered in Dostoevsky's typical fashion: the living out of ideas. While Ivan's Grand Inquisitor presents the main argument against human freedom in the *The Brothers*, the novel ultimately demonstrates that individual freedom is a part of humanity so essential that without it, human beings are reduced to the ranks of animals. Despite Ivan's mainly good intentions in proposing a system of government that attempts to

remove freedom from the equation of humanity, the practical result, Dostoevsky contends, is a prison dynamic where God is replaced by (a) man-god(s). As Dostoevsky indicates in *Dead House* as well as his letters to his friends and relatives after his release from prison, the Grand Inquisitor's promise of bread and safety from suffering in exchange for free will cannot sustain human beings psychologically, emotionally, or spiritually. Thus, Ivan's theory of government cannot truly work in practice; human free will can only be contained or potentially redirected by others at best.

Huxley and Dostoevsky draw the same major conclusion about freedom's importance and centrality to the human experience. As long as "walls" are put in place to prevent them from defining their own wills and striving towards an ideal, not only are human beings forced to live beneath their natural design and abilities, but their status is reduced to that of herd animals—an idea on which both authors seem to agree. For Dostoevsky, the source of mankind's freedom undoubtedly is Christ, and this is evident in nearly all his major works and conveyed most powerfully in *The Brothers*. For Huxley, however, the fundamental source of human freedom is not as clear. His writing suggests that the freedom to think for oneself and pursue personal fulfillment and happiness is an innate quality of human nature, distinguishing human beings from other creatures, but he does so without pointing to anything external to humanity. Nonetheless, applying keen insights into human nature to their literary genius, the works of Dostoevsky and Huxley offer compelling and sobering arguments for the centrality of human freedom.

## Chapter 1 – Finding Freedom in a *Dead House*: Penitentiary and Paradox

Human freedom stands as one of Fyodor Dostoevsky's most extensively probed subjects, in both his novels and his other writings. Believing that freedom was central to bearing the *imago Dei*, the author despised people and institutions that sought to contain or even eliminate such a crucial component of humanity, in spite of its potential for misuse (which he equally despised). But perhaps the greatest irony of Dostoevsky's understanding of freedom's importance is that it was sparked in a "tomb" (Dostoevsky, *Dead House*, 163) of confinement and constant surveillance: prison. In the absence of his full Russian citizenship and traditional nobleman's rights, Dostoevsky (re)discovered the value of his personal freedom he had previously taken for granted—a four-year experience that would become the basis not only for this first work examined in this thesis, but would influence the rest of his writing career. Examining *Notes from a Dead House*, this chapter aims to argue that, per Dostoevsky's semi-fictional account of prison life, freedom from constraint is critical for the well-being of the human spirit and is a precondition of moral restoration and personal fulfillment. This chapter will also attempt to argue that one must embrace suffering as a reality inseparable from human freedom and its exercise—a point that latter chapters will emphasize as well. For the purposes of this thesis, *Dead House* attests to the natural human need for freedom from constraint, which then enables human beings to exercise the freedom to strive towards a goal or an ideal—which, for the prisoners of the story, is ultimately moral restoration and an experience of full humanity.

In 1860, Dostoevsky began to formally write about his prison experience in a serial work he called *Notes from a Dead House*, which translator Richard Pevear considers a pioneer of the prison memoir sub-genre (*Dead House*, xii). Prison life for Dostoevsky included four years of solitary and communal confinement, followed by several years of compulsory military service in

exile; the content of *Dead House*, however, focuses solely on the Westernized liberal nobleman's four years in the Siberian hard labor camp in Omsk. Here, Dostoevsky experienced first-hand the extremes of life under total control and became acutely aware of the lack of personal freedom afforded to Russian prisoners. A nobleman-turned-prisoner, Dostoevsky was soon crushed beneath the new burden of living under the tyrannical supervision of prison authorities who allowed him only slightly more autonomy than a herd animal. Yet according to Joseph Frank in *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal*, Dostoevsky also discovered in his moments of solitary confinement that the human spirit possessed an astonishing capacity for “resiliency and strength . . . when thrown back on its resources” (21), and he began to understand the ways in which “[t]he self . . . possessed powers of resistance that it could exert even under conditions of the extremest distress; man never had to renounce the autonomy of his personality if he chose—finally and stubbornly chose—not to do so” (21).

In *Dead House*, the prisoners' deprivation of freedom was physical, intellectual, and psychological. Scanlan notes that *Dead House* and Dostoevsky's letters reveal not only the physical constraints on the prisoners, but also their severely limited access to forms of communication and intellectual enrichment: “For a writer, the cruelest deprivation was the prohibition of reading and writing. Prisoners were allowed no books but the Russian Orthodox Bible, and writing materials were disallowed altogether, even for correspondence” (41). Barred from reading (with the exception of the Bible) and writing for the duration of his prison sentence, Dostoevsky expressed most of his feelings about prison life after his release in his letters and—most notably—in *Dead House*, a work whose fictional elements so thinly disguise his experiences in captivity that many scholars consider it his own “autobiographical record” (41).

Despite being subjected to a harsh and often brutally regimented lifestyle and deprived of many means with which to occupy himself, Dostoevsky nonetheless experienced the subtle power of brief moments of freedom in prison. His exposure to the dystopian living conditions of the prison directed him towards a recognition of the value of personal freedom and humanity's inability to function without it. In "Dostoevsky and Freedom," Robert L. Jackson states that "[f]reedom for Dostoevsky in the 'dead house' was, in the first instance, *freedom from*: freedom from immobility, incarceration, coercion; from the violation of one's human dignity, from an obligatory herd existence" (4). Indeed, for any prisoner, "freedom" means the absence of restraint and the ability to live comfortably, happily, and independently. It is no wonder, then, that to Dostoevsky, "[t]o be alone is as normal a need as drinking and eating, otherwise you become a misanthrope in this compulsory communism. The society of people becomes a poison and a plague, and it is just from this unbearable torture that I have suffered the most of all these past four years (28:1:177)" (qtd. in Jackson 4). To this thought, Jackson adds, "The deprivation of freedom, Dostoevsky believed, is an unendurable torture" (4). Prison life proved to be the antithesis of a whole, fulfilling human existence for Dostoevsky, but not solely because of the physically harsh living conditions.

Evidenced in the letters he wrote to his relatives after his release, the greatest strains of prison life revolved around the stifling of creativity and the lack of intellectual engagement and brotherly communion that resulted from his "compulsory communism" (4). Frank notes that according to Dostoevsky, the convicts were virtually forced to face the common burden of their reality:

Nothing worked more disturbingly on the nerves of the prisoners, in the first weeks of their isolation, than the lack of any occupation or distraction that could take their minds

off their perilous situation . . . What [Dostoevsky] badly needs, he tells Mikhail, is some external mental impressions to revivify him, because the mind requires nourishment as the body required food. (*Dostoevsky: Years*, 22)

Within every prisoner existed passions, desires, and will to act on them, but the prisoners were placed in an environment where outlets for these innate human qualities were severely limited. Dostoevsky observed for himself what happens to people when uncontainable aspects of their humanity are subjected to external constraint.

Such subject matter constitutes the primary content of *Dead House*, Dostoevsky's semi-autobiographical work that follows the Siberian prison time of fictional convict Alexander Petrovich. In this work, allegedly based on the journal notes he had smuggled out of prison, Dostoevsky conveys not only how the roughness of prison life affected him, but also how his time in Omsk informed his perspective on humanity's need for personal freedom. In the chapter "First Impressions," the narrator (Alexander) describes one of his first major observations about labor in captivity: "In freedom a peasant most likely works incomparably more (than a prisoner), sometimes even at night, especially in summer; but he works for himself, works with a reasonable purpose, and it is incomparably easier for him than for a convict doing forced labor that is totally useless to him" (Dostoevsky 22). The labor itself inflicted on the prisoners, the narrator admits, is not where the true weight of misery lies for the prison community, but rather in the fact that the labor is compulsory, personally meaningless, and unproductive. The narrator says, "[O]nly much later did I realize that the punishment and *hardness* of this labor lay not so much in its difficulty and ceaselessness as in its being *forced*, imposed, under the lash" (20). Prison's rigid constraints and drastic limitation of personal autonomy produce inner strife that significantly overshadows even the physical suffering of the convicts' daily work.

Without the opportunity to pursue much of anything besides the prison tasks and the strict lifestyle prescribed for them by their superiors, the narrator and his fellow convicts are forced to live in such a way that their natural inclination to exercise their wills is effectively abolished. Some of the convicts cynically nod to their abuse of relative freedom in civic life: “‘You didn’t know how to live in freedom, now stroll down the green street and inspect the ranks.’ ‘You didn’t listen to your father and mother, now you can listen to the drumhead’s leather.’ ‘You thought gold embroidery was fun, now crush stones till your time is done’” (13). Although the narrator notes the lack of seriousness with which these utterances are made, they do contain an “admonition” (13); the convicts know they are in prison as an effect of their abuse of freedom in the civic world, and they in turn lose that freedom as a consequence of their unlawful behavior.

Despite any poetic justice in their punishment, the convicts live much like animals or machines according to the narrator—a condition perhaps most broadly marked by their lack of freedom. The narrator (and Dostoevsky) protests the immorality of this type of penal servitude in Russia, declaring that its extreme confinement “achieves only a false, deceptive, external purpose. It sucks the living juice from a man, enervates his soul, weakens it, frightens it, and then presents this morally dried-up, half-crazed mummy as an example of correction and repentance” (16). To Dostoevsky, the penal system he faced under Nicholas I did little to address what he saw as the root of most crime among the Russian people. Anna Schur suggests that Dostoevsky largely perceives crime not as a “product of environment, a miscalculation of pleasures and pains, or a lapse of will as the determinists, utilitarians, or metaphysical libertarians would have it” (37), but rather “an act of self-assertion, as sudden as the subsequent transition to penitence and resurrection. Its suddenness, in fact, indicates that the ‘living soul’ survives and is capable of moral regeneration” (37). Thus, Dostoevsky’s major criticism of the Russian penal system is that

instead of allowing the criminal to experience an unmitigated process of repentance and renewal that leads to true absolution of guilt, the criminal is dehumanized by a system of punishment and containment that damages the human spirit more than it reorients it towards moral restoration. The narrator later says, “whatever measures be taken, a living man cannot be turned into a corpse: he will be left with his feelings, with a thirst for revenge and life, with passions and the need to satisfy them” (52). In essence, he implies that freedom-less living conditions are ultimately incompatible with human nature and warns readers of the chaos which ensues when uncontainable aspects of humanity such as emotions, intellect, and autonomy are caged for extended periods of time—an attitude towards physical and psychological constraint that later surfaces in the work of Aldous Huxley.

In Chapter III of *Dead House*, the narrator describes how the prisoners, despite their varying degrees of moral guilt, react to their present confined situation as human beings. On noting that stealing and unruly behavior are both common occurrences within the Omsk walls, he reasons that much of it happens due to the prisoners’ nearly uncontrollable urges to do something for themselves out of their own free will: “[T]here is so much anguish in prison, and a prisoner is by nature a being who yearns so much for freedom, and, finally, by his social position, is so light-minded and disorderly, that he is naturally inclined to suddenly ‘go all out,’ to carouse away all his capital, with noise and music, so as to forget his anguish if only for a moment” (Dostoevsky 39). This passage also attests to the centrality of individual freedom for the human being. Alexander particularly notes that it is “by nature” (39) that a prisoner desires freedom emotionally and psychologically. Moreover, this emotional and psychological need to retain a sense of freedom is observed (and perhaps experienced) by the narrator of the prisoners’ relationship with their money: “Money is minted freedom, and therefore, for a man completely



deprived of freedom, it is ten times dearer. Just to have it jingling in his pocket half comforts him, even if he cannot spend it” (18). When the narrator receives a kopek from a visiting woman later in the work, it is no wonder that he admits to holding onto it for a long time. Even though the prisoners’ opportunities for spending their money—what little they have of it—is limited to only a few unconventional outlets, the coins “jingling” (18) in the prisoners’ pockets carry far more value than the monetary value engraved on their surfaces. The coins’ symbolic value, freedom and the hope of freedom, is unceasingly attractive to them because it provides a much-needed *feeling* of freedom. As long as the money is in the prisoners’ possession, the prisoners retain an anticipation of potential freedom.

To the prisoners, money symbolizes freedom not only because it grants them access to occasional sprees in prison to exercise their free will, but also because it symbolizes hope for the future. On this matter of hope, the narrator writes, “From the very first day of my life in prison I began to dream of freedom. Calculating when my prison term would be over . . . became my favorite occupation. I could not even think of anything otherwise, and I am sure than anyone who is deprived of freedom for a term does the same” (96). The prisoners’ obsession with closing the gap between themselves and the day they no longer have to live in such a controlled, deprived environment is a major force that keeps the prisoners from completely deteriorating both psychologically and even physically.

The narrator’s experience in prison also forces him to realize the true value of freedom he overlooked as a regular citizen. He says, “The hope of an inmate, deprived of freedom, is of a completely different sort from that of a man living a real life. A free man has hopes, of course . . . but he lives, he acts; the whirl of real life carries him away entirely” (96). In this passage, the narrator likely alludes to his attitude as a legally free man before his prison sentence; when living

a “real life,” people tend to take for granted the value of their personal freedom. But it is important to recognize the depth of what the fictional narrator conveys about Dostoevsky’s own realization about the value of individual freedom for the author. In a letter to Natalia Fonvizina, Dostoevsky writes, “I want to say to you that in such moments, one does, ‘like dry grass,’ thirst after faith, and that one finds it in the end, solely and simply because one sees truth more clearly when one is unhappy” (*Letters*, 67). The spirit of this section of the Fonvizina letter pervades the majority of *Dead House*, not only regarding the narrator’s observations of fellow prisoners wrestling with their assigned “convict” identities, but also regarding his own revelations about what it means to be fully human and individual freedom’s role in constituting that humanity.

The lack of individual freedom, to the prisoners, affirms their “less-than-human” status in Omsk. As the narrator states, “The prisoner himself knows that he is a prisoner, an outcast, and he knows his place before his superior; but no brands, no fetters will make him forget that he is a human being. And since he is in fact a human being, it follows that he must be treated as a human being” (Dostoevsky 111). Consciousness of his true nature compels the narrator—and his fellow prisoners—to at least internally oppose their current social conditions, even if the most extreme act of opposition can only manifest itself in a defiant disposition towards the prison environment. This is why, according to the narrator, the prisoners choose to dwell on the prospect of a future freedom rather than to internalize their status as convicts who passively accept inhumane treatment from their superiors: “And since [the prisoner] is in fact a human being, it follows that he must be treated as a human being. My God! *Humane* treatment may make a human being even of someone in whom the image of God has faded long ago. These “unfortunates” need to be treated all the more humanely. That is their salvation and their joy” (111-12). While the extent to which the prisoners can live fully human lives is by definition

painfully small in contrast with the relatively free subjects of Russia in this work, the narrator highlights marked differences in individual and sometimes communal prison experiences depending on the degree of humaneness exhibited by the prison guards. He admires the “kind, noble commanders” (112) because their humanness acknowledges and respects, to a degree, the prisoners’ status as human beings. He states, “I have met such kind, noble commanders. I have seen the effect they have had on these humiliated people. A few gentle words—and the prisoners all but resurrected morally. They rejoiced like children, and, like children, they began to love” (112).

Conversely, and “strangely,” as the narrator puts it, there is such a thing for the prisoners as being treated “too familiarly and *too* kindly by their superiors” (112). The narrator’s observation echoes one of Dostoevsky’s own observations during his prison sentence. In his article “Dostoevsky: *House of the Dead*,” Frank notes that the main reason Dostoevsky’s fellow prisoners despised overly-friendly officers (especially gentrified officers, if the prisoners in question are peasants) was because they were more at ease when people lived up to their class expectations: “To his surprise, Dostoevsky learned that the peasant-convicts esteemed only a man who knew how to maintain his social position . . . Any officer who tried to treat the convicts too leniently or too familiarly only stirred up their resentment” (786). In *Dead House*, the prisoners want to respect their superiors, and for a superior to lose respectability while retaining control of the prisoners would prove offensive. The narrator says, “Prisoners like such an officer more: it means that he preserves his own dignity, and does not offend them, therefore everything is good and beautiful” (112)—as much beauty and goodness as there can be in this aspect of prison life.

But in a place as spiritually dark as the Omsk prison-fortress, one must search ardently for beauty and goodness; the narrator of *Dead House* catches glimpses of both through brief but meaningful experiences of freedom. For instance, the narrator says that prison labor often frees the prisoners from immobility and forced communalism with one another, which he calls “one more torment in prison life that was almost worse than all the others” (23). Work in prison, however physically straining, allows the prisoners to put their minds in a place other than these “torments” (23). The narrator remarks, “Work saved them from crime: without work the prisoners would have devoured each other like spiders in a jar” (18). Work tends to give the inhabitants of the *Dead House*—to some extent—a break from total confinement and a chance to refocus their perpetually caged energies away from the realities of their imprisonment, even though it is substantially less satisfying than free work. According to Frank, elements of even forced labor fuel the prisoners’ hope of freedom “because it made sense and could be seen to serve some useful purpose; it was part of a comprehensible world in which even their hope for freedom, their hope for the unforeseeable and the unpredictable, might still conceivably come to pass because chance and caprice were also part of human life” (*The Years* 158). The forced labor performed in Omsk, although not necessarily intrinsically enjoyable, gives the prisoners a chance to direct their energies toward a productive end—as opposed to tasks that prove “totally useless and hence totally inhuman” (158).

However, the prison work is far more of a relief when it allows the prisoners contact with nature, perhaps because it brings them into contact with “unforeseeable and unpredictable” (Frank, *The Years*, 158) realities that exist apart from prison life. The narrator refers to springtime in one chapter as “the phantom of freedom” (Dostoevsky 225) because of its representation of new life, and he and the other prisoners always look forward to its arrival. He

states, "Spring had its effect on me as well. I remember how I would sometimes look greedily through the chinks in the paling and stand for a long time, my head pressed against our fence, peering intently and insatiably at the grass greening in our prison rampart, while the distant sky turned a deeper and deeper blue" (224). The prisoners long for the beauty of nature, yet their access to it is severely restricted by the fortress.

During the summer months, however, the prisoners are granted more access to the outdoors due to the shifting nature of their prison work. Of the changing season, the narrator says, "The coming beautiful days excite the fettered man, too, and in him, give rise to certain desires, yearnings, longings. It seems the pining for freedom is still stronger under a bright ray of sunlight than on a gray winter or autumn day, and that is noticeable in all prisoners" (221). The beautiful weather and greening earth seem to produce a mass effect of strengthening spirits in the prisoners, as if the spring and summer make the idea of freedom somehow more tangible. When the warmer months come around in Siberia, the prisoners collectively experience a positive change in their spirits that also appears to leave them internally unsettled. According to the narrator, "It is as if they are glad of the bright days, and at the same time some sort of impatience, of impulsiveness, intensifies in them" (221). However, the narrator may be insinuating that the prisoners' reactions to these "bright days" (221) are unique to their situation; their disposition toward these days goes beyond a cursory nod to nature's aesthetic qualities. A testament to such uniqueness can be found in the narrator's next observation:

Indeed, I noticed that in the spring quarrels seemed to become more frequent in prison. Noise, shouts, din were heard more frequently, scandals broke out; and at the same time you would notice somebody at work somewhere gazing pensively and intently into the blue distance, there on the other side of the Irtysh, where the boundless stretch of free

Kirghiz steppe, a thousand miles of it, begins; you would hear somebody sigh deeply, with the whole of this chest, as if the man were longing to breathe in that faraway, free air and relieve his crushed, fettered soul. (221)

In this passage, the narrator presents two different but related effects of spring and summer on the prisoners. The warmer days and their vernal beauty not only arrest the prisoners' sensory faculties, but they also symbolize freedom—the presence of “free air” (221) beyond the prison walls. Moreover, the thought of freedom brought on by this natural scenery stirs within the prisoners' existential frustration; they are brought into contact with the beauty of the outside world that they cannot fully experience because they lack the freedom to do so. With their longings rekindled, the prisoners are forced to confront the realities of their severely limited autonomy. They are aware of the potential joy and fulfillment life can bring to those who live as free citizens, but they are unable to partake in them, so they become restless.

The coming spring's promise of freedom resonates with the prisoners' own desires for new life and simultaneously deepens their hatred for the prison itself. In the same chapter, the narrator states that the aforementioned prisoner, formerly gazing out from behind the prison bars, suddenly shakes off his “dreams and broodings” (221) and puts himself back to work with a renewed vigor: “A minute later he has already forgotten his sudden sensation and begins to laugh or curse, according to his character; or else with an extraordinary ardor out of all proportion with the need, he suddenly throws himself into his work assignment [and begins to work] with all his might” (221). The narrator says that the prisoner does this “as if he wishes to stifle in himself by heavy work something that is weighing on him and crushing him from inside” (221). This dual reaction to the warmer weather is characteristic of the entire prison, the narrator indicates, and it

is a reaction that reveals an inner conflict within the prisoners: to suffer one's hope for freedom, or not?

Despite any unrest that the changing seasons stir within the prisoners, they always seize opportunities to commune with nature since such communion temporarily frees them—if only mentally—from prison. The narrator admits that “in warm weather, bathed in bright sunlight, when with your whole soul, with your whole being, you hear and feel nature resurrecting around you with boundless force, you feel all the more oppressed by the locked prison, the convoy, and the will of others” (222). It is perhaps a renewed realization of their innate desire and design for unfettered life that draws the prisoners to the natural world; a living symbol of free life, the spring and summer vegetation presents itself as an undeniable contrast to the oppression of prison. In the presence of nature, the prisoners have the opportunity to commune with uncontrolled surroundings that exist apart from human subordination and, perhaps, for a brief while, to be themselves a part of a greater reality that transcends their designated stations as convicts. This transcendental experience is also reflected in the prisoners' Christmas celebration, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

The narrator also remarks that these months see a spike in the number of prison escapes for this very reason (222). He says, “after stuffy holes, after courts, fetters, and rods, [the escapees] wander about entirely by their own will, wherever they like, wherever it looks more inviting and free; they drink and eat wherever and whatever they can, wherever God sends them” (222), and during the evenings, “they fall peacefully asleep in forest or field, with no great cares, with no prison anguish, like forest birds, saying good night before sleep only to the stars in heaven, under God's eye” (222). The life of these Siberian “tramps” (222), although free from imprisonment, is not without struggle and suffering; on the contrary, the narrator describes their

general lifestyle as one that forces them to go hungry some days, driving them to desperate measures such as robbery and murder to satisfy their basic needs, even though these measures are, in his words, “naturally more from necessity than by vocation” (222). However, the life of an escaped convict described in *Dead House* appears more akin to chasing after the illusion of freedom than entering into the complete legal freedom he had as a citizen before his sentence. Even though he is no longer behind the prison bars and can act more autonomously, he must still live in caution as an exile.

The desperate, even crazed desire for the life in the forest—“free and full of adventures” (222)—is an embrace of this “illusion of freedom” that loosely resembles the prisoners’ attitude towards money. As with the coins, which the prisoners hold onto not so much for their use value but for the freedom they symbolize, the forest (and other natural elements) signifies the freedom to wander and experience the earth’s beauty at one’s own will. Yet, the freedom afforded to escapees by nature fails to offer a full sense of freedom; the wanderers are still forced to live in a state of condemnation, inferiority, and fear because they have not fulfilled their prison sentence and must live in hiding, in most cases. Even so, from a literary standpoint, the narrator’s account of fellow prisoners’ escapes into the forest and their near-irrational possession of money in prison reveals a fundamental truth not only about human psychology, but about the human spirit. According to Jackson, Dostoevsky insinuates in *Dead House* that “the human being at all times needs to *feel* free. The illusion, or the sense of the semblance of freedom is also a component of reality. Freedom for man is a psychological necessity. Without this feeling—however illusory—he would not consent to live” (5). Jackson’s observation about freedom’s centrality to human life shows itself in subtle but consistent ways throughout *Dead House*, most frequently through prisoners’ displays of self-expression: “Freedom here is embodied in self-expression. True, the



convict's self-expression takes on palpably destructive and self-destructive forms. Yet precisely the wildness and desperation of his self-expression attests to both the profound wounds inflicted on the convict's ego and his need to affirm the innermost sense of self and being" (Jackson 5). Even the basest means of self-expression and self-assertion reveal an underlying need for autonomy. In spite of the risk for harm to self and others, most of the prisoners cannot help but exercise their free will when confronted with the opportunity, regardless of whether the experience moves them toward their goal of actual freedom.

The narrator also recounts that despite the fact that prisoners are banned from keeping animals for themselves in prison, they nonetheless welcome the company of these free creatures. The narrator in particular delights in the presence of prison animals, and this delight is rooted in a suffering human need for companionship. He admits that not only is he a prisoner, but as a nobleman among peasants, he is an outcast within the prison community for much of his sentence, and when he encounters a prison dog names Sharik, he immediately takes to the animal that "[n]obody every petted" or "paid attention to" (93). He says, "I remember that it was even pleasant for me to think, as if flaunting my own hurt to myself, that I now had one being left in the whole world who loved me and was attached to me, my friend, my only friend—my faithful dog Sharik" (94). Against the prison's rules, the narrator chooses to befriend the dog not simply to alleviate boredom, but out of a need to freely exercise active (reciprocal) love towards another being, as evidenced by his loneliness during the first month in prison.

Elsewhere in *Dead House*, other animal companions serve as distractions for the prisoners from their present confinement. A prison animal that especially captures the prisoners' interest is an injured but feisty eagle brought in from outside. The narrator says, "I remember how fiercely he looked around at the curious crowd and opened his hooked beak, prepared to sell

his life dearly” (246), almost admiring the eagle’s determination in refusing to give into perceived threats to his safety or become domesticated like most other prison animals. “He’s wild, he won’t give himself up!” (247), the prisoners say and proceed to ignore him; yet, the narrator points out that there were always “scraps of raw meat and a crock of water beside him. Somebody must have been looking after him” (247). Although the eagle does not take the food directly from the hands of the prisoners, as if to deliberately refuse help out of pride or skepticism, hunger eventually drives it to give in to the prisoners’ offerings and explore parts of the fortress—but only in the absence of onlookers (247).

Despite the eagle’s feistiness, however, the narrator and the other prisoners feel a peculiar sense of empathy for him precisely because of his fearful, defiant spirit: “it was as if they all suddenly felt compassion for him. They said the eagle ought to be taken out. ‘Let him die, but not in prison,’ some said. ‘Right, he’s a free, tough bird, he’s not used to prison,’ others agreed. ‘Meaning he’s not like us,’ somebody added. ‘What blather: he’s a bird, and we’re men’” (247). After the prisoners carry the eagle—still fighting—over the ramparts and release him into the forest, they stay behind to watch where he will go with his regained animal freedom. Of the prisoners’ interest in the eagle’s movements past the walls, the narrator remarks, “Strangely, they were all pleased at something, as if they were getting a share of his freedom” (248). The prisoners’ genuine delight in freeing the eagle reveals the depth of their own desire to be free of prison life; through vicarious experience, the prisoners feel—if only for a few moments—liberated themselves. Watching the eagle hobble off across the steppe without looking back at the prison, they say to one another: “See him go!,” “And he doesn’t look back . . . Hasn’t looked back once, brothers, he’s running for it!,” “Freedom, right enough. He’s feeling his freedom,” “Meaning liberty,” “Can’t see him anymore, brothers . . .” (248). Rather than expressing envy

towards the running bird, the prisoners are glad for it even though the risks to its survival prove far greater in the forest than inside the prison. The eagle's determination to live in freedom is something they find admirable yet bittersweet since they can only watch as the bird is "feeling his freedom" (248). The eagle's spirit also surfaces in Huxley's character John "The Savage" in *Brave New World*, a protagonist whose moral and psychological orientation towards living as a free being starkly contrasts with the world into which he is brought; however, this dynamic will be discussed in a later chapter.

Nature—the vegetation outside the fortress and the visiting creatures within it—is, indeed, a welcome delight and escape from the rigid, confined aspects of prison life for Omsk's inhabitants. Encounters with nature tend also to be encounters with freedom for the prisoners. Yet nature is perhaps not the glimmer of freedom that shines brightest in their lives, nor in that of the author. A common theme in many of Dostoevsky's works—religious freedom—surfaces in *Dead House* as one of the few but infinitely precious means by which the prisoners are afforded freedom during their sentences. When Christmas approaches in the tenth chapter of *Dead House*, something rather unusual takes place in the prison: the prisoners start to become friendlier with one another, and even the guards reflect a degree of this change in demeanor. The narrator states, "You did not hear the usual cursing and quarreling. Everybody understood that it was a big day and a great feast. There were some that went to the other barracks to wish certain people a Merry Christmas. There was a show of something like friendliness" (133). He then adds, "I will note in passing that there was almost no friendship to be observed among the prisoners, I don't mean in general—that goes without saying—but in particular, when some one prisoner became friends with another. There was almost none of that among us, and it is a remarkable feature: it is not that way in freedom" (133). In spite of the usual lack of friendly community in prison,

Christmastide seems to bring a spirit of genuine brotherhood and goodwill to the prison that transcends present circumstances. Moreover, this spirit of communion, although inextricably related to the passing occasion, is not compulsory; the prisoners' kindness, along with the festivities and theatricals put on in the days to come, is exercised freely and liberally.

In the eleventh chapter of *Dead House*, the prisoners are given the chance to put on Christmas performances in celebration of the season. During this time, the prisoners gather materials to build a temporary stage, choose actors, and rehearse for the play. The narrator admits that such festivities do not technically align with the prison rules, even so close to Christmas, but the major "[does] not want to interfere, realizing that it would be worse if he forbade it" (146) because he knows that only disorderliness would result from such interference. The chance to put on a play brings the prisoners the utmost delight, according to the narrator: "In short, the prisoners' fantasy, especially after the first success, went to the ultimate degree during the holidays, all but to the giving of prizes or the shortening of their term at hard labor" (148).

Putting together theatrical performances, on one hand, provides the prisoners with an opportunity for self-expression, creativity, and, through acting, briefly turning into people they are not—non-prisoners. Jackson notes that "[i]n their transfiguration as actors and audience, in their dramatic roles as players and participants in the theatricals, in the free play of their faculties, in short, in the play of art, and in its deepest themes, the convicts literally and figuratively acquire new identities" (9). The prisoners on stage and in the audience laugh good-naturedly at the performers acting out their folk comedies, and the merriment shining in the actors' faces mirrors the spirits of the prisoners watching the performance. The plays provide the convicts with a time of mutual enjoyment that is highly uncharacteristic of the prisoners any other time of the year:

Imagine prison, fetters, unfreedom, long sad years ahead, a life as monotonous as drizzling rain on a dreary autumn day—and suddenly all these downtrodden and confined men are allowed for one little hour to let go, to have fun, to forget the oppressive dream, to set up a whole theater, to the pride and astonishment of the whole town, as if to say, see what kind of prisoners we are! (156-57)

In this passage, the Dostoevsky juxtaposes prison a broad list of prison life descriptors to present the essence of the prisoners' Christmas performance experience; “fetters,” “unfreedom,” “long sad years,” and “monotonous” (156) life are exchanged for “let(ing) go,” “fun,” forgetting “the oppressive dream,” (156) and their ability to create a “whole theater” (157) according to *their own design*. The narrator observes that it is as if the prisoners suddenly become children again, “though some of these children were forty years old” (148). For the prisoners, Christmas represents a temporary period of relief from the reality convict life, and it also serves as a time where they can engage with the outside, free world in a universally-celebrated holiday.

While the chance to break away from boredom and enjoy light-hearted communion certainly provides a significant experience of freedom for the prisoners, what is perhaps the most significant change brought about by the Christmas celebration is what happens to the prisoners' sense of personhood. For these few celebratory days, the prisoners live less like punished creatures in a herd existence and more like full human beings with dignity, fraternity, and freedom, which releases their capacity for mutual love. Through the religious services and the performances held in the prison during the Christmas season, each prisoner is “unconsciously aware that by his observance of [Christmas] he brought himself into contact with all the world, that consequently he [is] not altogether an outcast, a lost soul, a piece of flotsam, and that even in prison things were the same as among real people” (Dostoevsky qtd. in Jackson 8). The narrator

also remarks after the finale of one of the plays—a resurrection scene—that “[i]t’s true, real. These poor men were allowed to live their own way for a little while, to have fun like other people, to spend if only an hour of unprisonlike time—and they were morally changed, even if only for those few minutes” (Dostoevsky 163). The experience of communal worship and celebration in *Dead House* is a form of freedom for the prisoners that differs from the other brief moments of freedom they experience through exercising their wills in defiance or hanging onto “illusions” of freedom (such as jingling coins in their pockets or staring out at the steppe in the summer). Christmastide for the prisoners carries with it a much more spiritual and restorative effect; during this time, they feel as though they are freed from their prisoner status by their ability to observe the holiday and thus become equals in the eyes of God with those who are not imprisoned.

The power of the Christmas plays to at least momentarily transform the inner lives of the prisoners demonstrates the crucial human need for individual freedom in *Dead House*. According to Jackson, this time of year enables the prisoners to recover elements of their humanity that they gradually lost upon entering prison:

The convict, then, recovers his humanity and dignity *not* through hurling himself against the wall, as it were, in order to get an “illusion” of freedom, not through disassociation from, and the conflict with, his fellow convicts, with the establishment, with the “environment,” but through real and symbolic communion with each other, with the “world,” and with a spiritual reality that was outside of time and space. (8)

In prison, the narrator—in effect Dostoevsky himself—recalls many instances in which fellow prisoners strive for self-expression and autonomy to achieve immediate gratification, whether through quarrels with the other prisoners or the sound of “coined freedom” in their pockets. Yet,

most of these displays, at their core, reflect the brokenness of a downtrodden people whose freedom-inclined natures conflict with the way in which they are presently forced to live. In the absence of freedom, however, lives the dream of it kept alive by the prisoners' inner lives. The narrator observes empathetically, "Here everyone was a dreamer, and that jumped into your eyes. You felt it painfully, precisely because this dreaminess lent the majority of the prisoners a gloomy and dismal, somehow unhealthy look" (Dostoevsky 250). The prisoners' hope for freedom exists regardless of its unlikely potential for coming true. However, the prisoners choose to quell their hopes by concealing them from others, growing even more "gloomy and dismal" (250) over these hopes. The narrator states that "[t]he more unrealizable the hopes were, and the more the dreamer himself felt that unrealizability, the more stubbornly and chastely he concealed them within himself, but renounce them he could not" (250-51). The prisoners cannot renounce their hopes because in doing so, they would have to renounce their own natures. Collectively, their greatest hope is to live free to pursue lives of meaning and purpose: "No living man lives without some sort of goal and striving towards it. Having lost both goal and hope, a man often turns into a monster from anguish . . . The goal of all of us was freedom and getting out of prison" (252). Without freedom—either as unhindered volition or a dream to be realized in the future—the prisoners inevitably descend into complete despair because they cannot fully live out their God-given human design.

Hence, caught between their present confinement and their hopeful future release from prison, the convicts, with varying degrees of steadfastness and patience, can only freely embrace the suffering of waiting. The prisoners' literal constraints—feters, walls, and surveillance—prod them into extreme psychological states that bounce between hope and despair. According to Frank, "Of course the desire of the prisoners for freedom in the literal sense—freedom from the

fetters they were forced to wear, the stockade in which they were penned, the surveillance they had to endure—was an ever-present poignant yearning in convict life” (“Dostoevsky” 794).

Their human natures long for freedom from oppression, which drives some to defiant violence, carousing, and attempts at escape, and they also long to have freedom *for*: freedom for loving one another in sincere communion, for practicing religion, and for retaining their identity and dignity as human beings. Experiences of the latter sort of freedom surface especially during the Christmas season, as well as in occasional but significant personal encounters of the narrator with fellow prisoners and even animals throughout *Dead House*.

But the narrator’s time in prison is not without great suffering; not only does he endure the harsh physical and mental realities of prison life in a hard labor camp, but he is also thrust into a state of keen awareness of his own lack of the freedom which he likely took for granted before his arrest. Yet, on his release from prison, he admits, “I will note here in passing that, owing to dreaminess and long estrangement, freedom seemed to us in prison somehow freer than true freedom, that is, as it actually exists in reality. The prisoners exaggerated the notion of actual freedom . . . quite proper to every prisoner” (Dostoevsky 296). While suffering what was in essence the antithesis of freedom by having their full Russian citizenship stripped from them, the narrator and his fellow prisoners become so fixated on the freedoms they lack as convicts that they elevate their “notions of freedom” (296) to an obsession. The narrator states that even “[s]ome ragged little officer’s orderly was considered almost a king among us, all but the ideal of a free man compared to prisoners, because he went about unshaven, without fetters and without a convoy” (296). They recognize that there is a visible distinction—the shaving, the fetters, the convoys, and lack thereof—between themselves and the rest of the world, and the narrator makes it clear that their most immediate wish is to be free from their “convict” identities.



Yet, at least for the narrator, shedding the convict's identity and its wretched implications is not synonymous with putting off suffering. Soon to be released, the narrator states that more than anything, he longed impatiently not simply for relief, but for resurrection:

I remember that only the passionate desire for resurrection, renewal, a new life, gave me the strength to wait and hope. And I finally pulled myself together: I waited, I counted off each day, and, though there were a thousand left, I counted off each one with delight, bade farewell to it, buried it, and, with the coming of the new day, rejoiced that it was no longer a thousand, but nine-hundred and ninety-nine. (282)

The first sentence of this passage not only highlights the narrator's personal desire for an internal resurrection upon his release, but it also serves as another instance of a recurring theme of death and resurrection throughout *Dead House*. As seen previously in the prisoners' Christmas plays, the final scene of their performances is a resurrection—a scene that embodies a collective hope of renewal and resurrection from the “tomb” of prison (163). Elsewhere in *Dead House*, the prison is referred to as “tomb” or “grave” where the prisoners' hopes and spirits go to die. In one of his letters to his brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky writes, “Those four years I consider a time in which I was buried alive and closed up as in a coffin . . . I haven't the strength to tell you, my friend, what a frightful time it was. It was inexpressible, endless suffering” (qtd. in Jackson 4). The resurrection the narrator yearns for in *Dead House* is implicitly a resurrection of his inner life—his psyche and ultimately his soul. Such a resurrection of the self and its individuality can only occur in freedom. Despite being locked up in the proverbial tomb of prison, the narrator chooses to retain his hope for the new life that awaits him at the completion of his sentence: “I waited, I called for freedom to come quickly; I wanted to test myself anew, in a new struggle. At times I was seized by a convulsive impatience . . . But it pains me to remember now about the

state of my soul then” (Dostoevsky 282). This “convulsive impatience” (282) is a product of freedom-deprivation not only for the narrator, but for the prison community as a whole in *Dead House*, and Dostoevsky writes of this irrational but realistic human response to the conditions of prison life quite emphatically. Human beings *need* to feel free.

Before the narrator is released from prison into freedom, he is taken to the prison blacksmith to have his fetters removed. This moment is not only significant to the narrator because he is literally being freed from physical constraints, but being freed along with his body is his personality and ultimately his spirit—he is experiencing the beginning of his personal resurrection. It is important to note, however, that the symbolic removal of fetters occurs earlier in *Dead House* in a similar but far grimmer manner at the end of the chapter entitled “The Hospital,” after a sick prisoner has died, and the narrator watches him being unfettered only after he is no longer breathing. He remarks, “The body was carried out. Suddenly everybody started talking loudly. The sergeant, already in the corridor, was heard sending someone for the blacksmith. The dead man had to be unfettered . . .” (180). Death as resurrection and release from constraint is the reality for some prisoners. But fortunately for Alexander, his fetters are removed when he is alive:

We had to go straight to the blacksmith, to have our fetters removed. But now no armed convoy came with us: we went with a sergeant. The fetters were removed by our fellow prisoners in the engineering workshop. I waited while they unfettered my comrade, then approached the anvil myself. The smiths turned my back to them, raised my leg, and placed it on an anvil . . . They fussed about, wanted to do it better, more skillfully . . .

(297)

As the narrator's prison sentence comes to an end and the physical marks of his captivity—convoys, walls, and fetters—fade away, he experiences a surreal but immediate psychological and spiritual release. The prisoners bid him farewell with “Well, go with God, go with God!” (298); they are not visibly envious, but, on the contrary, they address him “as if pleased with something” (298) in a scene that echoes their release of the eagle in an earlier chapter. The prisoners' send-off of Alexander is bittersweet; although they have time left on their sentences, they witness a fellow prisoner become unshackled and released into the freedom for which they still yearn. As Frank notes, “This natural longing for freedom is beautifully expressed in the episode of the wounded eagle who refuses to be tamed, and who is finally released by the prisoners . . . no doubt he will perish during the winter, but the convicts understand his desire to die in freedom” (“Dostoevsky” 794). Like the eagle, Alexander will now not only be able to die, but to live in freedom. As the fetters are undone, he says, “Yes, with God! Freedom, a new life, resurrection from the dead . . . What a glorious moment!” (Dostoevsky 298). To him, being deprived of freedom is to death as freedom is to life; the transition from one to the other is undoubtedly a type of resurrection.

By the time the narrator is released from prison, he has witnessed and personally experienced the “positive and negative polarities of freedom” (Jackson 11) during his four years in Siberia. While some prisoners behaved no less than immorally when confronted with opportunities for freedom, others—and in some cases even the same ones—recognized the potential for goodness that arose in response to freedom. As Dostoevsky expresses later in his novella *Notes from Underground*, “The highest freedom, then, is not ‘freedom from,’ which leaves one in isolation with oneself, but ‘freedom for’—the power to direct oneself towards an ideal, and to strive for it” (Jackson 16) and living “in harmony with equally free fellow men”

(Weiss qtd. in Jackson 16). Respecting another person's freedom is of critical importance for Dostoevsky; without mutual respect for the reflection of the divine image in one another, people cease to love others as full human beings, instead regarding others as less than that which their image-bearing status denotes. Although human freedom, as seen in *Dead House* and later in *The Brothers Karamazov*, has potential for misuse due to its morally ambiguous nature, denying its centrality to human nature and, furthermore, attempting to significantly curtail or remove it from the human experience ultimately results in humanity's degradation.

Chapter 2 – The “Problem” of Freedom in *The Brothers Karamazov*

While *Notes from a Dead House* highlights the value Dostoevsky places in freedom from oppression and unreasonable constraint, his final and perhaps most famous novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, both affirms this idea and adds to it another truth about human freedom: once people can experience freedom *from*, they can exercise freedom *for*. Thus, this chapter will attempt to argue that, despite humanity’s potential for abusing individual freedom and the suffering it may cause others as a result, Dostoevsky demonstrates in *The Brothers* that this same freedom is required for human beings to actively love one another and strive for moral and spiritual restoration.

In his typical authorial fashion, Dostoevsky does not fail to acknowledge arguments against human freedom in addition to his own authorial position on the subject, and such voices of opposition are foregrounded in the “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” passage—what Dostoevsky himself considered perhaps the strongest conceivable denial of God (Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse*, 105). However, he answers the problems of freedom posed in “Legend” by taking certain characters through a “furnace of doubt” (Dostoevsky qtd. in Sandoz 105) reflective of the author’s own spiritual journey and maturing understanding of suffering and human freedom.

After his ordeal in the Siberian prison camps followed by time in exile and compulsory military service, Dostoevsky returned to normal civilian life a spiritually changed man. His experience in prison left him morally and psychologically rattled, yet during those four years of darkness, he underwent a transformation of the soul that reshaped his perspectives on individual freedom and its inherent value to humanity. According to general scholarly consensus, it is accurate to say that Dostoevsky found Christ in prison; his letters to his brother Mikhail and his

friend Natalia Fonvizina attest to an undeniable shift in the author's spiritual state. Although his letters do not seem to attribute his spiritual awakening to any specific prison experience, they indicate that his inner transformation occurred gradually over the course of four years' hard labor. Moreover, the extreme limits placed on personal autonomy and expression in prison forced Dostoevsky to confront the former radical socialist ideas of his youth with a new, painfully-gained perspective on life under constraint—perspective that would later fuel his convictions about the centrality of human freedom in his final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Yet, in the years that transpired between Omsk and *The Brothers* (and even until his death, many argue), Dostoevsky wrestled with his faith and, consequently, his views on individual freedom. Sandoz acknowledges that for Dostoevsky faith was not easily won: “He gained it through a lifetime of torment—a veritable *Via Crucis* – shaped by the suffocating experience of imprisonment and political exile in Siberia (1849-59), chronic illness and susceptibility to epileptic seizure, and a burden of conscience that invoked nightmarish confrontation with the devil as the indwelling other half of his divided soul” (*Political Apocalypse*, 105). Traces of doubt surface in nearly every one of Dostoevsky's writings, and such doubts are typically expressed through the voices of his major characters.

However, such voices serve more as an acknowledgement of the real moral and intellectual conflicts permeating Russian society (as well as a broader spiritual crisis on the European continent) than an outworking of the author's personal position(s). In one of his letters to Natalia Fonvizina, Dostoevsky indeed confesses that he is “a child of the century, a child of unbelief and doubt, always has been and forever shall be” (Dostoevsky qtd. in Jackson 18). Yet, he admits that his doubts are also met by moments of overwhelming affirmations of God's existence when he freely loves and is loved by others; as Jackson notes, “[Dostoevsky] goes on

to say that precisely in his moments of doubt and despair, when he is overwhelmed by ‘opposite proofs,’ or ‘contrary evidences’ . . . God sends him moments ‘in which he loves and finds that he is loved by others’” (18-19). In the same letter to Fonvizina, Dostoevsky says, “I form within myself a ‘symbol of faith’ . . . to believe that there is nothing more beautiful, more profound, more sympathetic, more reasonable, more steadfast and more perfect than Christ” (qtd. in Jackson 19). Although these words were penned by Dostoevsky years before he wrote *The Brothers*, his final novel certainly does not shy away from the validity and weightiness of spiritual doubt as it exists in real life, even though the novel’s metaphysical conclusion falls in favor of Christ. Thus, *The Brothers*’ characters are given the freedom to doubt, reason, and arrive at their own conclusions as would real human beings with real voices; as full, albeit fictional, human beings, they must.

One of many areas in *The Brothers* in which conflicting voices are given their forum is “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” where Ivan Karamazov unveils his fantastical poem against God and human freedom to his younger brother Alyosha. In *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*, Edward Wasiolek suggests that “Legend” is, in one sense, Dostoevsky’s “final statement against God” (171): “It is Dostoevsky confronting himself with the candor and courage to place everything he had built up into the balances again . . . his final confrontation with the testimony of things seen and with man’s desolating weakness and infinite capacity for self-deception” (171). Yet Dostoevsky’s generous acknowledgement of the primary rational arguments against human freedom and ultimately the *imago Dei* is not the novel’s metaphysical conclusion, and certainly not the author’s final personal conviction. In the context of the whole novel, “Legend” rather demonstrates Dostoevsky’s ability to probe the depths of evil without succumbing to despair. In his *Writer’s Diary*, Dostoevsky responds to criticism regarding the aim and effects of

Ivan's treatise: "These fools [critics] could not even conceive so strong a denial of God as the one to which I gave expression [in *The Brothers*] . . . The whole book is an answer to *that* . . . Thus it is not like a child that I believe in Christ and confess Him. My Hosanna has burst forth from a huge furnace of doubt" (qtd. in Sandoz 105). In light of this excerpt, perhaps Wasiolek is at least partially correct in asserting that "Legend" is an expression of Dostoevsky's personal struggles with humanity's core moral, intellectual, and spiritual questions that largely go unanswered by reason alone. However, the design of *The Brothers* as a whole in conjunction with many of Dostoevsky's personal writings and his other novels suggests that rather than allowing opposing voices to devour the metaphysical genius of his work, he gives them their own expressive freedom—but not outside of his artistic framework, and never at the expense of the goals of the traditional novel.

In fact, the inclusion of multiple voices and, with them, their respective worldviews and opinions, led literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin to classify Dostoevsky as the author of the original polyphonic novel—a novel in which "many voices" freely interact. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin states, "The character is treated as ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of fully weighted ideological conceptions of his own" (5). To a certain extent, *The Brothers* exemplifies this literary style in that it gives its characters a forum where they can (and do) freely vocalize their ideologies. Bakhtin states that "Dostoevsky, like Goethe's Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but *free* people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even rebelling against him" (6), and that his characters exhibit "a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*" (6).



However, other scholars argue that Bakhtin takes his theory of the polyphonic novel too far in relation to Dostoevsky's works, suggesting that, despite Dostoevsky's extremely realistic approach to character development and his thorough articulation of viewpoints with which he ultimately disagrees, he retains his own artistic vision and moral voice throughout his works. For instance, René Wellek argues that "[t]he true observation made by Bakhtin and others that Dostoevsky allows 'each of the contending viewpoints to develop to its maximum strength and depth, to the maximum of plausibility' (93) does not refute the fact that Dostoevsky makes a clear judgment about the values of the points of view presented by the speakers" (33). Wellek affirms that Dostoevsky does, in fact, write in a highly dramatic manner; the individual voices of important characters not only frequently oppose one another, but they each possess depth and significance to the plot of the novel in their own right. Yet, it is also a manner that ultimately serves the metaphysical purpose of the author instead of diminishing it (33-34). Dostoevsky, indeed, gives his characters the freedom to think and speak as if they were real people, which in turn enables passages such as "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," Ivan Karamazov's ideological attack on created order, to exude such force. Despite "Legend's" reputation as one of the most persuasive treatises against God and human freedom in literature, Dostoevsky by no means allows the views of its fictional author to subvert the greater moral and philosophical purpose of the novel as a whole. The challenge to the centrality of human freedom (and thus, the *imago Dei*) presented within this passage arguably gives Bakhtin just cause for interpreting *The Brothers* as a novel containing polyphonic elements, but perhaps not to such an extent where the author-creator loses his own voice and cedes authority over his content to the voices of his own creations.

One—if not *the*—major theme of *The Brothers* is the value and absolute necessity of freedom for the individual human being; however, Dostoevsky allows expression of what is

perhaps the strongest conceivable opposition to individual freedom, its required conditions, and potential consequences. The voice of opposition is primarily that of Ivan, who favors a system of human existence where free will is eliminated by an external power for the happiness of others. To Ivan, such a system theoretically eradicates the potential misuse of freedom by those whose human weakness renders them “incapable” of handling free agency (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers* 62-63). According to Julian W. Connolly, “The launching point for Ivan’s discourse is his claim that he ‘accepts’ with his earthly Euclidean mind the existence of God . . . but that paradoxically, he does not accept the world that God has created” (61). Launching a metaphysical attack on God, Ivan refuses to accept the world as it is; to him, the suffering of children “cannot be redeemed or compensated for by anything” (Connolly 62). Especially in light of his own experience with his neglectful father Fyodor, Ivan resents a God who allows atrocities to occur. Thus, as an artistic expression of his views, he composes a poem that he titles (the chapter’s namesake) “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” which serves as a fantastical treatise and attack on human freedom—and ultimately on God Himself.

The setting of the poem is sixteenth-century Seville around the time of the Spanish Inquisition; hence, the “Inquisitor” character, according to Nicholas Berdayev, is in part a product of the rigid Catholicism to which Dostoevsky argued, along with socialism, “[opposes] liberty of the human spirit” (78). Suddenly Christ appears, and, despite performing miraculous acts of healing in the crowd outside of the church, he is arrested and privately interrogated by the Inquisitor for endowing mankind with individual freedom. The Inquisitor’s basis for attacking Christ is mankind’s abuse of the freedom to exercise one’s will. In order to “correct” God’s “mistake” of creating man with the capacity to think and choose freely without the moral strength to always resist evil, he attempts to abolish that freedom entirely by instituting a world

order whose subjects' freedom to choose between good and evil is eradicated. Ivan tells Alyosha, "[The Inquisitor] precisely lays it to his and his colleagues' credit that they have finally overcome freedom, and have done so in order to make people happy" (Dostoevsky 251). Here, two implicit assumptions surface: the assumption that freedom for the masses is a problem that requires fixing, and the assumption that happiness is of higher value to humanity than freedom. These ideas also appear decades later in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the novel's fictional world state similarly exerts total control over its people in the name of happiness (and tranquility), which will be expounded upon in greater detail in the next chapter.

In "Rebellion," the chapter directly preceding "Legend," Ivan expresses his rationale for encouraging a world state that eliminates the freedom of the individual: real instances in which innocent children were made to suffer cruel torments at the wills of other people (242-43). Hence, the Inquisitor's—and Ivan's—plan for humanity begins in part from humanitarian sentiments, but the objects of these sentiments exist primarily as abstractions in Ivan's mind. Sandoz suggests that "Ivan's [argument] begins in outrage and indignation rooted in humanitarian pity for his fellow man, particularly for the guiltless, for children" ("Philosophical Anthropology" 362). Ivan has great difficulty accepting a God that allows the innocent—especially children—to suffer in terrible ways, so he resolves to "return [God] the ticket" (245); that is, on account of unjust suffering, he would rather reject the all-encompassing forgiveness of God through Christ and even the final resolution of things than accept His world and the realities of the suffering endured in that world. However, Ivan's choice to return the ticket implies his desire for the same freedom that he condemns in "Legend." Rowan Williams highlights this incongruence in Ivan's philosophy:

Ivan is also insisting on the freedom to opt out of the passage of time: the refusal to accept a world in which atrocities happen is also a refusal to accept the actuality of healing or forgiveness. And while this is in many ways an appropriate aspect of the human response to atrocity—as in the memorial inscription at Auschwitz—“O earth, cover not their blood”—the shadow side of it is the denial of any future freedom to alter relations or transform memories. (39)

Without “atrocities” (39), there is no need for forgiveness, and in rejecting a world of undue suffering, Ivan is rejecting not only forgiveness and healing, but the real world entirely. He postulates that if sufficient constraint is placed on individual freedom, the active evil that victimizes innocent children will henceforth disappear.

Thus, in “Legend,” there is no doubt that the Inquisitor views human freedom as a divine mistake; he argues that the presence of great suffering in the world negates any good that comes from this freedom. Confronting Christ within a prison cell, the Inquisitor declares that human freedom has been “overcome” by the new identification of church with state:

Was it not you who so often said then, “I want to make you free”? But now you have seen these “free” men . . . Yes, this work has cost us dearly . . . but we have finally finished this work in your name. For fifteen hundred years we have been at pains over this freedom, but now it is finished, and well finished . . . precisely now, these people are more certain than ever before that they are completely free, and at the same time they themselves have brought us their freedom and obediently laid it at our feet. It is our doing, but is this what you wanted? This sort of freedom? (Dostoevsky 251)

The Inquisitor’s assessment of human fallenness is correct here in that individual freedom can and has been used for committing evil, such as the atrocities against children that Ivan laments in

“Rebellion”—a truth that Dostoevsky certainly affirms. However, the Inquisitor’s (and Ivan’s) solution to the problem of evil, which disturbs Alyosha, is belied by a low—perhaps hateful—view of humanity itself. The Inquisitor predicts that “[people] are depraved rebels, but in the end it is they who will become obedient” (253) to the new, ecclesiastically-certified world state. In one of his letters to his editor and friend Liubimov, Dostoevsky writes that his Inquisitor’s church state will be realized through “the law of chains and subjugation by means of bread” (qtd. in Sandoz, “Philosophical Anthropology,” 356)—a concept that would later inform Huxley’s dystopian works.

Not only does the Inquisitor believe that human beings are naturally servile, but also that their inclination towards servitude, comes about easily under the conditions of happiness and satiety; they will gladly give up their freedom for bread. Thus, as a “correction” of Christ’s “mistake” of providing freedom, the Inquisitor’s plan for humanity is to replace his subjects’ freedom with his own versions of “mystery, miracle, and authority”—temptations Christ rejected in the wilderness (255): bread, happiness, and a new sense of well-being under the kindly paternalism of the state disguised as Christ. The Inquisitor declares that the people will “lay their freedom at [their] feet” (253) and say, “Better that you enslave us, but feed us” (253). He appropriates Christ’s salvific power for utilitarian purposes, offering his subjects bread in exchange for their freedom—“mystery, miracle, and authority” in exchange for the work of Christ. According to Andrew Hacker, the Inquisitor manipulates these symbols to represent the values and provisions of the world state and satisfy the people’s “craving for community” (598). Moreover, Frank argues in *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet* that the Inquisitor “has debased the authentic forms of miracle, mystery, and authority into magic, mystification, and tyranny” (614). In essence, the Inquisitor views these three items solely as “a means of coercion

and domination” (614), not unlike the underlying purpose behind *Brave New World’s* State’s motto, “Community, Identity, Stability” (Huxley 1). Hacker also notes that the Inquisitor seeks to harness the people’s inclination toward the “communality of worship” (Dostoevsky 253), and upon targeting and satisfying these needs, the Inquisitor creates a society that caters to human happiness and minimizes the suffering of the herd (Hacker 598).

Despite the loss of freedom that enables his subjects to choose between good and evil and strive towards a moral ideal, the Inquisitor anticipates that their psychological need for freedom (Jackson 5) will be satisfied (artificially) by the elimination of moral and economical decision-making and the substitution of guaranteed happiness for freedom of choice. He postulates that if he and his ruling class directly provide their subjects with the objects of temptation Christ rejected in the wilderness, they will joyfully submit to the church-state’s design as an improvement upon Christ’s freedom (253). Predicting the people’s response to the new world state, the Inquisitor tells Christ:

Freedom, free reason, and science led them into such a maze, and confront them with such miracles and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, unruly and ferocious, will exterminate themselves; others, unruly but feeble, will exterminate each other; and the remaining third, feeble and wretched, will crawl to our feet and cry out to us: “Yes, you were right, you alone possess his mystery, and we are coming back to you—save us from ourselves.” (258)

Since the Inquisitor treats happiness and freedom as mutually exclusive, establishing universal happiness requires individual freedom’s abolishment (597). However, Hacker notes that “in such a society it is psychologically impossible for all to be happy” (599), an idea acknowledged by the Inquisitor and which also anticipates the World State in *Brave New World*: “There will be

thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil” (Dostoevsky 259). The Inquisitor and the few who are part of the stronger, more moral ruling body retain that freedom so they can use it for the “good of the whole”—a benefit to society, but a burden for those in power. A recurring theme in Dostoevsky’s works, this moral totalitarianism surfaces later in Huxley’s famous novels as well.

Despite the Inquisitor’s spoken intent to bring his subjects earthly happiness and security, he admits that this constraining new universal order will exist at the expense of the eternal life offered by Christ. He states, “Peacefully they will die, peacefully will they expire in your name, and beyond the grave they will find only death. But we will keep the secret, and for their own happiness we will entice them with a heavenly and eternal reward” (Dostoevsky 259). While the handful of moral elites will suffer from the knowledge of their “necessary” deception, the ruled-over will rest in blissful ignorance of their social order’s reality. In one sense, it seems that the Inquisitor believes that universal happiness and stability are of greater consequence than the eternal life of his people. However, his resolve to replace Christ and His gift of freedom with the promise of earthly happiness, satisfaction, and direction reflect his disdain for humanity rather than love for it. By eliminating freedom, his method of government reduces human beings to animals whose wellbeing is directly tied to the will of their master. As Dostoevsky remarks of the Inquisitor’s philosophy, when one takes away freedom from humanity, people are rendered “a herd of cattle” (qtd. in Sandoz, “Philosophical Anthropology,” 369).

Although the Inquisitor’s solution to the problem of evil made possible by individual freedom leans toward utilitarian practicality on the surface, further examination of Ivan’s emotional and spiritual disposition towards humanity reveals a fragmented relationship with the

real world. To Christ, the Inquisitor says, “They will finally understand that freedom and earthly bread in plenty for everyone are inconceivable together, for never, never, will they be able to share among themselves” (Dostoevsky 253). The final clause of this sentence echoes Ivan’s prior confession to Alyosha that, as Connolly puts it, he “cannot understand how one can love one’s neighbors” (61) unless one loves them “abstractly” or “from a distance” (Dostoevsky 237)—a notion contrary to Father Zosima’s admonitions of active love later in the novel. Alyosha is bewildered and saddened by his brother’s poem and what it darkly suggests about Christ, humanity, and the world, but he interprets it as a praise of Christ rather than a censure despite its author’s intentions. In disbelief that a person such as the Inquisitor really exists, Alyosha says, “Your poem praises Jesus, it doesn’t revile him . . . as you meant it to. And who will believe you about freedom? Is that, is that any way to understand it?” (Dostoevsky 260). However, he quickly realizes the “secret” of the Inquisitor: “Your Inquisitor doesn’t believe in God, that’s his whole secret!” (261), and tells Ivan, “You don’t believe in God” (262). Deducing from the Inquisitor’s total lack of regard for human freedom and eternal life, Alyosha understands the Inquisitor’s—and Ivan’s—failure to accept God and His earth.

However, the end of Ivan’s poem alludes to the novel’s thematic trajectory thenceforth; this is where Dostoevsky begins his authorial focus on the critical role of human freedom in enabling people to practice active love. When asked how his poem ends, Ivan replies:

[W]hen the Inquisitor fell silent, he waited some time for his prisoner to reply. His silence weighed on him . . . But suddenly he approached the old man in silence and gently kisses him on his bloodless, ninety-year-old lips. That is the whole answer. The old man shudders. Something stirs at the corners of his mouth; he walks to the door, opens it, and says to him: “Go and do not come again . . . do not come at all . . . never,



never!” And he lets him out into the “dark squares of the city.” The prisoner goes away . . . the kiss burns in his heart, but the old man holds to his former idea. (262)

Ivan quickly dismisses his “Legend” as a “muddled poem written by a muddled student” (262), but Alyosha, aware of his brother’s inner conflict between his hatred for God’s earth and love for small aspects of it (and even a potential love for God), recalls Ivan’s earlier statement: “I want to live, and I do live, even if it be against logic. Though I do not believe in the order of things, still the sticky little leaves that come out in spring are dear to me, the blue sky is dear to me, some people are dear to me, whom one loves sometimes” (230). Despite his love for the “sticky little leaves” (230, 262), Ivan refuses to accept the whole world on account of the problems of evil and suffering.

Ivan’s denial of created order and the consequences of the Fall, however, is a willful act on his part and an ironic contrast to the Inquisitor’s solution for mankind. Paralleling the response of Christ to the Inquisitor, Alyosha then responds to Ivan by kissing him upon the lips (263), to which Ivan cries, “Literary theft! . . . You stole that from my poem!” (263). Alyosha’s kiss is a concrete gesture of active love—a theme that drives the action of the rest of *The Brothers* towards an answer to “Legend” and that makes a tangible case for human freedom. In this scene, as Connolly argues, “Alyosha is following Jesus’ example, showing love and compassion for a suffering man, not endorsing his ideas” (68). Alyosha not only recognizes suffering in another human being, but he also acts upon his sense of compassion towards the sufferer and thus embodies active love—a practice that Ivan fails to embrace at this point in the novel. While he can love abstractly, abstract love does not suffice as a wholesome response to the problem of suffering.

After his unsettling encounter with Ivan, Alyosha develops his own struggle to embrace both spirituality and the earth itself through active love; he temporarily takes on Ivan's spirit of doubt, questioning whether any potential goodness can come from human freedom. This crisis only becomes exasperated by the subsequent death of Father Zosima and the unanticipated "odor or corruption" (328) from the unusually rapid decay of the elder's body. Due to this odor, the entire monastery descends into spiritual unrest, and Zosima's reputation suffers scathing remarks by some elders who perceive the odor to be a confirmation of both his failure as a monk and the illegitimacy of his teachings. Consequently, Alyosha leaves the monastery; his "spirit of anticipation" (Connolly 76), or his view of how the world should work, is broken. Having expected a miracle—a pleasant scent from Zosima's body—that did not appear and witnessed the other monks' resentment towards the elder, he descends even deeper into spiritual dismay. However, Alyosha's "crucible of doubt" (76) provides an opportunity for the beginning of Dostoevsky's authorial response to the problems of suffering and, necessarily, freedom. Connolly suggests that "this episode drives home the point that one should not seek miracles as a precondition of faith" (77), which was "a key element of in the devil's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness" (77). While Alyosha indeed thirsts for miracles, he also thirsts for "justice" (Dostoevsky 339)—for Zosima in an immediate sense, but in a broader sense, for Providence to transcend nature and vindicate the righteous (339).

However, nature and Providence appear to be at odds in Alyosha's mind as he leaves the monastery. His subsequent encounter with Rakitin in the woods helps direct him through his "crucible of doubt" (Connolly 76) in spite of Rakitin's intent to agitate him further by bringing him to the ill-reputed Grushenka—an arrangement that reflects Judas' betrayal of Christ. On the way to his anticipated moral "slaughter," Alyosha tells Rakitin, "I do not rebel against my God, I

simply ‘do not accept his world’” (Dostoevsky 341), not only “plagiarizing” from Ivan’s poem, but reflecting his brother’s disposition towards created order. However, events take an unintended turn shortly after the pair arrives at Grushenka’s lodging. The instant Alyosha reveals the news of Zosima’s death, Grushenka experiences a sudden change of heart and recognizes the sinfulness of her intentions: “The Elder Zosima died! . . . Oh, Lord, I didn’t know” (351). She gets up, crosses herself, and confesses, “I’ll tell you everything now: you be still, Alyosha, because I feel ashamed of hearing such words from you, because I’m wicked, not good—that’s how I am . . . [to Rakitin] I did have such a low thought, of eating him up, but now you’re lying, it’s quite different now” (351). Grushenka’s sudden remorse for her ill-intended actions and her compassion for Alyosha have a profound effect on his spirit; he recognizes her moment of active love. He says, “Who am I compared to her? I came here seeking my own ruin, saying: ‘Who cares, who cares?’ because of my faintheartedness; but she, after five years of torment, as soon as someone comes and speaks a sincere word to her, forgives everything, forgets everything, and weeps!” (355). Grushenka and Alyosha have given one another “an onion” (357)—a free act of love reflecting the ideal of Christ. Grushenka’s choice to forego her original plan for Alyosha’s “ruin” (355) and instead show reverent compassion for him opens his eyes to humanity’s capacity for active love. By her free act of compassion, Grushenka exercises her freedom to choose good over evil—an event that appears to resonate with Alyosha as a confirmation of humanity’s need for individual freedom.

Renewed by his encounter with Grushenka, Alyosha decides to return to the monastery, which is arguably a symbolic act of choosing to return to the path of Christ. When he arrives, he hears Father Paissy reading the Scriptural passage of Cana of Galilee, and after drifting to sleep, he has a vision of the wedding feast itself. Within this vision, however, Zosima appears and says

to Alyosha, “Why are you marveling at me? I gave a little onion, and so I am here. And there are many who are here who only gave an onion, only one little onion . . . What are our deeds? And you, quiet one . . . were able to give a little onion to a woman who hungered” (361). Referring to Alyosha’s compassion for Grushenka, Zosima assures him of the power of active love and, thus, the immense value of human freedom as love’s agent. He continues, “Begin, my dear, begin, my meek one, to do your work! And do you see our Sun? . . . Do not be afraid of him. Awful is his greatness before us, terrible is his loftiness, yet he is boundlessly merciful, he became like us out of love, and he is rejoicing with us” (361), calling “new guests” to his table “now and unto ages of ages” (362). This image of Christ and Zosima at His wedding feast reaffirms not only the elder’s righteousness, but also the soul’s immortality and the direct relationship between heaven and earth. The earth rejected by Ivan is the same earth that Zosima tells Alyosha to embrace and within which to “work” (362), and, as Zosima implies, it has undeniable spiritual significance, for upon the earth dwells humanity and the rest of God’s creation. Alyosha wakes from his sleep with a renewed spirit: “The entire experience has the effect of fortifying Alyosha’s soul” (Connolly 82), as evidenced by his encounter with nature when he walks out of the monastery.

Alyosha’s spiritual renewal in this chapter culminates in his embrace of the earth, an event that follows directly after his dream of Cana of Galilee. After leaving the cell, his soul yearns for “freedom, space, vastness” (Dostoevsky 362); he looks up at “the heavenly dome, full of quiet, shining stars, hung boundlessly. From the zenith to the horizon the still-dim Milky Way stretched is double strand” (362). In this moment, he allows himself to be fully engulfed in the beauty of the earth and the night sky, taking in the “sapphire sky” (362) and the “luxuriant autumn flowers” (362) simultaneously. As “[t]he silence of the earth [seems] to merge with the

silence of the heavens [and] the mystery of the earth [touches] the mystery of the stars” (362), Alyosha’s figurative embrace of the earth then turns into a literal embrace:

Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth. He did not know why he was embracing it, he did not try to understand why he so longed to irresistibly kiss it, to kiss all of it, but he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it, to love it unto ages of ages. “Water the earth with the tears of your joy, and love those tears . . .,” rang in his soul. What was he weeping for? Oh, in his rapture he wept even for the stars that shone on him from the abyss, and “he was not ashamed of his ecstasy.” It was as if threads from all those innumerable worlds of God all came together in his soul. (362)

In contrast to his rejection of God’s world before his visit with Grushenka and his dream at the monastery, Alyosha now not only accepts the earth, but loves it whole-heartedly, as did Zosima.

Steven Cassedy, however, goes so far as to interpret this moment as earth worship inspired by Zosima’s teachings, stating that “Zosima’s earth worship is truly astounding in its departure from the verse of Jesus’ message” (156). This shared love of the earth between Zosima and Alyosha indeed manifests itself in tears and ecstasy, as observed after Alyosha’s dream, but Cassedy misstates the nature of Alyosha’s and Zosima’s orientation towards the earth. Williams disagrees with Cassedy’s interpretation of this section, suggesting instead that when Alyosha “falls on the earth . . . his reconciliation with the earth and his awareness of being caught up in a cosmic exchange of forgiveness and penitence are bound inextricably together” (170) rather than a deification of the earth itself. Moreover, William Lynch asks the question: “How did he get to the top of the heavens and down to the earth, in such a way as to embrace the fullness of both?” (33). He suggests that Alyosha is capable of embracing both the material world and the spiritual

world because he has “[met] and [walked] through” both (33). Unlike Ivan, Alyosha accepts both God *and* His world, and he is able to do so through choosing the path of active love (as opposed to Ivan’s abstract love, which stays only abstract). Thus, the freely-given love and compassion reciprocated between Alyosha and Grushenka, as illuminated by the vision of Zosima, is Dostoevsky’s first major step towards responding to Ivan’s “Legend;” active love must operate on the freedom to choose good over evil. Therefore, Alyosha necessarily accepts the irrationalities of time and place, unlike his Euclidean-minded brother Ivan.

Chapter 2 of *Book VI: The Russian Monk*, a section the narrator says was dictated by Alyosha, contains Zosima’s teachings on active love, freedom, and suffering. Many scholars argue that Dostoevsky intended this section as his rebuttal to Ivan’s poem, but while his “answer” to the problem of suffering and the human condition may appear in its most concentrated form within this section of *The Brothers*, he maintains that “the whole book” is an answer to “Legend” (qtd. in Sandoz, “Philosophical Anthropology,” 361-62). In Zosima’s biographical information, one passage in particular reveals a time during his younger years that had a profound impact on his understanding of human freedom: *The Mysterious Visitor*. He meets a man, Mikhail, guilty of murdering a woman fourteen years prior, and, although the man is innocent in the eyes of everyone he knows, his guilt is unbearable, from which he longs to be free (Dostoevsky 308). However, he ultimately realizes that he must confess and embrace the suffering that may result thereafter in order to grasp this freedom: “I know that paradise will come to me, will come at once, the moment I tell. For fourteen years I have been in hell. I want to suffer. I will embrace suffering and begin to live” (308). Choosing the path of confession and subsequent suffering offers Mikhail freedom from guilt and affords him the capacity to love fully

(308). Moreover, his resolution to freely confess his sin and embrace suffering confirms Zosima's pursuit of the monastic life.

In Chapter 3, which records elements from the talks and homilies of the elder, Zosima makes several other noteworthy statements about freedom and suffering. First, he calls attention to the world's distorted perception of both God and itself: "Look at the worldly and at the whole world that exalts itself above the people of God: are the image of God and his truth not distorted in it? They have science, and in science only that which is subject to the senses. But the spiritual world, the higher half of man's being is altogether rejected, banished with a sort of triumph, even with hatred" (313). According to Zosima, the world does not simply bifurcate physical reality from spiritual reality, but it refuses to acknowledge the possibility of a spiritual world at all. This view of reality is similar to Ivan's, but, more specifically, Ivan refuses to embrace human freedom because he cannot come reconcile earthly life with the irrational, namely its potential to facilitate horror as well as beauty. On this matter, Zosima states:

The world has proclaimed freedom, especially of late, but what do we see in this freedom of theirs: only slavery and suicide! For the world says: "You have needs, therefore satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the noblest and richest men. Do not be afraid to satisfy them, but even increase them"—this is the current teaching of the world . . . But what comes of this right to increase one's needs? For the rich, *isolation* and spiritual suicide; for the poor, envy and murder . . . I ask you: is such a man free? (313-14)

In this passage, Zosima warns his readers of the dangers of unrestrained human will; unlimited freedom is incapable of achieving satisfaction, and without a proper object, it eventually turns on itself.

Dostoevsky's other works include numerous instances in which Zosima's observation of unlimited autonomy's destructive nature finds application, including the Underground Man in *Notes from Underground* and Kirillov and Stavrogin in *Demons*. To some extent, the Grand Inquisitor himself fits this mold; in order to enforce absolute submission, one must have the freedom for absolute power. However, Zosima is not advocating the total control or elimination of human freedom, as does Ivan in "Legend." Rather, he emphasizes the necessity of properly oriented freedom: the freedom to strive towards Christ in actively loving others, which cannot be realized without autonomy of thought and action. While human freedom carries the risk of being misused, as Zosima acknowledges in the aforementioned passage, it is also a critical component of human nature in that it enables people to love and do good unto humanity. Hence, Zosima offers the choice of the "monastic way" (314) of freedom, or as he puts it: "Obedience, fasting, and prayer are laughed at, yet they alone constitute the way to real and true freedom: I cut away my superfluous and unnecessary needs, through obedience I humble and chasten my vain and proud will, and thereby, with God's help, attain freedom of spirit, and with that, spiritual rejoicing!" (314). Zosima teaches that freedom from "tyranny of things and habits" (314) enables freedom to love actively in brotherly communion (314). This, he says, is freedom in its highest form: freedom of the spirit. Moreover, if the freedom of the individual is properly directed, humanity as a whole will benefit.

Aside from Alyosha's dream of Zosima at the wedding feast, Dostoevsky uses two other dreams in *The Brothers* as powerful responses to the Grand Inquisitor poem: the eldest brother Dmitri's dream of the "Wee One" and Ivan's vision of the Devil. Shortly after his arrest and interrogation in Mokroye, Dmitri, exhausted from his ordeal, falls asleep on a large chest and dreams he is driving across a familiar steppe. He sees a line of thin, withered peasants, and in



one of the peasant women's arms is a small baby, "crying, reaching out its bare little arms, its little fists somehow all blue from the cold" (507). Filled with pity, Dmitri asks, "Why are they crying?" (507), and the peasant driver answers, "The wee one . . . it's the wee one crying" (507). Dmitri persists on asking the driver why the "wee one" is crying, why "its little arms (are) bare" (507), and why, despite his questions' perceived foolishness, the peasants as a community are neither feeding it nor rejoicing and embracing the earth. He does not understand why they live in such poverty and sees their predicament as senseless; like his brother Ivan, the suffering—particularly that of the "wee one"—moves him deeply. But rather than cursing humanity and God in response to the suffering of children, Dmitri is filled with compassion and a desire to address their suffering through active love, as "he feels a tenderness such as he has never known before surging up in his heart, he wants to weep, he wants to do something for them all, so that the wee one will no longer cry, so that the blackened, dried-up mother of the wee one will not cry either" (508), and ultimately that "there will be no more tears in anyone from that moment on" (508).

While Ivan's solution to human suffering in "Legend" is to take away human freedom through totalitarian deceit, it comes from an inability to love humanity beyond individual children, which, furthermore, reveals that the extent of his love is only abstract. Not only does he have little to do with children in real life, but his few interactions with them, such as with Kolya and Liza, have corrupting effects on the children. In contrast, Dmitri not only recognizes the "wee one's" suffering, but he is moved to "do something" (508) about it immediately. Moreover, since the "wee one" cries for all the peasants, Dmitri's compassion extends to all of them as well—not just the child (508). In a moral and psychological sense, he is directly immersed in others' suffering, and his compassion is thus ignited by this vivid dream.

As a result of witnessing the peasants' suffering, Dmitri undergoes a spiritual resurrection, similar to that of Alyosha's embrace of the earth, that leads to his own freely chosen embrace of suffering: "I accept the torment of accusation and of my disgrace before all, I want to suffer and be purified by suffering!" (509). On one hand, Dmitri's resolve to embrace suffering somewhat resembles the Inquisitor's decision to take on the burden of absolute freedom and suffer while his subjects remain blissfully ignorant of their condition, but on the other hand, his embrace of suffering is of a completely different nature and for a different purpose. According to Connolly, Dmitri "seems to have arrived on his own at an understanding and acceptance of one of Zosima's key injunctions for those who are moved to indignation at the evildoing of others" (86): to seek out and bear suffering so that "your heart will find comfort, and you will understand that you too are guilty, for you might have been a light to the evildoers" (Dostoevsky qtd. in Connolly 86). Furthermore, Dmitri's sentimental embrace of suffering is a sacrifice of "Christ-like humility" (86) for all as opposed to the Inquisitor's "egocentric self-display" (86). Although he does not name specific people for whom he chooses to suffer, one could easily infer that his choice is an empathetically-charged act—a general resolution of the soul to love actively. Moreover, by accepting responsibility for his father's murder in spite of his innocence in the matter, he prevents any other accusations of the same crime from falling upon other innocent people, including Alyosha or Ivan. Through this acceptance, he embodies Zosima's injunction to suffer on behalf of others.

Shortly after Dmitri's arrest, Ivan has a peculiar, two-part encounter with a peasant man and an eerily realistic hallucination where he is visited by the Devil himself—events which work together to change the trajectory of Ivan's inner life. On the way to his third meeting with his illegitimate half-brother, Smerdyakov, he runs into a drunken peasant lurching forward at him

and shoves him onto the frozen ground. Hesitating whether to save the peasant from freezing, he decides to keep going: “Ivan stepped up to him. He lay flat on his back, quite motionless, unconscious. ‘He’ll freeze!’ Ivan thought, and strode off again to Smerdyakov” (Dostoevsky 621), showing little concern for the peasant’s life. However, when he returns from his visit with Smerdyakov after having realized his part in Smerdyakov’s murder of their father, he sees the peasant still lying on the frozen ground, nearly buried by the blizzard, and decides to pick him up and take him to a local trade station for help (633). The narrator then states, “I will say only that the affair took him almost a whole hour. But Ivan Fyodorovich was left feeling very pleased. His thoughts were expanding and working” (634). The reason for this sudden act of kindness—even active love—the narrator reveals, is because Ivan has decided to plead guilty on behalf of Dmitri, or else he “would not have stayed a whole hour arranging things for the little peasant” (634) and let the peasant freeze to death. While his motives for testifying against himself and his decision to help the peasant lean more towards self-satisfaction (Wasiolek 176), his actions testify to at least a slight shift in his view of humanity.

Yet Ivan is finally confronted with the darkness of his own atheistic mentality and its own insufficiency when he slips into delirium upon returning home from Smerdyakov’s in the next chapter, titled “The Devil. Ivan Fyodorovich’s Nightmare”—a passage leveled at the Grand Inquisitor’s treatise. This delirium, or “brain fever” (634), to which Ivan “stubbornly [refuses] to succumb” (635) is not merely a physical sickness from the day’s events, but a spiritual sickness that results in a visitation from the Devil himself. In his delirium, Ivan suddenly sees a man sitting on his sofa who looks “as though he belonged to a category of former idle landowners that flourished in the time of serfdom . . . a sort of sponger, in bon ton, as it were, knocking about among good old acquaintances” (636). The Devil’s apparent prior knowledge of Ivan’s

interactions with Smerdyakov causes Ivan to believe, in typical Euclidean fashion, is only a figure of his imagination. To this, the visitor responds: “Don’t believe in it then . . . what good is faith by force? Besides, proofs are no help to faith, especially material proofs. Thomas believed not because he saw the risen Christ but because he wanted to believe even before that” (636). In this short passage, the Devil reiterates not only Ivan’s demand for a miracle as a precondition of faith (as expressed in “Legend”), but also the Inquisitor’s argument that Christ should have performed the miracle. He points out the inconsistency of desiring—ultimately believing in—miracles while simultaneously dismissing faith for its “irrational” nature. Using Thomas as an example, the Devil acknowledges that true faith is not a product of material proof of something. Ivan responds with angry surprise at the Devil’s comment, but as the conversation continues, he only becomes more irritated. A rationalistic thinker, Ivan wants material proof of faith’s legitimacy before embracing it, but his dogged rationality is belied by the necessarily irrational nature of the miracles he seeks as material “proofs.”

While Ivan has difficulty determining whether the Devil is a real entity or simply a self-constructed figment of his imagination, their conversation torment him. Frank notes that “Ivan’s dialogue with the devil plays on the continual fluctuation between the stirrings of his conscience and the amorally nihilistic conclusions that he has drawn from his refusal to accept God and immortality” (*Mantle* 678). Moreover, by satirizing the ideas in Ivan’s poem, the Devil “offers up a vision of the universe in which the figure of God seems absent, a sharp refraction of Ivan’s vision of an insensitive or absent God in Book Five” (Connolly 97). The Devil expounds upon Ivan’s vision of replacing one God figure with another (the Inquisitor) in “Legend” as well as an older poem of Ivan’s titled “Geological Cataclysm” by predicting the rise of the “man-god”—who, as logic would follow, is the eventual result of a society that, in the absence of any God or

moral order, “all would be permitted—even anthropophagy” (Dostoevsky 69): individual freedom without conscience or a proper object, and certainly without regard for the freedom of others. And once humanity has rejected God, the Devil postulates, “the entire world view will fall of itself, without anthropophagy, and, above all, the entire former morality, and everything will be new” (649). The Devil echoes the Inquisitor’s desire to institute universal happiness at the expense of freedom of spirit: “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” (649), thus admitting to the Grand Inquisitor’s lie of immortality. The Devil’s reiteration of Ivan’s poem casts the Inquisitor’s pseudo-benevolent rise to power in a much more sinister light than the poem’s author has previously recognized. The Inquisitor bears the characteristics of the same people whose man-god complex leads to the destruction of humanity by rejection of God and, consequently, of active love for other human beings.

However, the Devil knows that Ivan’s ideal society—one which has moral order and respect for human freedom, which are crucial for human goodness—is ultimately impossible apart from God. At the conclusion of the nightmare, the Devil says, “It’s all very nice; only if one wants to swindle, why, I wonder, should one also need a 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” (649). At this unveiling of the Inquisitor’s own “swindling” (649), Ivan, mimicking a gesture of Luther (Connolly 97), throws his tea glass at the Devil, who then gloats at the fact that Ivan was listening and treats him as a *real* being. Although the glass is still on the table in front of him when he wakes up to Alyosha knocking on his door, he convinces himself, “That was no dream!” (650). The gesture of throwing the glass indicates Ivan’s jarring recognition not only of the spiritual and material worlds’ interconnectedness, but also his

personal freedom to rebel against ideas he does not want to accept—a thematic repetition in this character’s behavior throughout the novel.

In his feverish nightmare of the Devil, Ivan is confronted with some of the dangerous inadequacies of his views of God and humanity as well as his vision for society expressed in “Legend.” The Devil calls attention to the disastrous shadow cast by any attempt to live in denial of God as the source not only of truth and moral order, but also justice, compassion, and love— aspects that Ivan longs for in humanity but cannot yet bring himself to accept. Conversely, Dostoevsky paints Ivan as someone who does desire to retain his personal freedom, as evidenced by his willful expressions of rebellion against God, which perhaps culminates in “returning the ticket,” or the contrary action of throwing the tea glass.

Perhaps Ivan’s attitude toward the freedom of the individual reflects a failure to embrace the freedom of others as he does his own. Williams states, “Love for the freedom of the neighbor is inevitably love that looks critically at its own definition of freedom. The neighbor’s freedom cannot be loved if one’s own is exalted over all other priorities; so to love freedom in others . . . is to embark on a process of decentering the self . . . But the ultimate source of this remains the divine authorship to which all agents equally relate” (183). Without loving the freedom of other people as they are, Williams argues, one does not fully love people at all (182-83). Like Ivan’s view in “Legend,” one may believe in his or her love for humanity without loving any real person; hence, given Ivan’s inclination to eradicate the freedom of those below his standards for moral and intellectual superiority and his lack of active love, he arguably fails to love the *imago Dei* at all.

The Grand Inquisitor’s vision for the world ultimately ends up dehumanizing its people and makes human wholeness impossible. Sandoz suggests that Ivan is agonized with religious

and philosophical doubt over the problem of suffering; “[h]ence new men must be fashioned through conditioning within the framework of a police state: in the act this involves the destruction of human reason as well as the breaking of the will of man” (*Political Apocalypse* 186). In order for people to function according to the design of a society such as the one in “Legend,” they must be reduced to creatures psychologically and intellectually malleable to the point of unquestioned conformity to the will of the governing body, but always for their government-defined good and happiness. Yet, this system of living disregards human individuality and, consequently, autonomy of mind, body, and spirit. While the hypothetical subjects in Ivan’s poem willingly hand over their freedom for bread and the guarantee of happiness, Dostoevsky contends that the totalitarian dynamic of this benefactor-beneficiary relationship negates the material good that comes from it.

As a whole work, *The Brothers* echoes Dostoevsky’s post-exilic reflection on personal liberty:

Try an experiment and build a palace. Fit it out with marble, pictures, gold, birds of paradise, hanging gardens, all sorts of things . . . And step inside. Well, it may be that you would never wish to leave. Perhaps, in actual fact, you would never leave. Everything is there! “Let well enough alone!” But suddenly—a trifle! Your castle is surrounded by walls, and you are told: “Everything is yours! Enjoy your-self! Only, don’t step outside!” And, believe me, in that instant you will wish to quit your paradise and step over the wall. Even more! All this luxury, all this plentitude will only sharpen your suffering. You will feel insulted as a result of all this luxury . . . Yes, only one thing is missing: a bit of liberty! A bit of liberty and a bit of freedom. (qtd. in Frank, *The Stir*, 31)

Whether in a prison or a palace, Dostoevsky argues that curtailing human beings' freedom goes against their fundamental nature, and mankind cannot resist the urge to step "over the wall" (31). According to Frank, this letter foreshadows Dostoevsky's central theme from *Notes from Underground*, whose narrator defends "the irrepressible and indestructible need of the human spirit to maintain its own freedom—his preference for suffering, if need be, rather than for a life of plentitude in a Socialist Utopia in which such freedom would be eliminated as a matter of principle" (31). As this and the previous chapters have shown, *Dead House* and *The Brothers* both contain powerful demonstrations of this principle, but perhaps with slightly different (yet interconnected) emphases. While Dostoevsky illustrates the human need for freedom from constraint in *Dead House*, his emphasis turns toward the need for the freedom to strive towards the ideal of Christ and actively love fellow human beings in *The Brothers*. Any denial of the need for individual freedom, in either sense, inevitably results in suppression of human potential in its most exalted sense, and, as the next chapter on *Brave New World* will show, the creation of a vague sense of dissatisfaction with life, regardless of living conditions.



Chapter 3 – Freedom as Enemy in *Brave New World*

Among the many twentieth-century authors influenced by Dostoevsky's thought is Aldous Huxley, a British writer who penned multiple well-known dystopian novels and satires, including *Chrome Yellow*, *Antic Hay*, and *Point Counter-Point*. His most famous novel, *Brave New World*, clearly bears Dostoevsky's fingerprints through its understanding of the centrality of human freedom. Arguably one of the most influential dystopian works of all time, *Brave New World* depicts a world state that values happiness and stability to the point of not only placing external constraints on its citizens' autonomy, but also conditioning them to be too content to rebel. Unlike *Dead House* and *The Brothers*, *Brave New World* is set in the future, and its universe is a hypothetical one—but certainly not one without ties to present-day reality from Huxley's perspective. A critic of government, culture, and modern human tendencies, Huxley, like Dostoevsky, frequently depicts situations in which human beings are put in extreme conditions, such as the imposing societal structure his characters face in *Brave New World*. Moreover, Huxley's apparent interest in human beings' response to varying degrees of individual freedom led him to draw conclusions that were, in some cases, strikingly similar to those of Dostoevsky. In *Brave New World*, Huxley ultimately affirms that individual freedom is essential for human beings to live to their full potential, and his case for individual freedom reflects both Dostoevsky's emphasis on freedom from constraint in *Notes from a Dead House* and that of freedom for active love *The Brothers Karamazov*.

While the extent to which Dostoevsky's works directly influenced Huxley's thought and writings remains somewhat unknown, several of Huxley's letters provide evidence for his great admiration of the Russian author. In his essay "Aldous Huxley and Russia: Brief History of a Dialogue," Valery Rabinovitch says, "For Huxley, the most distinguished authors in Russian

Literature were F. M. Dostoevsky and L. M. Tolstoy” (215), and Huxley considered them “really great novelist[s]” (Huxley qtd. in Rabinovitch 215). In fact, Tom Serpieters notes in “A Literary Man as a Poet of Thought” that Huxley considered Dostoevsky to be a “chemist” and “discerns chemical experimental methods in the way in which he conceived his novels” (233): “Just as in the laboratory the chemists discover the intimate secrets of matter by submitting it to extreme heats and colds, to chemical disintegration and recombination, so Dostoevsky examines the intimate constitution of the human soul by putting his characters into situations that test them as severely as matter is tested in a furnace” (Huxley qtd. in Serpieters 233). Huxley employs a similar artistic practice in *Brave New World* when he brings in the story’s main protagonist, John the “Savage,” into the dystopian environment of the civilized World State. In Dostoevsky’s works, this “test[ing] in a furnace” (233) undoubtedly occurs in *Dead House* as well as *The Brothers*; Alexander Petrovich is imprisoned in Siberia, Dmitri Karamazov is arrested, and Alyosha and Ivan go through furnaces of spiritual doubt.

Both authors also appear to view individual freedom and suffering as inseparable, but necessary, if an individual is to fully embrace his or her humanity. For example, both *The Brothers* and *Brave New World* illustrate this point through totalitarian world states depicted therein. While in *The Brothers*, the Grand Inquisitor demands his people’s absolute submission in order to eliminate suffering through the abolishment of individual freedom, *Brave New World’s* World Controllers (namely Mustapha Mond) attempt to eliminate suffering by psychologically conditioning their people to love and fully depend on the State. In the same novel, however, John (Mr. Savage) and a few other characters’ responses to the lack of individual freedom in the World State reflect the prisoners’ general response to their incarceration in *Dead House* as well as certain aspects of Alyosha’s and Dmitri’s respective

embraces of suffering as a means of moral purification. Whereas suffering towards a productive end can indeed happen in *The Brothers'* real-world setting, however, *Brave New World's* World State makes productive suffering virtually impossible for John.

One of *Brave New World's* most explicit thematic connection to Dostoevsky's support of human freedom's centrality appears in the insidiously anti-human design of its World State, whose promise of "Community, Identity, [and] Stability" (Huxley 1) comes at the cost of human freedom and, consequently, human potential. Eerily similar to the Grand Inquisitor's power of "miracle, mystery, [and] authority" (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers*, 255) over his church state, "Community, Identity, [and] Stability" have been established by the World State as the only fundamental human needs essential to maintain a peaceful society. Like Ivan's poetic construct of a totalitarian church-state ruled by Grand Inquisitor and his group of intellectual elites, *Brave New World's* civilized society is similarly governed by a select, intellectually superior few.

However, the World State's process of eliminating human freedom and suffering takes a step further than the Grand Inquisitor's methods by starting before its citizens are even born, a process foregrounded in *Brave New World's* opening chapter. The story begins at the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, where the State's motto, "Community, Identity, Stability" (Huxley 1) makes its first appearance as a group of students are given a tour of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, where human beings are grown from test tubes arranged into five designated classes: Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons, from greatest to least on a scale of intellectual and physical superiority as determined by the needs of society. The Director of Hatchery and Conditioning (D.H.C.) refers to this artificial human development into different caste levels as "Bokanovsky's Process" (2), which produces sets of identical twins by means analogous to industrial mass production. He the D.H.C. tells the students that the process is "one

of the major instruments of social stability” (3) before moving on to observe the continuation of this process in the “decanting” and conditioning stages, where the lab workers and machinery instill infants and children with a disdain for the natural world and anything that may foster independent thought and emotion (such as books) (11-12).

Moreover, the State conditions children to behave as it wishes by acclimating them to a hedonistic lifestyle and immersing them in compulsory lessons designed to permanently orient their minds towards the benefit of the State as they sleep. By placing genetic limits on its people’s intelligence, the State can stratify the population according to its needs. Andrew Hacker notes that all castes are taught “to accept their station without question” (600) through the conditioning process: “Such indoctrination ensures that the lower castes bear no resentment towards the rank and prerequisites of their superiors and also that they will be confident of their ‘natural’ command over those who fall beneath them” (600). As the D.H.C. notes, caste-specific “suggestions” (16) are repeated “[t]ill at last the child’s mind *is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child’s mind. And not the child’s mind only. The adult’s mind too—all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides—made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are *our* suggestions!” (16). The State’s decanting and conditioning process ensures that its citizens will always act in the best interest of the societal whole instead of their own or that of other people of their choice. Biologically predestined to grow into designated castes with specific abilities, people are conditioned to become as economically useful to the state as possible. In order to realize this design, of course, people are nearly incapable having wills and desires that are uniquely their own because of their potential risk to the State’s establishment of “Community, Identity, [and] Stability” (1). As in “Legend of the Grand

Inquisitor,” society’s structure proves far more valuable to the world leaders than the humanity supposedly supported by that structure.

Not only does the State maintain its control over its citizens by instilling loyalty and obedience from infancy, but it goes a step further also by providing them with excessive pleasure throughout their adulthood to pacify any desire for individual freedom. In *Dystopian Literature*, M. Keith Booker says that *Brave New World* “portrays a hedonistic future society in which individuals spend most of their time in the pursuit of instant happiness through sex, drugs, and mind-numbing multisensory entertainments like the popular ‘Feelies’ that are continually broadcast to keep the minds and senses of the citizenry occupied at all times” (171). The State’s aim in providing its citizens with constant stimulation and near-unlimited access to sensory pleasure serves to prevent societal instability. With neither the inborn desire to rebel nor any unmet needs in their conditioned state, most people in *Brave New World* feel free because their desires do not—and theoretically cannot—conflict with the will of the State. Therefore, not only does the State prevent people from developing into true individuals, but also, it largely eliminates their ability to actualize any potential for individuality that may already exist.

However, within the State are some exceptions to this generally content population: Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and Lenina Crowne exhibit elements of individuality despite their placement in such a conformist society. When Bernard Marx, an Alpha-plus, makes his first appearance in *Brave New World*, he is being shunned by two fellow Alphas as he enters the changing room; they “[avert] themselves from that unsavory reputation” (Huxley 20). Bernard has the intellectual capacity of an Alpha-plus, but he lacks the corresponding aesthetic qualities (e.g. too short). This physical deficiency, attributed to an accidental injection of “alcohol into his blood-surrogate” (28), contributes to his critical and cynical opinion of society and its failure to

accept him as a full Alpha-plus. Thus, he lives a cynical, rather melancholy life within his caste, but this status also provides him with a measure of individuality.

Bernard's desire for equal footing with the rest of the Alpha-pluses, however, arguably outweighs his desire to change society, and this wish initially surfaces through his envy of "ideal" Alphas such as his friend Helmholtz Watson. Unlike Bernard, Helmholtz is considered the intellectual and physical epitome of an Alpha-plus by nearly everyone in his society. A lecturer at the College of Emotional Engineering and a propaganda writer, he funnels his abilities into supporting the mission of the State, but, as his supervisors observe, he is "[p]erhaps, (and they would shake their heads, would significantly lower their voices) 'a little *too* able'" (40). Helmholtz's "mental excess" (41) causes him to become increasingly dissatisfied with his life as an Alpha because his creativity and desire for personal fulfillment are stifled by societal constraints. He feels that "sport, women, communal activities were only, so far as he was concerned, second bests. Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what?" (41). Although he yearns for pursuits more meaningful than his society allows, his limited frame of reference and the lack of freedom to expand it prevents him from identifying this interest. Moreover, his realization of the State's constraints on his creative potential leaves him with an unsettling yearning for more than what society offers him.

Despite their physical and social differences, Bernard and Helmholtz maintain a friendship based on their shared individuality, which counters the stifling limits on freedom established by their society. On one hand, Bernard is an individual due to his lack of "bone and brawn" (41) that are characteristic of the Alpha caste, and Helmholtz, on the other hand, is perhaps *too* intellectually gifted for an Alpha. In Bernard's apartment, Helmholtz asks Bernard, "Did you ever feel . . . as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to

give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using—you know, like all the water that goes down and falls instead of through the turbines?" (42). His growing awareness of the constraints on his potential inevitably forces him to confront the way the State has drawn rigid parameters around his work as a writer. He wants to write more than propaganda and scripts for the Feelies: "I'm thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling I've got something important to say and the power to say it—only I don't know what it is, and I can't make any use of that power. If there was some different way of writing . . . Or else something else to write about" (42). Even as an Alpha-plus, Helmholtz feels the burden of the constraints placed on his potential as a writer, and he desires the freedom to exercise his creative abilities beyond the needs of the State.

Although Bernard does not quite grasp or empathize with Helmholtz in this moment due to preoccupation with his own frustrations, their conversation seeks to interrogate the nature of the World State and the problems it poses to individual flourishing. Bernard's frustration with life in the State is primarily social. Because of his physical inferiority to, but intellectual equality with, other Alpha-pluses, he feels slighted by society since his physical appearance robs him of the superior treatment he expects as an Alpha. Hence, his cynical view of his society stems from an inability to fully experience the life of its top caste members. Conversely, Helmholtz suffers from a lack of productive outlets for his creative abilities. What is supposed to fulfill him—the privileges of Alpha life and popularity among his peers—now provides him with only a secondary level of satisfaction. While Bernard laments his caste's refusal to fully accept him, Helmholtz bemoans its limitations, and due to the structure of *Brave New World's* society, neither has the freedom to change his situation due to the castes' programmatic and static nature. Despite having their physical needs and, in theory, all other needs provided for by the State, both

men know that their State-given lots offer no room for change and self-actualization outside of state-prescribed boundaries. Even with the unlimited availability of *soma* and other indulgences, these characters remain dissatisfied with their lives because they seem to understand the ultimate futility of such temporal experiences to fulfill them as human beings—and their lack of freedom to truly remedy their situation.

Another noteworthy instance of resistance to the behavioral conditioning enforced in *Brave New World* occurs with the character Lenina Crowne. Conversing with her friend, Fanny Crowne, she reveals that she has been seeing Henry Foster on a consistent basis—a practice considered absurd in the State, which is reinforced by Fanny’s reaction: “Do you mean to tell me you’re *still* going out with Henry Foster?” (23). Lenina’s inclination to go out regularly with one man goes against the grain of her fellow citizens’ typical “consumerist” (Booker 172), non-committal attitude toward other people. Lenina’s choice to continue seeing Henry exclusively is, indeed, an abnormal practice in her society, and her decision to do so in spite of her peers’ surprise suggests that she, too, desires certain aspects of life that society is not designed to offer. Not only does the relative exclusivity of Lenina and Henry’s relationship indicate her preference for going against societal norms, but it also reveals a desire for long-term companionship with an individual instead of fully living out the State’s teaching that “every one belongs to every one else” (Huxley 24). To Lenina, it seems that people are not (all) necessarily interchangeable commodities, but perhaps unique beings worthy of personal investment. Additionally, Bernard also exhibits some unusual monogamous inclinations towards Lenina when they depart for the Savage Reservation, and this minor motif re-emerges later in the novel when they encounter the character John “The Savage.”



Upon the introduction of John and the Savage Reservation, the novel becomes more pointed in its critique of the World State's stance against human freedom and suffering. The Savage Reservation is a place outside of civilization's walls where unconditioned people live in a society whose strictures have not been imposed by planners, save for the electric fence surrounding it (Huxley 60). They are called "Savages" by the civilized (conditioned) world due not only to their lack of conditioning, but also because of their way of life. When Bernard and Lenina take a trip to the reservation, Lenina is particularly surprised to find the people living in family units, practicing monogamy, aging, and engaged in an acceptance of suffering—realities that have been eliminated in the civilized world. Whereas the aforementioned characters only offer perspectives from within the State and as products of the State, John is neither a product of conditioning nor a resident of their civilization. But because he is the viviparous child of Linda (a Beta woman) and the D.H.C., he is also something of an outsider to the people of the reservation. Nonetheless, he has grown up according to the ways of the Savages, practicing mystic rituals, participating in communal activities to the extent they allow him, and pursuing literary interests such as Shakespeare (68-76). He is nearly the antithesis of the conditioned people of the civilized world, and his differences become far more apparent when Bernard and Lenina take him and Linda back with them to the State. While Bernard seems to take a genuine liking to John, his motivations for bringing John and Linda to the State, however, are more experimental and self-serving than loving, foreshadowing the disastrous events to come. His experiment does not render boring results as John's nature as an unconditioned human being clashes with the design of the State, regardless of the State's offerings of comfort and happiness.

In *Brave New World's* literary design, John embodies the aspects of human nature that the State deems as threats to its core values of "Community, Identity, [and] Stability" (1); his

desire for personal freedom, his acceptance of suffering, and his love for nature and literature completely contradict the State's prescribed "humanity" for its citizens. His encounter with civilized society thus offers a vastly different perspective on life in the World State than that of any insider. Whereas Linda, originally decanted and conditioned as a Beta, is quick to re-embrace her former life of artificial pleasure through incessant soma holidays and other drug-like experiences, John is far more disappointed in this "Brave New World." To make matters worse, Bernard introduces him to his society as a human trophy from his expedition to the Savage Reservation, and as an emblem of Bernard's successful endeavor, John is received by the conditioned world as something between a celebrity and an exotic animal.

Disenchanted by the fanfare and the State citizens' shallow, hedonistic way of life, he begins a downward spiral into despair and frustration not only due to the overwhelming presence of meaningless distractions, but also because of a dire lack of outlets for him to exercise freedom for personal growth and flourishing. The severity of John's disappointment with the State's way of life surfaces after Lenina takes him to see a Feely film: the simple, banal *Three Weeks in a Helicopter* (97). After the film, he tells Lenina, "I don't think you ought to see things like that . . . Like this horrible film" (98), which he calls "base" (98) and "ignoble" (98)—ideas from his readings of Shakespeare. When he is alone later that evening, instead of taking *soma* to forget the "horrible film" (98), he takes out his old copy of *Othello* and begins to read it, "religiously" (98) turning the pages: "Othello, he remembered, was like the hero of *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*—a black man" (99). John's reading of *Othello* starkly contrasts with the Feely he viewed earlier; despite all of the film's advanced stimulation technology, John is disgusted with it in comparison to his old, decaying copy of Shakespearean work. He longs to satisfy his mind with something more substantial—anything that allows him to exercise his imagination and direct it towards a

worthy object—a rare thing, he continually finds, in the State. However, the only books to which he has access are those he brought from the Savage Reservation, as the State's aversion to literature has rendered the publication thereof not just obsolete, but essentially illegal. This omissive constraint on his ability to nurture his intellect, he realizes (as does Helmholtz), severely limits his intellectual and perhaps even spiritual potential.

The longer John stays in the State, the more cracks he discovers in its foundation of “Community, Identity, Stability” (1); the constant stimulation from the Feelies, scent organs, and *soma* are mere distractions from a meaningless and slavish existence. Not only is he deeply affected by the lack of truth, beauty, and art in entertainment outlets and other leisure activities, but he is also stunned by the State's exceptionally narrow understanding of humanity and its consequential treatment of its people. Despite the State's emphasis on the happiness of the masses and efforts to eliminate human suffering, its design conducive to its citizens' comfort and pleasure primarily serves the State itself. The State's deliberate inattention to the full needs of humanity hits John most poignantly when he goes to visit his mother, Linda, in the Hospital for the Dying, where she is now “dying in company—in company with all the modern conveniences” (116)—right around the State's projected time of death for an average conditioned citizen. Linda is thoroughly drugged with *soma* in front of the ever-running television when John rushes in to see her, but before he arrives at her bed, he is held up by a nurse casually explaining the inner workings of the hospital with no sense of urgency. This irritates John, who, demanding where his mother is, is met with an offended reaction from the nurse: ““You *are* in a hurry,” she said. ‘Is there any hope?’ he asked. ‘You mean, of her not dying?’ (He nodded.) ‘No, of course there isn't. When somebody's sent here, there's no . . .’

Startled by the expression of distress on his pale face, she suddenly broke off. ‘Why, whatever is the matter?’ she asked. She was not accustomed to this kind of thing in visitors” (116).

The nurse’s surprise at John’s emotion and insistence on seeing Linda exemplifies the State’s widespread disregard for human life’s intrinsic value, which is arguably the basis of its lack of respect for individual freedom and its denial of natural human rights. Moreover, after John spends only a few minutes with Linda, this collective flippancy about death shows itself again as a herd of identical twin pairs are shuffled into the room as part of their death conditioning process. Having been sheltered from the natural progression of human aging, they gawk at Linda’s grotesque-looking form (aged from its former Beta beauty through life on the Reservation) despite John’s presence, making comments such as “Isn’t she awful?” (118) and “Look at her teeth!” (118). When one twin behaves in a particularly irreverent manner, provoking John to grab him and box him on the ears, the nurse does not scold the child, but instead becomes agitated with John for interfering with the children’s death conditioning. Linda can no longer recognize John in her *soma*-induced trance, rendering John completely isolated in spirit as he tries to get her to recognize him. The combination of his violent mannerisms and her hallucinatory state causes her to see him as an “intrusion” (119) into her dream rather than as her son, so she panics and eventually chokes to death.

As John grieves over his mother, however, the conditioning process continues as usual around him. The loss of one person fazes neither adult nor child in the room, and the nurse scolds John for “the scandalous exhibition” (120) in fear of his emotional reaction “[u]ndoing all [the childrens’] wholesome death-conditioning” (120), another means by which the State attempts to eliminate suffering. John’s display of grief over his mother’s death is a spectacle to the conditioned onlookers, and rather than accepting death conditioning as a means to free oneself

from suffering and loss, he views the practice as a handicap on people's ability to love and receive love. An immediate example of this problem is arguably Linda's soma-induced condition preventing her from recognizing and showing love to her son. In essence, total avoidance of suffering in the World State ultimately amounts to a depreciation of the spiritual good suffering is able to facilitate.

However, when John later sees *soma* delivered and distributed within the hospital, he recalls the Shakespearean phrase "O, brave new world" (123), now seeing in it an audacious sense of hope for his "new world": "Linda had been a slave, Linda had died; others should live in freedom, and the world be made beautiful. A reparation, a duty" (123). In a desperate attempt to initiate this "reparation" (123), he says to the people around him, "Listen, I beg of you . . . don't take that horrible stuff [soma]. It's poison, it's poison . . . Poison to the soul as well as body" (123). Unmoved by his pleas, the crowd of Deltas becomes angry, but John persists in expressing his ultimate motive for doing away with *soma*: "I come to bring you freedom" (123). John sees that the only means by which he might enact a societal change is through verbally persuading the conditioned masses to rebel against their State, and he tries his best to bring the crowd to an understanding of their reality of bondage through artificial happiness. To no avail, he continues to ask them, "But do you like being slaves? . . . Do you like being babies? Yes, babies. Mewling and puking . . . Don't you want to be free and men? Don't you even understand what manhood and freedom are?" (124). John's choice of infantile words in describing the conditioned masses of the State reflects the Grand Inquisitor's own verbiage for his subjects, whom he calls "thousands of millions of happy babes" (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers*, 259) who have given up their freedom for happiness.

However, his words fall on highly-conditioned ears; not only do the Deltas fail to comprehend the truth of his warning about the *soma* and his promise of freedom, but neither do they want to part from the comforts of conditioning nor understand the significance of individual freedom. Unlike the prisoners in *Dead House*, who care little for philosophy of freedom but crave freedom nonetheless, the Deltas' conditioning renders them incapable of grasping the value of freedom or the potential it holds for a human being. John's final response to their ignorance is to throw the *soma* out the window—an action that sends the entire hospital into chaos as Bernard and Helmholtz simultaneously arrive. Perhaps ironically, the Deltas fight for their *soma* as if it were their “right” while John keeps throwing bottles out the window. As Helmholtz joins John in throwing out the bottles, Bernard remains on the fringes of the commotion, unsure of whether to sacrifice his safety and Alpha dignity to help his friends (Huxley 124-25). However, the commotion ends when the police arrive and tranquilize the crowds, and John, Helmholtz, and Bernard are taken away to answer to Mustapha Mond for disturbing the peace and threatening societal stability. Although the police use force to subdue the crowds, that force comes only in forms of non-violent tranquilization—spray, gasses, and a firm but gentle automated warning over the building's speakers—in order to maintain the social expectation of comfort and security, whereby threats to societal order are simply neutralized instead of destroyed.

In the Controller's study, the culprits' collective act of defiance against the State and its values is met with a treatise in defense of the State's design for human life. Addressing John, Mustapha remarks, “So you don't much like civilization, Mr. Savage” (127). Indeed, John cannot deny his sore disappointment in the State and its people, although he perks up when Mustapha quotes *The Tempest*: “‘Have you read it too?’ he asked. ‘I thought nobody knew about that book

here, in England” (127). Mustapha replies, “Almost nobody. I’m one of the very few. It’s prohibited, you see. But as I make the laws here, I can also break them” (127), reflecting the mindset of the Grand Inquisitor; both rulers have taken on the “burden” of freedom and thus believe they retain the power to define the needs of humanity. According to Elliot, “In Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* Mustapha Mond, the Controller, is [an] incarnation of the Grand Inquisitor, unhappy himself, dedicated to the happiness of the Epsilons, the Deltas, the Betas, and most of the Alphas” (95-96). Except for his lack of affiliation with the “Church,” Mustapha is analogous to the Inquisitor in both political position and his justification for the laws governing society. He bans his citizens from exposure to any teaching or artifact with the potential to draw people away from that which contributes to technological progress and the growth and stability of the State. He is especially wary of old and beautiful things; hence, *The Tempest* and other Shakespearean works are dually dangerous to society; as Mustapha explains, “Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones” (Huxley 127). Despite the shallow, banal nature of the “new things” (127) such as the Feelies John criticizes, Mustapha maintains that they are far more suitable for society than *Othello* because they promote the conflict-free, simple-minded attitudes that must be instilled to ensure social stability.

John’s primary grievance against society within the state is ultimately directed at the absence of individual freedom, which, in turn, results in imaginative stagnancy and severely curtailed human potential. While Mustapha admits to enjoying the great imaginative works’ intrinsic beauty and compositional quality, he says such works—and their ideas—must be kept away from the general population:

[O]ur world is not the same as Othello's world. You can't make flivvers without steel—and you can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's *soma*. Which you go and chuck out of the window in the name of liberty, Mr. Savage. *Liberty!* . . . Expecting Deltas to know what liberty is! (129)

If humanity's most important need is stability, then the World Controllers have designed human community in a way that perfectly reflects the primacy of this virtue. The conditioning process prevents the development of virtually every human striving towards a chosen ideal, almost completely killing individuality and stifling every attempt to satisfy natural human curiosity. Moreover, suffering is eliminated as a normal part of life for the masses, with the exception of the Controllers and some Alphas. To eliminate the expectation of suffering, the Controllers prevent as many opportunities for it as possible. As both John and Mustapha know, however, total stability requires the sacrifice of any personal freedom that could destabilize society. But as demonstrated throughout *Brave New World*, Mond errs in his assertions about complete mastery over the masses' behavior, particularly their desires. Not only do the three men in his office sit there on account of subverting the State's design, but even the Epsilon elevator operator earlier in the novel shows signs of desiring more than his state-given lot when he gapes at the "warm glory of the afternoon sunlight" (36).



Thus, anything that might stir the imagination and elicit too much contemplation is carefully guarded, lest it move some to action contrary to the best interest of the State. Addressing John's lament over the State's implementation of stability, Mustapha says, "Actual happiness always looks pretty squalid in comparison with the overcompensations for misery. And, of course, stability isn't nearly so spectacular as instability. And being contented has none of the glamour of a good fight against misfortune, none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt" (129). He admits that his happiness-saturated society precludes the possibility of any life-altering or even significant human experience, but he believes that the price of stability is justified by its effects. Like the Grand Inquisitor, Mustapha seems to look down on human nature as a thing to be cured, just as he sees conditioning as the crowning scientific achievement that primes society for harmonious existence.

According to John D. Simons in "The Grand Inquisitor in Schiller, Dostoevsky and Huxley," the Controller and the Grand Inquisitor alike are "convinced of man's inability to attain happiness through Christ's freedom" (24). He continues: "[They] proceed to create a common basis that will render all men happy and content. As the first step, it was necessary to establish an entirely new, materialistic system of values and to make man's concept of success and happiness dependent on it" (24). In *Brave New World*, the general population has been conditioned to derive pleasure, fulfillment, and security from consumption while looking to the State as the sole source of these "essentials." The population's system of values is oriented towards virtual worship of the state, which is thus rendered a functional God-figure in the novel. It is no wonder, then, that "Ford" is substituted for "Lord" or "God" in the State citizen's language. This dynamic in Huxley's novel mimics the Grand Inquisitor's societal blueprint; "Community, Identity,

Stability” parallels “mystery, miracle, authority” as the ultimate trifecta of human needs; the freedom of the individual is sacrificed for the stability of the whole, and unlimited freedom is granted to a small group of elites claiming to suffer for the benefit of those under their rule.

But John is prepared to suffer the burdens of living free of the State’s physical, intellectual, and emotional confines in spite of the virtually unlimited sensual pleasures offered therein. He cannot acclimate himself to such a lifestyle as an unconditioned, naturally-developed person because he is fully conscious of human potential apart from the State’s design for humanity. Before speaking alone with John, Mustapha orders Bernard and Helmholtz to be banished from civilized society, but sent to islands, respectively, where they can continue their pursuits of art and science without running the risk of deconditioning and destabilizing society (Huxley 132-33). Helmholtz appears resigned to his “punishment”—on the condition that he is sent to an island “with a thoroughly bad climate . . . [with] a lot of wind and storms” (133) because he believes these conditions to be more conducive to writing (133). Whereas Bernard longs for reinstatement in society, Helmholtz’s attitude is more like John’s in that he chooses to embrace unpleasantness and suffering (on a stormy island) for the sake of better fulfilling his potential as a writer and, more to the point, a human being. While the degree of suffering awaiting Helmholtz on the stormy island is unclear in the text, his resolve is arguably rather Dostoevskian in nature; he not only accepts, but desires a harsher living situation for the freedom to strive towards his personal ideal.

However, John is far more outspoken about his desire for freedom and about the dehumanizing nature of the State’s conditioning process and caste system. When they are alone, he eventually tells Mustapha that he would rather live in true freedom than in the illusion of it, embracing suffering to experience everything which the World State has destroyed or for which

it has invented an artificial replacement: “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin” (140). Mustapha then asserts, “In fact . . . you’re claiming the right to be unhappy” (140), to which John responds, “All right, then . . . I’m claiming the right to be unhappy” (140). To put John’s words into perspective, Mustapha lists various ailments within John’s “right” to experience: “the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind” (140). After a long silence, John simply says, “I claim them all” (140).

Despite the potential dangers of claiming individuality and living free from the community of the State, John cannot accept a world in which truth, beauty, and individual freedom have been abolished. He is a prisoner in spite of the fact that Feelies, scent organs, and *soma*, keep the senses flooded with pleasurable distractions from society’s stagnant reality. His experience within this “brave new world” disintegrates into a nightmare rather than the dream of freedom he envisioned before his arrival, and, unlike even the narrator and other prisoners in *Dead House*, he is left with no hope for a future freedom (Dostoevsky 252) to which his spirit can hold fast. Moreover, his soul yearns for a wholeness that can be achieved neither in the State nor back at his Reservation, where Linda’s and therefore his own status as an outsider barred him from experiencing many aspects of the natives’ lifestyle. In his own words, he is “[t]errribly alone” (79) on the Reservation, and the State offers him only a horrifying alternative. Thus, as a prisoner with no hope of freedom and unable to purge himself of the horrors of this artificial humanity, he ultimately allows his will to turn on itself by choosing to commit suicide—a final

act of defiance—after wandering on the outskirts of the Wall for a few days while still being hounded by the ignorant, spectacle-seeking news crew of the State (151).

As his experience of the civilized world expands, John becomes increasingly distressed by his environment the realities of civilized life and begins to respond to his new situation like the prisoners in *Dead House* when they are placed under extreme duress. His reaction to these new, and for him—extreme—conditions and his inability to fully escape from them towards the end of *Brave New World* reflect the “convulsive” (Dostoevsky qtd. in Jackson 6) responses to imprisonment that Dostoevsky’s narrator observes in fellow convicts. Indeed, John confronts the realization of his own hopelessness with violence and mania. Moreover, the society that so torments John because of its antagonism to human freedom and individuality borrows an astounding number of principles from Ivan Karamazov’s “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” particularly the rulers’ shared assumptions about humanity and its need for absolute governance. As Simons notes, “the Inquisitors [and] the World Controller claimed to be striving for humanity’s welfare, concluding that the happiness best suited to human nature is the soothing oblivion of a decisionless existence. [Huxley and Dostoevsky show] that such a philosophy can lead to the ultimate stage of deterioration, where freedom and the worth of the individual are no longer respected” (29).

Although Huxley’s argument for the centrality of individual freedom—while it offers a nod to God’s necessary existence—finds its deepest roots in sociological argumentation rather than in religious and theological reasoning, he and Dostoevsky employ a common literary technique of allowing their characters to live out ideas to their logical conclusions. Hence, *Brave New World* makes much of its argument for freedom’s essential place in human life by putting its characters through situations in which their natures are tested (Serpieters 233). John’s final

response to his “brave new world” as a freely chosen act of self-cancelation appears to serve as Huxley’s primary answer to the destruction of individual freedom and the problem of suffering, as opposed to Dostoevsky’s answer of active love. In effect, his suicide mirrors Ivan’s returning his ticket to God, only John is returning his ticket to the State. Huxley’s argument for individual freedom from *Brave New World* acknowledges the value of an individual’s potential—and, thus, his or her right—to freedom from constraint. *Brave New World* certainly does not offer a Christ-centered or even a clear answer to the central problem of freedom, but, through echoing much of Dostoevsky’s thought, points not only to individual freedom’s essential role in human wholeness, but the value of the individual.

## Conclusion

Despite the similarities in their treatment of human nature, behavior, and freedom in Dostoevsky's and Huxley's works, few researchers have attempted to bridge the gap in scholarship between these authors. However, a careful examination of the major motifs in *Notes from a Dead House*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *Brave New World* reveals commonalities threaded through each work that warrant substantial consideration.

Often referred to as a prophetic writer by many scholars, Dostoevsky is considered a foundational literary source of the twentieth century's dystopian sub-genre. According to Booker,

Dostoevsky's work functions as an important forerunner of many developments in twentieth-century literature . . . Dystopian fiction is clearly among the later literary trends that directly echo aspects of Dostoevsky's fiction. Indeed, while it might not be strictly accurate to describe any of the individual works of Dostoevsky literally as Dystopian fictions, his works anticipate the modern development of dystopian fiction in striking ways. (141)

Many scholars largely agree that the Russian author's proto-dystopian motifs stem from his personal experience of utopian-minded philosophers and political radicals bearing their influence on his society. However, Booker contends that Dostoevsky's prison experience operated as a microcosm of totalitarian government and believes *Dead House* to be most akin to an actual dystopian work:

[*Dead House*] is the Dostoevsky work that probably comes closest to being a dystopian fiction in its own right. The book, based on Dostoevsky's own experiences, is a description of life in a Siberian prison camp in the mid-nineteenth century. But

Goryanchikov, its fictional author, clearly implies in places that the prison society he describes can be seen as a microcosm of the similarly carceral Russian society outside the camp. (141-42)

Among the many grievances the narrator holds against prison life in *Dead House*, the lack of individual freedom torments him most of all. Thus, Dostoevsky's implication here is that in society outside of prison, despite the absence of other harsh Siberian realities such as corporal punishment, labor, the cold, and squalid living conditions, life without freedom on a national scale would be unbearable because freedom is central to human nature.

Huxley's understanding of humanity's need for freedom is similar. His great realization of a character who lives out the consequences of having his individual freedom curtailed to the point of dehumanization is John "the Savage" in *Brave New World*. Because of his unconditioned nature as a creative, knowledge-hungry, and loving being, John cannot find true satisfaction under the dystopian shadow of the World State, whose formula for human livelihood of sacrificing individual freedom for artificial happiness is utterly incompatible with natural humanity. Indicators of Dostoevsky's influence surface throughout other major elements of *Brave New World* as well, particularly in the Grand Inquisitor-like figure, Mustapha Mond. Booker notes that "the Grand Inquisitor is a direct forerunner of any number of Dystopian rulers, including Zamyatin's Benefactor, Orwell's O'Brien, [and] Huxley's Mustapha Mond" (141), and Peter Firchow contends that parts of Huxley's *Brave New World* are "alleged to have been derived (not to say plagiarized) from Shakespeare, Dostoevsky" (302) and others.

Much of *The Brothers'* connection to *Brave New World* rests in the similarities between the two world leaders (Ivan's fictional Grand Inquisitor and Mustapha Mond) and their moral and political philosophies for governing humanity. Arguably, it is Dostoevsky's influence that

seems the strongest on Huxley in this regard. Both Dostoevsky's and Huxley's rulers aim to rid society of individual freedom, but they claim to do so for the sake of human happiness and security. Ironically, however, the sacrifice is not so much theirs as that of the people who "benefit" from their authority; their stable societies come at the loss of essential elements of their citizens' humanity that require individual liberty, including the ability to strive towards a goal or ideal, the exercise of one's creative abilities, and the capacity for active love. Despite the undeniable truth that trials lead to great suffering, both Dostoevsky and Huxley contend that human freedom should not and cannot be abolished if people are to retain their humanity.

While Dostoevsky is well aware of the term *freedom*'s various meanings and practical understandings, the two primary types of freedom dealt with in *Dead House* and *The Brothers* are what this thesis refers to as *freedom from* and *freedom for*. In *Dead House*, the narrator is forced into becoming hyper-aware of his inherent desire for freedom from constraint. As a prisoner, he must endure a strictly regimented lifestyle and is confined to a small area within which he is permitted physical movement. Not only do the physical constraints upset him, but the tight regulations placed on reading and writing material in prison exacerbate his feelings of intellectual confinement. Consequently, the prisoners' psychological states suffer tremendously from such a lack of individual freedom, and they often resort to extreme behavior when given an opportunity to exercise their wills. Carousing, violence, and quarrels are among the expressions the narrator observes in his fellow convicts.

Yet, while *Dead House* appears to dwell on human beings' need for a reasonable degree of autonomy, it also sheds light on Dostoevsky's major focus later found in *The Brothers*: *freedom for*. Within *Dead House*, this focal shift occurs when the convicts have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with traditional Russian Orthodox festivities and theatricals. Not only are



they temporarily free from many of their typical prison constraints, but, through brotherly communion and the chance to partake in a universal celebration of Christ, they enact their freedom by loving one another in the spirit of Christ and striving towards a Christian moral ideal that is seldom present within the prison any other time of year. Perhaps the perennial nature of this brotherly communion corresponds with the relaxation of physical and behavioral constraints for the Christmas holiday, which therefore suggests that freedom *from* enables freedom *for* in Dostoevsky's thought.

Nowhere is freedom *for*—especially freedom for active love—explored more thoroughly in Dostoevsky's works than in *The Brothers*. However, freedom *from* certainly is not ignored. On one hand, in “Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” through which Ivan expresses his desire to replace human freedom with universal happiness and security (much like the World Controllers), freedom *from* takes an ironic twist when the Grand Inquisitor seeks to eradicate suffering. In giving his people an experience of freedom from suffering, he simultaneously institutes a governmental system in which freedom *for* cannot exist for the “weak” masses by convincing them that they are incapable of being free. On the other hand, the rest of *The Brothers* responds to the Grand Inquisitor's formula for human living by demonstrating this approach's horrific lack of viability. As shown in the teachings of the Elder Zosima and the defining experiences of other characters in the novel, humanity must not only have freedom *from* the types of external constraints imposed by the Grand Inquisitor, but also freedom *for* pursuing a life of active love; without individual freedom or suffering, active love would be impossible for human beings. Dostoevsky implies that since human beings, no matter the degree of their intellect or even their good intentions, are incapable of creating or maintaining a perfect society, abolishing or severely limiting individual freedom dehumanizes people and ultimately makes them cease to love in

action. Thus, in *The Brothers* as well as in *Dead House*, freedom from constraint (as opposed to freedom from suffering) allows the freedom for active love and self-sacrifice that characterizes the ideal of Christ-likeness.

While Huxley likely did not share foundational Christian beliefs about humanity, theology, and Christ as the true source of human freedom, *Brave New World* nonetheless reflects significant threads of Dostoevsky's thoughts regarding freedom *from* and freedom *for*. This idea is perhaps most observable in John's character when confronted by Mustapha Mond. In spite of the pleasure offered within the physical and mental confines of the World State (such as banned literature and caps on creative work), the limitations on human potential for anything more than economic contribution and the avoidance of suffering creates more misery for John than satisfaction. John, a literary embodiment of the spiritual and emotional side of humanity, cannot truly live out a largely artificial and purely rational design for human beings because that design ultimately denies the human need for freedom—not only freedom from constraint, but freedom for striving towards personally-chosen ideals and the condition of suffering necessary for their realization. Since John is considered an outsider and barred from many activities (including spiritual activities) at the Savage Reservation in addition to finding the State essentially unlivable, he would rather cease to exist. In *Brave New World*, there is no alternative.

Whereas Dostoevsky attributes the source of human freedom to Christ in *Dead House* and *The Brothers*, Huxley fails to pinpoint any one source of human freedom and chooses not to establish any spiritual connection with freedom in *Brave New World*. Primarily through the character John, he chooses to simply illustrate the effects of extreme constraint upon the individual, which undoubtedly concludes that, in spite of “Community, Identity, [and] Stability” (Huxley 1), freedom is an essential component of humanity whose elimination results in an

ultimately stagnant and meaningless life. Although hypothetical (as is, of course, Dostoevsky's work in large part), Huxley's assessment of the human psyche and spirit when placed under conditions of extremely unnatural limitations therefore renders results strikingly similar to those portrayed by Dostoevsky. From both a Christian and a secular point of view, in the case of Dostoevsky and Huxley, one cannot take away an individual's freedom without taking away that individual's humanity. However, Huxley's rationale for freedom's centrality derives from the self-evident needs of human nature. Dostoevsky affirms this idea, but he takes his argument much further because of his belief in Christ and the *imago Dei*. Christ defines Dostoevsky's (mature) concept of human freedom as the capacity for human beings to strive towards Christ-likeness, truth, and beauty, while embracing the earth and actively loving their fellow image-bearers.

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