

The reflection of Spinoza-Leibniz theodicy debate in Dostoevsky's "Brothers Karamazov"

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Introduction

In the western philosophical tradition Fyodor Dostoevsky is mostly known as one of the founding fathers of existentialism and much less attention has generally been drawn to a somewhat more traditional theological part of his philosophy. "Brothers Karamazov", the most philosophical novel of Dostoevsky, in essence, represents an inquiry into the problem of theodicy, where existential, political and psychological issues (for which the novel is praised the most) are only occasional and peripheral. Theodicy in general is not a very popular problem in contemporary philosophy – it is seen as a relict of the essentialistic philosophy reliant on a huge metaphysical background that is today considered obsolete. However, theodicy for Dostoevsky is not just an abstract inquiry into divine justice, but also an important social challenge: the question that Dostoevsky is trying to resolve is the impossibility to live happily and build any kind of harmonic society in a world that rests on the others' suffering. This is not merely a question of explaining evil happening in the world and living happily knowing that your suffering is justified, but also a matter of fighting with evil and ending suffering. This question clearly goes beyond the boundaries of dreamy abstract theology, and it is not a coincidence that many other existential, political and ethical problems posed by Dostoevsky stem from this inquiry in - probably the most fundamental problem of human life - the problem of evil and suffering.

In my thesis I will look at Dostoevsky not only as a theologian or a social critic, but also as a historian of philosophy. The polemic of Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov on the problem of evil is full of references to the early-modern theodicy discourse. The whole novel "Brothers Karamazov" was initially conceived by Dostoevsky as a "Russian Candide" featuring the author's response to Voltaire and Leibniz. But apart from these thinkers there is also a third philosopher, whose ideas are in a sense reproduced in the novel, but not explicitly discussed there – this is Baruch Spinoza. The relationship between Leibniz and Dostoevsky (which is very strong and obvious to anyone who have read "Brothers Karamazov") is very rarely discussed in the philosophical literature, but the relationship between Dostoevsky and Spinoza (at least to my knowledge) has almost never been discussed at all.¹ Spinoza is not a theodicy thinker, but his ideas can be conceived as some kind of anti-theodicy, in which the evil in our world is metaphysically reconciled with God's perfect nature through the denial of morality within God's order. This discrepancy between the moral and metaphysical perfection of our world has also become a serious problem of Leibniz's Theodicy, and his philosophical argumentation was frequently accused of bearing hidden similarities with Spinoza. The problem of moral nihilism resulting from the theodical search of harmony lies in the center of Dostoevsky's inquiry and represents his explanation of the moral and political crisis that was about to happen in philosophy of his age. The inability to reconcile the harmony offered by God with the unredeemable child suffering leads Ivan Karamazov to the anti-utopia of the Grand Inquisitor. Ivan wants the Inquisitor to "correct" God's plan and take away the cognition of good and evil from humans in exchange for their freedom. While Spinoza sketches the metaphysical image of

¹ The only exception, to my knowledge, is a small article of the Russian biographer of Dostoevsky, I. D. Yakubovich "Moral-Philosophical search of Arkady Dolgoruky (Spinoza and Leibniz in the Dostoevsky's novel «The Raw Youth»", which does not have an English translation. This article discusses Dostoevsky's references to Spinoza and Leibniz in the draft to the novel "The Raw Youth" published 4 years before "Brothers Karamazov", but Spinoza features there mainly as a political thinker and the moral and religious part of his philosophy are not mentioned. These references in Dostoevsky's drafts also show that the writer was familiar with Spinoza and Leibniz and was planning to reflect on their philosophical views in his works.

the world of necessity, in which there is no freedom of will and no good and evil, the Grand Inquisitor wants to artificially reproduce such a world, as some kind of totalitarian paradise, where there is no freedom, but “everything is allowed”.

The normative project of the Grand Inquisitor is almost identical to the positive (almost mathematically deduced) metaphysical views of Spinoza and this cannot be a simple coincidence. The dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov in many ways echoes Leibniz’s dialogue with Spinoza in his Theodicy. But in Leibniz’s Theodicy the dialogue is one sided and many more challenges of Spinozism are left unanswered by Leibniz, whereas Brothers Karamazov in a way reproduces and develops this conversation up to the point, where the radical opposition between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor should appear. This opposition for Dostoevsky is not merely a personal religious choice, but also the global choice of humanity on the path to overcoming of evil and suffering. The political consequences of this choice are evident from the rise of totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, which in many ways reproduce the Grand Inquisitor’s ideology. This transition from the abstract religious debate to a radical social criticism also allows me to apply theodical reasoning in the setting of economics and look at such problems as externalities and redistribution from a different angle.

The structure of this paper is as follows. At first the tensions between Spinoza and Leibniz in the field of theodicy are discussed, and the moral challenge of Spinozism for theodicy is defined. Next, I consider the dialogue between Alyosha and Dmitry Karamazov and discuss Dostoevsky’s own reflection on Leibniz’s theodicy. Then, Dostoevsky’s own theodicy and the anti-theodicy of the Grand Inquisitor are explained. Subsequently, the philosophical dialogue between Spinoza and Leibniz is conceived through the prism of this theodicy/anti-theodicy dichotomy of the Brothers Karamazov, and the social consequences of this theodicean debate for the history of modernity are discussed. The final section of this paper provides the overview of the history of the economic thought through the prism of theodicy and the application of theodical reasoning to contemporary ethical issues in economics.

Leibniz’s Theodicy and the “challenge of Spinozism”

The idea that God has chosen to create our world as the most perfect of all possible worlds is the gist of the Leibniz’s Theodicy. The perfection of the world for Leibniz is defined in terms of its worthiness of God’s own nature; God, according to Leibniz wants to create the world “purposed solely to manifest and communicate his perfections in the way that was most efficacious, and most worthy of his greatness, his wisdom and his goodness”². This “most efficacious” communication of the Divine nature for Leibniz implies that our world should be governed by the simplest and the most general laws as possible, and the evil that we find in such a world is justified as a mean for sustaining the generality of these laws. So that the most general law of the distribution of rainfall would necessarily imply that some areas are left without rain, and it would be unworthy of God’s perfection to intervene and disrupt the whole system of weather to prevent a one single drought.³ Two rather peculiar objections can be posed to this view:

1) If God is compelled to create the most perfect world, because He Himself is perfect by definition, then does this not imply that all characteristics of our world are already sustained in

² Leibniz, Theodicy, 78.

³ Nadler, The best of all possible worlds, 100.

God, so that our world is only an attribute of God's perfect nature and no real creation process took place?

And

2) If sustaining the simplicity of laws is more important for God than preventing particular instances of evil, and our human morals do not generally concern these general laws, then does this not imply our anthropomorphic moral notions are meaningless in relation to Divine Wisdom?

The first point of criticism was already voiced by Leibniz's contemporaries and is labelled by Steven Nadler as the "challenge of Spinozism for theodicy"⁴, whereas the second accusation of Leibniz of being forced to commit to some kind of moral Spinozism is much rarer in the philosophical literature, but it also seems to me more important. Johnathan Israel claims that Leibniz's theodicy in its essence is a criticism of Spinoza and Bayle as the "architects of the morally-neutral universe", and what, according to him, "shaped the structure of argument in the Theodicy most of all is Leibniz's response to Spinoza and Bayle denying the reasonableness of inferring God's goodness from what passes in the world."⁵ But is it at all possible to infer God's goodness from pain and suffering happening in the world without neglecting the evil of this suffering? The preservation of human notions of good and evil in relation to divine ordering of the world is one more crucial challenge for Leibniz that, as we will see later, is much more dangerous for his system than the metaphysical challenge of Spinozism.

In the Ethics Spinoza claims that anthropomorphic notions of good and evil are meaningless from the divine standpoint. Spinoza's God by definition is the most perfect being, and its perfection also implies that it contains all possible attributes, so that all events happening in our world follow necessarily from a divine and perfect nature. This pantheism of Spinoza implies that our world is the most perfect (of all possible worlds), simply because the essence of this world is God, and God is perfect by definition. Spinoza's proposition "God did not lack material to create all things, from the highest degree of perfection to the lowest"⁶ in this context addresses easily any theodicy questions, such as "why did God create earthquakes?" or "why did God create suffering?". Nevertheless, this ontological perfection of the world does not imply any moral goodness, and so this response of Spinoza does reconcile the perfection of our world with all the evil happening in it, but it also demolishes traditional morals completely. Leibniz tried to avoid this – he claimed that our world is not only ontologically, but also morally the best from all possible ones⁷. This extension allows Leibniz to refute the accusations of metaphysical Spinozism - Leibniz explicitly mentions that his notion of God cannot be reduced to the faceless God of necessity of Spinoza, as He is only morally, but not metaphysically compelled to create our world and not a different one. The perfection of our world is, therefore, grounded not in the essence of God, but in the supreme morality, by which God's Wisdom is guided in comparing infinitely many worlds that are equally metaphysically possible as this one. The ontological status of these possible worlds as well as the relation of God's morality and God's wisdom are already separate questions, but what is particularly important for this enquiry is that this "moral necessity", by which God is guided, is the main element of

⁴ Nadler, *The best of all possible worlds*, 233.

⁵ Israel, "Leibniz's Theodicy as a Critique of Spinoza and Bayle," 239.

⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics I*, Appendix III.

⁷ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 174.

Leibniz's Theodicy that prevents it falling in Spinozism. And so, the proper functioning of Leibniz theodicy now turns out to depend not on the metaphysical, but on a moral justification of the necessity of evil happening in our world.

Apart from the metaphysical evil (which arises from the fact that God is perfect, and our world is not identical to God, so that it is necessarily imperfect in some respect), Leibniz points to two more kinds of evil: physical (suffering) and moral (sin). Physical evil for Leibniz is justified either as a mean for the greater good or as a punishment for moral evil.⁸ Moral evil eventually is also justified as a mean for the greater good, so essentially Leibniz is taking a sophisticated "consider the whole" approach to theodicy. Nevertheless, by showing that all disasters that we encounter in the world are necessary for the overall harmony, Leibniz also, in a sense, undermines the goodness of this harmony and the question of ends justifying the means inevitably arises. Leibniz does not deny the possibility of creating a world without evil, but this world, according to him, will be less perfect and morally worse than the one we live in. Leibniz writes: "the best course is not always that one which tends towards avoiding evil, since it is possible that the evil may be accompanied by a greater good. For example, the general of an army will prefer a great victory with a slight wound to a state of affairs without wound and without victory".⁹ Nevertheless, the good can be accentuated by evil in as much as the evil can be accentuated by good and Leibniz does not provide any guarantee that the latter is not the case. War in Leibniz's example could have also been started by an evil tyrant, who caused people get wounded and killed for his own amusement. And it is hardly possible from the mere fact of suffering happening in the war to infer the goodness of the general, who has started it.

Furthermore, taking into consideration that the perfection of our world for Leibniz is defined in terms of sustaining the generality of the laws of nature, there is really no guarantee that the eventual divine harmony will really contribute much to human wellbeing. Leibniz explicitly mentions that God is not guided by any anthropomorphic morality: "No substance is absolutely contemptible or absolutely precious before God. It is certain that God sets greater store by a man than a lion; nevertheless it can hardly be said with certainty that God prefers a single man in all respects to the whole of lion-kind. Even should that be so, it would by no means follow that the interest of a certain number of men would prevail over the consideration of a general disorder diffused through an infinite number of creatures."¹⁰ Expanding this argument to other aspects of God's creation, it can be said that the interest of a certain number of earthquake victims will not prevail in the mind of God over the consideration of general disorder in the movement of tectonic plates that would result from preventing the earthquake. This explanation does show that God did not intentionally create lions and earthquakes to harm people, but it cannot show the morality of God's order from a human perspective. Not unlike Spinoza, Leibniz refuses to think of the perfection of our world in terms of human convenience, but unlike Spinoza for whom "Perfection and imperfection are only modes of thinking [of nature]",¹¹ Leibniz also tries to show the moral goodness of our world disregarding that morality exists exclusively between God and humans. It is hardly possible to think of such a system of morals, where the generality of laws of nature is valued more than human life, and it seems that either Leibniz's God is immoral from a human perspective or that human morality is

⁸ Nadler, *The best of all possible worlds*, 98.

⁹ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, Appendices [378].

¹⁰ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 118.

¹¹ Spinoza, *Ethics IV*, Preface.

short-sighted, false, and meaningless in relation to divine law. The first option is incompatible with the whole idea of theodicy, the second one will again lead to Spinoza.

Both Spinoza and Leibniz try to abstract from the individual human standpoint and look at the world from a divine perspective. But Spinoza realizes that this abstraction inevitably results in complete indifference of the universe to the human drama, whereas Leibniz is balancing between showing the divine justice and care about humans and neglecting the human happiness in the construction of the metaphysical harmony. The complete lack of conciliatory force of “consider the whole approach” was very well realized by Spinoza, and it inspired him to come up with a different concept of happiness, whereas Leibniz seems to have overlooked it. Had he taken this into account, he would probably again have been forced to embrace Spinoza’s conception of God as a disinterested abstract entity.

Even though Voltaire’s *Candide* is frequently criticized of misrepresenting Leibniz’s optimism,¹² this book gives a very good impression of how Theodicy looks like from the point of view of the suffering individual. The basis for *Candide*’s absurd optimism is not only a blind belief in the harmonic perfection of our world (which *Candide* mistakenly conceives in terms of his own well-being), but also the fact that the eventual divine harmony does not really provide any comfort to the suffering individual. The uselessness of any harmonic divine ordering of the world in addressing the real human problems makes Leibniz’s God as indifferent to human suffering as the faceless God of Spinoza. The God of Leibniz does care about humans, and although He wills to make all humans happy, this endeavor is eventually overthrown by His wish to build a harmonious universe in which human suffering takes place. Both Leibniz and Spinoza make us accept suffering as something necessary for the general course of Divinely ordered nature, but Spinoza neglects such normative concepts as good and evil, joy and suffering, and calls upon us to find happiness in a Stoic peace of mind, while Leibniz does not want to give up these notions and inevitably fails to demonstrate the goodness of our world from the individual human perspective.

The mere fact that our suffering is required for the proper functioning of tectonic plates or for accentuating the joy we (or other creatures) get from good things does not make suffering less evil, and the necessity of this evil for God’s plan does not make it less negative for us. Physical or metaphysical harmony does not seem to have any value in Christian morality, and Leibniz’s proposal to think of evil as not only metaphysically, but also morally necessary, results in the depreciation of evil, as if it was only a negligible discomfort with which we should not really be concerned. In this respect Spinoza’s neglect of anthropomorphic morality as well as Voltaire’s mocking on the benefits of human suffering can be seen as harsh, but honest inferences from the Leibniz’s approach to evil. There is a certain missing component in the Leibniz’s theodicy, something that would not only justify the evil from the point of view of God, but also from the point of view of suffering individual – something that would make us accept this suffering and with this suffering accept God, not vice versa. This exact limitation of Leibniz’s theodicy serves as a basis for Dostoevsky’s enquiry into the problem of evil in the “*Brothers Karamazov*”.

¹² e.g. Nadler, *The best of all possible worlds*, 98.

Leibniz's theodicy and the problem of Grand Inquisitor

Rebellion against God is a central motive of Dostoevsky's philosophy and theodicy is a natural part of it. In 1877 Dostoevsky has made a note in his diary, featuring the plan to write a "Russian Candide", which should have included some kind of theistic response both to Voltaire and to Leibniz on the question of God and evil. This unfinished plan was partially realized in Dostoevsky's next novel "Brothers Karamazov" published in 1880. The most explicit discussion of theodicy is given in the Fifth Book of the novel, which includes, such chapters as "Rebellion" and "The Grand Inquisitor". Dostoevsky himself have pointed out that this book is the "culmination of the whole novel," which includes the discussion and resolution of the "disruptive problem of our age", which is the "denial not of God but of the meaning of His creation."¹³ The gist of this problem is explained in following monologue of Ivan Karamazov:

It's not God that I do not accept, you understand, it is this world of God's, created by God, that I do not accept and cannot agree to accept. With one reservation: I have a childlike conviction that the sufferings will be healed and smoothed over, that the whole offensive comedy of human contradictions will disappear like a pitiful mirage, a vile concoction of man's Euclidean mind, feeble and puny as an atom, and that ultimately, at the world's finale, in the moment of eternal harmony, there will occur and be revealed something so precious that it will suffice for all hearts, to allay all indignation, to redeem all human villainy, all bloodshed; it will suffice not only to make forgiveness possible, but also to justify everything that has happened with men--- let this, let all of this come true and be revealed, but I do not accept it and do not want to accept it! [...] I absolutely renounce all higher harmony. It is not worth one little tear of even that one tormented child who beat her chest with her little fist and prayed to 'dear God' in a stinking outhouse with her unredeemed tears! Not worth it, because her tears remained unredeemed. They must be redeemed, otherwise there can be no harmony. But how, how will you redeem them? Is it possible? Can they be redeemed by being avenged? But what do I care if they are avenged, what do I care if the tormentors are in hell, what can hell set right here, if these ones have already been tormented? And where is the harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive, and I want to embrace, I don't want more suffering. And if the suffering of children goes to make up the sum of suffering needed to buy truth, then I assert beforehand that the whole of truth is not worth such a price. [...] imagine that you yourself are building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last, but for that you must inevitably and unavoidably torture just one tiny creature, that same child who was beating her chest with her little fist, and raise your edifice on the foundation of her unrequited tears - would you agree to be the architect on such conditions? Tell me the truth."/ "No, I would not agree," Alyosha said softly.¹⁴

The numerously repeated motive of redemption of suffering in future harmony clearly refers us to Leibniz. Ivan's example of harmony built on the tears of a child echoes Leibniz's claim that a great victory brought by a wise general can redeem the suffering of soldiers. Ivan goes much further than simply doubting the possibility of harmony, instead he criticizes it from the moral point of view – not a metaphysical, but a moral theodicy is required for Ivan to accept the world created by God. Ivan points to the fact the eventual harmony does not in any way nullify the suffering that has already happened: the child was already tortured and we cannot simply

¹³ Coulson & Dostoyevsky, Dostoevsky: a self-portrait, 224-225.

¹⁴ Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, 207.

forget it and live happily ever after. The family that Job has lost did not return to him, instead God gave Job a new family, and Dostoevsky (who also lost a child) did not understand how could Job accept it.¹⁵ Both brothers Karamazov (who are presented as polemicists in this dialogue) agree that it is immoral to accept any harmony built on children's tears – however perfect our world may be from the divine standpoint and by however virtuous reason God was guided in designing it – it is immoral for us to agree with this plan. The theodicy clearly does not work, the price of the harmony is too high and so it is better for us to reject God's plan and reshape the world to our needs. This is why Ivan introduces the figure of the Grand Inquisitor, who has come to "correct" God's deed.

The main feature of the divine plan that does not satisfy Ivan is the necessary connection between sin and the freedom of will. God, according to Ivan, allowed the original sin (and, consequently, all other sins) to happen because he wanted humans to come freely to the path of virtue. Nevertheless, this burden of moral responsibility that appeared after the sin of Adam, does not allow humans to live happily in the world that is built on suffering. Ivan cannot believe that there can be any harmony in such world: "Who wants to know this damned good and evil at such a price? The whole world of knowledge is not worth the tears of that little child to 'dear God.'"¹⁶ When Ivan says that no man can be happy, when at least one child is crying, he also refers us to the principle "everyone is guilty for everyone else" that is repeated by different characters throughout the novel. There is nothing that would excuse us from letting the children cry, and so we are responsible for these tears, but this burden of responsibility is much stronger than us.¹⁷ By taking away our freedom the Grand Inquisitor will protect us from misusing it – there will be no more children's tears and all humans will be happy as they will not have to bother about living a good life, doing right things, the question of meaning of life will disappear as well. There will be no good and no evil in the world of Grand Inquisitor, there will only be pure necessity, a perverted Leibniz's "happy necessity", which will assure that "there will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers [the inquisitors themselves] who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil."¹⁸

The view that free choice between good and evil is better in the eyes of God than having no freedom and no evil at all (with which Ivan and Grand inquisitor are arguing) is frequently attributed to Leibniz,¹⁹ but his actual treatment of freedom is a little bit more complicated. Leibniz claims that, as free beings, we are selves responsible ourselves for the moral evil and God wants us to be morally responsible for our actions, but he does not really discuss why freedom is good in itself (apart from it being good because God preferred it to creating no freedom). There is only one small passage in Leibniz's polemics with Bayle, where his position on this topic becomes explicit. Leibniz questions the following quote of Bayle: "It therefore does not beseem the infinitely good Being to give to creatures a free will, whereof, as he knows for certain, they would make a use that would render them unhappy. Therefore, if he gives them free will he combines with it the art of using it always opportunely, and permits not that they neglect the practice of this art in any conjuncture; and if there were no sure means of determining the good use of this free will, he would rather take from them this faculty, than

¹⁵ Walsh, *The Book of Job and the Dialectic of Theodicy*, 162.

¹⁶ Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 209.

¹⁷ 60 years later Jean Paul Sartre will refer to this monologue Ivan Karamazov in formulating the main theses of his existentialist project, such as, for example: "man is condemned to be free".

¹⁸ Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 220.

¹⁹ E.g. Bertrand Russel expresses this view in the *History of Western philosophy*.

allow it to be the cause of their unhappiness.”²⁰ Bayle’s point is strikingly similar to the words of Ivan Karamazov – humans could have been made happier if they were directly guided by God, and their freedom of will is only a cause of their own unhappiness. It does not seem that Leibniz realized how serious this critical point really was, as his response was quite trivial: he only repeated that God does not only care about human happiness, and even if we ourselves do not want to be free, God knows better what is good for us on the whole. This argument allows Leibniz to take away from God the moral responsibility for our sins, but it does not in any way justify why we should be thankful for God for our freedom.

If we were ready to sacrifice our happiness for abstract metaphysical harmony, we would, of course, consider our freedom as a virtue, but there is simply no reason for us to embrace this harmony. Nothing would prevent us from denying God and worshipping the Grand Inquisitor, who only cares about our happiness, and does not want us to tolerate the burden of freedom. Ivan treats the Inquisitor’s control as a virtue and claims that people themselves will subdue their freedom to the Inquisitor: “They will marvel at us, and look upon us as gods, because we, standing at their head, have agreed to suffer freedom and to rule over them – so terrible will it become for them in the end to be free!” – says Inquisitor.²¹ The theodicy debate now turns into a very radical social criticism – the anti-utopia of the Grand Inquisitor is frequently cited as Dostoevsky’s prophesy on the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century.²² The debate between Leibniz as a protector of traditional religious morality and Spinoza as an architect of the morally neutral universe, where morality is a social convention – as it was described by Johnathan Israel – is mirrored in the debate between Christ and the Grand inquisitor. Spinoza also sketches a world of necessity, which cancels the notions of good and evil; the happiness in such a world is associated with peace of mind and the freedom from passions, including, of course, such disruptive inclinations as pity and altruism. Leibniz, on the other hand sketches our world as morally superior to any other possible world, where all the evil, however bad it is, in the end only accentuates the overwhelming good, but there is no place for happiness in this world, unless it is an absurd happiness of *Candide*. Moreover, Leibniz’s tendency to nullify the significance of the human suffering by referring to its necessity in the functioning of divinely ordered nature as well as his rejection of purely anthropomorphic morality are also dangerously close to ideas of Spinoza and Grand Inquisitor.

Similarity between Spinoza and the Grand Inquisitor deserves particular attention. Spinoza’s rejection of anthropomorphic morality is only a necessary conclusion of his inquiry into the essence of God. It is just an apparent result of his mathematical reasoning, which relies on a on a set of axioms and propositions logically deduced by Spinoza. Spinoza’s argumentation does not have any normative element (if only some implicit normative inclinations) and so anyone, who does not agree with the metaphysical views of Spinoza will have no reason to follow his ethics. Nevertheless, the Grand Inquisitor reproduces the normative world of Spinoza without any positive metaphysical basis. Spinoza does not aim to destroy freedom and morality, as this is only a necessary implication of his inquiry into the essence of God and nature, but these implications are strikingly similar to the normative project of Grand Inquisitor. For Spinoza the distinction between good and evil “is nothing but an affect of joy or sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it,” and by overcoming this affect we can actually achieve greater happiness and greater virtue of mind.²³ The Grand Inquisitor in turn also conceives the cognition of good and evil as a burden to be relieved, but his ideal of happiness is somewhat more utilitarian than

²⁰ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 120.

²¹ Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 215.

²² Jones, *Introduction*, v-vi.

²³ Spinoza, *Ethics IV*, P8.

Spinoza's. For Spinoza the meaninglessness of traditional moral notions is implied by the impossibility of the world being otherwise and the resulting absence of metaphysical freedom, whereas the Inquisitor conceives a world of necessity that is beyond good and evil as an ideal society, and achieves this ideal by fighting intentionally with freedom. The greatest joy of mind is, according to Spinoza, achieved in a more certain knowledge of God, and considering that reason can obtain this knowledge with mathematical certainty, the notion of faith, as an overcoming of doubt, becomes redundant. Although Spinoza here is less radical than the Inquisitor, who considers free faith as a burden, causing the "horrors of slavery and confusion",²⁴ they both agree that the relief of confusion under indubitable authority is a virtue (it is no coincidence that the phrase "dictate of reason" has a clear positive connotation in the Ethics). The transition of unresolved theodicy into a quasi-Spinozist world of necessity in the views of Ivan Karamazov explicates the real downside of the Leibniz's Theodicy that is dangerously close to Spinoza in some respects. Dostoevsky rediscovers the historical accusations of Leibniz in hidden Spinozism and leads them to their final point – the tragedy of theodicy, in which the justification of evil becomes a source of evil itself.

The legend of Grand Inquisitor is frequently referred to as a separate philosophical work, reflecting the Dostoevsky's view on the rise of social utopism in his century and the upcoming social changes associated with it. Nevertheless, I believe that it is a mistake to interpret the Legend of Grand Inquisitor independently from the general context of "Brothers Karamazov". This is Ivan Karamazov, who have come up with the idea of Grand Inquisitor and his preceding deliberation shows not only the Ivan's own path of thought but also a historical logic of the rise of totalitarianism in Europe. The transition from abstract metaphysical inquiry into a concrete social order in the reasoning of Ivan Karamazov demonstrates the starting point of totalitarian thinking – the unsatisfied search for harmony. The impossibility to justify child tears in face of the divine harmony makes Ivan to search for an earthly utopic ideal that would substitute the established world order. Johnathan Israel is right in claiming that theodicy is not only a justification of God, but also a justification of the established organizational moral principles of society. Ivan cannot resolve the theodicy, the established social order that is built on the child tears is unacceptable and so we need a new moral grounding for society and a new social architect. Ivan cannot endure the absolute existential responsibility for the others' suffering and so he desires to get rid of it for the sake of his (and man's in general) happiness. He dedicates this responsibility to a strong centralized agent that would regulate the human behavior and forcefully maintain some kind of harmony. Totalitarian regimes do not arise by themselves – the reign of a strong hand provides a big comfort for the individuals, who do not want to carry the burden of the moral responsibility. It is much better to entrust the building of utopian society to some strong leader than trying to contribute to society by yourself. And, moreover, the doubts about the morality of your actions on the path to the greater harmony are alleviated, as goal justifies the means in totalitarianism. This is exactly why there is no good and evil in the world of totalitarianism – there is a certain higher ideal (such as, for example, the prosperity of a certain nation) in relation to which "everything is allowed." Ivan's theological inquiry into the meaning of child suffering that is quite in line with the peaceful theodicy discourse of the 17th century turns into the anti-utopia that resembles the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. The unresolved search of harmony on the early modern theodicy discourse have soon resulted in the search of a certain artificial harmony – a utopia, which justifies any means in achieving it in the same way as any evil is justified by eventual divine harmony in theodicy. It is not a coincidence that the totalitarianism is expressed in the Dostoevsky's novel through the inquisition – the perverted church. In the Pushkin speech

²⁴ Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, 219.

Dostoevsky criticizes the Europe of his time for the desire to make the government a substitute of the church (and this idea is also expressed in *Brothers Karamazov* by father Paissy, the successor of Elder Zosima).²⁵ This idea clearly is anticipation of the real agenda of the coming totalitarian soviet government and the Hitler's support by catholic church. In the same way as government becomes the church in totalitarian government the theodicy turns into the totalitarian utopia in the European history of ideas.

As was discussed earlier, the challenge of Spinozism for theodicy thinkers is not so much metaphysical as it is moral – it is possible to make up infinitely many abstract concepts (such as Leibniz's distinction between moral and metaphysical necessity) to justify why and how did God create our world. But it is much more difficult to find a moral justification for any kind of harmony that is built on human suffering – such a harmony will most likely result in the ignorance of the suffering and the moral nihilism. Dostoevsky brings this issue to a social dimension – the ideas of Grand Inquisitor can be seen as some kind of normative Spinozism – the intentional renouncement of freedom and construction of a morally-neutral world for the sake of relief of suffering. This anti-utopic ideology is, of course, deprived of many essential features of the actual Spinozism (such as strict rationalism, for example), but it does reconstruct quite well the Spinoza's attitude to the problem of evil, which the central problem of the Dostoevsky's inquiry. Dostoevsky's own theodicy can be seen as a purification of Leibniz's theodicy from ideas that are dangerously close to Spinoza.

Spinoza and Dostoevsky's theodicy

The anti-theodicy of the Grand Inquisitor and Ivan's own deliberation on children's tears are both presented in the form of a dialogue, and while the Grand Inquisitor's opponent – Christ – is completely silent, Alyosha Karamazov does give a certain response to Ivan. Alyosha resolves the Ivan's dilemma of the "edifice of human destiny" that is built on the tears of a child by referring to the suffering of Christ: "[...] he himself gave his innocent blood for all and for everything. You've forgotten about him, but it is on him that the structure is being built, and it is to him that they will cry out: 'Just art thou, O Lord, for thy ways have been revealed!'"²⁶ Alyosha points out that unjustified suffering does not happen by some blind necessity, but is caused by us, and we are responsible for it – Christ is being crucified every day, and children are being tortured and there is no one else to blame but us. In R. McCullough's interpretation of Dostoevsky's theodicy, the suffering of children literally "participates in Christ's own suffering".²⁷ There is nothing in principle that would excuse us for allowing the child's suffering to take place and this implies that we are guilty for it, as if we have caused it ourselves.

Dostoevsky emphasizes that the sacrifice of Christ as well as any undeserved suffering is no burden on human conscience, but instead a stimulus for greater human cooperation that is built on common guilt. This idea is best expressed in the preaching of the spiritual teacher of Alyosha Karamazov, Elder Zosima: "Truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone, only people do not know it, and if they knew it, the world would at once become paradise. [...] There is only one salvation for you: take yourself up, and make yourself responsible for all the sins of men. For indeed it is so, my friend, and the moment you make yourself sincerely responsible for everything and everyone, you will see at once that it is really so, that it is you who are guilty on behalf of all and for all. Whereas by shifting your own laziness and powerlessness onto others, you will end by sharing in Satan's pride and murmuring against

²⁵ Dostoevsky, Pushkin Speech.

²⁶ Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 208.

²⁷ McCullough, *Christ, the Karamazovs, and Compensational Theodicies*, 212.

God.”²⁸ Any paradise of which we can think in the Christian worldview is inevitably built on the unjustified suffering and this is not only the suffering of Christ, but also our own suffering that is added to it. Our common guilt in this way would only encourage us to make a sacrifice in order to restore the paradise that we have lost – this is the only way that we ourselves can give meaning to child tears. The theodicy is now turned upside down – we should no longer accuse God of making children suffer, but we should ourselves redeem our guilt for making these children cry.

The ideal of ultimate sacrifice arising from common guilt was realized in practice by the third brother – Dmitry Karamazov. Dmitry did not kill his father, but he, nevertheless, felt responsible for this crime and voluntarily accepted his sentence and went to Siberia. Dmitry explains: “It's for the 'wee one' that I will go. Because everyone is guilty for everyone else. For all the 'wee ones,' because there are little children and big children. All people are 'wee ones.' And I'll go for all of them, because there must be someone who will go for all of them. I didn't kill father, but I must go. I accept! All of this came to me here ... within these peeling walls. And there are many, there are hundreds of them, underground, with hammers in their hands. Oh, yes, we'll be in chains, and there will be no freedom, but then, in our great grief, we will arise once more into joy, without which it's not possible for man to live, or for God to be, for God gives joy, it's his prerogative, a great one ...”²⁹ Reference to children here is clearly not coincidental – Dmitry by his own example shows Dostoevsky's resolution of the problem of child's tears – not to abstract from the others' suffering, but to participate in it. Dostoevsky adds an interpersonal dimension to the classical Augustinian theodicy. Augustine had claimed that newborn children deserve their suffering, as they are guilty of first-born sin; Dostoevsky and Leibniz, on the contrary, propose a more humanistic view in which child suffering is as innocent as Christ. But unlike Leibniz, for whom the child's suffering is an integral part of a perfect world, Dostoevsky proposes us to take on ourselves the burden of suffering from these children. Both for Leibniz and Dostoevsky harmony is impossible without our suffering, but Dostoevsky here speaks of a yet unrealized harmony – a harmony that we ourselves have rejected and continue to reject every day. It is not God, who needs our justification, but we ourselves have to justify the crimes that we have committed – and the harmony that God proposes to us is exactly the tool of our expiation.

Interestingly, Dostoevsky's ideal of joining Christ in suffering for the sins of others, was in a way anticipated by Leibniz. When explaining the positive sides of God's disinterestedness in human happiness, Leibniz writes: “Moreover, one has no cause to complain of the fact that usually one attains salvation only through many sufferings, and by bearing the cross of Jesus Christ. These evils serve to make the elect imitators of their master, and to increase their happiness.”³⁰ Leibniz did not develop this idea into an argument, as his God is not exclusively concerned with humans, and their happiness is not required for Divine harmony as he represents it. Leibniz intentionally does not strictly define the function of suffering in the composition of harmony, but he, nevertheless, supposes that the encounter with evil and suffering may eventually lead to our moral improvement (this is an extension of his “evil accentuated the good” argument). Dostoevsky radicalizes this idea – we can either ignore others' suffering and live blindly under the dictate of the Grand Inquisitor or we can take our moral responsibility for this suffering and do what we can to prevent it. Without this common guilt the true paradise will not be restored, but we can still replace it by an artificial harmony that is beyond good and evil. In this case we

²⁸ Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 253.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 502.

³⁰ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 122.

would lose our freedom and our moral responsibility, so that the world we live in will turn into a harmony that is neither evil nor good, but necessary.

Spinoza shows that the qualities of our world follow necessarily from God's nature and so it does not make sense to assess them from any moral perspective. Humans for Spinoza also do not have any freedom of will and there is no substantial normative difference between earthquakes and child torture – these phenomena are equally necessary for the functioning of our world and do not carry in themselves any good and evil. People living in the world of the grand inquisitor, who have deprived them of freedom and cognition of good and evil will most likely have the same attitude to any imperfections in the human behavior. Leibniz, on the other hand, distinguishes between moral and physical evil – while physical evil can be justified as necessary for the overall harmony (as droughts that are necessary for the overall distribution of rainfall), we ourselves, as free beings, are responsible for the moral evil. Nevertheless, this possibility to do evil in a perfect world, inevitably results in speculations on the goodness free will (such as that of Pierre Bayle or Ivan Karamazov). If God preferred the world with free will to the world without free will, and we ourselves suffer from free will, does this not imply that God uses us merely as a means to build His harmony on our suffering? Leibniz believes that undeserved suffering (such as the suffering of children) is compensated in the afterlife, but this does not cancel the mere fact of suffering that has already happened, and we (at least according to Dostoevsky) cannot simply accept this suffering as an ordinary order of events. This is how the problem of children's tears arises for Dostoevsky. He, in turn, outlines two possible solutions – we can either follow Ivan and give up our freedom for the sake of a quasi-Spinozist world, where moral responsibility is no problem, or follow Alyosha and Dimitry and make ourselves responsible for all the evil happening in the world. In the second case the opposition between God and rebelling man, such as Ivan or Job, is alleviated, and instead man conjoins his own suffering to the suffering of Christ. Now the harmony does not fall on us from above, but we ourselves build it in our attempts to redeem the priceless sacrifices of Christ and all children that suffer with him. In the world of radical existential freedom these sacrifices occur only by our fault and not because the world in itself is somehow imperfect or evil.

The conflict of moral constructivism (bordering with moral nihilism) and religious morality, necessity and freedom, philosophical and dogmatic conceptions of God in the views of Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov reproduces the tensions between Spinozism and Leibniz's Theodicy (as well as some tensions within the Leibniz's Theodicy discussed earlier). Johnathan's Israel shows the importance of the theodicy debate in the history of the Enlightenment; Leibniz's theodicy in this respect is the last bastion of the *ancien régime* falling under the pressure of radical Enlightenment. Dostoevsky goes further as he shows that the paradoxical mixture of nihilism and utopianism of the 19th century as well as the coming catastrophes of the 20th century are rooted in the 17th century search for harmony and perfection. The inability of 17th century man to find comfort in rationalist theodicy and the resulting severance of the link between morals and metaphysics are direct sources of the radicalism of 18th and 19th century thought. Many philosophers have pointed on Enlightenment as a cause for all kinds of nihilistic social tendencies during the 19th and the 20th century, but Dostoevsky was the first to do it through the prism of theodicy. The polemics of the brothers Karamazov can be read as the reiteration and reinterpretation of theological debates of the past, in which the hidden tensions between theodicy thinkers are explicated. Dostoevsky points on this philosophical background both as a basis for his own theodicy and as a root of dangerous ideas of his age. The voice of the author of the novel is silent, Dostoevsky clearly presenting us a choice to fill in the blind spot between Spinoza and Leibniz – we can either follow Alyosha and suffer to make theodicy possible or follow Ivan and construct a world, where theodicy is impossible from the beginning. In this

social dimension this would imply either making the common guilt a binding principle of society or rejecting the moral responsibility for the sake of man's happiness. The linkage of theodicy and the social criticism in "The Brothers Karamazov" emphasizes the social relevance of theodicy not only in the 17th century, but also in the whole history of modernity.

Theodical thinking in economics

In the previous sections of the thesis I have sketched the political meaning of theodicy debate of the 17th century. Theodicy is not just an abstract questioning of God's justice, but also a particular attitude towards freedom and the moral responsibility, which can give response not only to political and religious, but also to economic challenges. Let us look at the history of economics through the prism of theodicy starting with a small biblical reference.

Initially the state of Israel was governed by God chosen judges, who ruled according to 10 commandments. But then in the book of Samuel, the Jews chose a king, who could exert his own laws, and God, in turn, considered this decision as a betrayal. Many disasters happening to the Jewish people in Bible have resulted from this separation of civil and the moral responsibility. This separation of responsibilities remains to be a serious problem in economics, but it has only appeared relatively recently – this problem did not worry the first economists. Adam Smith, in the very beginning of economics, uses a truly religious metaphor of invisible hand to justify the operation the market economy. It is as if by God's hand the mysterious market mechanism leads to the most satisfying distribution of resources. Either literally or metaphorically God was directing the economy to the benefit of humanity, and the responsibility for all the negative economic outcomes (such as unemployment or poverty) was lying on this providential force of the market mechanism. But this blind belief in initial attunement of the market economy to the needs of the whole society have soon ended – God and providence have disappeared from the economy, and what was left is a set of faceless corporations that manage human resources for the sake of their corporate benefit. The tension between social and corporate benefits has appeared and so the question of justice and morality of free market had to be answered. The attempts by liberal economists to justify the morality and justice of the free market distribution of resources have from that time become an acute question in economics – this exact question is further referred to as an economic theodicy.

The justification of market economy in the liberal paradigm almost never happens without appeal to freedom. The distribution of resources resulting from market operation might not be the most desirable for society on the whole, but what is really important is that this distribution rests on a set of voluntary transactions. It might be immoral to give very low wages to workers, whose skills are not demanded in the economy, but these workers have agreed voluntarily to work in circumstances like this. Government intervention involving, for example, direct monetary support or wage limits will inevitably involve the involuntary transfer of money from taxpayers to these poor people. The charity is very well possible within the free market economy and if people really wanted to give their money to others in need – they would have already done it anyway. The virtue of this act of sharing disappears when the government intervenes and takes on itself the responsibility for the redistribution of wealth. The world of government intervention is the world of the Grand Inquisitor – world, where the morality of individual actions is crowded out by a necessity induced from above. Market economy consists of people, corporations consist of people and so there is no external force which can be blamed for the downsides of economy than the people themselves. Any government intervention that is aimed at "correcting" the market outcomes is no different from inquisitor's intension to correct the human behavior. Therefore, the fundamental assumption of any government policy is the belief in incompetence of people themselves governing their lives, and (at least when the

democracies are concerned) the readiness of people to give up a piece of their freedom in exchange for fulfillment of some higher social objectives.

Nevertheless, the notion of inquisition in economics does not need to carry such a negative connotation as in the novel of Dostoevsky. Any healthy economy inevitably relies on some degree of the government intervention, as the government should at least enforce legislation and assure that the market exchange is indeed voluntary (and not forced as in the case of slavery, for example). But the criticism of free market is generally associated with a much greater government involvement than simply forcing the law. The responsibility for the negative economic outcomes frequently lays on the corporations, which can act as a separate legal body that have their own interests that cannot be reduced to the interests of individuals, who manage this corporation. Conflict between personal and corporate responsibility arises here. For example, it is generally not in the interest of workers to pollute air, but they may nevertheless continue to maintain the factory that pollutes air. The factory by itself is not a faceless capital that dictates its interests through the factory's management (as Karl Marx would have probably put it), but only a mechanical tool, which serves the goals of the corporation. The air pollution in this example is not in the direct interest of the corporation, but it inevitably arises as a byproduct of the company's operation – an externality. All stakeholders, all managers and all workers may be against the air pollution, but the installment of pollution filters or the limitation of production intensity will inevitably worsen the company's competitive position and decrease the chances of company's survival on market. It seems that the whole logic of market competition forces this company to maintain the polluting activities and it is rather difficult to justify theodically how can the market serve benefit of humanity if it forces companies to pollute air.

The government intervention is a very frequent solution to the problem of externalities. Government can indeed introduce certain environmental standards and force companies to be more ecologically friendly. But this solution will distort the whole economy and decrease the overall production pie that is shared by all of its citizens and also impose a higher tax burden on the citizens as the constant environmental monitoring clearly requires big financing. When the individuals are forced to finance the ecological policies from their taxes the whole virtue of the voluntary ecological charity disappears – there is no more good in the environmental concern of taxpayers and no more evil (at least in the legal sense) in pollution if it is within the government standard. It seems that the economic theodicy here is irresolvable and the strict control of the grand inquisitor is inevitable.

Nevertheless, the pro-interventionist point of view presented shows only a one-sided somewhat too philosophical attitude to theodicy. As it was argued earlier, market mechanism by itself does not have any personal logic that is independent from the voluntary actions of economic agents – market is only a neutral tool of communicating the people's preferences that allows the transaction to happen. The interests of corporations do not coincide with the interests of employees or stakeholders, but these interests are not dictated to companies by the market itself (it is impossible in any way to institutionalize the market mechanism – market by itself cannot be responsible for anything, we cannot simply point on a certain institution or legal entity and label it as a market). The interests of corporations do not arise out of anything, but they are dictated by the market demand – the air pollution would have never occurred if the products of polluting factories had not been demanded. Today, in the era of “responsible consumption”, we can speak of ecologically friendly and ecologically unfriendly products as two separate kinds of production that have a different demand. This is also why many companies today put “eco-friendly” logos on their products – firms respond to the rising environmental

consciousness of consumers and now it is the interest of these firms to minimize the environmental damage. And so, these are not only the evil corporations to blame for the remaining air pollution, but also the lack of consciousness of consumers, who either intentionally or unintentionally continue not to distinguish the eco-friendly and non-eco-friendly production. The same logic can be also applied to the exploitation of workers. People, who do not tolerate the inhuman labor conditions and catastrophically low wages in developing countries, can simply stop buying the products of exploitative companies – these products will not disappear from the market, but instead the companies themselves will adjust their production to satisfy the ethical preferences of consumers. And this is exactly how through the interaction of responsible consumption and corporate social responsibility the “Fair trade” initiative have appeared.³¹

Clearly choice between the world of Grand Inquisitor and the world of freedom is repeated in the economic theodicy. It is possible to resolve many ethical issues in economics through the government intervention, but this would inevitably imply a certain limitation of freedom and privation of moral value of personal charitable activities that are fully or partially taken over by the government. On the other hand, there is also a possibility to resolve these issues without any intervention at all, the discrepancy between social and corporate responsibility is not inevitable, as the interests of corporations in the market economy cannot be independent from the preferences of customers of their customers (otherwise, the customers would switch to some other firm that better fulfills their preferences – the competition forces companies to align their interests with consumers). If consumers realize their social responsibility for the market choices they make than the brake between social and corporate responsibility will disappear and the market outcome will align with the general societal interest. It is not enough to justify the evil happening in economy as a mean for the greater wealth of the nation (as 17th century economists did), but is also important to be responsible about your own personal market participation. The decreasing role of national governments in contemporary economy, rising softness of contemporary economic policies (illustrated for example by the system of tradable pollution permits in Europe, which allows much more freedom for corporations than the environmental taxation of the past), and the greater role of social responsibility in the operation of the market economy shows a rising potential of the second kind of policies in the resolving the economic problems of present day. It seems that the Dostoevsky’s appeal to importance of freedom and the people’s moral interconnectedness is best realized in contemporary economy, where both corporate social responsibility and responsible consumption have become major global phenomena.

Conclusion

Brothers Karamazov can be read both as a Dostoevsky’s reflection on the philosophical disputes of the past and as a prophesy for the philosophical and political catastrophes of the future. The dispute between Alyosha and Ivan Karamazov reproduces the Spinoza-Leibniz debate on theodicy and drives it to the final point – tragedy of theodicy. Ivan’s inability to justify the child suffering in the divinely ordered world makes him to come up with an anti-utopia of the Grand Inquisitor. In the worldview of Ivan Karamazov the unresolved theodicy outlines a search for an

³¹ What makes this case especially peculiar is that it cannot be so simply resolved by the government intervention. There is no world government to which Dutch consumers can appeal in order to prevent the exploitation of workers in Vietnam and the mere existence of this world government does not seem to be a very good idea. The market economy, on the other hand, is not limited by the national borders, and only free market allows the consumers from all over the world to communicate their preferences to each other without any direct (institutionalized) organization of these consumers.

artificial harmony in totalitarian paradise and the reevaluation of Christian values. This shift from religious morality to morality as a social convention resulting from the crisis of 17th century's theodical thinking for Dostoevsky is associated with the shift from theodicy to utopia and from church to government.

The philosophical interaction of Spinoza and Dostoevsky (at least to my knowledge) have almost never been discussed at all. Dostoevsky does not make any explicit references to Spinoza in *Brothers Karamazov* (and he did not intend to make them), but his anti-utopia of the Grand Inquisitor in many ways resembles Spinoza's world. *Brothers Karamazov* contain many direct references to the 17th century theodicy debate, which was largely influenced by Spinoza, and so the proposal to associate the Ivan's criticism of the Leibniz's optimistic theodicy with the challenge of Spinozism for theodicy is appropriate in this context. The interpretation of the Leibniz – Spinoza dialogue through the prism of *Brothers Karamazov* allows to reveal hidden tensions between these thinkers and also to assess the political significance of the Early Modern theodicy debate. The choice between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor which inevitably arises as a final point of the limitations of the Leibniz's theodicy in resolving the problem of child tears represents also an important societal choice in the history of Modernity. Apart from that, the theodicy, as a particular attitude to morality and freedom can also be used as a framework for resolution of the ethical problems in economics.

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