

Kimberly Young*

Ivan Karamazov's Euclidean Mind: the 'Fact' of Human Suffering and Evil

Abstract

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky addresses the problem of how to reconcile God's goodness with the evil in the world by comparing the metaphysical implications of Ivan Karamazov's and the Elder Zosima's Euclidean and non-Euclidean epistemologies. For Ivan, the moral opposites of good and evil cannot be reconciled, just as two parallel lines cannot meet (Euclid's fifth postulate). For Zosima, the symbol of the crucifix represents a meeting of the parallel lines and the moral opposites.

Keywords

Dostoevsky, Evil, Suffering, Euclidean Reasoning, the Crucifix

The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

Solzhenitsyn [1973] 2018, 75

Vladimir Kantor argues that Fyodor Dostoevsky, like Saint Augustine of Hippo, believed that the individual, not God, is to blame for the evil in the world (2011, 14). Although Dostoevsky places moral responsibility upon individuals for their capacity to perpetrate evil, via Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky challenges the moral goodness of a God that would allow the suffering of children. In a letter to his friend Apollon Maikov, Dos-

* La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Email: sublitura@gmail.com

toevsky wrote, "The main question which will run through all the parts of the novel is the question that has tormented me either consciously or unconsciously all my life—the existence of God" ([1870] 1987, 331)¹. Through Ivan Karamazov, Dostoevsky tests the idea that if God exists, God's essence is flawed (Kaladiouk 2006, 424). Indeed, in *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky deploys all of his creative power and offers a monumental *pro et contra* to the question of God's existence and the problem of evil, framing this exploration through epistemologies associated with Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries.

Ivan Karamazov is the champion of a Euclidean worldview. Ivan reasons that if God created the world, he did so according to Euclidean geometry. According to Euclidean geometry the two parallel lines cannot meet, even in eternity. This serves Ivan's argument that the moral opposites of good and evil cannot be united. The suffering of even one child must prevent eternal harmony (the parallel lines from meeting). In a letter to N. A. Lyubimov Dostoevsky wrote of Ivan Karamazov, "My hero chooses an argument that, *in my opinion*, is irrefutable—the senselessness of children's suffering—and from it reaches the conclusion that all historical reality is an absurdity" ([1879] 1987, 465; emphasis original). Indeed, Ivan concludes that, God is not good, and people are not good (they ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), and that all reality is an absurdity and an "offensive comedy" of suffering unto death (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 235). Believing there to be no answer to the why of evil (according to his Euclidean reasoning), Ivan answers: why not? If there is no immortality (an eternal harmony which would justify suffering and evil), then 'everything is permitted.'

I argue that an understanding of Dostoevsky's engagement with Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry can provide Dostoevsky readers with a greater insight into Dostoevsky's understanding of good and evil through the intersections he explores between spatial and moral perspectives of reality in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Indeed, although Dostoevsky does not provide an answer to the why of evil and suffering, he exposes the limitations of Ivan's moral imagination. Ivan Karamazov can find no adequate theodicy to the why of evil and suffering because he adheres to the Euclidean presupposition of a three-dimensional spatial reality in which the parallel lines (good and evil) can never meet. On the other hand, the Elder Zosima believes in a multiverse of interpenetrating spatial realities akin to those

¹ Although Dostoevsky was referring to the unwritten novel, *The Life of a Great Sinner*, he transferred many of the ideas and themes of his intended novel to *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as *Demons*.

proffered by non-Euclidean geometry. For Zosima, the only way to alleviate the inevitability of suffering and evil in the world is through individual moral responsibility represented by the symbol of the crucifix (the heroic individual suspended between the moral opposites). I argue that in *The Brothers Karamazov*, a non-Euclidean epistemology upholds the primacy of individual freedom, moral responsibility and the possible reconciliation of the moral opposites, while a Euclidean epistemology becomes aligned with limitation, lack of moral responsibility and evil.

For Mikhail Bakhtin, Ivan Karamazov is one among Dostoevsky's ideologically driven characters who "stress[es] the idea of the limited and defective nature of human beings, man's inability to bear the burden of freedom, his negative drive toward self-limitation and self-destruction—toward an end" (1981, 281). For Bakhtin, it is Dostoevsky's demonic characters who are possessed by evil impetuses that adhere to a finalising (and therefore limiting) approach to reality. Indeed, this impetus is made explicit by Ivan's devil who expresses a desire to embody a finite and definitive (Euclidean) form, rather than remain an x in an indeterminate (non-Euclidean) equation. Steven Cassedy has argued that characters who attempt to embody an absolute or finalised self "free of the presupposition that moral absolutes exist" fail to do so because they are "mere fleshy being" (2005, 130-150). Characters such as the underground man (*Notes from Underground*), Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*), Stavrogin and Kirillov (*Demons*) along with Ivan Karamazov, are driven by a desire to go beyond or collapse good and evil by embodying super human forms; attempting to escape limitation and contingency via a psychological leap. For Yuri Corrigan, the attempt to escape the self through cerebral activity or the need to colonise the thoughts and ideas of the other, "serve as a foundation for Dostoevsky's developing psychology of evil" (2019, 229). Corrigan argues that "rational thought is most often complicit in the phenomenon of evil as the confabulator of ideological disguises for the fear of inwardness" (2019, 241). Such is the case with Ivan Karamazov who admits to his younger brother Alyosha, that by sticking to the rational 'facts' of Euclidean geometry, he is alleviated of the burden of attempting to understand the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean geometry.

Indeed, in a conversation with his younger brother Alyosha Karamazov, Ivan employs the language and motifs of Euclidean geometry as the framework for his argument against "reasoning from another world" which would justify the evil and suffering on earth (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 238). Throughout the novel, Ivan maintains his epistemological position as a 'Eu-

clidean' because the homogeneity of Euclidean space serves Ivan's argument against the possibility of non-Euclidean spatial realities and their attendant ontological and metaphysical implications (the parallel lines would meet/good and evil could be reconciled). Euclidean space is two or three-dimensional and consists of plane surfaces where curvature everywhere is less than zero. On plane surfaces, parallel lines cannot meet (Ravindran 2007, 26-27). Non-Euclidean geometry differs from Euclidean geometry only where the fifth postulate (the parallel postulate) is concerned. In curved spaces (elliptical, spherical or hyperbolic) the parallel postulate is violated, and parallel lines can intersect in such spaces, or, to put it more accurately, the very notion of parallel lines ceases to exist (Torretti 1978, 104-105)². János Bolyai and Nikolai Lobachevsky were the first mathematicians to independently explicate a non-Euclidean variant to Euclid's universally accepted axioms, but it was Carl Fredrich Gauss, a friend of Bolyai's father, who first propounded (though never published) non-Euclidean postulates (Torretti 1978, 50). Gauss was reluctant to explicate a non-Euclidean geometry given that he believed that human understanding was unable to comprehend the essence of space stating, "I am ever more convinced that the necessity of our geometry cannot be proved, at least not *by*, and not *for*, our HUMAN understanding. Maybe in another life we shall attain insights into the essence of space which are now beyond our reach" (Gauss qtd. in Torretti 1978, 55; emphasis original). Dostoevsky would also come to view the metaphysical implications of a non-Euclidean geometry in a similar light.

Dostoevsky first encountered Bolyai-Lobachevskian geometry when he read Hermann von Helmholtz's article, 'The Origin and Meaning of Geometrical Axioms' in which Helmholtz engages with Bernhard Riemann's analytical geometry (Riemann was a student of Gauss) (Brookes 2013, 24).

² Roberto Torretti wrote,

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

In his article, Helmholtz rejects the unchallenged instrumentality of Euclidean geometry as the only model for conceptualising space. Helmholtz argues that, “geometrical axioms must vary according to the kind of space inhabited” (1876, 305). By way of example, Helmholtz imagines how a surface/plane-dwelling being (as opposed to a sphere-dwelling being) would determine what the shortest or straightest line between two points would be. For the surface/plane-dweller this line would be straight or geodesic, for the sphere dweller, an arc of a great circle. The surface/plane-dweller would understand the concept of infinite parallel lines extended over their two-dimensions; the sphere-dweller would know nothing of parallel lines because any two straight lines of a certain length, would eventually cut, at least at one point if not two (Helmholtz 1876, 305). Helmholtz imagines multiple and distinct spatial realities (he also refers to elliptical or pseudo-spherical space) and considers the significance of how those who inhabit these spaces would conceive of their worlds. The notion that the term ‘parallel lines’ would not occur to the sphere-dweller indicates a qualitative ontological difference in how they would view their world compared to that of the surface/plane-dweller. Alexander Brookes argues that Dostoevsky “subsumed the philosophical implications of non-Euclidean geometry into his ontological beliefs concerning the existence of God and the structure and nature and laws of space in the universe” (2013, 24). Like Helmholtz, Dostoevsky identified that a non-Euclidean geometry could have profound significance on how people perceive space and reality.

Throughout *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov adheres to a Euclidean reasoning. By sticking to empirical fact within an enclosed space-time manifold, Ivan would elide the contradictions and paradoxes of divine or metaphysical concepts by limiting his horizons of meaning to the finite, flattened planes of (a literal and symbolic) Euclidean space. Ivan argues that within a purely Euclidean space, any theodicy or justification for suffering and evil must be logically absurd to a mind created to understand the concept of three dimensions only. Dostoevsky believed that Ivan’s argument against God was irrefutable. In the conversation between Ivan and Alyosha in the chapters ‘The Brothers Get Acquainted’ and ‘Rebellion,’ Ivan establishes a position of reasoning grounded in the axioms of Euclidean geometry which, from the outset, dismisses theodicies on logical grounds. Robert Wharton suggests that Ivan rejects four familiar theodicies: that “sufferings are just retribution for ‘the sins of the fathers,’” that suffering is justified by the future punishment of oppressors, that suffering is the inevitable consequence of our knowledge of good and evil and the price of our moral

freedom and finally, that all suffering will one day be redeemed in a future, eternal harmony (1977, 570-571). Not one of these theodicies can account for or justify the suffering of innocent children, and if they can, Ivan does not want eternal harmony at such a price. For Ivan “the problem of theodicy is in practice insoluble to the human (“Euclidean”) mind” (Kantor 2011, 17). He cannot understand the why of evil and suffering, arguing that he was not created with a mind to do so. Ivan says to Alyosha:

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

Ivan reasons that if he cannot understand how non-Euclidean geometers could proffer that two parallel lines could meet in eternity, it is not for him to understand God; likening the impossibility of evil and good being reconciled with the inconceivability of two parallel lines meeting in eternity. Ivan’s need for a theology of immanent justice undergirds his Euclidean argument against “reasoning from another world,” reasoning which is incomprehensible to the “human heart here on earth” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 238). Ivan argues that if the world is created according to three dimensions only justice, not forgiveness, must be the law of the world.

Ivan uses the spatial image of the parallel lines as a metaphor to indicate the incompatibility of God’s love and mercy with the world God created: a world in which children are tortured as a prerequisite for eternal harmony is not a world created by a good God. Ivan declares, “[I]et the parallel lines even meet before my own eyes: I shall look and say, yes, they meet, and still will not accept it” (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 236). Ivan drives this point home by cataloguing a series of historical anecdotes of the suffering of children beginning with the image of Turkish soldiers impaling infants before their mother’s eyes, to the last example of a young house-serf torn apart by dogs in front of his mother for accidentally injuring his master’s (the General’s) favourite dog. In the *Notebooks* for the novel, Dostoevsky explicitly connects the impossibility of the mother forgiving the General with the Euclidean axiom that parallel lines cannot meet (Dostoevsky [1879] 1971, 72).

Ivan was to ask Alyosha, "Can you accept the fact that the parallel lines will meet? Can you understand how a mother can embrace the general and forgive him?" (*ibidem*). Ivan even goes so far as to assert that the mother has no right to forgive the General, even if the child themselves did. No one can forgive the General on the child's behalf, not even Christ. Ivan wants retribution here and now on earth and not "somewhere and sometime in infinity" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 244). Just as Ivan anticipates that he would not accept the non-Euclidean meeting of the parallel lines even if he were to see it, Ivan cannot accept the suffering of children even if he were to witness the redemption of suffering in some future, eternal realm.

Ivan wants to believe that God exists and that his essence is good and that his Euclidean reasoning is limited, yet, for Ivan, suffering is an insurmountable 'fact' and one that undermines any notion that God is good. Ivan confesses to Alyosha that he desires that the "offensive comedy" of human suffering would disappear "like a pitiful mirage, a vile concoction of man's Euclidean mind" (235). He wants to believe that at the world's finale something will be revealed to allay all anguish, redeem humanity and which will justify everything that has happened, but he cannot believe because he cannot accept the 'fact' of the suffering of children. Ivan admits to Alyosha, "I don't understand anything [...] and I no longer want to understand anything. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I wanted to understand something, I would immediately have to betray the fact, but I've made up my mind to stick to the fact..." (243). By sticking to the fact, (what is empirically observable) Ivan confronts Alyosha with an irrefutable argument by which he rejects the world God created. Because Ivan is convinced that no adequate theodicy exists, he removes God from the conceptual place he occupies as Sovereign and collapses theodicy into moral permissibility. Indeed, although Ivan attempts to establish an apodictic argument against God based on the suffering of the world, his own Euclidean ontology allows suffering to be permissible, according to the laws of determinism. Ivan says to Alyosha, "I know that there is suffering, that none are to blame, that everything flows and finds its level" (244). Yet, under the aegis of determinism, no one is responsible for that suffering, "and that, to his [Ivan's] mind, would amount to the betrayal of the suffering of the individual, or in his words, to being 'false to the fact'" as Anna Schur Kaladiouk points out (2006, 428).

Indeed, Ivan can no more accept human suffering as a prerequisite for a future eternal harmony, than he can accept the moral implications of determinism (Kaladiouk 2006, 428). Hence, Ivan's doctrine, 'everything is

permitted,' is a lie.³ Despite proffering a doctrine of moral relativism, Ivan cannot logically dismiss the real dichotomy and distinctions that exist between good and evil. The fact that Ivan does not ground his doctrine in causality or the laws of determinism points to his lingering concern with morality. For, "[k]nowledge of morality, of good and evil, presupposes the presence of alternative possibilities for action in a given situation—means capacity for conceptualization of alternative ideals, towards which behavior can be devoted" (Peterson 1999, 305). Indeed, it is clear that Ivan has formulated a hierarchy of moral values based on real distinctions he makes between good and evil. Ivan identifies evil as a real force and one that resides within each person, telling Alyosha that, "[t]here is, of course, a beast hidden in every man, a beast of rage, a beast of sensual inflammability at the cries of the tormented victim, an unrestrained beast let off the chain" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 241-242). He knows that there are people who are "possessed by an aesthetic that makes art of terror and pain" (Peterson 1999, 309), those who find beauty in the ideal of Sodom, as his elder brother, Dmitri Karamazov, points out. Yet, despite acknowledging human capacity for evil, Ivan also tells Alyosha that he believes that none are to blame and are therefore not responsible. Evil is a problem which Ivan lays squarely at God's feet.

In lieu of an answer to the why of suffering, Ivan collapses the moral valuation with which he rejects the world God created, into moral relativism declaring 'everything is permitted.' Ivan's doctrine, 'everything is permitted,' is a butchered version of the Apostle's Paul admonition to the Corinthians, that "[e]verything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial" (1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23 NIV). By appropriating the first part of Paul's admonition only, Ivan abandons the caveat "not all things are beneficial," Paul's warning against the abuse of moral freedom under the aegis of God's grace. Paul's admonition occurs in two separate places in his first letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10:23, the context of Paul's admonition concerns the freedom of the believer to eat and drink whatever they want (hitherto forbidden in Jewish law) so long as they are not seeking their own good alone, but that of others. Paul indicates that each person should listen to the inner-

³ After the encounter with his devil, Ivan is reduced to a fevered, unconscious state and Alyosha intimates that if Ivan wakes, he must choose to believe in an ideal which holds the Good and truth above the rational fact of suffering or else be left with the moral nihilism which has caused his psychological collapse. Alyosha says, that "He [Ivan] will either rise into the light of truth, or [...] perish in hatred, taking revenge on himself and everyone for having served something he does not believe in" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 655; ellipsis original).

workings of their own conscience, for the free working of conscience is the believer's freedom. The other context of Paul's admonition appears in 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul's disquisition on sexual immorality. In this excerpt from his letter to the Corinthians, Paul argues that the body is holy and a member of the body of Christ (the Church) and therefore should not be used for sexual promiscuity. Once again, Paul draws attention to the believer's freedom and moral agency with the caution that although God's forgiveness and grace frees us from sin, not every action is beneficial for our spiritual development. Paul uses the example of sexual union with a prostitute as an example in which moral permissibility is not beneficial for the spiritual health of the believer. Considering the biblical origin of Ivan's butchered doctrine of moral permissibility, by abandoning Paul's caveat in the formulation of his doctrine, Ivan proffers a credo of moral promiscuity; it can be wed to any ideology to serve as a justification for any action/crime.

In the interview between Ivan and his devil, the devil traces the ideological formulation of Ivan's doctrine to a poem which Ivan wrote as a young man called 'Geological Cataclysm'. In the poem, Ivan proffers that in the future a new phase of human evolution would begin with the death of the idea of God. Ivan maintains that if the idea of God is destroyed, humankind's former love of God would be replaced by a love of humankind. Ivan says, "Once mankind has renounced God, one and all (and I believe that this period, analogous to geological periods, will come), then the entire old-world view will fall of itself" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 648). Ivan likens the collapse of the old-worldview to a geologic, tectonic restructuring that displaces the old moral topography (the idea of God and immortality). In place of God, mankind would rise up and be exalted with the "spirit of divine, titanic pride, and the man-god will appear" (649). In the vein of Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) and Kirillov (*Demons*), Ivan asserts that for the person who is capable of stepping over the idea of God and immortality, as well as their conscience, everything is permitted; for such a person has become the man-god. Ivan concludes that "[t]here is no law for God! Where God stands—there is the place of God. Where I stand, there at once will be the foremost place [...] 'everything is permitted'" (ibidem). Ivan assumes that God is unlimited and unbounded in his power and therefore beyond morality. Like Kirillov, Ivan believes that if there is a God then God's will is the highest, but if there is no God then Ivan's will is the highest. Based on this belief, Ivan would destroy the idea of God in order to reify his self-will as the highest and become the man-god, to whom everything is permitted. Ellis Sandoz argues that "in the dreamworld of the superman, everything prohibited in the real world is

permitted, and the lie in the soul can be both believed and disbelieved simultaneously [...] the lie being that the 'I,' the reified self-will is the sum total of existentially relevant being *even if* the "Thou" is real" (1964, 366). The idea that the individual, reified 'I' can surmount the idea of a *causa sui* God can only be sustained as a fantasy, a lie or a delusion. Where God as the highest thought transcends time and space and the individual, time and space are the limits of Ivan's Euclidean man-god. Hence, it is only in the dreamworld of the man-god that the reified 'I' is the sum total of meaning and being.

Dostoevsky maintained that the fullest expression of the 'I' was paradoxically to overcome the 'I,' not through nihilistic self-destruction, but through love for others and the whole of creation. Theosis (divine union) via the kenotic model of Christ, forms the basis of the Elder Zosima's non-Euclidean response to Ivan's Euclideanism. After the death of his first wife, Maria Dmitrievna, Dostoevsky wrote:

To love a person *as one's own self* according to the commandment of Christ is impossible. The law of individuality on earth is the constraint, 'I' is the stumbling block. Christ alone was able to do this, but Christ was eternal, an eternal ideal toward which man strives and the laws of nature should strive. Meanwhile, after the appearance of Christ, as the *idea of man incarnate*, it became as clear as day that the highest, final development of the individual should attain precisely the point (at the very end of his development, at the very point of reaching the goal) where man might find, recognise, and with all the strength of his nature be convinced that the highest use which he can make of his individuality, of the full development of his *I*, is to seemingly annihilate that *I*, to give it wholly to each and every one wholeheartedly and selflessly (Dostoevsky [1864] 1973, 39).

Dostoevsky believed that the reified and isolated self-will, relentless in its desire to contain and control, was the enemy of the moral life. The *I* becomes the boundary and limit of its world and thus space (symbolically speaking) becomes closed and homogenous (Euclidean). To overcome the isolation and separation which characterises the reified will (ego), an emptying of the will (kenosis) is necessary, an action which Dostoevsky believed Christ was able to perform. In her article 'Dostoevsky and the Kenotic Tradition' Margaret Ziolkowski points out that

[t]he notion of kenosis is based on a statement made about the incarnation of Christ by Paul in Philippians 2: 6-8: 'His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself (*ekenosen*) to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross' (Jerusalem Bible) (2001, 32-33).

Where Ivan's man-god would transcend good and evil by relativising or collapsing the distinction between the two, the God-man Christ unites the moral opposites on the cross.

Indeed, Alyosha says to Ivan that Christ is the one being who has the right to forgive everything, "forgive all *and for all*, because he himself gave his innocent blood for all and for everything" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 246; emphasis original). Christ, ostensibly innocent, took upon himself humanity's evil ("he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree"—1 Peter 2:24 ESV). By embodying both good and evil and voluntarily suffering at the centre point of the moral opposites, Christ nailed to the cross (the crucifix) represents a bridge between the moral opposites (Jung [1954] 1995, 76). For Carl Jung, the crucifix is a symbol of great psychological importance to the individual who would seek to integrate the darker aspects of their psyche (the shadow) into their consciousness, rather than deny its existence (as Ivan denies his devil). Jung asks:

How can absolute evil be connected and identified with absolute good? It seems to be impossible. When Christ withstood Satan's temptation, that was the fatal moment when the shadow was cut off. Yet it had to be cut off in order to enable man to become morally conscious. If the moral opposites could be united at all, they would be suspended all together and there could be no morality at all. That is certainly not what synthesis aims at. In such a case of irreconcilability the opposites are united by a neutral or ambivalent bridge, a symbol expressing either side in such a way that they can function together [...] the *Crucifixus* is the symbol uniting the absolute moral opposites" (ibidem).

The cross represents a meeting of the parallel lines (good and evil) and is a symbol of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which is the source of revelation that destroys and redeems (we put to death the evil within us when, imitating Christ, we are crucified with him) (Peterson 1999, 299). Although the revelation of the cross/tree represents the destruction of humanity's unconscious, prelapsarian state of being, we could not have become self-conscious as moral agents without such knowledge. To eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is to become like God and when we bear the burden of the cross (our dual nature) voluntarily, we, like Christ fixed to the cross the "archetypal individual, crucified, suspended and tormented, manifest for all eternity [our] identity with God" (Peterson 1999, 297).

The burden placed on the postlapsarian individual (a burden which Ivan's Grand Inquisitor alleviates by taking away the freedom of the people over which he rules) is the consciousness of evil and suffering; a suffering

which cannot be alleviated by the mental leap of Ivan's man-god, but through accepting contingency. Suffering is the valley of the shadow of death, the knowledge of our contingency unto death, but we need not fear it as evil ("Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Ps. 23:4 KJV). Indeed, philosopher Iris Murdoch contends that "[a] proper understanding of contingency apprehends chance and its horrors, not as fate, but as an aspect of death, of the frailty and unreality of the ego and the emptiness of worldly desires" (1992, 107). For Jung, suffering is the "torture of having to endure the world in all its reality. This is the cross he has to bear, and he himself is a cross. The whole world is God's suffering, and every individual man who wants to get anywhere near his own wholeness knows that this is the way of the cross" ([1958] 1995, 59) The way of the cross is to willingly bear the burden of our dual nature, along with the certainty of suffering and death; it is also to lay down our will following the kenotic model of Christ. If, however, we cannot bear the consciousness of evil and suffering in the world, the cross as a symbol of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, can destroy us. If the Tree of Life (which is also the cross) is not planted in our soul when evil and suffering inevitably confront us, we are yet nailed to a cross by affliction (there were two crosses either side of Christ's); quivering "like a butterfly pinned alive to a tray" (Weil [1950] 1998, 54-55).

For philosopher Simone Weil, if the individual can remain oriented towards love when the nail of suffering and affliction is (inevitably) driven through their soul, they will find themselves "nailed to the very centre of the universe [...] "[i]n a dimension which is not spatial, and which is not time, a totally other dimension, the nail has pierced through the whole of creation, through the dense screen which separates the soul from God" ([1950] 1998, 55). When the point of intersection of the nail of affliction in the soul, is also the point of intersection between the two branches of the cross, the soul experiences, like Christ, the multi-dimensional unity of all love, suffering and good and evil which extends beyond a purely Euclidean space, across all times and spaces (*ibidem*). Indeed, for Zosima, to the soul which is oriented towards Christ in love, "all things are good and splendid, because all is truth" (Dostoevsky [1880] 1990, 295). Zosima maintains that through Christ, union between God, mankind and all creation was made possible and that all creation grow in goodness through contact with the infinite and divine worlds of God.

Zosima's non-Euclidean response to Ivan's Euclidean reasoning is ultimately couched in the union of the moral opposites via love (theosis). Zosima is able to perceive

an undifferentiated unity that extends laterally without exception, connecting each individual to all other manifestations of existence. Included are not only all other people but vegetable life and inanimate objects (rocks and soil) as well. The union also extends vertically to join all forms of existence to God (Anderson 1986, 120).

Zosima's epistemology is non-Euclidean insofar as he senses that there is a higher world/space and reality beyond three-dimensional space and linear time which can be analogised as the multiple spatial realities proffered by non-Euclidean geometry. Although Dostoevsky acknowledges that evil is insoluble to the Euclidean mind and that the suffering of children is an 'irrefutable' fact of existence, via Zosima, Dostoevsky offers the reader of *The Brothers Karamazov* a non-Euclidean spatial and moral perspective of reality that offsets the senselessness of the suffering and evil in the world.

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