

**Dostoevsky's Prophecy of Soviet and
Post-Soviet Being**

Grigorii L. Tulchinksii

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing the content of the parable of the Grand Inquisitor from Fyodor M. Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* allows us to identify the root ideas and consequences of a program for reorganizing society aimed solely at transforming the external material environment. Historical experience has confirmed Dostoevsky's warning that implementing this kind of program requires permanent violence against nature, society, and man. The temptation of the powerful by their own power can be countered by a program for forming social harmony.

KEYWORDS

the authorities/power, F.M. Dostoevsky; violence; religion; socialism; Christology

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Introduction

Dostoevsky's work represents an outstanding contribution not only to world literature, but also to philosophical understandings of man's Being, of his place in the world, of his attitude toward other people and himself.

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Phenomenology, existentialism, personalism, philosophical hermeneutics, analytical philosophy, research on theory and philosophy of culture and personhood, and even cognitive science have turned to and will continue to turn to Dostoevsky's texts, not only in search of answers, but also for their formulation of questions that have arisen before humanity and each of its representatives when faced with the challenges of modern civilization.

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Dostoevsky's works, along with Lev N. Tolstoy's spiritual inquiries and supporters of *imiaslavie*,¹ which had a major impact on philosophy, poetry, and mathematics, are rightly considered the symbols of a "Russian Renaissance" that emerged in Russian culture in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Dostoevsky was, as they say, right in the "thick of it" for his time. He literally "knew everything and everyone": He spent time both in Europe and in labor camps, he was a socialist and also dined with the royal family. Both advancing and substantiating arguments still used by Orthodox fundamentalists, he considered himself a greater liberal than the liberals themselves, and for all the initially deliberate outrageousness of that statement, there is a nontrivial substance to it, as we shall see.

This article discusses the key role of Dostoevsky's understanding of the programs for reorganizing the world and attempts to implement them that actively manifested in his time. A number of Dostoevsky's texts present this understanding, including "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," *Crime and Punishment*, and *Demons* (primarily in Shigalev's declarations). However, he expressed this understanding in its most concentrated form in a small fragment of chapter five, book five of his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the "poem" delivered by Ivan Karamazov to his younger brother Alyosha in their dark, fenced-in corner of the tavern. This fragment immediately aroused interest and heated debate, during the course of which, and courtesy of Vasily V. Rozanov, it became known as "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" (LGI). The text itself, along with analysis and interpretations by Konstantin N. Leontiev, Vladimir S. Solovyov, Vasily V. Rozanov, Sergey N. Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Semyon L. Frank, happily gathered into a single book by Yu. I Seliverstov,² provide a fairly complete picture of the content and meaning of LGI. The parable represents an ingenious prophecy regarding the prospects for organizing a society in which the material conditions for prosperity are provided under the caring guardianship of the authorities who make those conditions a reality.

Dostoevsky did this in a deeply religious, Christological context that takes his understanding far beyond simple condemnation of socialist ideas and leads not only to an awareness of why the Soviet experiment collapsed, but also to the horizons of human and social Being that have only recently been unveiled.

Dostoevsky's lesson

The parable of the Grand Inquisitor is part of Dostoevsky's final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, itself the first part of a *War and Peace*-sized novel about his hero's moral path that he first conceived in 1868; it would consist of five tales, fifteen author's sheets each. The prototypes for the characters in this novel were to be Chaadaev, Pushkin, Belinsky, and Granovskii.³ However,

current affairs distracted Dostoevsky's attention, beginning in 1876 when he began publishing his *Diary of a Writer* (in which we find, apparently for the first time, the blogging format). Notably, Dostoevsky began thinking about *The Brothers Karamazov* after his 1863 trip to London, where he visited the World Expo, which made a great firsthand impression on him as the triumph of Baal, as the prophecy of the Revelation fulfilled.⁴ In his preface to *Karamazov*, the author writes that this would be the first of two novels, of which the second was to be the main work. The first gives only a sketch of the hero (Alyosha), in contrast to Ivan, who combines the features of a number of characters from Dostoevsky's other works, including Raskolnikov, Svidrigailov, Stavrogin, and Versilov, concentrated into one person. This is who delivers the parable.

In his prefatory remarks before reading the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter at a December 30, 1879, literary gathering for the benefit of students at St. Petersburg University, Dostoevsky said that, in this text, "Christianity's lofty view of humanity has been reduced to gazing at them as if they were a herd of beasts, and the contempt for that herd is no longer disguised as a social love for humanity."⁵

The plot of "The Grand Inquisitor" is too well known to reproduce in detail here, but we will reiterate the overall outline. In sixteenth-century Seville, against the backdrop of the Inquisition's daily bonfires burning heretics for the glory of God, Christ reappears, showing compassion and mercy for the tormented and persecuted. He is recognized, his miracles are glorified, but the Grand Inquisitor orders Christ seized and imprisoned, then visits him at night and delivers a lengthy speech asking Christ to leave the world, lest he be condemned in the morning and burned at the stake as the worst of heretics. Christ utters not a single word for the entire duration of the action; then he leaves and kisses the Grand Inquisitor farewell.

The essence of the parable lies in the Grand Inquisitor's detailed argumentation. He believes that anything Christ would proclaim now would destroy people's faith in freedom that he proclaimed fifteen hundred years before, a proclamation that its interpreters and analyzers, among which the Grand Inquisitor considers himself, have managed to master for themselves. As a result of their activities, "now, and precisely today . . . people are more confident than ever that they are completely free, but meanwhile they themselves have brought us their freedom and humbly laid it at our feet."⁶ This happened because people have finally been made happy. A man who strives for freedom is a rebel who inherently cannot be happy.⁷

The Grand Inquisitor reminds Christ of the three temptations to which he was subjected by the "terrible and sly spirit" and which he rejected. The first is to feed people by turning stones into bread. "You objected," says the

Inquisitor, “that man does not live by bread alone, but do you realize that, in the name of this very bread, the spirit of the earth will rise up against you, and fight you, and defeat you, and everyone will follow him . . . centuries will pass, and humanity will proclaim from the lips of his wisdom and his science that there is no crime, and therefore no sin, but only the hungry.”⁸ People do not want freedom, but to be fed, saying: “Enslave us if you must, but feed us.”⁹ The Inquisitor, who has knowledge of centuries of state experience, actually claims to formulate the principle of anthropology of power: Freedom and satiety are incompatible.¹⁰ Freedom of any kind brings only additional suffering. 115 120

The second temptation was to cast himself down from the temple roof and remain unharmed. In rejecting this in the name of faith in God rather than miracles, the Inquisitor says that Christ “did not realize that, as soon as man rejects miracles, he will immediately reject God, for man seeks not so much God as miracles.”¹¹ 125

The third temptation was the temptation of power: As we know, Christ rejected the offer of Caesar’s sword and all the kingdoms of the world. This was his main error in the eyes of the Grand Inquisitor, because in his mind, “Who else can control people if not those who control their conscience and those who hold their bread? We took the sword of Caesar, and in so taking it, of course, we rejected you and followed *him*.”¹² 130

According to this argument, the Grand Inquisitor and others like him corrected Christ’s “error” and followed his tempter, taking power and basing it on miracle, mystery, and authority. That people were “led like a herd, and that this terrible gift that brought them so much torment was finally removed from their hearts,”¹³ namely, the gift of freedom, brought them only happiness. Dostoevsky’s understanding of happiness through enslavement is also detailed by Shigalev in *Demons*,¹⁴ but there it is based on “mathematically” dividing humanity into a tenth who are to be its rulers: They are allowed to do anything and they receive unlimited power over the remaining nine-tenths. 135 140

The Grand Inquisitor proclaims that he and others like him will give people “a quiet, humble happiness, the happiness of the weak creatures they were created to be . . . Oh, we will convince them . . . that they are weak, that they are only pathetic children, but also that the happiness of a child is sweeter than any other. They will become timid and will look up to us and cling to us in fear, like chicks to their mother hen.”¹⁵ This fear is that they could lose their well-being and bear responsibility for the possibility of that loss. 145 150

Thus does the Grand Inquisitor outline his argument for the anthropology of power as deliverance from freedom and responsibility based on the promise of prosperity and happiness. Anthropology is the right word, because it is based on human nature.

“Thus you yourself laid the foundation for the destruction of your own kingdom. Blame no one else for this,”¹⁶ the Inquisitor lectures Christ. Christ, however, blames no one: He kisses the Inquisitor farewell. In the novel, Alyosha answers his brother, “Your poem is praise for Jesus, not blasphemy,”¹⁷ and he is right in a broadly theological sense. In the concrete historical sense, however, the Inquisitor’s program has been made reality on more than one occasion, and it continues to be today. 155
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Dostoevsky believed that socialism was focused on changing the economic and other material aspects of life. As he demonstrates in “The Dream of a Ridiculous Man,” however, this not only does nothing to change moral nature, but it also turns into unfreedom. Consumer society makes satiety a reality but is also fraught with spiritual slavery,¹⁸ with a “new animalness” (G. Agamben). 165

Dostoevsky found the solution in Christianity, not so much in its religious canon as in the great hope given by the experience of the righteous who make the moral ideal a reality in their own lives. Any endeavor begins with an idea initiated by someone who captivates others by his personal example. The problem lies in transitioning this idea from a small group to a wider circle, and ultimately to everyone. The issue is not only and not so much about intensive regular communication,¹⁹ but, per Dostoevsky, about the work of each individual’s soul, the test of love, goodness, and conscience. The society that would arise and be driven by this is not the kind of society in which man cannot work evil, but one where he would not wish to work evil,²⁰ where it is not the general ordering of life that creates change, but where that very ordering is itself created by “me, myself.” 170
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It is not by chance that when O. Kharkhordin reconstructs the “Dostoevsky project,” he characterizes it as “a project for converting the world into a church and displacing the state.”²¹ However, this kind of reproach seems unjust. Dostoevsky’s message is directed specifically against caesaropapism (for which he always reproached Catholicism), where the church itself supplants the state or merges with it (as the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church has done). 180
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The Soviet experience

Another area where Kharkhordin is right is that the parable of the Grand Inquisitor demonstrates a model not of the church’s sublation of the state but, on the contrary, of the state’s sublation of the church, wherein the authorities themselves don church robes, speak of spirituality, and replace any ethics with violence. If we remain in a secularist position, then, in cases of developed civil society, the church, as part of that society, can play the role of defending the individual from state encroachment on his freedom.²² Without this kind of institutional environment, the Grand Inquisitor’s model is the one that becomes reality. 190
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This idea was famously developed by Nikolai Berdyaev, arguing that Soviet communism exploited the deep religious energy of the Russian people. Today, the argument has been reiterated by D. Marsden.²³ Andrei Sinyavsky even argued that Soviet Being represents the reality of Dostoevsky's dream in reverse, "for a state without God has turned into a church without God and with endless pretensions to human conscience. Stalin, therefore, does not just speak, but seemingly acts as a priest, while any of his opponents, even imaginary ones, must repent of their sins before being shot."²⁴ 200

Indeed, many back in the 1930s noted that the characteristics of the social order constructed by the Stalinist regime were inherent to the design of religious institutions.²⁵ This is about more than just the portraits of leaders replacing icons. The former seminarian Stalin combined a highly simplified Marxism–Leninism with a catechetical style of rigid dogmatism, theological concision, struggle against heresy, argumentation through questions and answers, and liturgicality. This all was preceded by the "God-building" of 205
A. Bogdanov, M. Gorky, and A.V. Lunacharsky.²⁶ 210

Thus, religion did not die out in the Soviet order's semantic picture of the world and sociocultural practice, despite the efforts of "militant atheism"; it did not die at all, but "changed its form; the transcendental lost its otherworldliness and became immanent."²⁷ M. Vaiskopf's analysis of the style of the Stalinist regime concludes, "In the person of Stalin, Russia retreated to its pre-reform sociocultural paradigm, the total sacralization of the sovereign and the state."²⁸ 215
While proclaiming its hatred for the church, religion, and autocracy, the Stalinist regime took their place in practice, meanwhile embodying their integration.

This was precisely the danger Dostoevsky warned about but could not possibly have dreamt of in his parable of the Grand Inquisitor! Moreover, in *Demons* Dostoevsky warned of the danger of half-educated seminarians and university students entering the political arena. 220

In their struggle for power against a civil bourgeois society that had not yet matured in Russia, the Bolsheviks did lead a peasant revolution that responded to the real demand of the majority of society, which was made up of peasants and soldiers recruited from the peasantry, ending a much-hated war and giving land to the peasants in their preferred form of "black redistribution." Having thus won a civil war that bled the country further, the Bolsheviks interrupted the country's entry into modernity and plunged it 225
into archaism.²⁹ They were able to gain a foothold in power only with the help of the New Economic Plan. 230

Lenin and his supporters were able to use Western scientific terminology to express populist, Slavophile meanings, imparting the character of an international mission to the Soviet authorities. The Stalinist regime was able to put into practice the synthesis of this essentially religious message with the practice of imperial power in its internal and external 235
manifestations.

Dostoevsky was not a “theological political scientist” in the sense of C. Schmitt, who is now translated and quoted with great reverence by Russian political scientists. For Schmitt, the essence of the political is tough opposition to the Enemy, an ability to fight him to the death,³⁰ an ability provided by power, which cannot be immanent in nature. Its origins are transcendent and extra-normative from the perspective of this world. For Schmitt and his supporters, an example of this transcendence, this “other-worldliness” of power, is the state of emergency, which abolishes all rules and laws, institutionalizing the powers-that-be as the source of new rules for life and death. Schmitt equates sovereignty with the state of emergency: “The sovereign is he who decides on the state of emergency.”³¹ This allows us to draw far-reaching conclusions. “The state of emergency has the same significance to jurisprudence that the miracle does for theology,” Schmitt writes.³² Just as a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature by some direct, volitional intervention, so is the social order created by the direct intervention of the sovereign. In fact, this means the sacralization of secular authorities, giving them the right to limitless expression of will and actions, including unlimited violence. From this point of view, the role of the authorities, the state, is to maintain order while “shuttling” human society from the first appearance of the Messiah to his second coming and Judgment Day. Order is maintained despite the finite nature of power itself and, for that matter, of each individual man. Thus, the bar for the basis for political violence is raised to messianism.

To adhere to this standpoint leads to justification of some very specific practices. This was true of Schmitt himself defending the June 30, 1934, “Night of the Long Knives,” when SS detachments carried out extrajudicial reprisals at Hitler’s direction to destroy the leadership of the Sturmabteilung, led by Ernst Röhm, who was suspected of planning a coup. The next day, Hitler himself justified the massacre of his former comrades-at-arms as a “state necessity.” A short while later, Schmitt, a jurist of the highest caliber, delivered a speech, “The Führer Protects Law,” in which he argued that “the Führer creates Law by his strength as leader.”³³ The Führer is not just self-defined; he defines everything else and is not defined by anything or anyone. Herein lies the Grand Inquisitor’s trinity of miracle, mystery, and power, making the ruler a “mortal God.” This is the miracle and mystery of power, or power as a miracle and mystery, from the point of view of “inquisitors” and the philosophers who defend them.

Because it is true that, in critical situations (coups, revolutions, states of emergency) where old institutions fail, the authorities reach beyond normativity, introducing—temporarily, until the crisis is resolved, or laying the foundation for a new form for the state—new rules, “transcendental” rules in relation to the old ones. This requires justification in the eyes of society in order to ensure legitimacy. The elimination of problems causing the crisis is

temporary in nature, which does not always suit the new rulers. They need stronger arguments, more “thought-out” justifications. It is not by chance that history has seen such frequent appeals to reviving “true” dynasties and eliminating “imposters.” However, the most “simple and substantial” defense is provided by sacralization, the direct appeal to divine will and power, or the appeal to possession of some indisputable historical truth, reinforced by large-scale, theatrical rallies for greater persuasiveness.³⁴ The well-known ideological maxim “Marx’s doctrine is omnipotent because it is true” is an example of the latter. 285

“Political theology” in the spirit of Schmitt, even with its “archaism,” explains a lot about the realities of Soviet (and not just Soviet) political life. Starting with militant atheism, seizure of church property, destruction of churches, and repressions against church representatives and believers, the communist regime asserted the “omnipotence of the true doctrine” through pagan sacralization and thanatological design (a tomb on the capital’s central square, where an unburied mummy of the leader lies in the center “forever alive, more alive than all the living,” along with a wall of plaques with portraits of successful people, like in a columbarium, and spruce trees, that evergreen cemetery plant, in political–spatial design, and so forth) to the cult of personality of the ruler, who during a difficult period in 1941 was forced to resort to the services of the Russian Orthodox Church. The party of atheist internationalists underwent an intensive evolution toward Orthodox national patriotism. 290

However, Schmitt and his acolytes describe only the symptoms; Dostoevsky’s parable provides the diagnosis: the well-being of the many at the expense of an absolutely despotic “One.” The reduction of the transcendent to the immanent becomes the immanent’s appeal for justification to the transcendent. As a result, nothing is sacred but defending the graceless will of power to power, seizing it or maintaining it. Instead of law, there is only unregulated, unchecked violence and the practice of fearmongering. 300

Sacralization of the future as legitimization of terror

Real-life practice has been complementary to Dostoevsky’s diagnosis, in a particularly bright and bold way as it relates to the Soviet experience. We mean specifically the “sacralization” of the future, where the “bright future” occupies the place normally reserved for divine, otherworldly transcendence. This is especially important when lacking the “here-and-now” happiness promised by the “inquisitors.” The future ideal provides additional justification for the state of emergency and violence as a means of bringing about the future in question. The future legitimizes terror in the present.³⁵ 310

The present thus loses its value in itself; it becomes merely a stage on the path to the great goal of salvation. The present, including any living generations, can be sacrificed or used as inert, raw material, as fuel for the 320

locomotive to the future. Notably, in critical situations the “inquisitors” appeal to the younger generations, right down to teenagers, giving them *carte blanche* to inflict physical violence. Since the second half of the twentieth century, this has become a common practice among dictatorial regimes. Mao unleashed half-educated university students and schoolchildren onto the streets; to take reprisals, the Khmer Rouge armed teenagers not only with machine guns, but also with garden hoes; several similar waves were launched by Mobutu in Zaire and Mugabe in Zambia. Each time, once the task of reprisals and intimidation of real or imagined enemies was completed, the youth were removed from the political proscenium, sometimes with the help of the same violence that put them there. 325

All manifestations of the present are devoid of value in contrast not only to a future bright ideal, but also to any means of accelerating its achievement, of shortening the path to it.³⁶ This method of acceleration involves not only physical violence against nature, society, and individuals, but also against time itself. 335

During the Soviet experiment, planning and socialist competitions for fulfillment and overfulfillment not only of five-year plans but of any targeted plans served as such a means; this was aggravated by the desire at each level of power to report overfulfillment of targets to higher authorities, whether overfulfillment of *dekulakization*, fighting against Trotskyists, mining coal, smelting steel, harvesting corn . . . 340

The consolidation and institutionalization of practice leads to the paradox of inherent value of striving for a happy future: It would better if this striving never ended, continually postponing the bright future. Stalin seems to have understood this perfectly well, proclaiming the intensification of class struggle while constructing the classless communist society,³⁷ thereby justifying wave after wave of state terror. Nor was he alone in this. His counterpart in totalitarianism made literally the same claim: “The revolution is not finished. It is simply impossible to finish. We are a movement; we are the eternal revolution. We will never accept any kind of established forms.”³⁸ The state of emergency introduced in 1933 after the Reichstag fire persisted until Germany’s surrender in 1945. 345

The same thing happened in the Soviet mid 1960s. Once it became clear that the promise of the new CPSU Program adopted by the 22nd Congress, which proclaimed that the current generation would live under communism, was not in fact feasible, the state ideologists moved on to the concept of various stages of “developed socialism.” 350

However, this practice, in whatever form it occurred, represents only a modification of the Grand Inquisitor’s in abolishing the second coming of Christ. The state of emergency and violence must never end: It is a source and means of legitimizing the self-proclaimed sovereign. The only limits these regimes face are set by economic or military disaster. 365

For such regimes, therefore, what is especially important is the task of transition of power related to illness or death of the “chief inquisitor” around whom the regime is built. The problem is no less acute in case of his decrepitude or other forms of moral obsolescence.³⁹ If the regime does not have a dynastic format, solving this problem involves the careful selection and promotion of a “successor.” Examples include the People’s Republic of China, where this technology has been thoughtfully implemented over the last few decades, and Belarus, which has faced a full-scale crisis due to the short-sightedness of a regime tailored to a single man. 370

Incidentally, this is the problem of all radical revolutions that begin with a kind of “carnivalized” abolition and overturning of the old order. For the new order, the carnival enthusiasm is soon replaced by a demand to curb the revolutionary elements. This is what happens during a de facto state of emergency. It is not by chance that history demonstrates a constancy with which revolutions and military coups establish repressive regimes. This makes it possible to eliminate not only political opponents, but entire categories of citizens, up to and including physical elimination. This is in fact what happened in Soviet Russia, and not just there. “The conscious use of an eternal state of emergency (even if not formally declared) has become one of the main practices of modern states, including the so-called democracies.”⁴⁰ The actions of various governments during the COVID-19 pandemic are worthy of special consideration in this context. 375 380 385

Furthermore, historical experience shows that some societies have been capable of evolutionary development through reform, while others make “revolutionary” breakthroughs accompanied by the violence of emergency measures. Vladimir Lefebvre even builds his well-known model of the two basic ethical systems on this kind of generalization.⁴¹ The first (“evolutionary”) involves a “positive” choice to affirm the good, and it is not the ends but the means used to achieve them that are subjected to ethical evaluation. The second (“revolutionary”) involves a “negative” choice to fight evil: “Good must be done with fists.” The first path preserves and develops the cultural form in a cumulative way. The second is a path of constant swings from one extreme to another, of inversions that inevitably reproduce the emergency measures and violence enshrined in the Grand Inquisitor’s arguments. As Konstantin Leontiev emphasized, the LGI presents a path not of love and humanity, but of fear, grief, and suffering,⁴² transforming the Crystal Palace promised by socialism into its antipode: the Chicken Coop, the Anthill, metaphors we typically find in Dostoevsky. 390 395 400

The Inquisitor associates this kind of transformation with the very nature of man and humanity. “There have been many great people with great histories, but the more elevated these people, the more unhappy they have been, because the more aware they are of the need for the universality of uniting people.”⁴³ The failure of attempts to meet this need is due to the fact 405

that the desire for connection was embodied in the need for universal adulation. This is less about great conquerors who “flew like whirlwinds across the earth, trying to conquer the universe” and unconsciously expressed “the same great need of humanity for global and universal unity” and more that the very nature of man has been perverted. The only way to preserve and provide for this community of perverted beings is to take that perversion itself as a foundation and meet its demands with crime, to answer its lies with lies. As Rozanov wrote, “There has never been greater despair than what lay in this idea, so strange and difficult to refute. One could even say this is the saddest thought that has ever passed through human consciousness . . . the heaviest in all of world literature.”⁴⁴

Dostoevsky’s main lesson, the anti-utopian paradigm of LGI, is the danger of compulsory good, the desire to make it reality “from above,” the imperious will to transform the material conditions of universal security and satiety for all. The logic of the Grand Inquisitor contains the logic of Modern Era rationalism, as a transition from the cognition of truth to the transformation of the world in accordance with “cognized laws of its development.” In this, Ivan Karamazov overlaps with Goethe’s Faust, but he takes the next obvious step: This transformation must ensure that suffering is overcome and harmony achieved. Then the key aspect lies in the means applied, which turns out to be the very transformation of the surrounding material world, including nature, society, and man himself. Compulsory and notwithstanding nature, society, and man. Which is impossible without coercive, imperious will, without violence against that very same nature, society, and man. This is literally in the spirit of Barmalei from the movie *Aibolit-66*, who declared, “I’ll make all of you happy. And whoever doesn’t want to, I’ll grind you down, pound you into dust, and throw you to the sharks!” The temptation of the powerful by their own power.

This is, too, a very Russian theme, applying a theory to solve practical issues: extreme issues and “final” solutions. As Goethe said, “General ideas under great self-conceit can lead to great disaster.”

It may be that this is precisely the situation underlying the “pendulum” nature of development of Russian society, where long periods of “stabilization” alternate with short-term flashes of reform, followed by backsliding into yet another “stagnation.” The issue, obviously, is the voluntarism of the Russo-Soviet political elite, what we earlier called “the temptation of the powerful by their own power.”⁴⁵ The long-suffering nature of the Russian people only adds to this. Rejection of the present (legal nihilism and non-institutionalism) in the name of a future higher justice generates a “stoppage of time.” Improving life has nothing to do with the present, while protracted waiting leads to bursts of “bloody, merciless” riots. Thus, in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, many factors of the “logic of the Grand Inquisitor” converged.

We can continue comparing these two paths with the aid of two simple tests, namely, answering the following simple questions: (1) Are taxes a form of tribute or a pooling of resources? (2) What is Law?

It makes sense to start with Law. The usual answer is that Law is what is legislated and enforced.⁴⁶ This is the typically legalistic reduction of Law to laws that are passed. These laws do not, however, appear on a stone tablet; they are developed and established by specific people. In our own time, these are legislators delegated to do so by the public. It is not by chance that we call the bodies in this branch of government legislative or also representative. They act as a platform for developing an equilibrium of wills of a given society's social forces. The basis of laws is thus consideration of the rights of citizens, which are also taken into account when legislation is being developed. This in turn includes the culture of control, enforcement, and implementation of law. Once again: Law is a system for developing and ensuring order, expressed in legislation, in which the interests of members of society are implemented.

The same is true of taxes. It is one thing if the "resource pooling" of individual citizens and business structures to solve common problems that can be solved only by redistributing resources, with the solution to these problems being delegated to the state. It is quite another thing if the state is collecting tribute from the "taxable population" to address problems facing the authorities themselves.

Where taxes represent the public's "pooling" of resources and Law the balance of interests among social forces, then the authorities ensure their own legitimacy by implementing this balance. That said, we can easily see that what is implemented in the LGI is something else entirely, namely, the triumph of the self-sufficiency of the authorities as such and in itself, uncontrolled and unaccountable to the public, desperately trying to preserve itself forever.

Just as real history is an equilibrium of wills, so is real power realized in the balance of interests in the social forces of society. The strength of the authorities is ensured not by violence but by legitimacy, by its recognition as just by members of society. When the authorities resort to violence, this is a sign of their weakness, of their inability to construct the necessary harmony.⁴⁷ Power built on fear and violence will be forced to resort to them constantly, exhausting both social forces and their own. In reality, the political anthropology of power is reduced to disanthropology, as has been convincingly demonstrated by the actual institutionalization of interrogation and prison torture, the practice of prison camps reduced to an industry of violence and destruction. This paper has neither the time nor the place to delve deeply into this topic, but it will suffice to mention the phenomenology of dehumanization through pain and torture, as convincingly described by Varlam Shalamov, which reduces man to his ultimate corporality—not even nakedness, but "visceral" corporality—as well as the

degradation of personhood among prison camp inmates.⁴⁸ Giorgio Agamben provides a philosophical understanding of this disanthropology through extreme violence in his concept of *homo sacer*.⁴⁹ 495

Through modern polytechnologies, the reduction of human freedom has reached a level that Dostoevsky could not have imagined in his religious inquiries. While Dostoevsky had mostly Christological arguments for evaluation and judgment in his hands, the more the twentieth century progressed, the more clearly we saw that the anthropology of power he described was fraught with the rejection of *anthro*-pology as such.⁵⁰ 500

The anti-utopias of the Grand Inquisitor and Shigalev demonstrate the danger of the disanthropology of power in the program of contemporary socialism. These criticisms and warnings have turned out to be applicable not only to the application of “real communism” to any totalitarian arrangement of the social order, but also to current implementations of socialist ideas (including those aided by digital technologies), whether Fabianism in the West, Marxist–Confucianism in China, or the post-Soviet recension in Russia. 505

The helplessness and infantilism of mass-consumer society. The dependence on pressing the right options to access the “feeding hand” of impersonal algorithms. Dostoevsky precisely foresaw the danger of these developments, and indeed, Dostoevsky was a greater liberal than his contemporary liberals (and not only contemporary ones). Liberalism is not only, and not so much, a human right as it is a responsibility. 515

Even if we ignored the Christological aspect, this mindset essentially turns out to be close to modern studies of consciousness and self-consciousness. Modern research on brain psychophysiology has convincingly affirmed a practice already well known to parents and teachers: Freedom is secondary to the responsibility others burden us with,⁵¹ pulling us out of cause–effect relationships and grounding us, making personhood *causa sui*. “The cup didn’t just fall: You dropped it. You could have dropped it or you could have not dropped it. But you did.” As articulate speech develops, and especially narratives that use first-person pronouns and possessive pronouns, what also takes shape is what we call mental competency, consciousness of self—the ability to formulate coherent stories about one’s own experience, stories that create memory—a euphemism for consciousness. This consciousness, and its manifestations like reason and thought, are secondary in relation to the original responsibility. It is not by chance that Mikhail M. Bakhtin, in formulating his idea that a person endowed with consciousness had no alibi in the Being, used Dostoevsky’s work as his starting point. Self-consciousness and selfhood, which take shape in the process of mastering narratives burdened with responsibility, suggest the next step: responsible complicity, “participatory thinking” that deprives the consciousness-endowed person of “an alibi in Being.”⁵² 520 525 530 535

Dostoevsky associated the preservation of man with the preservation of God. In that regard, his conclusion is consistent with how philosophers of the Frankfurt School of Social Philosophy understood industrial and postindustrial civilization, both in the early period of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and in the late period of J. Habermas's postsecularism. This is not just about recognizing the theological roots of morality and Law, but also about the need to return religion to the space of public discourse. 540

However, the idea that "Dostoevsky, in arguing against Catholicism, reproached it for turning the church into a state. And our Orthodox path is different . . . what we want, ideally, is for the state itself to turn into the church"⁵³ seems inaccurate. Yes, on the Christian level, the parable of the Grand Inquisitor is directed against caesaropapism, for which Dostoevsky constantly reproached Catholicism, seeing it as a path to atheism, as the Grand Inquisitor indeed made into a reality.⁵⁴ However, Dostoevsky saw the solution not in religious officialdom, but in the living God in each individual's soul. In that regard, Solovyov's observation that the triumph and glorification of the Church in Dostoevsky are expected neither on this sinful earth nor in the next world is an important one. God became man in Christ in order to affirm the Divine in man: "The moral condition of humanity and of all spiritual beings does not at all depend on whether they are living here on earth or not, but on the contrary: The very condition of the earth and its relation to the unseen world is determined by the moral condition of spiritual beings,"⁵⁵ prepared for life with the descended God alive in their souls. 550 555 560

For Dostoevsky, it is important

that man find, become aware, and with all the strength of his nature be convinced that the highest use man can make of his personhood, of the fullness of his self-development, is annihilating that self, giving it over entirely to each and every one, unreservedly and selflessly . . . This is the paradise of Christ. The whole history, both of humanity and to some extent of each separate individual, is only the development of, struggle for, striving for, and achievement of that goal.⁵⁶ 565

Dostoevsky calls us not to reject the self, but to give it over to everyone.

However, before you give something, you must have something. In Dostoevsky, the fact of consciousness is taken as a priori, as a characteristic man is given from the outset. In his model of a wrought harmony cultivated from below, from each person, one vile deed can destroy everything. We might, therefore, say that this kind of "project," which we might call a "moral game with infinity," is also essentially utopian. Literally utopian to the point of eidetic purity. As Solovyov wrote, "That worldwide harmony Dostoevsky prophesied does not in the least refer to utilitarian prosperity on the present earth, but to the beginning of that new earth in which truth dwells."⁵⁷ 570 575

What makes this utopia attractive is the absence of violence, the original harmony, where justice is carried out in the name of preserving this harmony, where evil is a sign of deviation from that path, a sign that people have to think and understand what needs to be done in order to return to the path of harmony and good. Being is rooted in the heart of the human soul, and there is no evil in those depths.

Evil is the phantoms of Being in the shadow of this light,⁵⁸ a shadow cast by embodied actions, deeds, and decisions. No one desires evil. Everyone believes that they are doing good. But ideas about the good may be different for everyone. Only the means, therefore, should be justiciable. Real ethics is not some extreme pole; it is neither ∞ nor 0. On this scale it is always concrete.⁵⁹ But that is a topic for another conversation.

Notes

1. *Imiaslavie*, or name-glorification, was an early twentieth-century Russian religious movement. For more see S.M. Kenworth, “The Name-Glorifiers (*Imiaslavie*) Controversy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson, George Pattinson, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 327–342.—Trans.
2. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoievskii i posleduiushchie* ed. Yu. I. Seliverstov (Moscow: Moladaia gvardiia, 1992).
3. F.M. Dostoievskii [Dostoevsky], *Biografiia i pis'ma*, 2nd edition (St. Petersburg, 1883), pp. 233–234.
4. F.M. Dostoievskii, *Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniikah*, Chapter 5. “Vaal,” in F.M. Dostoievskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v 15 tt.*, vol. 4 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), pp. 414–421.
5. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoievskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
10. Literally “two things, incompatible” (*dve veshchi nesovmestnye*), a famous line from A.S. Pushin’s 1830 short play, “Mozart and Salieri.”—Trans.
11. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoievskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 32.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
14. Dostoievskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v 15 tt.*, vol. 7, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1990), pp. 364–387.
15. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoievskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 35.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
18. V.D. Dneprov, *Idei, strasti, postupki: iz khudozhestvennogo opyta Dostoievskogo* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1978), p. 198.
19. G.L. Tul'chinskii, *Telo svobody: otvetstvennost' i voploshchenie smysla* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2019), pp. 57–61.

20. Dneprov, *Idei, strasti, postupki: iz khudozhestvennogo opyta Dostoevskogo*, 625
p. 234.
21. O. Kharkhordin, *Osnovnye poniatiia rossiiskoi politiki* (Moscow: NLO, 2011),
p. 92.
22. Kharkhordin, *Osnovnye poniatiia rossiiskoi politiki*, p. 93.
23. J. Marsden, *Marxian and Christian Utopianism. Toward a Socialistic Political* 630
Theology (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991).
24. A. Sinyavsky, *Osnovy sovetskoi tsivilizatsii* (Moscow: Agraf, 2002), p. 153.
25. A. Zhid [Gide], *Vozvrashchenie iz SSSR*, in A. Zhid and L. Feikhtvanger,
Vozvrashchenie iz SSSR. Moskva 1937 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi litera- 635
ture, 1990).
26. *Bogostroitel'stvo*, "God-building," an approach coined by Lunarcharskii to incor-
porate a science-based religious sentiment into socialist groundwork.—Trans.
27. M. Ryklin, *Kommunizm kak religiiia: Intellekualy i Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia*
(Moscow: NLO, 2009), p. 18.
28. M. Vaiskopf, *Pisatel' Stalin* (Moscow: NLO, 2002), p. 242. 640
29. M.S. Voslenskii, *Nomenklatura. Gospodstvuiushchii klass Sovetskogo Soiuz*
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VShE, 2010).
31. K. Shmitt, *Politicheskaiia teologiia* (Moscow: KANON-press-Ts, 2000), p. 15. 645
32. K. Shmitt, *Politicheskaiia teologiia*, p. 57.
33. K. Shmitt, "Fiurer zashchishchaet pravo," in K. Shmitt, *Gosudarstvo*
i politicheskaiia forma, p. 264.
34. O.V. Khlevniuk, *Stalin. Zhizn' odnogo vozhdia* (Moscow: Corpus, 2019);
N. Frai, *Gosudarstvo fiurera. Natsional-sotsialisty i vlasti: Germaniia. 1933–* 650
1945 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009).
35. M. Ryklin, *Prostranstva likovaniia. Totalitarizm i razlichie* (Moscow: Logos,
2002), p. 133.
36. G. Liubbe, *V nogu so vremenem. Sokrashchennoe prebyvanie v nastoiashchem*
(Moscow: ID VShE, 2016), p. 145. 655
37. I.V. Stalin, "Ob industrializatsii i khleбноi probleme: Rech' na plenumе TsK
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1949), pp. 157–187.
38. G. Raushning, "Govorit Gitler," in *Govorit Gitler. Zver' iz bezdny* (Moscow:
Mif, 1993), p. 138. 660
39. G.G. Pocheptsov, "Upravlenie gosudarstvom lezhit ne v dubinkakh, a v kom-
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40. Dzh. [G.] Agamben, *Homo sacer. Chrezvychainoe polozhenie* (Moscow:
Evropa, 2011), p. 9. 665
41. V.A. Lefevr [Lefebvre], *Algebra sovesti* (Moscow: Kogito-tsentr, 2003).
42. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoevskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 52.
43. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoevskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 34.
44. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoevskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 156.
45. G.L. Tulchinskii, "'From Top Down' and 'From Bottom Up' Factors of 670
Inversions in Russian History," *Russian Journal of Philosophical Science*
[*Filosofskie nauki*], 2019, vol. 62, no. 8, pp. 16–32.
46. In this passage Tulchinskii uses two different terms, *pravo* and *zakon*, that are
both expressed by the umbrella term "law" in English. The former is also used
for "right" and refers more to the principle, the latter to concrete 675

manifestations in the form of regulations, rules, and so forth. To make the distinction clear here, I have used capital-L “Law” for *pravo* and laws legislated/passed for *zakon*.—Trans.

47. Kh. [H.] Arendt, *O nasilii* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2014); A. Kozhev, *Poniatie Vlasti* (Moscow: Praksis, 2006). 680
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49. Agamben, *Homo sacer. Chrezvychainoe polozhenie*.
50. G.L. Tul'chinskii, *Postchelovecheskaia personologiya. Novye perspektivy svobody i ratsional'nosti* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2002).
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52. M.M. Bakhtin, *K filosofii postupka*, in *Filosofia i sotsiologiya tekhniki. Ezhegodnik. 1984–1985* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), pp. 80–160. 690
53. Sinyavsky, *Osnovy sovetskoi tsivilizatsii*, p. 153.
54. *O velikom inkvizitore: Dostoevskii i posleduiushchie*, p. 13.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 137. 695
57. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
58. This line echoes the original manuscript title of Tulchinskii's own *Imposture: The Phenomenology of Evil and the Metaphysics of Freedom*: “The Shadow of the Heart: The Phantoms of Being.”—Trans.
59. G.L. Tul'chinskii, “Stereometricheskaiia model' motivatsii k nasiliuu,” *Nasledie*, 2016, no. 1(8), pp. 69–80. 700

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