THE DOSTOEVSKYAN DIALECTIC IN SELECTED
NORTH AMERICAN LITERARY WORKS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

James Gregory Smith
Denton, Texas
December 1995
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This study is an examination of the rhetorical concept of the dialectic as it is realized in selected works of North American dystopian literature. The dialectic is one of the main factors in curtailing enlightenment rationalism which, taken to an extreme, would deny man freedom while claiming to bestow freedom upon him. The focus of this dissertation is on an analysis of twentieth-century dystopias and the dialectic of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor parable which is a precursor to dystopian literature. The Grand Inquisitor parable of The Brothers Karamazov is a blueprint for dystopian states delineated in anti-utopian fiction. Also, Dostoevsky's parable constitutes a powerful dialectical struggle between polar opposites which are presented in the following twentieth-century dystopias: Zamiatin's We, Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, Vonnegut's Player Piano, and Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. The dialectic in the dystopian genre presents a give and take between the opposites of faith and doubt, liberty and slavery, and it often presents the individual of the anti-utopian state with a choice. When presented with the dialectic, then, the individual is presented with the
capacity to make a real choice; therefore, he is presented
with a hope for salvation in the totalitarian dystopias of
modern twentieth-century literature.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOSTOEVSKYAN DIALECTIC IN DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE

Dystopia, "the bad place," is a literary term designating anti-utopian fiction. Polish-born critic Maria Kwapien explains that the anti-utopian genre is that narrow band of literature concentrating on the description of the state or political organization of an imagined, idealistic society. Presentations of future social orders that are undesirable usually fit into the category of dystopic literature. Kwapien notes that a dystopia is a society whose characteristics are in opposition to utopian ideals, and that dystopias should have the following three characteristics:

1. they present a society
2. the society presented does not exist in reality;
3. the structure of the society is shown as unsatisfactory. (42)

Another characteristic of dystopian literature is that the satire involved is directed not against what humanity is, but against what humanity may become:

The genre of anti-utopia is best defined as that
exemplars: Huxley's *Brave New World*, Zamiatin’s *We*, and Orwell’s *1984*. An anti-utopia must contain a certain degree of social reorganization . . . . And it must contain a sense of continuity with the historical situation of the author’s present time . . . (45)

Finally, critic Kwapien’s analysis of dystopias and cognate literary genres leads him to the following definitive statement on dystopias:

Any anti-utopia is a literary work presenting in a variety of forms a negative picture of a social system, which may be observed by the author in the tendencies existing in the development of real societies. (47)

Kwapien would argue, then, that works such as Butler’s *Erewhon* would not fit the category of dystopia because the satire is not directed at what humanity will become but at what humanity currently is.

If a literary utopia is a fictionalized idealization of a state, then it is the dystopias which satirize these ideal visualizations and show that often the best of intentions, when fanatically applied, will lead to human misery. Maria Kwapien notes that some dystopias, such as Orwell’s *1984* satirize "good intentions," and he asserts:

Anti-utopias criticize those good intentions proving that the road to hell is paved with
proving that the road to hell is paved with
them; the utopian perfectionist tendencies are
either impossible to realize or . . . they may
cause unhappiness instead of expected social
improvements. (44)

Essentially, dystopias show that human ineptitude
perverts noble ideals and leads to dehumanization and
tyrranny. Critic Mark Crispin Miller notes that Orwell
satirized the destructive modern systems that have arisen
out of modern humanity’s good intentions of transcending
destruction via the rationalistic principles of the
Enlightenment.

Miller, writing about the genre of dystopian
literature, concludes that Orwell is satirizing the
mechanistic "Progress" of the Enlightenment which is,
according to Miller’s quotation of Orwell’s words, "just as
much of a swindle as a reaction" (701). Miller cites
Horkheimer and Adorno’s The Dialectic of Enlightenment to
make his case:

For Horkheimer and Adorno, "Enlightenment" refers
not simply to the optimistic moment of the
philosophies, but to the drive . . . toward the
rational mastery of nature. . . . Now nature will
serve those who study it . . . having freed it
from the obfuscation of folk wisdom, Church dogma,
and Aristotelian logic. . . . This program was
conceived by its earliest proponents as a means of universal renewal. . . . And yet the unrestrained demythifying impulse has led us not to rejuvenation, but toward apocalypse. (701-702)

Miller notes that the rationale of the Enlightenment eventually did away with such concepts as "God," "Nature," and even "Man." Writers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Zola, Flaubert and Shaw, to name a few, chipped away at these concepts in their literature and attempted to prove the outmoded ideas of Christianity indefensible by cutting the soul away from humanity in order to show that religion had, in Orwell's words, "become in essence a lie, a semiconscious device for keeping the rich rich and the poor poor" (Miller 702). Miller concludes:

Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Orwell saw the unprecedented horrors of mid-century not as the aberrant results of any single system of beliefs . . . but it was the relentless impulse of the Enlightenment that had enabled the conceptions of the death camp, the atomic bomb, the machinery of total propaganda—each one a highly rational construction devoted to afterminal irrationality. And that autonomous rationality, Orwell believed, would quickly supersede even those new myths devised to justify it in the present. . . . (703)

However, Horkheimer and Adorno, who worked in
intellectual traditions different from Orwell's, shared Orwell's belief that freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought and that a return to the Stone Age is not the answer either. Essentially, what they were arguing for is the middle ground in which there is not so much a repeal of the tenets of the Enlightenment as there is a call for those who form the intellectual vanguard of to evaluate its effect on society. Speaking of Horkheimer and Adorno, Miller writes: Rather, these critical advocates of the Enlightenment recognized that progressive thought, while indispensable, at the same time "contains" the seed of the reversal universally apparent today"; and so it was the two Germans' project to salvage the best original intentions of Enlightenment, by encouraging "reflection on its recidivist element": "The point is ... that Enlightenment must consider itself, if men are not to be wholly betrayed." (703)

Dystopian literature, then, is a reaction to the lack of a self-critical Enlightenment. Although Miller does not digress along these lines, the dystopian genre itself is a check on the zealous rationality of the Enlightenment because it satirizes the Enlightenment principles embodied in utopias. In fact, the majority of dystopias contain, in one form or another, reactions against the idealism of the Enlightenment.
In what way is the literature of dystopia a critique of the Enlightenment, and how is the critique fictionally realized? The answer has its roots in an understanding of Romanticism’s emergence as a reaction against the deadening mechanization of the unbridled Enlightenment. Social historian Alvin W. Gouldner writes:

The critique of the technocratic society and its "mathematical project" began close upon the French Revolution with the emergence of a selfconscious romanticism which, from its very beginnings, was antimechanistic, antimaterialistic, and disposed to a pantheistic . . . conception of all things infused with their own life spirit. Opposing the mechanistic deadening of things moved "merely" by external forces, the romantics affirmed that far from God being dead, He, the supreme life spirit, was everywhere and in all things, however lowly or trivial. (263)

Perhaps, then, Romanticism is the first critique of the Enlightenment, and dystopian literature is a critique of the Enlightenment precisely because its main thrust coincides with romanticism in its anti-mechanistic and, to a lesser degree, antimaterialist nature.

Both Romanticism and the dystopian genre condemn utopias that are in the Enlightenment tradition of bringing "happiness" to man with the best of intentions. The utopian
society is satirized for being run by soulless men with blinders on. Satire, especially dystopian satire, attempts to remove the blinders of readers in an attempt to show that rational utopian societies crush individual freedom, stifle imagination, and cripple creativity; consequently, individuals living in these "enlightened" societies are portrayed as men who have become so dehumanized that they are mere cogs in the routine machinery of a clockwork state.

What makes the machine state so monstrous is the blindness of its own ideology, the blindness of its own rhetoric. What the satire of dystopia does is to reveal the inadequacies of Enlightenment ideology in an effort to return spirit to humanity. Alvin Gouldner notes that one of the chief problems of utopian propaganda and ideology is the source of ideology itself, residing in the contradiction between the part and the whole:

In short, the limit on the rationality of ideology is fundamentally a defect of reflexivity. It is unable to transform the "resources" of its own analytic machinery into "topics," and thus it leads to an unexamined life. Ever since Socrates and Plato, such reflexive self examination has been one of the great virtues within the idealistic tradition. Theirs was a dialectic that always "soared upward," searching out the unstated premises of an argument and then, in turn, the
The other type of dialectic apparent in dystopian literature is the thesis/antithesis of Hegel. Polemical ideas are compared and contrasted by being presented in counterpoint so that one side is examined in the light of another such as the Pelagian vs. Augustinian phases of history Anthony Burgess explores in his dystopian novel *The Wanting Seed*.

One of the first anti-utopian visions that was an obvious reaction against the rationalism of the philosophers was *Gulliver’s Travels* written by the Anglo-Catholic Jonathan Swift. The fourth voyage, "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms," is a dialectic. Swift splits the dual nature of man—the quality of rationality and logic represented by the rational Houyhnhnms, and the impulse toward irrationality represented by the Yahoos. The dialectical stage is set: enter the protagonist upon the scene—the unimaginative, direct and honest Lemuel Gulliver who recounts his adventures in the rationalistic utopia of Houyhnhnm-land as forthrightly as he can. Because Gulliver is representative of man, then neither the Yahoos nor the Houyhnhnms alone are symbolic of man. They represent the extremes in human nature.

Perhaps Swift is setting up his dialectical view of man to show how man is a composite of sublime rationality and mundane bestiality. Gulliver’s pride is a consequence of the ideology of the Enlightenment and allows him to view
only one side of his own nature. Only when the Christian rescuer Captain Mendez appears upon the scene is the reader given a glimpse of a human who exhibits any kindness, and Mendez contrasts with Gulliver who is so enamored of utopian, one-sided theory that he is blind to anything which might contradict it. In his final ironic words, Gulliver damns himself for the sin of pride: "I here entreat those who have any Tincture of this absurd vice, that they will not presume to appear in my sight" (343).

Swift, a Christian as well as a humanist, was satirizing the new Enlightenment conception of man, the new mechanistic science, and rationalism. Swift did not feel that man was reasonable, but that he was capable of reason; however, reason alone, divorced from theological absolutes, could not be man's salvation from the darker impulse of his bestial nature. Swift's dystopic satire was effective precisely because he made use of the dialectic by presenting the reader a thesis/antithesis of human nature and letting the reader view the folly in both extremes.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, like Swift, criticized the danger of unrestrained rationalism. His legend of the Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov is an analysis of rationalism. This Socratic dialectic, featuring a questioner—the Grand Inquisitor—and Christ, is framed by another dialectic between two of the Karamazov brothers: Ivan, the representative of implacable logic and
rationalism, vs. Alyosha, the representative of love and the
human spirit. The legend of the Grand Inquisitor presents
the Grand Inquisitor’s society as a dehumanizing anti-
utopia.

Perhaps "The Grand Inquisitor" becomes the paradigm for
dystopia in literature. Patricia Warrick notes that while
Dostoevsky was on the political right, the dystopic writers
of the left--Zamiatin, a dissident of Communism; George
Orwell, a heterodox socialist; and finally, Aldous Huxley, a
scion of liberalism--were influenced by Dostoevsky and agree
with his vision of the dystopic world. In her article
"Sources of Zamiatin’s We in Dostoevsky’s Notes from the
Underground," Warrick states:

One of those conservatives most forceful in
assaulting utopian thinking in the nineteenth
century was Feodor Dostoevsky. In Notes from the
Underground, he prophesies the kind of world
he thinks will result from the implementation of
utopian planning. . . . (63)

While Notes from the Underground prophesies a future
dystopia, Dostoevsky’s chapter "The Grand Inquisitor" from
The Brothers Karamazov seems to be a blueprint for such a
dystopia.

The dialectic in the dystopian tradition presents the
characters, as well as the readers, of the novels, with
contradictory choices. The dialectic forces one to choose,
but when the dialectic is absent, no choice is available. In *Brave New World* and *1984* the characters are not presented with choices, and so these novels are examples of the most negative dystopias. Bereft of hope, man is caught in the rat-trap of a mechanistic world. The dialectical dystopias, on the other hand, present choices for the reader, and consequently, they present a way out of the trap. The basic choice lies in the dialectic weighing freedom against enslavement, with man caught between his impulse toward submission and his impulse toward rebellion. American dystopian novels are apparently less pessimistic than many of their British counterparts because they present both sides of a dialectic. Incidentally, American dystopian novels critique Capitalistic society instead of Socialist or Communist society.

Three major twentieth century dystopian novels written by North American authors which are structured dialectically are the following: Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.’s *Player Piano*, and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. All three novels can be better appreciated by comparing the dialectic they present to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Socratic dialectic of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Therefore, an analysis of the way Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor parable sets the precedent for the dystopias of Bradbury, Vonnegut, and Atwood should elucidate the purpose of the dialectic in dystopian literature, and in the
process, portray how these novels are legatees of Dostoevsky’s fiction.

These novels will be included in this study rather than other anti-utopian novels because they are considered to be the best North American anti-utopian works in the genre, and they contain the clearest examples of the Dostoevskian dialectic exhibited outside Great Britain. "Critical Utopias" will also be excluded from this study because they are often more utopian in nature than dystopian because they do not focus on the clearly negative depiction of an organized future society such as those found in Huxley’s *Brave New World* or Orwell’s *1984*, and the Dostoevskian dialectical paradigm is not clearly evident. In his work *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, Tom Moylan uses the term "critical utopia" to categorize works such as Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* and Ursula K. LeQuin’s *The Dispossed*.

In this study, then, a discussion of Dostoevsky’s Christ and the Grand Inquisitor parable will indicate how that work sets the paradigm for the Dostoevskian dialectic which will appear in most of the best examples of 20th Century dystopian writing. A chapter on Eugene Zamiatin’s novel *We* will follow because there appears to be a direct line of influence from Dostoevsky—via Zamiatin’s novel which is a legatee of Dostoevsky’s parable—to the American Dystopian works of fiction.
CHAPTER II

DOSTOEVSKY’S "LEGEND OF THE GRAND INQUISITOR": THE PRECURSOR OF THE DYSTOPIAN DIALECTIC

While the Grand Inquisitor parable in Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov is not a dystopia itself, it contains the dialectic between submission and freedom exhibited in dystopian literature. The Grand Inquisitor’s society would be a planned society, one in which man is directed; for man, according to Ivan, the spokesman for the Grand Inquisitor, is happy when he is enslaved by the good decreed by the Church. Ivan believes that man is unhappy when he is free to choose between good and evil. Therefore, instead of the indirection and consequent freedom present in Christ’s teachings, Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor want to deprive man altogether of the concept of choice. Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor represent rationality carried to such an extreme that man is deprived of his humanity, his choices of what he will be. He would become, then, a cog in the machinery of the utopian state. The subsequent dialectic between freedom and non-freedom is dramatically presented via the Grand Inquisitor and Christ, and the reader is left to make a choice between the two.

The Grand Inquisitor parable, a microcosm of the novel, contains delineations of the major tensions and conflicts
later to be played out in the book. The parable contains the dialectics of reason and illogic, doubt and faith, security and freedom as well as the fundamental dialectic of the Enlightenment between materialism and spiritual idealism. Prefacing the parable is the meeting between two of the Karamazov brothers: Alyosha—the representative of illogic, faith, and freedom—faces Ivan—the representative of atheism, rationality, doubt and security. Both brothers agree that for true Russians the questions of God’s existence and of immorality come first and foremost. Therefore, their political and theological positions, delineated in the Grand Inquisitor parable, indicate Dostoevsky’s own preferences not only in facing ontological inquiry but in confronting the exigencies of daily existence.

In the parable, both the representative of Ivan—the Grand Inquisitor—and the representative of Alyosha—Christ—are acting from altruistic motives, but their philosophies and their methods differ. Readers must decide which philosophy and method offers the best hope for mankind. The choices are difficult, and they appear in Christ’s rejection of the three endowments to mankind: miracle, mystery, and authority. These three endowments represent probable inroads into the parable, but each of them presents a different dilemma necessitating a choice. The miracle section of the parable explores the choice between
socialistic institutional Christianity and individual rights. The mystery section of the parable places the materialist against the idealist in the exploration of Christianity, doubt, and faith. The authority section constitutes an inquiry into the difficult choice between security without freedom and freedom without security. Each dilemma forces the question of response which must either be a collective or an individual one; the choice must be between the often authoritarian collective response and an individual affirmation of liberty.

In order to view the parable in its proper context so that one might be in an informed position to make a choice for either the freedom of Christ or the security offered by the Inquisitor, it is necessary not only to have a perspective that recognizes the parable as rooted in a contextual background but also to see that it cannot be interpreted anachronistically from the novel. The parable must be viewed not only in its religious context—the conflict between the idealistic versus the materialistic perspective—but also considered along with some rudimentary knowledge of Dostoevsky’s own biographical history and prejudices in the post-revolutionary ferment of nineteenth-century Russia. Dostoevsky’s work is concerned with transcendent philosophical as well as political questions: The Brothers Karamazov is no propaganda piece but is a complex dialectic. Through the Grand Inquisitor passage
especially, Dostoevsky raises some fundamental questions; he forces the reader to decide whether faith is more important than perpetual doubt, and to decide whether freedom without security is more important than security without freedom.

The critic Duncan Williams notes that Dostoevsky anticipates much that seems characteristic of the twentieth century. Williams asserts, "For a time when few western Europeans doubted the intrinsic superiority of their cultural inheritance, Dostoevsky’s generation of Russian intellectuals found it impossible easily and automatically to accept any single cultural universe" (Williams 58). In fact, the concept of doubt is the key element which motivated Dostoevsky throughout his long life, leading him through Christian humanism and utopian socialism to atheistic communism, and then—in Siberia, away from the cynical aristocratic and intellectual salons of St. Petersburg—to the Russian people themselves, and ultimately—after a long struggle of doubt and negation—to God. After noting Dostoevsky’s political shift to the right, biographer Edward H. Carr writes:

In Russia, politics and religion are never far apart; and the movement of Dostoevsky towards political orthodoxy implied, at any rate, a strong urge in the direction of orthodoxy in religion. Russia is not the home of middle courses; and it was scarcely possible in the Russia of the
1860's to find a middle position between radical materialism and conservative orthodoxy. (Carr 282)

Dostoevsky's internal dialectic kept him balanced between the rival ideological polemics of materialism and orthodox idealism. Dostoevsky's dialectic is reflected in his novels, the most representative being the monumental *The Brothers Karamazov*, that greatest delineation of his favorite preoccupation—the struggle between faith and disbelief.

In order to comprehend fully the Grand Inquisitor parable, it is essential to view it within the context of *The Brothers Karamazov*. In part II, Book V, chapter III of the novel, two of the brothers meet at a village to become better acquainted; each seeks to understand the other, for they represent radical differences. Ivan Karamazov, a student of natural sciences at the University, represents humanism and atheism although he is not a totally committed atheist, because he is torn between faith and disbelief. On the other hand, his brother Alyosha is a monk, but one who works in the world rather than in a monastery; although he represents faith, there are times when he, too, has doubts about the spirit's triumph over the flesh. When these two controversialists come together, each attempts to sway the other to his respective side. Biographer-critic Constantin Mochulsky notes the dialectical struggle:

The "youthful lover of mankind" clashes with his
brother, the atheist; Alyosha believes in God and lovingly admits God's world. . . . Ivan does not believe in God and before loving the world, wants to understand its meaning. Christian love is opposed to atheistic reason. (627-28)

Alyosha begins the disputation by questioning his brother's belief in God. Alyosha feels that one should love life and place love before logic. Surprisingly, however, Ivan concedes the existence of God, but rejects the decrees of God. He states, "It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand, it's the world created by him that I don't and cannot accept. . . (Brothers Karamazov 282). To strengthen his argument, Ivan does not reject God outright, but in the tradition of Voltaire, he rejects the world god has created:

You know that old sinner of the eighteenth century who said that if God didn't exist he would have to be invented. And true enough, man has invented God. What is so strange and extraordinary is not that God really exists but that such a thought--the very idea of the necessity of God--should have occurred to a vicious animal like man, for that concept is so holy, so touching, so wise that it does man too much honor. (281)

Subsequently, in the fourth chapter, entitled "Rebellion," Ivan responds to Alyosha's question as to why
Ivan will not accept God's world. Because Ivan has witnessed acts of evil in the world, he revolts against the idea that God created such an imperfect world. If God did not create the world, though, does God exist?—Ivan wonders. Critic Mochulsky succinctly epitomizes Ivan's argument at this point:

Christianity acknowledges the Fall from grace and believes in the coming of the Final Judgement; Ivan denies the first and contemptuously rejects the second: he does not want any reward for innocent suffering. . . . Ivan declares that there is no original sin, that man is born without guilt. Consequently, the sufferings of children are unjust and the Final Judgment is senseless.

(Mochulsky 616-617)

Ivan meticulously illustrates his argument with his dossier culled from news items and personal anecdotes he considers "proof" of God's non-existence; these news items contain descriptions of man's inhumanity. Animals are beaten. Children are tortured. A body cast into the air is, in descent, impaled on a soldier's bayonet. In one of the more horrific stories, a mother locks her little girl up in an icy, dark, and stinking outhouse every night. Ivan, not believing in an afterlife, calls for retribution in the present, and not in some vague hereafter:

I still need retribution. Without it I'd rather
I must have retribution not somewhere far off in infinity but here, on earth. I want to see it with my own eyes. (The Brothers Karamazov 294)

Ivan is rebelling against the Christian world-view and demands present justice in lieu of a judgment day:

I have no wish to be a part of their eternal harmony. It’s not worth one single tear of the martyred little girl who beat her breast with her tiny fist, shedding her innocent tears and praying to "sweet Jesus" to rescue her in the stinking outhouse. It’s not worth it, because that tear will have remained unatoned for. . . . No, I want no part of any harmony: I don’t want it out of love for mankind. (295)

Coupled with his suffering is the painful realization of the connectedness of all mankind and the collective suffering of humanity.

Also, another aspect of Ivan’s character is his embodiment of the "philosophy of reason," which holds that man is a rational being. Mochulsky elaborates:

Ivan is proud of his reason and for him it is easier to renounce God’s world than reason. If the world is not justified by reason, it is impossible to accept it. The rationalist does not want to be reconciled with a kind of "nonsense."
Here begins the tragedy: rational consciousness finds no meaning in the world order. In the world there is an irrational principle, evil and suffering, which is impervious to reason. (615)

Ivan, the Voltairean protestor against human suffering, rises in rage against the doctrines of a beneficent God, trumpeted by the Panglosses of society. Ivan's humanist principles compels him to protest against the traditional concept of God and to urge the protection of people against the cruelties of despotic governments in history.

Ivan, reasoning against God "out of love for mankind," forces Alyosha to revolt by proclaiming that Alyosha, too, cannot accept God who is the architect of a world founded on the unavenged tears of even just one child:

Imagine that you are creating a pattern of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end. . . but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature. . . and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears. Would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? (The Brothers Karamazov 296)

Ivan believes that Alyosha must also reject the traditional concept of God and come to protect humanity from the harsh cruelties of historic reality; thus Ivan states,

. . . and that is why I reject the higher harmony altogether. I do not want a mother to
embrace the torturer whose dogs have torn her son from limb to limb. I do not want harmony. I do not want it because of my love for mankind. (295) Alyosha is forced to agree on this point; he is forced to admit that he, too, would not consent to be a divine architect under such cruel conditions, but he responds to Ivan's devastating humanistic logic with the one objection that Ivan has apparently neglected: Christ forgives everyone for everything because 'He himself gave his innocent blood for everyone's sins and for everyone's sake' (296). However, Ivan anticipates him on this point:

I was wondering how long it would take to bring Him into our discussion, because the people on your side usually make use of Him above all else in your arguments. (296)

The Grand Inquisitor parable, Chapter V of Book V, Part II, is Ivan's subsequent and final answer to Alyosha's response. This parable, the climax of Ivan's dialectic, seems to be Dostoevsky's most complex literary creation; for in it, the author grapples not only with the difficult problems of socialism and religion, but also with existential questions such as the problem of evil in the world and the question of freedom and the necessary human responsibility that liberty entails. It is Ivan's injured sense of justice that makes him reject God and formulate the parable of the Grand Inquisitor; in the parable, the Grand Inquisitor's injured
sense of justice makes him side with the doomed and suffering millions rather than with Christ's few elect. Ivan, via his counterpart the Grand Inquisitor, attacks the divine endowments of miracle, mystery, and authority which leave humanity free not only to sin but to disbelieve:

Having destroyed the idea of the fall and the reward, the atheist must do away with the idea of redemption. . . . He sharply changes his tactics. In place of logical proofs there is a set of religious myths, in place of facts from contemporary reality a legend whose action takes place in Spain of the 16th Century. (Mochulsky 617)

The plot of Ivan's parable is deceptively simple; in the tradition of Voltaire and other satirical writers, Christ returns to earth. The setting for Christ's return is sixteenth-century Seville on the day after the burning of heretics and a "splendid auto-da-fe." Christ, coming softly through the crowds and performing miracles, is apprehended by the stern, ninety-year-old Grand Inquisitor who throws him into a dungeon. That evening is a night "fragrant with Laurel and Lemon" contrasted with the smell of burning flesh. The Inquisitor, in the trappings of a monk, justifies his acts and indicts Christ for a crime against humanity - the rejection of miracle, mystery, and authority. The complexity of the confrontation lies, not in the plot,
but in the dramatic tension between the "red-eyed"
Inquisitor and Christ, whose mute, enigmatic reaction
succeeds the Inquisitor’s raspy monologue. The Inquisitor
charges Christ with putting too much faith in man.
Humanity, the Inquisitor argues, is too weak to be anything
more than a follower and an impudent slave:

    Thou didst think too highly of men . . . for they
are slaves, of course, though rebellious by
nature. . . . I swear man is weaker and base by
nature than thou has believed him. . . . By
showing him so much respect, Thou didst, as it
were, cease to feel for him, for Thou didst ask
too much of him. (308)

Then, the Grand Inquisitor offers a corrective to
Christ’s work on the basis that the true lovers of humanity
should recognize three temptations. These temptations are
the three limitations of a free faith: mystery, miracle, and
authority.

D.H. Lawrence, a prominent critic of Dostoevsky as well
as a serious author in his own right, sums up humanity’s
tripartite weakness succinctly in his "Preface to
Dostoevsky’s 'The Grand Inquisitor'":

    Mankind in the bulk can never be "free" because
man on the whole makes three grand demands on
life, and cannot endure unless these demands are
satisfied. 1) He demands bread, and not merely as
foodstuff, but as miracle, given from the hand of God. 2) He demands mystery, the sense of the miraculous in life. 3) He demands somebody to bow down to, and somebody before whom all men shall bow down. (Lawrence 91)

The Grand Inquisitor believes Christ's way is impossible for the masses to follow because it makes greater demands than human nature can meet. He believes that true shepherds of mankind must not reject the miracle, mystery, and authority offered in the place of freedom by the great tempter, that "wise and dreaded spirit," that spirit of self-destruction and non-being. The Grand Inquisitor explains how Christ refused the first miracle of turning stones into bread to feed the people, and he puts Christ's challenge before humanity succinctly thus:

You came empty-handed, with nothing but some vague promise of freedom, which, in their simple mindedness and innate responsibility, men cannot even conceive and which they fear and dread, for there has never anything more difficult for man and for human society to bear than freedom! (304)

The Inquisitor is certain that all mankind--after suffering for thousands of years--will eventually return again and again to the Roman Church which has corrected Christ's teachings. The motto of the hungry people on earth must be "Feed us first, then ask for virtue."
The second and third gifts of the great tempter which Christ rejects are dealt with in less length in the parable but are no less important. The concept of mystery is mentioned when the Inquisitor castigates Christ for appealing only to the strong, only to the elect, who have the strength to follow the tortuous path of freedom:

Why is it the fault of a weak soul if he cannot live up to such terrifying gifts? If that is so, it is a mystery that we cannot understand; and if it is a mystery we have the right to preach to man that he must worship blindly, even at the expense of his conscience. And that is exactly what we have done. . . . And men rejoice at being led like cattle again, with the terrible gift of freedom that brought them so much suffering removed from them. (309)

Part of the mystery is the irony that God could have taken doubt away from man, but did not. Another mysterious irony is that the Grand Inquisitor is a Cardinal, an interrogator who not only ostensibly represents the Church but symbolizes the voice within any man who reaches out for faith in the midst of doubt. But perhaps the most poignant mystery kept from the "weak" masses is that irony of the Grand Inquisitor, the representative of the Church, who, being an atheist, pays only lip-service to Christ:

. . . we are not with You, we are with him and
that is our mystery! We have been with him and not with You for a long time, for eight centuries already. (310)

According to the limited viewpoint of the Grand Inquisitor, he and his elect share the terrible burden of the knowledge of the mystery, the knowledge that man has a basic existential freedom, and that in reality, God does not exist. Although the Inquisitor says he recognizes Christ, the mystery is that he has rejected Christ because, being a projection of Ivan's persona, he is confined to a purely humanistic perspective of existence. From this standpoint, the Grand Inquisitor discusses the third gift that Christ has rejected, the gift that is perhaps the most terrible of all, the gift of authority. The Grand Inquisitor queries Christ on why the last gift was rejected when that gift would have given man someone to worship. According to the Inquisitor, man needs "someone to worship, someone who can relieve him of the burden of conscience, thus enabling him finally to unite into a harmonious ant-hill where there are no dissenting voices, for the unquenchable thirst for universal unity is the third and last ordeal of man" (310). The Grand Inquisitor is so single-minded in his pursuit of imposing happiness upon the masses, that he will, ironically, go to any lengths in pursuit of his ideal, including the burning of heretics and dissenters at the stake. The question can then be posed: Is Dostoevsky
suggesting, through the duplicity of this character created by Ivan, that there is a fundamental short-sightedness in the rationality of the Enlightenment, and in Ivan particular, a myopic vision corrected only through the romantic’s lenses of faith and spirituality?

Essentially, the concepts of miracle, mystery, and authority combine to represent the antithesis of Christ. One critic writes of how the Grand Inquisitor sneers at the socialists but goes on to appropriate their essential materialism:

Ecclesiastical totalitarianism comes to terms with the socialist cause by absorbing it. Only then begins the reign of the universal state "an harmonious antheap"--assuring peace for all. Its principle of organization is power. Jesus repudiated power, but not the theocrats of Rome, who have taken up the sword of Ceasar, proclaiming themselves lords of the earth. (Rahv 256)

The terms socialist, theocracy, and totalitarianism in the above passage are the key terms of thought leading to an interpretation of the various meanings of the parable. Although the critics have written about the basic levels of meaning, none has explained that the three gifts of the tempter--miracle, mystery, and authority--represent the three major levels of interpretation in the following manner: the miracle section of the parable embodies the
Anti-Christ principles of Roman Catholicism and contemporary socialism; the mystery section explores the crisis of belief: faith, doubt and Christianity, and, finally, the authority section constitutes an exploration into the difficult choice between freedom and its opposite--happiness through totalitarianism.

The surface-level interpretation located in the "miracle" sectionindsicts Roman Catholicism and contemporary socialism which appear to unite under the authoritarian banner necessary for the enforced happiness of the masses. Mochulksy speaks of the first symbol of the miracle which "reconciles the irreconcilable," in the following manner:

The first temptation in the wilderness is a prophetic image of the history of mankind; the "bread" is a symbol of atheistic socialism; not only contemporary socialism, but also the Roman church... Dostoevsky was convinced that Catholicism... would unite with socialism and form with it a single tower of Babel, the kingdom of the Anti-Christ. (Mochulksy 618)

Dostoevsky evidently feared the atheistic socialists, but he perhaps feared Fourierism and the Christian socialists more because socialism and Christianity wedded would unite two of the most powerfully authoritarian ideologies in existence: Dostoevsky believed that, faced with these collective institutions of humanity--no matter how humanitarian they
might be in principle—man's individual rights would be crushed. Philip Rahv, a Marxist critic, also comments upon Dostoevsky's linking of Roman Catholicism with socialism through the miracle of turning stones into bread:

Thus in the Inquisitor's gloss on the Gospel story of the temptation, the motif of "stones into bread" is brought in again and again so as to convert it into the formula for socialism. The linkage of socialism with the Roman Church, though it may strike western readers as fantastic, is integral to Dostoevsky's thought. . . . In the main, however, it was the authoritarian principle, the idea of the "compulsory organization of human happiness" that was the essential link in his conception of socialism and Catholicism as two aspects of the same heretical self driving toward the obliteration of human dignity and freedom.

(257)

Both socialism and Catholicism attempt to make man happy by relieving him of his individual responsibility. The socialist gives man bread for his physical needs, while the church assuages his mental need for something to believe in. The Grand Inquisitor, representative of socialism and Catholicism, lies to the people and gives them bread in Christ's name, and in return, the people relinquish their individual rights. Bread for socialists and God for the
Catholics form powerful weapons of the Christian-socialist tyrant who claims that ultimately the people will "finally understand that freedom and the assurance of daily bread for everyone are two incompatible notions that could never exist" (The Brothers Karamazov 308). Dostoevsky's attack on the Church appears solely confined to Catholicism, for he has Alyosha break into Ivan's monologue with a disclaimer in favor of Russian orthodoxy which Dostoevsky's evidently felt was a purer form of Christianity.

However, Dostoevsky's attack can be viewed as an attack in general upon the Church, i.e., institutionalized Christianity, because the Inquisitor parable represents Christ's example betrayed by the very leaders who are supposed to set an example for the people. Although Dostoevsky advocated bread for the people as well as equality, he came to the conclusion that these were not to be obtained at the expense of individual rights. R.P. Blackmur sums up Dostoevsky's feelings toward organized religion thus:

> When man once possesses his religion (instead of being possessed by it, or caught in it), that is, when he has transformed his religion into a human institution, he will both persecute those who are still possessed by it and will find evil in the renewal of the original experience of it even in himself. He does not wish again to glimpse the
nearly chaos of the heart. (207)

However, a more complex level of interpretation of the parable concerns an exploration of faith, doubt, and Christianity. This level is made all the more complex because the author requires the reader to make a judgment based, not solely on theology, but a judgment based also on an awareness of an historical continuum. At the end of the "miracle" section of the parable, the Grand Inquisitor proclaims, "Judge for yourself then: who was right, you or the one who questioned you?" Dostoevsky, through the Inquisitor's asking Christ to judge, seems to ask the reader to judge whether Christ or Satan has been more beneficent in human history. And perhaps at this point, it should be observed that the historical perspective in the parable is a central one, for according to Philip Rahv, the parable constitutes an "Excursus on the theme of man's historical fate: Ivan's denial consists of a relentless scrutiny of man in general, and particularly Christian man, in the light of what he has made of history and history has made of him" (25). The Inquisitor indict Christianity by pointing out that throughout history men have killed in the name of Christ:

And it is precisely that requirement of shared worship that has been the principal source of suffering for individual man and the human race since the beginning of history. In their efforts
to impose universal worship, men have unsheathed their swords and killed one another. They have invented gods and challenged each other: "Discard your gods and worship mine or I will destroy both your gods and you!" (306)

Ironically, Ivan is almost trapped by his own logic, because the Grand Inquisitor, a cardinal of the church who has presided over the auto-da-fe the day before, has committed the same crime in his effort to unite the masses under atheistic totalitarianism. Ivan leaps out of logic in order to justify his atheism, and the legend of the Grand Inquisitor becomes not a logical weapon, but an analogical weapon through which he reveals God, Christianity, and man in an historical framework and thereby transforms history into the immediate realm of prophecy and revelation so that history itself may become the final arbiter of his argument. Philip Rahv asserts:

In his assault on God and the traditional faith, Ivan proceeds in a way that transcends the rationalistic argumentation of the old-time atheists. For him it can no longer be a question of attempting to disprove God’s existence logically. Ivan is not one to permit his intellectual faculties to linger in the modes of the past. He has made the essentially modern leap from the static framework of analytic thinking in
Ivan reveals that the Grand Inquisitor's mystery which deludes the people really is atheism disguised. A shocked Alyosha angrily responds thus: "Their only secret is their godlessness, and your Inquisitor's only secret is that he doesn't believe in God, that's all." (315) Ivan agrees with Alyosha's assessment, but justifies the Inquisitor's behavior; the Inquisitor acts from the altruistic motives that Ivan himself has operated under in wanting to stop the suffering of at least one innocent child. Ivan asks why a man who has spent his life wandering in the wilderness would not "use lies and deception to lead men consciously to their deaths and destruction, while at the same time deceiving them, so that they will not see where they are being led . . . so that these blind creatures may think they are happy" (315).

Although the Grand Inquisitor justifies his betrayal of Christ for the same reason Ivan justifies his own atheism—a love of mankind—Ivan's wish to save the innocent from suffering is undercut by his implied, if not apparent, siding with the Grand Inquisitor. Ivan wishes to stop the suffering of one innocent child rather than to adhere fanatically to what he considers a blind ideology—namely Roman Catholicism. However, the ideology of the Inquisitor is as blind and entails as much suffering—if not more so—albeit it is not the innocent who suffer under this ideology.
so much as the wise who recognize a tyranny and then resist it. Ivan's logic, when closely scrutinized, becomes for Alyosha the deluded absurdity of logic taken to its extremes; this logic is the one that opponents to the Enlightenment feared—the logic of fanaticism. Stewart Sutherland explores such possibilities when he warns that adherents of the Grand Inquisitor's logic may reside not only in our leaders but in ourselves;

They are found potentially in the hearts of all of us, and indeed in the compassion of the Grand Inquisitor for those "millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly," as well as in the Inquisitor's insistence that he serves the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man." (370)

Recognizing the danger inherent in Ivan's line of thinking, perhaps Dostoevsky may wish to alert the reader to the tyranny of reason. Alyosha, suggesting feeling rather than rationality, and the romantic rather than the rationalist, objects at the end of the Grand Inquisitor passage with the only response he can muster in the face of Ivan's diabolical logic:

And what about your sticky leaves and the graves that are so dear to you and the blue sky and the woman you love? How will you be able to live until
then and love all those things with the hell that
is in your heart and in your head?" (317)

Alyosha, rooted firmly in the tradition of the Sermon on the
Mount, believes right ends never justify wrong means; one
cannot lie, cheat, steal, or kill and still claim to have
God on one's side. Alyosha sees through the facade of
Ivan's altruistic reasoning to his altruistic nihilism.
With this insight, Dostoevsky creates a fundamental tenet of
dystopian literature. Because Ivan has disposed of God's
works, he consequently has disposed of God:

God, confronted by the radical proofs of the
meanness of His world, the senseless suffering
prevailing in it and man's congenital inability to
enter the promised spiritual kingdom, is disposed
of through his works. But if Ivan does not
believe in God, neither does he believe in man.
It is true that he loves man--there is no one
else left to love and perhaps there has never
actually been anyone else. (Rahv 252)

While they are both dealing with the problem of evil, Ivan
employs man's limited reasoning, while Alyosha employs faith
in Christ.

Part of Ivan's problem concerning his faithlessness and
lack of zest for life stems from the vice of pride, the
pride of an intellect and a rationality that he believes
can penetrate even the mystery of God. Ivan lacks the
humility of his brother Alyosha, who does not try to analyze the mystery as Ivan attempts to do.

Given Ivan's nihilistic despair, given his imputing the charges of authoritarianism and murder to Christianity when his Inquisitor is patently engaging in the same offense, and finally, given that his "mystery" is in reality the blindness of faithlessness, the reader eventually realizes that Dostoevsky perhaps "doth protest too much" and his sentiments largely side with Christ even though the Inquisitor is the commanding presence in the work: "Part of the difficulty of the Legend lies in the fact that what Ivan intended as a refutation of Christ was intended by Dostoevsky to impress his readers as a vindication" (Hingley 222). Ivan's argument via the Grand Inquisitor is an appeal to reason; however, the side of the dialectic represented by Christ and Alyosha is an appeal to faith.

Dostoevsky's personal answer to Ivan's dossier and all the horrors that it contains is in the manner of Alyosha because Alyosha was a religious individual at heart and had the necessary faith; faith alone gave him hope for humanity after he endured the brutality of four years in a Siberian prison for crimes against the state. Dostoevsky eventually realized that it is humanity's lack of faith, his unbelief, that is dehumanizing, but Ivan apparently does not realize this truth which alone can heal his divided soul; it is precisely Ivan's lack of faith that fills his heart and head
with such hell. Ivan perversely rejects God, humanity, even life, as he accepts the Grand Inquisitor’s atheistic though altruistic ideal; Ivan’s ultimate negation is totally nihilistic as is reflected in his statement, "Don’t you realize I really don’t give a damn about anything, that, as I told you before, I’m only interested in lasting out until I’m thirty because by then I’ll be willing to throw down the cup of life" (317). Ivan wrestles with the thought of suicide, and in the face of the Nietzschean concept that "God is dead," Ivan reaches the point of refusing to live, that very point at which the Grand Inquisitor claims that humanity has ceased to have any mystery left. Ivan says,

For the mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for. Without a concrete idea of what he is living for, man would refuse to live, would rather exterminate himself than remain on this earth, even if bread were scattered all around him. (306-307)

The Grand Inquisitor maintains it is not only the need for something to believe in that is difficult, but also freedom of choice is unbearable: "Have you forgotten that peace, and even death, is more attractive to man than the freedom of choice that derives from the knowledge of good and evil?" (307).

Ivan, like mankind in the Inquisitor’s speech, fears
the "terrible burden of freedom" the Inquisitor speaks of, the necessity of choice in an apparent vacuum. Ivan's nihilism and weltschmerz cause him to appear to be one of the "weak" over whom the Grand Inquisitor rules. Although Ivan is perspicacious and altruistic, he lacks the strength to carry on even in the Inquisitor's footsteps. Ivan is apparently at the point of giving up, of no longer dreading death. All he now wishes to do is to live a hedonistic or materialistic life until he can "turn down the cup of life at thirty"; he will live out a goal-less, ideal-less existence with nothing to drive him except "The Karamazov drive—the vile, earthly drive" (317).

The Brothers' respective responses to the mystery inform the dialectic, which Dostoevsky has written in the tradition of Swift and Voltaire. For example, Dostoevsky's work takes on aspects of Swift's Gulliver's Travels in its critique of the dehumanization of man as a result of atheism and a fanatical worship of reason as a substitute for God. Dostoevsky, then, inverts the utopian to create the dystopian. His Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor wish to supplant Christ's teaching with a system arising from human rationality; so also do later dystopias, such as Zamiatin's We (1921) or Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (1953), which are both novels depicting systems founded on humanity's limited, dehumanizing rationality.

A strong argument can be made that both Christ and the
Grand Inquisitor are equally logical and right based on their respective premises. Christ offers man the freedom to reject the demand for proof—the materialist’s eternal demand for proof of what is not definable materially. Ivan’s logic, based on empiricism, and Alyosha’s analogical thought modes are based on fundamentally different assumptions. Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor argue from a philosophy of materialism, while Alyosha and Christ argue from the standpoint of idealism. Therefore, they will never be able to discuss—much less agree—because they use fundamentally different reference points in viewing the world. Although logic is clearly on the side of the Grand Inquisitor, Christ offers an alternative choice to logic.

Therefore, the story framing the Grand Inquisitor parable in which Ivan asks a question that cannot be answered is the microcosm of the idealist/materialist split in the novel. Ivan’s question to Alyosha cannot be answered. "How, in view of such things, can you believe in providence?" is unanswerable precisely because Ivan and Alyosha are coming from disparate ontological and epistemological positions.

This discussion leads into the central dilemma of the Authority section of the parable: in this section, humanity is given the difficult dispensation of free-will, and he must make the choice between security without freedom or freedom without security. However, humanity does not make
the choice in a vacuum but in an historical continuum: Happiness without freedom, or freedom and hell—the choice must be made in the historical context of Ivan's dossier which cannot be merely dismissed. If one accepts the choice of God and freedom, then the question is raised of what to do with the cruel General and his vicious dogs presented in Ivan's dossier? The heart of the question is how to deal with the cruelty of historical reality when it negates freedom and God: Ivan's "version of atheism is all the more forceful in that it allow for God's existence, if need be, but not for the justifications of His world as revealed progressively in and through history" (Rahv 251). If historical reality rushes inexorably onward, and history appears to continually thwart human freedom, then Ivan's version of the future is necessarily bleak and pessimistic. Rahv notes that the choice here is between freedom and happiness: "Implicit here is the idea of freedom as the consummation of rebellion and of happiness as the total renunciation of it" (252).

In the dilemmas thus posed to man in the parable—the choice between freedom and happiness in the Authority section—the Grand Inquisitor's position is clear; he has devised a plan to end the suffering of humanity and to provide universal happiness. Stewart Sutherland comments on this utopian aspect of the parable:

The Inquisitor and his allies have taken upon
themselves to recognize the weakness of men and correct and complete the work which Christ began. This, however, is at the price of taking from the mass of men and women their freedom. In the end, men are unable to bear the gift of freedom and in return for their freedom, the Inquisitor offers them happiness. . . . (366)

Although it seems monstrously paradoxical that the Grand Inquisitor would make man "free" and proclaim "universal happiness" by enslaving humanity, it must be remembered that the Grand Inquisitor is operating from humanitarian, even utopian, motives. He sincerely believes that he is doing what is best for humanity, and he rationalizes his actions on the assumption that freedom is actually a burden the masses would gladly trade for security and bread. Thus the Grand Inquisitor portrays Christ as the villain for failing to use the sword of Caesar "for good." Khoren Arisian, Jr., discusses the vilification of Christ in the parable:

Jesus is pictured as a naive humanist, a liberal reformer who allegedly brought a new freedom to the people. But the Grand Inquisitor insists that all Jesus ever brought was the freedom to be insecure. . . . People have to be kept in check with appropriate fairy tales, otherwise reality will drive them to distraction. Religion, says the
Grand Inquisitor, is never a matter of truth, but a matter of providing psychological comfort, and if lies are helpful and work, they should be unashamedly used. (Arisian 153)

Arisian's comment points out another important aspect of the Grand Inquisitor. The Inquisitor's "humanitarian" motives do not stem from religion or Christianity at all. Arisian continues:

The Grand Inquisitor berates Jesus precisely because of his incapacity to be an institutionalist; and furthermore would agree with Karl Marx that supernatural religion is the opiate of the masses.

The Grand Inquisitor's authoritarian principle—along with his virulent atheism exhibited by his desire to deceive the masses via religion—seems to be modeled after Dostoevsky's socialist friend, Belinsky, who wanted to do away with the concept of sin in society and who "understood that in denying the moral responsibility of man he was depriving him of his freedom" (Rahv 260). The atheist Belinsky also echoes Ivan's rejection of an imperfect world created by a so-called "just" God. Belinsky once stated:

Do you know that it is not ethical to heap sins upon man and to put him under all sorts of obligations, when society is so badly organized that man cannot help doing evil, since he is
economically led to wickedness. (Rahv 260)

Herein lies the germ of the idea in the parable—that if all men were economically secure, all men would be happy because there would be no crime or poverty. The Inquisitor asserts: Dost Thou know that ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin: there is only hunger. "Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!" (The Brothers Karamazov 304)

In the Authority section of the parable, the Grand Inquisitor goes on to state what ecclesiastical totalitarianism would entail, and this explanation is tied in with his rationalization about the concept of sin in such a society:

Oh, we shall allow them to sin too, for, weak and defenseless as they are, they will love us like children if we allow them to sin. We shall tell them that every sin they commit with our permission can be expiated, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and that we shall take upon ourselves the punishment for their acts. And we shall indeed take their sins upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviors, who will answer to God for the sins they, the weak, commit. (312)

The Inquisitor recognizes that the basis for morality lies with God, and to take God away from the people, even if he
is an illusion (as the Inquisitor maintains), would be to take away morality from the people and effect the loss of the Inquisitor's control over the masses. Also, the Grand Inquisitor believes that the Church triumphed solely because it followed Satan's advice to look for miracles rather than to follow the philosophy of freedom offered by Jesus.

Therefore, it is not so much Christianity that Dostoevsky denigrates in the parable, but the authoritarian principle inherent in the human institution of the Church that Dostoevksy so despises; the institutions of Christianity took away a measure of freedom from the individual in the political realm as well as in the religious realm. Philip Rahv comments on the concept of ecclesiastical totalitarianism:

The notion of a "free theocracy" expounded by Ivan is a contradiction in terms. . . . But if it is a contradiction, it is exactly of the type, holding in balance his conflicting impulses toward rebellion and submission, to which Dostoevsky was always irresistibly drawn. (Rahv 266)

This passage points up an important point: Dostoevsky did not directly deal with the concrete political realm in the parable; he dealt with the "impulses toward rebellion and submission" located in the nexus of the individual's mind. On the literal level, the Grand Inquisitor is essentially asking man for a total abdication of his
responsibility and the expiation of sin. Critic Rahv states, "'Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!' is the Inquisitor's blunt way of stating Belinsky's protest against the demands made on abused and hungry men in the name of the Christian ethic. (261). Dostoevsky has essentially removed the concrete political meaning from his parable, for the only concrete political institutions the author deals with are the Catholic Church and the theoretical framework of Belinsky's type of socialism which he does not name directly.

Dostoevsky's essential intent in the Grand Inquisitor parable as well as in the whole "Pro and Contra" section of The Brothers Karamazov is to explore the dilemma of freedom and responsibility versus security and irresponsibility—the impulse to rebellion versus the impulse to submission. In exploring man's desire for freedom, as well as his equally strong desire for flight from freedom—via his abdication of moral responsibility—Dostoevsky must question the very intellectual foundations, the very reference points of Modern Western thought: Christianity is questioned; the rational faith of the Enlightenment is questioned; the nature of human institutions is questioned; and finally, the nature of humanity itself is questioned. According to Khoren Arisian, Jr., what emerges then is

... a philosophical fantasy. . . presented as the creation of Ivan's tormented mind. Bitter and
disillusioned, Ivan can find no warrant for the
belief that enjoins men to love one another. (152)

Dostoevsky's question of the problem of evil in Chapter 4 of
*The Brothers Karamazov* (in which Ivan confronts the cruelty
of historical reality and the suppression of freedom by
human institutions) is integrally linked with the problem of
freedom so explicitly discussed in the Authority section of
the Grand Inquisitor passage. Albert Camus succinctly
expresses the philosophical problem with which Dostoevsky is
wrestling:

> For in the presence of God there is less a problem
> of freedom than a problem of evil. You know the
> alternative: either we are not free and God the
> all-powerful is responsible for evil. Or we are
> free and responsible but God is not all-powerful.
> (56)

Although Dostoevsky wrestles with this paradox, it appears
that when presented with a choice between rebellion and
submission, he opts for rebellion and freedom. Philip Rahv
comments upon Dostoevsky's belief that freedom of choice in
the knowledge of good and evil is the essence of humanity's
humanity and the essence of Christ's teaching. He states:

> The kind of faith or obedience that is bought with
> bread is evil, and so is any constraint on man's
> conscience, in whatever form, even if the
> constraint is exercised for ostensibly good ends.
Freedom is not to be confounded with goodness or happiness. (269)

Despite the fact that the Inquisitor's logic, within its own limits, is as irrefutable as Ivan's argument against suffering, Dostoevsky's attack is "in the name of the individual and of Christ on all forms of organization of Man for his own good" (Hingley 224). In order to champion the individual, Dostoevsky had to reject atheism and empiricism in favor of faith and a rebellious intuition; Philip Rahv states:

Whatever Dostoevsky's manifest intention, actually it is one of the most revolutionary and devastating critiques of power and authority ever produced. What it comes to is a total rejection of Caesars' realm, a rejection of power in all its forms, in its actuality as in its rationalizations; and it exposes above all the fatal effect of power on such ideals and aspirations of humanity as are embodied in the original Christian teaching. (164)

Paradoxically, however, for Dostoevsky to openly champion Christ and freedom would undermine the very concept of autonomous choice itself. Not only that, Dostoevsky clearly struggled with the equally strong impulse towards submission in his own personal life. In the words of the Inquisitor, freedom is in reality a "burden to man." And
Christianity is impossible because it makes impossible demands on humanity that are greater than his nature can bear. Dostoevsky was one of those Russian intellectuals who represented the elemental rejection of authority, but in that rejection lay the seeds of love for authority because it eased the burden of responsibility from the masses resulting in

... a hatred sometimes taking the form of blind anarchic revolt but more often that of meek submission; yet the submission has something about it so flagrant, a perfection of abjectness as it were which is in itself a kind of challenge and provocation. It goes without saying that Dostoevsky was thoroughly infected with such feelings, and their ambivalence suited his psychological make-up. (Rahv 265)

Inherent in Dostoevsky's rejection of authority, then, is an almost masochistic submission to that same authority. An authoritarian masochist is one who cannot resist his own need to submit to the law; he is one who abdicates his responsibility as does the character D-503 in Zamiatin's dystopian novel We (as well as, incidentally, does K, the character in Franz Kafka's The Trial). Maria Marcus notes that authoritarian masochists defend themselves against "every tiny seed of rebellion" in order to hang on to the last strands of self-respect, "for how could you bear being
told that you have been living a lie and have been a puppet in the hands of authority?" (229).

Every oppressive system obviously has advantages for the oppressors, but there are also advantages for the oppressed, as long as they react with authoritarian masochism and identify with their own oppressed status. There is not much to speculate over. . . . When you have no choice, you need not choose. That can also be quite a comfortable existence apart from having to toil away at your daily bread). (217)

Although Dostoevsky ultimately opted for freedom rather than total submission to masochism, he recognized the strong impulse toward submission in himself, and the quotation above can stand as a platform of the Grand Inquisitor's ecclesiastical totalitarianism which would attempt to, at least, make mankind "happy" if not "free."

The key words in the last quotation, "When you have no choice, you need not choose," make apparent that the entire Inquisitor parable, (indeed, the whole "Pro and Contra" section of The Brothers Karamazov,) revolves around the individual's making a choice. The choice lies between faith and doubt, freedom and servitude, rebellion and submission, and finally between idealism and materialism. Dostoevsky, like Bradbury in Fahrenheit 451 presents both sides almost equally--with the Grand Inquisitor representing Ivan and
servitude, and Christ representing Alyosha and freedom in the parable.

The "Grand Inquisitor" parable is not a cautionary tale about specific political conditions in modern society, nor is it an object-lesson of right or wrong, good and evil, black and white. Instead, the parable is a complex exploration into the nature of the meaning of human beings and into the substance of ultimate reality. The reader's interpretation and "choice" depend on his or her personal preoccupations as well as his or her general frames of reference. But whatever cultural baggage the reader brings to the parable, these things are clear: (1) the parable deals with the individual's struggle for meaning in a chaotic world as well as with the individual's response in the face of the impassive power of the collective state; (2) the second dialectic deals with the individual's choice between two conflicting ontological perspectives of reality; and (3) the last dialectic entails the individual's choice between the two equally powerful impulses that conflict in the human psyche—the impulse towards freedom and rebirth and the impulse toward submission and death.

The main characters in the novel, Alyossha and Ivan, are both unable to make the choice, even though they favor different sides. In exasperation Ivan finally proclaims, "I don't really give a damn about anything, that, as I told you before, I'm only interested in lasting out until I'm thirty,
because by then I'll be willing to throw down the cup of life" (317). By refusing to make a choice, Ivan has abdicated his responsibility (thereby allowing others to make a decision for him). However, making no choice actually constitutes a choice, and Ivan has taken the road of submission and suicide. Rather than taking Christ's path or the Grand Inquisitor's path, Ivan takes the path of submission by abdicating his responsibility and choosing to end his days in a state of hedonism.

Alyosha, on the other hand, is still wrestling to make his choice in the face of the dialectics just presented to him by his brother Ivan via the parable of the Grand Inquisitor. Struggling to interpret the meaning of Christ's kiss, Alyosha asks his brother, "And what about the old man?" Ivan's reply is, "The kiss glows in his heart. . . . But the old man sticks to his old idea" (316). Therefore, Dostoevsky is leaving the parable open to interpretation which can take two directions. The Grand Inquisitor was touched by Christ's gesture as is evidenced by; the kiss "glowing in his heart." This kiss seems to undercut the Inquisitor's monologue, but at the same time, the Inquisitor is not moved enough to change his position; he "sticks to his old idea." This leaves Alyosha, as well as the reader, wondering who is right. While Ivan has chosen the path leading to madness, suicide, and submission, Alyosha has apparently chosen the path of freedom. He is
going in the direction of making an autonomous choice. The chapter ends with his literally turning in the opposite direction from Ivan, Alyosha hurrying toward the monastery.

Just as Alyosha is presented with making his own choice in the face of the dialectics presented, so, too, must the reader make a choice. Dostoevsky’s choice is clear, as is evidenced from his notebooks, as well as from a close reading of the text. The critics have occasionally pointed out that the Inquisitor is coupled with Satan in the parable. However, all critics have overlooked the fact that as much as the balance seems to be thrown on the side of the Inquisitor in the parable (via his ponderous monologue filled with seemingly incontrovertible evidence based on the truth of historical reality), Dostoevsky still subtly seems to be pointing the reader in the direction of Christ’s path of freedom. This direction is clear when it is realized that Ivan chooses the path of submission by abdicating his right to make a choice, while Alyosha, in wrestling with the problem, can be seen to be in the process of making an autonomous choice. In this sense, Alyosha is clearly on the path toward freedom. Although Dostoevsky preferred freedom over submission, his readers are presented with the same dialectics, and rather than making the decision for them in the parable, he wishes his readers to take responsibility of making that choice for themselves. In the final analysis, perhaps Dostoevsky indicates that making the decision is of
necessity a constant, never-ending process.
CHAPTER III

ZAMIATIN'S WE: CHOICES IN DYSTOPIA

Ever since Sir Thomas More's literary classic *Utopia* was published in 1515 portraying a "perfect" society based on a form of communism, writers such as Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward* and William Morris in *News From Nowhere* have been obsessed with the idea of socialist utopias. This fascination has been especially true with the advent of the atomic age and its subsequent technology. Technology becomes for the first time in history a means whereby socialist utopias may be achieved; technology offers the means to condition and control a mass population. Such a regulated society becomes as plausible a threat in our age as the threat of nuclear Armageddon, and one such novel which posits this kind of nightmarish future is Eugene Zamiatin's *We*. This novel was written in 1920, but because it was suppressed by the Soviet government, it was never published in Russian, the author's mother tongue. The first foreign language edition came out in 1921 in German, and the novel was first published in Berlin (*A Soviet Heretic* 301).

Eugene Zamiatin in *We* exhibits a utopia in direct contradistinction to the rosy illustrations of the nineteenth century utopias; these anti-utopias portray worlds controlled by modern technology. One critic believes
these novels suggest that history has proved to be a cheat, not because it turned away from the progress promised in the nineteenth century, but "because it betrays our hopes precisely through an inverted fulfillment of these expectations" (Warrick, *Cybernetic* 63). Zamiatin's *We* explores the establishing of a dystopia as the dialectic is being destroyed; this dystopia, like Dostoevsky's, is organized through the principle of miracle, authority, and mystery.

Although several critics such as Patricia Warrick note that Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is a model for Zamiatin's *We*, they do not explore the similarities thoroughly. Warrick is the one critic, however, who has frequently noted how much Zamiatin owes Dostoevsky in regard to the dialectic in the literature:

Dostoevsky's vision of man and society embodies a strong sense of the dialectic, just as Zamyatin's does. But for Dostoevsky the conflict is between the forces of good and evil warring against each other in man's mind, rather than between energy/entropy, as it is for Zamyatin. (74)

Zamiatin opposed the society he described in *We*. Through analyzing how the Grand Inquisitor parable informs Zamiatin's novel, the reader can see that the Utopia Zamiatin envisioned based on miracle, authority, and mystery becomes a dystopia, a society that crushes man's creativity,
his individuality, and his freedom of choice.

In Zamiatin's novel, characters are referred to as mere numbers which reflects the impersonal nature of the tyrannical bureaucracy, and the narration of We is recounted in the form of a diary kept by citizen D-503, a reflexive, introspective state-mathematician, who makes it his "duty to write concealing nothing" (24). The state that D-503 portrays is the authoritarian state, the "Single State," modeled after the Grand Inquisitor's in which freedom is suppressed in the name of happiness. Critic David Richards notes that Zamiatin is concerned with the themes of freedom vs. security and "with the clash of reason and unreason as well as with the fate of the would-be independent individual in a highly organized, conformist society" (54). Richards writes:

Created by the survivors of a series of global wars, it could be that state prophesied by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor to come into being after the "ages of the confusion of free thought, of science and cannibalism," a result of that craving for universal unity which he attributed to mankind. Complete conformity has nearly been achieved and individuality almost eradicated. These are the themes treated earlier by Dostoevsky. (54)

Richards also notes that the Grand Inquisitor's prophecy has
been almost fulfilled; the Inquisitor has said:

And they shall have no secrets from us. We shall allow or forbid them to live with their wives or mistresses, to have or not to have children—and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. (54)

The first plank, then, of D-503’s society is the Grand Inquisitor’s concept of miracle. In the novel, technology appears to be emblematic of the miraculous. The concept of containment by the Green Wall itself is quite miraculous; also, the Well-Doer’s Gas Bell jar, his weapon of execution, is described in miraculous terms:

All this was simple; all of us were familiar with the phenomenon, dissociation of matter—yes—the splitting of the atoms of the human body! Yet every time we witnessed it, it seemed a miracle. (We 46)

Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor believes that because man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create the miraculous if need be. In other words, man’s basic nature is to seek that which transcends human existence; he worships the superhuman. Therefore, in Zamiatin’s imaginative society, the auditorium meetings become worship services where God, the old-fashioned representative of the superhuman, has been replaced by the Well-Doer who controls the new superhuman power, technology.

In Zamiatin’s dystopia, the concept of God has been
replaced by reason, science, and technology. Therefore, the "Mystery" of the knowledge of good and evil can be ignored, for the collective body of man—i.e. the state—dictates morals. The Individual, relieved of the mystery, can now worship the State in lieu of the Church. Zamiatin fears then, that in the dystopia of modern mass society, technology will become the new miracle that causes the individual human to worship the State. Technology is the new miracle replacing the old miracle of the Church. The "Table of Hours" invented by Taylor, the architect of the state in We, forces individuals to worship all day except for one or two "personal hours" in which the individual may draw the curtains around his cubicle. Zamiatin depicts a nightmare vision of the lack of privacy in a society that makes use of Taylor’s technological miracle:

At the very same hour, millions like one, begin our work, millions like one, we finish it. United into a single body with a million hands, at the very same second, designated by the Tables, he carry the spoons to our mouths; at the same second we all go out to walk, go to the auditorium, to the halls for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed. (13)

Perhaps the most ironic technological miracle of Zamiatin’s dystopia is the "operation of Fancy" whereby subversive or individual thought is cut out of the mind, the
brain, by an operation; at the end of the novel, D-503 hopes to cure himself of his "sickness," of individuality, by undergoing this operation.

In conjunction with the regulation of daily life by the Table of Hours, D-503's society has regulated sex through a system using state-issued pink slips; the regulation of sex and the abolition of private interaction deprive humans of relations except that of the primary relation between the individual and the state. D-503 writes:

It is already three hundred years since our great historic Lex Sexualis was promulgated: "A Number may obtain a license to use any other Number as a sexual product. ". . . then you file an application to enjoy the services of Number so and so, or Numbers so and so. You get for that purpose a checkbook. (6)

Wilhelm Reich, an eminent American psychiatrist, details substantial evidence in his book The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality that sexual repression is one of the cardinal ideological means by which a ruling class subjugates a population:

The sexual needs, although subject to change through the social process, are elements of the "social basis," for they constitute a very essential part of the real individuality and decisively determine his actions. (155)
By dissolving the individual's sexual identity—one of the ways the individual defines himself, the authoritarian state eradicates the "I" and replaces it with the state's "We."

However, although the United State is regulated sexually through the pink slips, it is through sex that societal control is also subverted. D-503 is a key member of the United State because he is the builder of the Integral, the space ship that he believes will allow his society to colonize and mechanize the universe. Not surprisingly, therefore, I-330, one of the chief rebels, seeks to convert him by breaking down his defenses through sex. I-330 represents creativity, beauty, carnality and primeval mystery. Her sensuous eyebrows are symbolic for the X or the unknown integer of Mephi. (Perhaps Zamiatin is also linking her to the symbol of the Christian cross as well, at least indirectly; D-503, then, becomes a "fallen angel" in having sex with I-330 because sex is not only an illegality but also the impetus for his rupture from the body of We.)

To understand the process of subversion via sexuality, it is necessary to delineate the differences between the two main characters, D-503 and the mysterious I-330. In the beginning, D-503 represents one of the contented masses who would be one of the Grand Inquisitor's "sheep." As a key architect of the United State, he accepts the miracle of technology and the domination of the state just as the Grand
Inquisitor's followers greedily and unquestioningly accept the miracle of bread and the domination of the church. Zamiatin's miracle—technology creating security and "happiness" for the masses at the expense of individual freedom—enables the Well-Doer to oppress and, simultaneously, to delude the masses. Richards notes how D-503's diary reveals the extent of technological control:

The diary outlines the official policy for the suppression of freedom, individuality and emotion, and for the glorification of mechanicalness, group consciousness and logic. Dreams, self-awareness, any desire to be different—all are treated as a psychic disorders or crimes. We read: "Surely it is clear that individual self-consciousness is only a disease." (56)

D-503 represents the Euclidean mind of reason content with the rational, technological order of the state, and he consistently speaks in mathematical metaphors to express both his ideas and his feelings. When D-503 analyzes music, he prefers only mechanically and mathematically rigid composition:

I suddenly perceived all of the music, all of the beauty, of this colossal, this mechanical ballet. . . . Because the deep meaning of the dance is contained in its absolute, ecstatic submission, to the ideal of nonfreedom. If it is
true that our ancestors would abandon themselves in dancing at the most inspired moments of their lives. . . then it means only one thing: the instinct of non-freedom has been characteristic of human nature from ancient times. . . . (We 6)

At this point, one sees that Zamiatin is touching on the psychological appeal of totalitarianism with its religious mysteries and military parades; the character of D-503 becomes analogous to Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov in his submission to the authority of reason.

On the other hand, the dialectical opposite of protagonist D-503 is I-330, the heroine of the novel. I-330, a free-thinking individual, represents the elect of the Grand Inquisitor parable, a follower of Christ in the path of freedom. D-503 describes her thus:

In her eyes, nevertheless, and on her brows, there was a strange irritating X, and I was unable to grasp it, to find an arithmetical expression for it. Somehow I was confused; with a somewhat hazy mind, I tried logically to explain my laughter. (8)

That I-330 has a humanizing effect on D-503 from the beginning is important in understanding the potential for humaneness in D-503. While he represents mankind's rational and logical aspects, I-330 represents the emotional and irrational elements which the architects of any socialist
utopia want to control or eliminate. D-503 cannot logically
deal with her because she stands for all the subconscious
animalistic atavism that his "civilized" socialist utopia
has tried to repress.

I-330 makes D-503 aware of his animalistic atavisms early in the novel. When D-503 claims everyone is so much alike because "nobody is one, but one of," I-330 tries to change his mind, and she causes D-503 to become confused. He describes her in the following manner: "I noticed her brows that rose to the temples in an acute angle--like the sharp corners of an X. Again I was confused, casting a glance to the right, then to the left" (8). When he protests, she makes her point by asking to see his hands, which, in conjunction with his face, she calls "a curious harmony." D-503 seems ashamed because he refers to his hairy hands as "ape-like" and a "stupid atavism."

I-330 begins the subversion process by separating D-503's "I" from the "We" of the United State. To parallel his ape-like hands, her carnal atavism of sharp teeth and an "X-like smile" awaken D503's sexuality and pull him from the Euclidean arena of abstract conceptual thought into animalistic and carnal feelings. D-503 is a child of the state, but the novel begins with I-330's arrival. I-330 begins to subvert D-503, and the dialectic arises when the state represented by the O integer struggles against the individuals represented by the symbol X. The conflict and
tension in the novel stem from D-503's mental and physical resistance to the questions and doubts I-330 arouses in him. D-503 is torn between the miracle of technological symmetry versus the miracle of the mysterious sensuality of I-330, a sensuality described thus:

She was dressed in a fantastic dress of the ancient time, a black dress closely fitting the body, sharply delimiting the white of her shoulders and breasts, and that warm shadow waving with her breath between. . . . And the dazzling, almost angry teeth. A smile, a bite directed downward. (18)

Significantly whenever I-330 is described, she is referred to as chaotic, dazzling, angry, animalistic; this description, in conjunction with her being symbolized with the X, suggests that I-330 is the personification of the Mephi, i.e., the uncertainty factor.

I-330 continually reminds D-503 of his humanity and the fact that he is not the epitome of abstract rationality like one of Swift's Houyhnhnms, but that he is a sensual human being. As an independent thinker, he writes:

While I was writing today of the loftiest summit of human history, all the while I breathed the purest mountain air of thought, but within me it was and remains cloudy, cob-webby, and there is a kind of cross-like, four-pawed X. Or perhaps it
is my paws, and I. . . . don’t like to talk about them. . . . They are a trace of a primitive epoch. Is it possible that there is in me. . . ? (23)

Although on the verge of recognizing the X factor within himself, D-503 characteristically negates it within the same passage, "There is no X in me!"

I-330 eventually leads him to see the split in his personality, and he states:

I became glass-like and saw within myself. There were two selves in me. One, the former D-503, Number D-503; and the other. . . . Before, that other used only to show his hairy paws from time to time, but now that whole other self left his shell. That shell is breaking. . . . (54)

Constantly confronted by the X in I-330’s smile, an irritation like "an eyelash in the eye," D-503 is irritated enough to attempt to question the authority of the state.

To heighten the impact that the characters have on the reader, Zamiatin wrote We in the neo-realistic style. Neo-realism or "synthetism" arose from Soviet artists’ desire to seek new modes of expression more suitable to the times, as well as to pave the way for the coming Soviet "utopian" society. Critic William Hutchings writes:

Throughout his criticism, Zamyatin asserts that significant works of art and literature must be both dynamic and dialectical, simultaneously
incorporating and advancing their social and intellectual contexts. Accordingly, We effectively illustrates Zamyatin's critical principles, embodying in its design and structure the author's conscientious effort to forge a new aesthetic appropriate to an epoch of technology and speed. (Hutchings 82)

It is Zamiatin's use of the dialectic that makes his writing similar to that of Dostoevsky, but it is Zamiatin's highly compressed, impressionistic style that makes him such a modern writer. His style flashes carefully coordinated details before readers and enables them only to see the actions of the characters but also to understand their motivations. Richards notes that Zamiatin uses elliptical sentences to suggest rather than to describe, and that the individuals in his novel are given specific characteristics which reveal their personality:

These key characteristics repeated at intervals almost always become leitmotifs and, in Zamiatin's most elliptical moments, stand stead for the characters, so that the action is carried on in one example from We between sharp X-like eyebrows (I-330) and hairy hands (D-503). (24)

The leitmotif for S-4711 is his doubly-bent back, and the one for U is her gill-like cheeks, while the leitmotif for 0-90 is her perfectly shaped, rosy lips. These distinctive
features help to differentiate the characters because their names—one standard character differentiation—have been replaced by numbers.

Not only does Zamiatin correlate physical characteristics symbolically with a character, but he also makes the numerical designation correspond to each nature. Alex M. Shane notes that the mixture of Latin and Cyrillic letters in the Russian text are appropriate because they are associatively linked to their characters. For example, the D of D-503 in Cyrillic stands for the mathematical symbol of increment while "on another level, the inclusion of R-13 and D-503 in the same circle of friends indicates that Zamiatin perhaps envisioned R-13 as an archetype of D-503, R being the mirror image of the Russian word for the first-person, pronoun I" (Shane 161n). Even in Cyrillic the D of D-503 is composed of a curve and a straight line, and Patricia Warrick contends: "D-503 embodies in the letter D of his name the conflict in which he will become involved. The letter D is made up of a curve and a straight line. He is both a man who reasons and a man who feels" (69).

While some of the critic's interpretations of a character's name may be wrong because of the translation from the Cyrillic, several major symbolic interpretations may still be made as in the case of the character 0-90. While D is perhaps a combination of 0 and I, the two women that D-503 walks between, 0 symbolizes the state, or at
least what the state will grind the character into. Although D-503 speaks in terms of seeing the state as a "straight line" at one point, the reader also gains the impression that he views the state as an 0 or a perfectly geometric circular whole, self-sufficient and complete in its absolutes which must never be questioned. Perhaps the state can be represented by 0 or 0-90, the "maternal norm" who lacks the intellect to question as does D-503; she merely feels, and is one of the easily led "children" of the state. D-503 seems peeved at her when all she can reply to him is the monosyllable, "Spring," in response to his theory of music and dance. She is described as a child-like, almost mindless integer of the state: "She appears round all over; the rose-colored 0 of her lips is open to meet every word of mine. She has a round soft dimple on her wrist. Children have such dimples" (We 6).

Is it more than coincidental that Zamiatin named the most mindless and helpless individual to the United State 0? 0, an impersonal letter, could be the name of anyone; 0 is a creature that can be controlled; 0 is a zero, a creature with no identity, no "I." Patricia Warrick discusses how this 0 symbolizes security and comfort to D-503:

0, with whom he has had a long-standing liaison, represents certainty to him. He explains that she is "simple, right, and limited as a circle. I do not fear this word 'limitation.' The function of
man’s highest faculty, his reason, consists precisely of the continuous limitation of infinity. (70)

Although 0 can be viewed as symbolic of the United State, at least in the eyes of D-503, and as symbolic of the non-identity that the state forces upon the individual, she also is the opposite force, the impulsive force. 0 rebels against the state even though she lacks the intellect of D-503. 0 feels and behaves in accord with her feelings of love for D-503. She rebels against the state by having his child outside the green wall. 0, like Alyosha in The Brothers Karamazov, has not lost her humanity through extreme rationality—the destructive force in Ivan, the Grand Inquisitor, the Well-Doer, and ultimately in D-503. Through the paradox of the character 0, Zamyatin suggests that the rationalist’s miracle of technology can not suppress the irrational biological urge that has enabled the species to survive.

The second plank of D-503’s society is that of Authority used in conjunction with Miracle and Mystery by Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor to subjugate those individuals willing to give up their "burden of freedom" in exchange for security and bread. Like Dostoevsky’s work, Zamyatin’s We explores the opposition between security and freedom. Critic Richards sums up the parallels:

Like Dostoevsky, Zamyatin bases the state’s case
for a highly organized society and the suppression of individual freedom on humanitarian, psychological grounds. R-13, one of the spokesmen for state orthodoxy, posits a straight choice between freedom and happiness and condemns the desire for freedom as a malicious inspiration of the devil. (57)

In fact, R-13's speech is a parody of the Grand Inquisitor's monologue:

You see, it is the ancient legend of paradise. . . . That legend referred to us of today. . . . There were two in paradise and the choice was offered to them: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness. No other choice. . . . They, fools that they were, chose freedom. Naturally, for centuries afterward they longed for fetters, for the fetters of yore. (We 59)

In the novel the God-like Well-Doer--the supreme authority--subjugates the masses. In Zamiatin's fictional society, just as the Well-Doer corresponds to Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, the United State corresponds to the Inquisitor's church. The Well-Doer holds ultimate authority because he has ultimate knowledge and resides at the top of the system; hence, he is responsible for controlling the system. But the greatest parallel between the Well-Doer and
the Inquisitor lies in their rhetoric. As the Well-Doer scolds D-503 for his aberration, the Well-Doer asks: "what was it that man from his diaper age dreamed of, tormented himself for? He longed for that day when someone would tell him what happiness is, and then would chain him to it" (200). Similarly the principle of submission through obedience is the foundation of the Inquisitor’s society; the Inquisitor states: "They will submit to us gladly . . . because it will save them from the great anxiety in making a free decision for themselves (The Brothers Karamazov 312). The Well-Doer, like the Inquisitor before him, believes that man’s happiness should resemble that of children who have no choices and no responsibility. When the Well-Doer accuses D-503 of attempting to thwart his plan, the accusation is reminiscent of the Grand Inquisitor’s accusing Christ of "Coming to hinder us." The old Inquisitor’s church and the Well-Doer’s state usurp the power of Christ and the individual soul and become the supreme authority over mankind.

The Well-Doer has created a state controlled by the miracle of technology that will transcend the human—that will manipulate the individual for the purposes of the state, rather than have the state serve the individual. The Grand Inquisitor explains:

Oh, we shall allow them to sin, too, for weak and defenseless as they are, they will love us like
children if we allow them to sin. . . . We shall allow them or forbid them to live with their wives or mistresses, to have or not have children—all according to the degree of their obedience to us. . . . (312)

The Grand Inquisitor’s society in Dostoevsky’s parable is the abstract blueprint of the society that is dramatically portrayed in Zamiatin’s We. In Zamiatin’s society, everything, including sexuality, is regulated by the Table of Hours. Also, life is controlled by the guardians whom D-503 likens to cogs in the state machinery which take broken pegs (individuals) either to the Bureau of Medicine to be fixed or to the Gas Bell Jar to be destroyed.

What makes Zamiatin’s dystopic state so hideous, however, is that physical punishment is only a primitive means of social control. For Zamiatin, the universe and the microcosm of the state in that universe should present thoughts dialectically opposed to one another. In the fictional society of We, the author has created a dystopia defined as the state’s allowing only one side of the dialectic—the state’s side, and the state’s truth. Therefore, an individual like D-503 has access only to the side of the dialectic that the state presents. Similarly in the twentieth century Soviet society that Zamiatin is satirizing, an individual has no reference points from which to judge the truth of an idea because his only source of
information is the state apparatus. So it is no surprise that even when confronted by a contradictory reality, D-503 has been conditioned to deny that reality. For instance, having witnessed the "hairy" men living beyond the wall, D-503 writes in his next entry:

... in brief, imagine that you see things that cannot come to your mind even if you suffer from a dream sickness. That is how I feel now. For you must understand that no one has gone beyond the Green Wall since the Two Hundred Years’ War, as I have already told you. (We 149)

D-503 is apparently unable to accept the fact that many numbers have already breached the wall including his beloved I-330 who led him beyond the wall for the first time.

One example of the state’s allowing only its truth occurs on election day, the day of unanimity. Free elections in the United State are perhaps no less a sham than those in Zamiatin’s own society. D-503 writes:

The elections themselves have rather a symbolic meaning. They remind us that we are a united, powerful organism of millions of cells, that to use the language of the "gospel" of the ancients—we are a united church. (129)

Once again, Zamiatin’s voice sounds close to that of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor. However, on the day of Unanimity, many openly vote against the Well-Doer perhaps
for the first time, even though the next day the state journal reads:

The celebration of the Day of Unanimity, long awaited by all, took place yesterday. The same Well-Doer who so often has proved his unshakable wisdom was unanimously re-elected for the forty-eighth time. The celebration was clouded by little confusion, created by the enemies of happiness. . . . (135)

Those few who do dare to think as individuals lived in perpetual fear of being found out by the guardians or by a fellow citizen who recognize subversive thought or action. D-503 records in his journal:

The same evening I learned that they had led away three Numbers, although nobody speaks aloud about it, or about anything that happened. This ostensible silence is due to the educational influence of the Guardians who are ever present among us. Conversations deal chiefly with the quick fall of the barometer and the forthcoming change in the weather. (157)

All these measures of the Well-Doer's authority, from the omnipresent guardians with their listening membranes to the manipulation of history of the United State are evidence that the novel We, published in the 1920's, is the prototype for Orwell's 1984, (1949) and Huxley's Brave New World,
(1932); these are novels which, though similar to *We*, lack the explicit presentation of the dialectic, the human versus the purely rational, the dialectic that Dostoevsky perceived as central in modern man's pursuit of freedom.

Because the Well-Doer has eliminated the pain of making choices in his society, he likens his state to the fabled paradise in which individuals "have no desires any more, no pity, no love, they are all--blessed" (200). And in fact, D-503 is a happy child of the state until he meets I-330 who forces him to question his beliefs. He is happy, presumably, because he is representative of the perfect citizen of the state, a cipher who has no love, no desires other than to serve the state obediently by building the Integral which will spread to the stars the ideology of the United State; D-503's recording of a state communique echoes the Grand Inquisitor in that if others will not freely accept happiness and bondage, then they will be forced to submit to them:

Your mission is to subjugate to the grateful yoke of reason the unknown beings who live on other planets, and who are perhaps still in the primitive state of freedom. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically faultless happiness, our duty will be to force them to be unhappy. (3)

Not only must D-503 learn the meaning of love, he must
learn the meaning of pity, another element that the Well-Doer wishes to erase from his subjects. Even a long while after the subversion process has begun to work on D-503, he shows a lack of pity when some of his workers die in the process of building the Integral: "A dozen Numbers represent scarcely one hundred millionth part of the United State. For practical consideration, Pity, a result of arithmetical ignorance, was known to the ancients; to us it seems absurd" (102). Not until later in the novel when D-503 has fallen in love does he exhibit an act of humanity. He saves a woman caught in the crush of a crowd because he believes her to be his beloved 1-330. At the point where he ceases to see her as a cipher and recognizes her as a human being, he states:

For a second, I looked at the woman’s figure with the eye of a stranger, as all the others did. She was no Number any longer; she was only a human being, and she existed only as a substantiation of the insult which she cast upon the United State. (119)

The society of the United State is not a static one whose development is complete. From the Well-Doer’s viewpoint, many imperfections exist in the state: weather is not yet controlled, and the personal hours are not completely regulated. Also, subversives have escaped the confines of the Green Wall and control the outside. These
subversives also foment trouble on the inside. The subversives, or the Mephi, are intent on winning the hearts and minds of those individuals of the state who are not completely committed to rationalism. D-503, when confronted by the subversives, discovers that he is not a rational automaton; he does have desires; he does have passion, however dormant, in the beginning. He is both logical and passionate, and cannot deal with his nascent feelings of love for I-330. He cannot integrate his state-oriented being and the emerging "I" that attempts to break from the "We." At times he believes he has two I’s, but his real I is the one he usually identifies with the state; thus he writes in his journal: "... I (the real I) grasped my other wild, hairy, heavily breathing self forcibly. I (the real I) said to him, to R—in the name of the Well-Doer, please forgive me. I am very sick" (61-2). At other times he is not able to identify his "I" with either side, and he is totally confused:

... I asked myself: "perhaps it really was nothing but delirium, all that has been going on around me lately." I glanced at my hairy hand, and I remembered: "There are undoubtedly, some drops of that blood of the sun and woods in you. That is why perhaps you..." No, fortunately it was not delirium. (179)

The process of writing his journals encourages the
fragmentation of personality which D-503 fears. The biographer-critic of Zamiatin Alex M. Shane comments:

On the level of individual psychology, the emergence of latent irrationality in D-503, his failure to achieve a synthesis between the rational and the irrational within himself, and his forced submission to the fantasectomy within himself, (which creates a model citizen, happy in his nonfreedom), are indeed tragic. (45)

The reader views the gradual disintegration of D-503's personality through D-503's writing; the act of writing magnifies his inner conflict because he is forced to resolve the dialectic as he attempts to express the resolution to an unknown reader or to explain away with rationalizations the existence of the dialectic.

The disintegration of D-503's personality, caused by the keeping of the journal and the subverting of D-503 by I-330 and her offers of love and sex, leads the narrator to a confrontation with the mystery, the third Dostoevskian plank which the Well-Doer's society is founded upon. This "mystery" is the knowledge of good and evil and the fact that the individual has an autonomous choice when he possesses the power to resolve the dialectic between good and evil. The Well-Doer wishes to keep the mystery a secret because if citizens of the state were to understand to understand that they were able to make a choice between good
and evil, they would be likely to lose their happiness, and the Well-Doer would lose his authority. This mystery (the knowledge of good and evil) concerns the conflict between the one state as represented by the wholeness, stability, security, the color blue, and the Well-Doer on the one hand, and the unknown, the incomplete, the unstable, the green beyond the Wall, and the Mephi, on the other hand.

This dichotomy leads the reader into the Dostoevskian dialectic of freedom opposed to security; however, Zamiatin presents the dialectic through the concepts of entropy and energy. D-503 confronts the mystery and the choice between energy and entropy directly when he follows I-330 beyond the Green Wall where she explains to him that there are two forces in the world—entropy and energy, one leading to destruction of equilibrium and the other leading to quietude and equilibrium. "The Christians worshipped entropy like a God. But we are not Christians, we..." I-330 explains to him. Here, Zamiatin is clearly aligning the forces of good, of freedom and of creativity with Mephisto, the Christians' fallen angel or the Devil. And he is aligning the forces of evil, the crippling forces of utopian rationalism and ideology with Christianity:

In the ancient days the Christians understood this feeling; they are our only forerunners. The greatness of the "Church of the United Flock" was known to them. They knew that resignation is
virtue, and pride a vice; that "We" is from "God," "I," from the devil. (120)

Zamiatin's delineations of good and evil are not only an allusion to Mephistopholes of the Faust legend, they apparently are a satiric jab at organized religion, the church, the state, or any other institution that subsumes individuality. Although his aligning of freedom with Satan is an inversion of Dostoevsky's aligning of freedom with Christ in *The Brothers Karamazov*, both authors agree that the institution of organized religion can be organized evil because it depends upon the forces of entropy and servitude rather than freedom and revolution.

Zamiatin believes that the autonomous individual must oppose the entropy associated with the centralized political state; therefore, he establishes a dialectic involving the entropy of the dystopic state against the energy of the individual. William Hutchings comments about Zamiatin's dialectic of energy/entropy:

> It thus becomes the obligation of the artist and of every man and woman whose soul is not deadened by the conformity imposed in the One State—to assume the role of the revolutionary, the heretic, in an unending dialectic thorough which human advancement is achieved as part of an ongoing cosmological process; such radicals must inevitably oppose the entropy associated with
Hutchings subsequently draws a symbolic parallel between the Soviet state Zamiatin satirizes and the state in *We* when he compares the symbolism of the *Integral* with Talin's monument, an official Soviet symbol:

> These ramps which surround the body of the *Integral* resemble the rotating spiral framework that surrounds the cylindrical section of Tatling's Monument; whereas the rotating spiral around the monument to the Third International was designed to symbolize the unending process of revolution (to which Zamiatin was passionately committed); the spiral ramps around the *Integral* are as motionless, stable, and unchanging as the Benefactor's One State in which all revolutionary energy is stifled (as indeed, in Zamyatin's view, it had been betrayed in Lenin's Russia as well.)

(98)

Also, just as the Grand Inquisitor and the Well-Doer want to keep the mystery a secret, so too does the centralized Soviet state. Because they want to maintain their totalitarian power, the rulers of these fictional societies--as well as Soviet society which is satirized--are keeping the masses ignorant about the true nature of the mystery ostensibly out of a desire to insure the happiness of man.
To allow the individual the right to make autonomous choices is to allow him unhappiness, and not only is this denial the goal of the Well-Doer and the Grand Inquisitor, it is official doctrine of the Soviet State:

Soviet scholars completely reject the anti-utopian novel as a legitimate genre because it attempts to "destroy faith in the coming happiness of man" and because it is permeated with an incurable historical pessimism. ...(We Prologue) Zamiatin's "historical pessimism" is actually optimism if change is allowed to occur in the political system.

While the static authoritarian and totalitarian systems would reject it, Zamiatin's "historical pessimism" is an optimistic dynamism that allows the freedom to change and grow. Shane notes that continual movement forward and the rejection of the past in the name of the distant future are fundamental to Zamiatin's view of the Hegelian dialectic, the true representation of man's historical progress:

The World lives only by heretics: Christ the heretic . . . Tolstoy the heretic. Our creed is heresy. . . . Today negates yesterday, but tomorrow is the negation of negation: always the same dialectical path, which carries the world into infinity along a grandiose parabola. Thesis yesterday, anti-thesis today, and synthesis tomorrow. (23)
For Zamiatin, the central figure of the dialectical spiral would be the heretic who rejects the established canon of entropic institutions. Significantly, however, the revolutionary Zamiatin differs from the revolutionary Dostoevsky in that his outlook on life is different. Despite the fact that they are both freedom-loving and would prefer revolution over slavery and entropy, Dostoevsky is a Christian, though individualistic in his Christianity, and Zamiatin is an atheist. Moreover, while Dostoevsky believes in absolute values such as truth, love and spirituality, Zamiatin is the ultimate revolutionary; he holds a "situation ethics" morality in which the truth of today is the falsehood of tomorrow:

This conception of the dialectical process, which represents a grafting of Hegel onto the eternally dissatisfied Scythian, underlay all of Zamiatin's future thinking. It is ultimately to lead to the extreme contention that "fortunately, all truths are false: the essence of the dialectical process is that today's truths become errors of tomorrow; there is no final number." He maintains that this sole truth existed only for the strong, not for the weak who needed "crutches of certainty" and lacked the strength to include themselves in the dialectical process. (Shane 23)

Before exploring the entropic/energetic dialectic in
fiction, Zamiatin had first examined the concept in two articles, "Tomorrow" and "On Literature, Revolution, and Entropy (Richards 37) in which he expounded his dialectical view of historical revolution. In "Tomorrow," Zamiatin also details his disappointment in what he views as the failure of the Soviet revolution: "We have lived through the age of the suppression of the individual in the name of the masses; tomorrow will bring the liberation of the individual in the name of man" (Richards 371). Richards also comments that in this article, Zamiatin postulates his dialectical view of progress while at the same time maintaining a Marxist belief in the ultimate salvation of man via the temporary restriction of individual freedom.

However, Zamiatin raises doubts. Will the restrictions of individual rights result in a desired utopia or in the brutal police state? Richards states:

Zamyatin’s dilemma is shared not only by the other Russian radicals who lived through the Revolution, but by all idealists, all would-be reformers: how far is the use of force justified in overcoming opposition to the practical realization of ideals? (38)

And so it can be observed that in the working out of the dilemma of how much force is involved in the creation of a utopia, Zamiatin explores one of the very problems raised by Dostoevksy in his Grand Inquisitor parable. In his work
Maior Soviet Writers Edward J. Brown has noted the following comparison between Dostoevsky’s parable and Zamiatin’s dystopia when he writes:

Like the that the forced benefactions of the good society outweigh the freedom which Christ . . . would offer.

D-503’s ultimate decision is, of course, the opposite of Christ’s. Instead of dying so that men may be free, he lives so that they will remain slaves. (208)

Also, Zamiatin is, like Dostoevsky before him, engaged in the psychological battle to wrest the hearts and minds of men away from the crippling entropic dogma of a Well-Doer and to sound the clarion of revolution and energy. One scholar has observed the similarities between Dostoevsky’s protagonist and Zamiatin’s narrator when he notes that D-503 in "confiding in his diary his anti-social sentiments and his tortured speculations on the irrational nature of man becomes a literary descendant of Dostoevsky’s hero in The Underground Man. (Maior Soviet Writers 203).

In his dystopia, Zamiatin wages the psychological struggle by setting up the energy/entropy split in the mind of the main character of D-503; consequently a dialectic is set up in the reader’s mind. D-503 is torn between the impulse toward submission and the will for freedom, torn between the entropy of the state which leads to happiness,
rest, and a form of death, or toward a state of energy, movement, and life. Entropy is represented by the utopian state of the Well-Doer in which everything moves according to the mathematically correct tables of the Taylor system: Zamiatin’s attack on Taylorism prophesies the dreadful consequences of idealizing man in the image of the supposedly superior machine. . . . Zamiatin creates the added horror, for his 20th Century readers, that the future subjects of such regulations are largely unaware of what they have lost: most of them gladly accept regimentation, fear freedom of choice, and believe that the individualism of the past was sickening order. (Rhodes 33)

This is the society of Dostoevsky’s Ivan, a society based on the rational mechanistic principles of Leibnitz. Patricia Warrick states, "Leibnitz’ plan to develop a general method in which ‘the truths of reason would be reduced to a kind of calculation’ is the kind of thinking against which Dostoevsky protests; it is the kind of plan that has been implemented in We . . . " (65).

The tension in the novel revolves around D-503’s vacillation between the polarities of entropy and energy. The outcome of the conflict depends on whether D-503 is to become one of the "living-dead," or one of the "living-living." David Richards comments about this dialectical
conflict which D-503 is mentally waging:

Zamyatin divides mankind into two categories, "the living-dead" and the "living-living." The former, the vast majority . . . live . . . in a trance, in a world of false security, accepting as absolute truth and as living principles the conventions and dogma of an earlier stage in the dialectical process, which has meanwhile moved far ahead of them. In contrast with this majority there exists, however, a tiny elite, who are aware of the relativity of truth to the moment. These are the heretics, the bearers of Revolution in human affairs. (16)

From D-503's first journal entry, the reader becomes aware of the dialectical struggle that is awakening within this character, and the reader can also observe the oppressive order of daily existence under the totalitarian state of the Well-Doer. Although there are times when D-503 realizes how oppressive life is under the regime, he continually lapses into the serene approval of the authoritarian system which has socialized and shaped him. After D-503 has been exposed to the subversive influence of I-330, he explains that man has built "a system of scientific ethics," i.e. ethics based on mathematics. D-503 basks in the comfort that this mathematical system gives him, and at another point in the novel he states:
The work of the highest faculty of man, judgement is always directed toward the constant limiting of the infinite, toward the breaking up of the infinite into comfortably digestible portions, differentials. This is what gives divine beauty to my vocation, mathematics. (We 62)

Ironically, D-503’s own mathematical reasoning leads him later to an entirely different conclusion, the frightening conclusion that the world is not a limited entropic one, but is an unlimited one of revolution.

Essentially, what the reader experiences in Zamiatin’s novel is a lesson in the disintegration of personality under a totalitarian system modeled after that of Swift’s Houhynhm-land or Dostoevsky’s state ruled by the Grand Inquisitor. In The Brothers Karamazov, for instance, Ivan is representative of the split-personality, the schizoid who has gained a certain rational lucidity, but at the expense of emotion and love. Just as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein monster represents the monstrosity of a personality in which reason is divorced from emotion and love, so is D-503 representative of the same type of mental dissociation. The result is loss of the essence of humanity.

Like Gulliver in Jonathan Swift’s satire, D-503 exhibits a similar short-sightedness because he is unable to integrate his personality. At least he is able to recognize the dialectic of his own personality. David Richards views
the Green Wall as the physical barrier that separates one part of D-503's personality from the other; if the wall could be breached, then perhaps the result would be the re-integration of his personality; Richards speaks of the wall in the following manner:

It symbolizes on the one hand the security and non-freedom of the Single State and on the other the frontier between the rational and the irrational areas of the mind. The destruction of the wall would mean not only the collapse of the tyranny of the Single State, but also the reunion of man with nature and the integration of the personality. (61)

Therefore, the goal of the people of the Mephi is to break through every boundary and to be fully free, fully human; the Mephi himself always holds the X in suspension, but D-503 is uncomfortable with this, he and would rather go back to his womb-like state of non-freedom and security. He would rather remain a child ruled by entropy, which forces the individual into being a cog of the machine state. Aligning the state with entropy is a digression from the traditional association of entropy with Satan versus creativity with God. Zamiatin has reversed the traditional roles of God and Satan in We. In the following instance he ironically condemns the humility of Christianity and extols the virtues of the pride of Satan, the handmaiden of
revolution and individuality. D-503 writes:

In the Ancient days the Christians understood this feeling; they are our only, though very imperfect, direct forerunners. The greatness of the "Church of the United Flock" was known to them. They knew that resignation is virtue, and pride a vice; that "We" is from God, "I," from the devil. (121)

David Richards notes that, for Zamiatin, the rational dystopia is combated not by the humility of religious man, but by the rebellious nature of natural man whose emotions overthrow the tyranny of reason:

Whereas for Dostoevsky the force most implacably opposed to the rational utopia was the true, uncorrupted spirit of Christianity, represented in The Grand Inquisitor by the silent figure of Christ embodied in the Russian Orthodox Church, Zamyatin condemns all churches equally. Since in his view there can be no unique unchanging truth, no organization can possess it and submission to the Orthodox Church is as absurd as submission to a rational utopia. (Richards 62)

After noting the dissimilarities between Christianity and Zamiatin's dialectic, Richards records key similarities between the approaches such as Zamiatin's rejection of the historical determinism of humanly contrived mechanistic rules. His rejection is an agreement with Christ's attempt
to direct men's attention beyond the superficial rationality of everyday life to an inner core of spiritual reality.

Richards asserts:

Finally, Zamyatin's attack on humility is directed against the passive resignation of the vegetable life and not against the conscious humility, which stems from an awareness of man's dependence on destiny—for Zamyatin the dialectical process, for the Christian the will of God—and is an indispensible ingredient of true knowledge. (63)

However, no matter whether the reader agrees with Dostoevsky's view of the dialectical struggle or Zamiatin's, the point of individual freedom has been made in the novel We, and only D-503, because of his shortsightedness, fails to see it. Although there are times when his passionate side almost takes control, as when he risks death in the crowds by stopping to save the freckled girl whom he mistakenly takes for I-330, D-503 prefers to remain a child, the child of the state.

In fact, seldom does D-503 act independently and take full responsibility for his actions. When he first emerges from the Green Wall, the barrier that separates the mass from freedom and psychic integration, he acts apparently from freedom and spontaneity when he feels within himself a "blazing coal. . . . Momentary light, a little painful, beautiful" and he screams, "All must become insane, we must
become insane as soon as possible!" (47). Patricia Warrick notes that it is pain that makes the individual aware of himself, and this awareness should be pursued for those who value individuality; this pain of awareness is the recognition of the irrational component of D-503's nature, an element Warrick claims D-503 cannot deny:

The remainder of We consists of D-503's. . . . attempt to resolve the tension between reason and the irrational, either by accepting both (which the structure of the One State will not permit), or by denying his unique, irrational Self (which his new awareness will not permit). (70-71)

When D-503 feels the momentary pain of the blazing coal of light, he feels his nascent soul; his passionate side has temporarily surmounted his logical side. However, every time D-503 does subdue the logical part of his psyche, he recoils in fear to the safety of . . . mathematical certainty, the Wall which shuts out the wild and primitive. In contrast to the Underground man of Dostoevsky who cannot bear walls, he feels that walls and barriers are the greatest inventions, isolating as they do in a man a perfect mechanical world, free from the irrational, hideous world of trees, birds, and animals. (Warrick 70)

Speaking of the similarity between Underground man's
description of the Crystal Palace and D-503’s description of his city, Edward J. Brown supports Warrick’s observations when he makes the following statement in his book *Russian Literature Since the Revolution*:

> The human reason, in its Euclidean variant, is all-powerful, and the aspect of the city presents only straight lines, planes, right angles, and neat diagonals. The streets and the houses are of glass, and, like the Crystal Palace which was for Dostoevsky the symbol of scientific rationalism, hard, shiny, and square. (76)

Apparently, however, the only time D-503 truly acts from a standpoint of freedom occurs when he helps the pregnant 0-90 escape through the Green Wall. Throughout most of the novel, he is haunted by guilt and acts like Hawthorne’s Arthur Dimmesdale, as evidenced by such lines as the following:

> I am covered with black, ineffaceable stains, I know it . . . . what if I should rush forward and shout out everything about myself at once; the end might follow . . . . at least for a second I might find myself clear and clean . . . . (We 131)

This protagonist is reminiscent of another Dostoevskian character, that of the Underground Man who is the prototype for the modern existential rebel/hero. Like D-503, the Underground Man possesses a vivid imagination and champions
irrationality in the face of the bureaucratic world.

D-503, through the subversion process of I-330 and through his own writing, has attained the realization that he is not regulated by the mechanized clock of the Taylor system; he realizes that he has a soul which beats to the rhythm of a different drummer. He is an individual unable to live in an ant-heap:

It had never occurred to me before, but this is truly how it is: all of us on earth walk constantly over a seething, scarlet mass of flame, hidden below, in the belly of the earth. We never think of it. But what if the thin crust under our feet should turn into glass and we should suddenly see. . . . "I became glass. I saw--within myself." (We 54)

Though Swift's Gulliver remains the object of satire and irony, the short-sighted D-503 does come to a moment of insight, a moment of revelation in which he is given the freedom to make a choice. Patricia Warrick comments:

His clear rational world has disappeared and he lives in the "ancient, nightmare world of the square root of minus one." Finally, he will be forced--as the novel climaxes--to exercise his free will in making a choice: to refuse the operation for the excision of his imagination; or to submit and become part of the machine. (72)
However, D-503’s relapse into extreme rationality in the tradition of Gulliver is evidenced in his last words, which are significantly the last words of the book, "I am certain we shall win. For Reason must prevail." D-503, like Gulliver, becomes so committed to rationality that he rejects, in the end, passion, love, and his own humanity. (In fact, early in the novel, the love D-503 apparently does exhibit seems to be based less on love than on a various blend of infatuation, sex, and curiosity. He remains throughout almost clinical toward 0-90, so much so it is surprising when he finally does help her.)

Ultimately, then, the question must be asked in a paraphrase of the words of the Grand Inquisitor—if man is by nature depraved, base, slavish, and weak, is utopia even a possibility? The question involves the connotation of utopia. Utopia literally means "nowhere," and can therefore be observed to be nothing more than a verbal construct. Because of the nature of man, a utopia seems an impossibility, and to make one a reality would entail a change in the nature of man. However, perhaps what Dostoevsky and Zamiatin feared was that the miracle of technology might effect the necessary change in man, for technology makes it possible to alter man chemically, genetically, mentally, and physically. The institution's ability to destroy the individual's humanity is the great horror dystopian writers warn their readers about; and at
least in one sense, technology has allowed dystopias to become a possibility. Richards warns:

And modern society, Zamyatin felt, was in just such a desperate state. The forces of Entropy were gaining the upper hand: modern societies were becoming increasingly regimented and dogmatic; the individual was having his thinking organized and his responses conditioned to conform with imposed patterns. . . . The rational scientific utopia (dystopia) envisaged by Dostoevsky was approaching rapidly. The increasing importance of the machine in modern life was paralleled by the increasing mechanization of man himself. (20)

Faced with the choice between freedom and security, D-503 opts for security by submitting to the operation of fancy, the process that will alter him so that he loses his humanity, the capacity of making choices.

Patricia Warrick insists that the concept of free choice is the key issue explored by both Zamiatin and Dostoevsky:

Suffering results from the individual's making the wrong choice, but it is a necessary concommitant of exercising free will, so it must be accepted. Through this suffering, man may finally come to God. (73)

D-503 makes the wrong choice, but Richards raises pertinent
questions: Is D-503’s choice a result of his being unaware that his freedom was being restricted? Did he prefer slavery? Zamiatin personally chooses freedom and revolution as does Dostoevsky before him. Richards agrees with Warrick when he finds that both Dosotevsky and Zamiatin are exploring the nature of freedom and the concept of choice in their works in the face of a society that seems to offer little resistance to the increasing mechanization of man:

Here Zamyatin faced the question which troubled Dostoevsky, in his The Legend of the Grand Inquistor—which was perhaps the starting point for Zamiatin’s novel We. Are truth and freedom intolerable to all but the strongest minds? Is the totalitarian state justified on humanitarian grounds in suppressing the heretic, in accepting complete moral responsibility, in imposing comforting rational patterns? (20-21)

Just as Dostoevsky’s parable does not leave the reader with clear-cut answers, neither does Zamiatin’s We leave the reader with as neat a conclusion as one might think after a cursory reading.

Essentially, both Dostoevsky and Zamiatin hold that a fundamental quality of being human lies in the individual’s ability to make autonomous choices. D-503, like Ivan before him, abdicates his responsibility and therefore ultimately loses his humanity. Like Ivan, D-503 may be one of those
weak men insufficiently strong enough to join the elect of the Grand Inquisitor. Ironically, D-503 chooses the worst form of slavery: he submits to the surgical operations to remove the fancy and consequently is able to watch the torture of his beloved I-330 and remain silent:

The power of the novel's final scene lies in its muted voice. D-503 with his emotions now excised by the State operation, can watch with indifference as his beloved, I-330, is put to death. In the final act of sacrificial love for another (echoing Dostoevsky's view of the noblest personality), she remains silent throughout her torture, refusing to implicate D-503, even as she is brought near death and revived three times before she is killed. He does not notice her sacrifice or her suffering. (Warrick 55)

I-330 is a Christ-figure, remaining silent in mute suffering just as the Christ in the Grand Inquisitor parable faced his Inquisitor with brave stoicism. Also, like Christ or Alyosha, I-330 acts from a standpoint of love, and her silence is based on the same reason that U remains silent after learning about D-503's liaison with I-330; U remains silent because the "absurd, ridiculous human truth" (211), is that she loves him too, and love is beyond reason. Love is one of the choices the individual must select if he is to remain human in a totalitarian society.
Just as Gulliver made his decision to abdicate his humanity by modeling his behavior after the rational horses in Swift's satire on humanity, so too does D-503 abdicate his humanity by undergoing the surgical operation to remove his imagination. After making this choice, he sings like the Biblical Joshua, "All right, go on, go on moaning and groaning! The walls cannot be torn down . . ." and then he writes, "Flying leaden clouds broke over his head . . . well, let them! They could not eclipse the sun! We chained it to the zenith like so many Joshuas, sons of Nun!" (169).

But in choosing non-freedom, in renouncing his humanity and the choices that being human entails, D-503 is not a son of Nun but a son of "none," a son of utopia, the utopia with the connotation "nowhere."

Aldous Huxley paraphrases the biblical Joshua in his preface to Brave New World, "You pays your money, and you takes your choice." The slavish D-503, like Joshua, like the Grand Inquisitor, chooses security over freedom to find so-called happiness, while the sans-culottish I-330 chooses freedom over security to find true happiness. Actually, however, D-503 is not really making a choice so much as he is abdicating his right to make further choices in his society. And this choice is his most crucial choice! His abdication of responsibility is reminiscent of Dostoevsky's Ivan. Both characters are faced with a clear-cut choice. D-503 abdicates his humanity and his responsibility to make
choices just as Ivan has done; both characters must love an essential part of humanity when they make their respective decisions.

However, man is a complex creature and is seldom faced with such clear-cut choices in reality. Dostoevsky and Zamiatin do not make choices for the reader by categorically stating which side is right or wrong in the dialectic, but there is a suggestion of a choice for the reader in the works of both authors. In the Grand Inquisitor parable, Christ’s silence as well as his enigmatic response of kissing the Grand Inquisitor undercuts Ivan’s parable. So too, in We, there is a suggestion of a correct choice for the reader in D-503’s bland acceptance of I-330’s torture. Ultimately, however, the reader must make his own decisions as to whether he will acquiesce to authority in a totalitarian society and abdicate an essential part of his own humanity—the ability to make autonomous choices. Like Dostoevsky before him, Zamiatin leaves the ultimate decision to the reader who must have enough imagination to make what will be the right choice, the choice of safeguarding man’s essential humanity.
CHAPTER IV

BRADBURY’S FAHRENHEIT 451:
CHOICES IN AN AMERICAN DYSTOPIA

Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451, published in 1953, is probably the first American Dystopian novel of any literary quality written in the tradition of Orwell’s 1984 and Huxley’s Brave New World. The work fits the criteria for a society whose characteristics are in opposition to utopian ideals: the presentation of the society is set in the distant future, the structure of this society is depicted as unsatisfactory, and the satire involved is directed not against what man is but at what man may become.

Also, like British anti-utopian works of fiction, Bradbury’s novel may be viewed as a critique of Enlightenment values of rationalism and progress. Critic Mogen David writes:

Though Fahrenheit 451 has been accused of vagueness . . . it remains one of the most eloquent science-fiction satires, a vivid warning about mistaking, in Orville Prescott’s phrase, "a mindless happiness and slavish social conformity for progress. (105)

However, Bradbury’s dystopia differs from British dystopias such as Orwell’s 1984 in that the target of the satire is
not so much a tyranny of a small minority such as the communistic party run by Big Brother as by the tyranny of the common man. Mogen David notes that the novel "depicts a world in which the American Dream has turned nightmare because it has been superficially understood" and that the antagonist Captain Beatty "represents Bradbury’s satirical target, not Big Brother but the potentially tyrannical small-mindedness of the common man, perverting the most basic community institutions to enforce conformity" (106). Bradbury’s depiction of a society constructed on a shallow understanding of rationality makes his satire reminiscent of Jonathan Swift’s satire of Lemuel Gulliver, another literary critique of Enlightenment values.

Other elements that Bradbury’s novel has in common with the dystopian novel is the depiction of a citizenry under totalitarian control and a rebel opposition to this control. This scenario is evident in dystopian novels written in the early 20th century such as Soviet author Eugene Zamiatin’s We which is the proto-typical novel of the genre and was published in 1925. For example, Bradbury’s protagonist, Montag, is similar to Zamiatin’s protagonist D-503 in that they both start out as tools of the government only to later undergo a political transformation. Although not bildungsromans, both novels chart the progress of protagonists who are minions of the totalitarian state and who undergo a change after coming into contact with
rebellious elements of their respective societies.

More importantly to this study, however, the Dostoevskian dialectic between freedom and security is quite pronounced in the conflict between protagonist Montag and his superior, the antagonist Beatty Montag ultimately chooses freedom while the authoritarian firechief Beatty takes the role of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor in keeping the masses controlled, ignorant, and content.

There are numerous indications in the novel that the society depicted is set in the distant future. For one thing, the novel’s setting is in a distant post-literary society where books have been outlawed and where individuals are so sedentary and homebound, the sidewalks are described as "white, unused, buckling" (5). The masses are content to stay at home and watch television or to listen to radio rather than to read books or even to talk to each other.

While Morton Teicher speaks of Fahrenheit 451 as "an extrapolation from present reality so that the fancible is made credible" (17), Wade E. Reynolds writes of how accurately Ray Bradbury wrote about inventions and social trends in the early 1950's which are now taken for granted: "...miniature ear radio receivers (today’s walkman radios), talking parlor walls (wide screen televisions), and a turning away from the printed media in favor of audiovisual media" (117). Another outstanding hint that the novel is set in the technological future is the mechanical
hound which guards the fire station. Ironically, before Montag becomes exposed to seditious ideas, he is himself a kind of mechanical hound in that he is sent out and programmed not only to burn books but to kill those who get in the way of performing his duties to the state. Interestingly, as Montag begins to rebel in subtle ways, the fire station's mechanical hound growls at him. This is perhaps a warning that he should remain in his proper social position in the society, and Montag worries that someone might "tell" the hound about his subversive activities.

In fact, much of the futuristic technology in the novel is designed to keep the populace in a state of ignorance by denying them access to books and to history. The irony of Montag's being a fireman is that his duty is to start fires in order to burn books instead of putting fires out; he is paid to destroy ideas, not to entertain any of his own. Firechief Beatty states at one point, "Out of the nursery into the college and back to the nursery; there's your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more" (55). One of the things that Bradbury questions in the novel is the consciousness industry in America, and critic Jack Zipes addresses this aspect of Bradbury's Dystopia when he states:

Bradbury wants to get at the roots of American conformity and immediately points a finger at the complicity of state and industry for using
technology to produce television programs . . .
and advertising to block self-reflection and
blankout the potential for alternative ways of
living which do not conform to fixed national
standards. (185)

Therefore, the novel exhibits another criteria of the
dystopian novel in that the structure of society is depicted
as unsatisfactory. Perhaps there is no other scene than that
of the attempted suicide of Montag's wife which better
epitomizes the nightmarish world Bradbury depicts. Irony
arises out of the matter of fact way the "handymen" perform
their duties. One of these state sponsored case-workers even
says of the attempted suicide, "We get nine or ten cases a
night" (15). Because Martha represents the typical "happy"
model citizen of Bradbury's anti-utopian world, it is clear
that the world is not a utopia since there is so much
unhappiness in it. Her denial of any memory of the suicide
attempt represents how narcotized these t.v. addicts of
Bradbury's dystopia are.

Bradbury highlights Montag's own unhappy condition
with a contrast between the natural world with that of the
anti-utopian man-made domicile. The author describes
Montag's bedroom as a "cold marbled room of a mausoleum
after the moon has set . . . the chamber of a tomb world
where no sound from the great city could penetrate" (11).
Montag and his wife never seem to really communicate, unlike
the members of Clarisse’s rebellious family. The rebels of the novel are often described in an outdoor setting, and they are described as always communicating. Bradbury writes, "Their laughter was relaxed and hearty and was not forced in any way" (17). After Montag’s initial meeting with the non-conformist Clarisse, he becomes even more despondent. Bradbury speaks of Montag’s own unhappiness thus: "He was not happy. . . . He wore his happiness like a mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back" (12).

Like the mysterious X-factor which causes doubt in the protagonist’s mind in Zamiatin’s Dystopian novel We, Clarisse is the one thing which is thrown in Montag’s path that he simply cannot ignore; Clarisse is a rebel because she is an individual as opposed to a collective thinker, and it is Clarisse who is the catalyst for Montag to question his own happiness. He states, "Happiness is important . . . and yet . . . I’m not happy" (67). When speaking of Clarisse, Montag says to his wife, "Men like Beatty are afraid of her. I can’t understand it" (67). The reason Clarisse frightens Beatty is that her questioning upsets the social order. Before Clarisse, Montag would only ask "How?" Now he begins to question "Why?"

In other words, Clarisse has forced Montag into engaging in a dialectic; so after she has disappeared, Montag goes home and tries to engage in a conversation with
Mildred. He does this by cutting off her "parlour walls" which constitute one-way communication, and then he proposes a series of Socratic questions in order to engage her in a dialogue: "Millie? Does the White Clown love you" (77)? At this point in the novel, he attempts to get her to question her love for her "family," i.e. the soap opera-like characters she watches on Bradbury's equivalent to big-screen t.v. Montag wants her to realize that the character of the White Clown is only a fiction and that only Montag himself is reality—the one who really cares for her. However, Mildred is tranquilized not only by her pills but by the messages of the "parlor walls," and she is so used to one way communication that even after Montag has turned the television off, his wife stares blankly back at him and states, "Why'd you ask a silly question like that" (77)? Montag is unable to engage in a dialectic with his wife.

In the novel, Bradbury attempts to explore how programmed Americans are by the crass commercialism of capitalism, and this exploration makes the work uniquely American. Mogen David writes of this aspect of Bradbury's dystopia thus: "Yet understanding the American context in which Bradbury writes clarifies the logic of political vagueness, since his major satirical target is the leveling impulse of mass culture, rather than the rigidity of ideology" (108). As Montag hurtles through the darkness in a train-car of the "vacuum-underground," he attempts to read
a copy of the New Testament despite the distracting commercial audio-messages blaring in his ears: "Denham’s Dentifrice." Bradbury subsequently uses the counterpoint method of description which Flaubert pioneered in Madame Bovary by contrasting lines from the Bible with lines from the commercial message: "They toil not--/Denham’s/Consider the lilies of the field, shut up, shut up/Dentrifice" (79)! Montag subsequently realizes that "The people were pounded into submission; they did not run, there was no place to run" (79). Here Bradbury contrasts the sacred words of the Bible with the junk jingles of contemporary advertising to make a statement about how programmed modern man has become and how bleak the future is that awaits - if the trends in commercialism are not ameliorated. He also shows how the destruction of a dialectic in society leads to totalitarianism and darkness.

In fact, Bradbury develops the whole concept of the Dostoevskyian dialectic in the characters of Montag and Beatty, though perhaps Bradbury was not consciously doing so. Montag corresponds to the Christ figure in The Brothers Karamazov, the one who would argue that man needs freedom above all else, while Captain Beatty corresponds to the Grand Inquisitor who would argue that man needs security above all and that freedom is dangerous. In this kind of dialectic, man is presented with a choice, and like Luke Skywalker in Star Wars, Montag chooses the good side, while
Beatty chooses the dark side. To carry this analogy one step further, Beatty is symbolically Montag’s father, who schools Montag in the culture of the censor and book burner. Montag grows up, and just as Luke Skywalker rejects the dark path his father Darth Vader has taken, so too does Montag reject the path Beatty wants him to follow.

Like the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoevsky’s parable, Beatty wants to be the shepherd to lead his flock—the masses—to the psychological state of security and happiness. However, he does this by totalitarian control and the destruction of all subversive individuals in the society. Beatty lectures Montag in the following manner:

You always dread the unfamiliar. . . . We must all be able. Not everyone born free and equal, as the constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, judge themselves against. (51?)

Beatty’s populace is pacified by the big screen televisions, and when someone dares to think for himself or publicly utters an idea questioning the state, he is set upon by the mechanical hounds. Because Beatty has the power to destroy the concept of the dialectic and has instituted a one-way form of technological communication, he has effectively taken away choice from the populace. Spenser asserts, "Power becomes unbreachable if textual information is
monolithic" (333). Only when individuals such as Montag are able to turn off technology do they begin to think for themselves as they begin to do in E.M. Forster's dystopian short story "The Machine Stops" when technological control of the masses breaks down.

Beatty sits at the apex of a so-called utopian society where everyone is equal, and there are no worries if people will only follow the party line. At one point, Montag, with his growing consciousness of his ability to make choices, questions his wife Mildred, "How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real" (52). Beatty and the other fire chiefs are the only ones who apparently know what really happened in ancient and recent history, but in order to retain their monopoly on power, they twist history or fabricate recent history in order to manipulate the populace with illusion.

At one point in the novel, Montag reads a brief revisionist history of Firemen in America which lists the First Fireman as Benjamin Franklin, (34) and this is some of the only authorized literature Montag could legally read.

The manipulation of history for retaining political power was a fear George Orwell evidently had of the future because in his Dystopian novel 1984, he described the leader of that imaginative society as rewriting history so that people would no longer read truth but propaganda. Writing of Orwell's novel, critic John Huntington states, "Orwell's
imagination, always attuned to suffering has managed to box itself in; the art of 1984, its greatness, is in the relentless denial of possibility of change. If hope is ever raised . . . it is dashed. Orwell’s pessimism reduces dynamic conflict to a monolithic truth" (137). But unlike Orwell, who does not present a dialectic—and hence no choices—in his dystopia, Bradbury does, and his protagonist, and presumably his readers, can make choices when presented with a dialectic instead of a monolithic truth. The mere presence of a dialectic allows for choice and for freedom.

Bradbury’s dystopian world differs from that of his British counterparts in that the Anti-utopian society he depicts is based on capitalism and not communism. Also, Bradbury portrays a dystopian state with power deriving from the bottom up rather than from the top down as in Brave New World or 1984. Speaking of the change in government from a Democratic to an Autocratic one, Beatty says the following to Montag:

It didn’t come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time. (59)

Because the programming of the individual via advertising and commercialism is more subtle than the more explicit
forms of social control depicted in such dystopias as that of Katherine Burdekin's British novel *Swastika Night*, the anti-Utopian vision is more uniquely American, for social control in the U.S. is more subtle than overt. For example, in his work *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said observes how all-embracing American social control of the populace can be without resorting to physical force. He states:

No one can deny the holder of great power . . . is the United States, whether because a handful of trans-national corporations control the manufacture, distribution, and above all selection of news . . . or because the effectively unopposed expansion of various forms of cultural control that emanate from the United States created a new mechanism of . . . dependence by which to subordinate and compel not only a domestic American constituency but also weaker and smaller cultures. (292)

Bradbury's Dystopia is so frightening precisely because he seems to be warning that Anti-Utopia is a possibility in America, not simply a possibility in socialist countries. When Beatty makes the following speech to Montag, he could be speaking of life in the United States in the late 20th century where literacy appears so low for an industrial society and people seem so uncritical of what they view on television:
Cram them so damned full of "facts" they feel stuffed, but absolutely "brilliant" with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving. . . . Any man who can take a t.v. wall apart . . . is happier than any man who tries to slide rule, measure, and equate the universe. (61)

Here, Bradbury speaks to the condition of man in a consumer-oriented society who is so crammed full of trivial data he doesn't see the big picture--least of all how he is manipulated by the powers in control of the media. In his book *The Unreality Industry*, author Ivan Mitroff makes the following comment upon how much contemporary American's reality is shaped by the media. He states:

> Unreality is big business. It is manufactured and sold on a gigantic scale. It has intruded itself into every aspect of our lives. For example, by some estimates, public relations, i.e., the deliberate manufacturing of slanted information, accounts for up to 70 percent of what passes for news and information in our society. The end consequence is a society less and less able to face its true problems directly, honestly, and intelligently. (6)

The implications of the above passage are chilling. The deliberate manufacturing of false information for social
control in America is one of the main items in Fahrenheit 451 that Ray Bradbury warns his readers about.

Bradbury explores a similar scenario when he has Montag question his wife and her guests at a cocktail party as to the reason why they voted for the president that they did. When Mrs. Bowles makes the comment that she voted for President Noble because he is the "nicest looking," Bradbury satirizes how people in the age of television are programmed to vote for the most telegenic presidential candidate. The author implies that the more intelligent candidate Hubert Hoag loses because he is fat and has an ugly-sounding name; thus Bradbury subtly satirizes the dumbing down of the populace of his own day and gives a warning to a future increasingly shaped by the technology of television programming. Media critic Ivan Mitroff notes that authoritarian regimes such as that fictionally depicted in dystopian literature now have a frightening capacity, for almost total social control for "earlier ages did not possess the technology to create as many different forms of unreality, the means to distribute it as widely, as well as the technology to intrude as deeply as we can into every aspect of human existence" (76).

Therefore, in Fahrenheit 451, Bradbury implies that a society cannot function democratically when its people do not read and do not stay informed; they lack choices which a dialectic would present to them. Beatty's philosophy sums
up the lack of choices in both political and private when there is no possibility of a dialectic: "If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none" (61).

While Beatty destroys the dialectic, Montag would create or preserve one because he corresponds to the Christ figure, the one who represents freedom in the Dostoevskyan paradigm. Montag tells his mentor Faber, "Nobody listens any more. I can’t talk to the walls because they’re yelling at me. I can’t talk to my wife; she listens to the walls. I just want someone to hear what I have to say" (82). He and Faber immediately engage in a dialectic when Faber outfits him with a "green bullet," a mechanical receiving device that fits inside his ear. As he goes back to confront Captain Beatty for the last time, Montag will act as a spy for Faber. Thus, while Montag is out in the field and Faber remains at home base, they carry on a dialog with each other about books. Unlike Clarisse who was merely a rebellious thinker, Montag, with Faber’s help, becomes a real rebel who attacks the state directly at one point by betraying a fellow fireman.

When Faber says to Montag, "Those who don’t build must burn" (89), he tries to show Montag that he has a choice. As Montag confronts Beatty, the latter says to him, "He is no wise man that will quit a certainty for an uncertainty"
(106). Beatty’s is the voice of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor argues bread and security over freedom. However, what Beatty does not know is that Montag is no longer listening to the party line; because Faber is whispering in his ear, he is engaging in a dialectic. Faber whispers to Montag, "I’ll say my say, too, in the next few hours. And you’ll take it in. And you’ll try to judge them and make your decisions as to which way to jump, or fall. But I want it to be your decision, not mine, and not the Captain’s" (108). Faber goes on to warn Montag to be wary of Beatty because he "belongs to the most dangerous enemy to truth and freedom, the solid unmoving cattle of the majority" (108). Clearly, Faber realizes sooner than Montag that Beatty would stifle the rhetorical principle of the dialectic as all totalitarian leaders would.

In the end, Montag makes his decision to seek freedom over security. As he incinerates his antagonist, he ironically turns Beatty’s own logic against him by stating, "Beatty... you’re not a problem now. You always said, don’t face a problem, burn it. Well, now I’ve done both. Good-bye Captain" (121). For Beatty, fire was the weapon that destroyed freedom and consequences, but for Montag, fire becomes the weapon of liberation.

Not only does Montag choose freedom over security as Christ does in Dostoevsky’s parable, Montag becomes a kind of Christ figure at the end of Fahrenheit 451 when he
becomes a shepherd. He is a shepherd of ideas because he carries a number of books of the Bible in his head after having read them before they were burned. Thus, Montag becomes, along with the other individuals who have also memorized chapters, a living book which prevents Christian tradition from being lost to posterity. Montag is the novice who shows promise, and the implication is that he will lead the straggling rebels down the path of freedom. Granger instructs him in seeing the world directly—not through the mediated graininess of big screen television. Granger asserts:

See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for by the factories. Ask no guarantees, ask for no security, there never was such an animal. And if there were, it would be related to the great sloth which hangs upside down in a tree all day every day, sleeping its life away. (157)

Montag is also a savior figure in that, like Christ who was resurrected, Montag is associated with the Phoenix who rises again to power and glory. Montag rises from the ashes because the Beatty's henchmen killed the wrong man in the televised death that was broadcast to the masses. This turn of events allowed Montag a rebirth into a new day, into an alternative society holding the promise of freedom for mankind. Speaking of the Phoenix, Granger states, "But every
time he burnt himself up he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again. And it looks like we’re doing the same thing, over and over again” (162).

The Phoenix may also be a symbol of another type of dialectic at work in the novel. Not only does Bradbury employ the kind of dialectic evident in the Dostoevskian paradigm, there is evidence of a Hegelian dialectic in Fahrenheit 451. For Hegel, history is a continuing cycle of thesis and antithesis. Instead of the progress of Enlightenment philosophy, mankind is only moving like a pendulum swinging from one extreme to another. Bradbury develops the concept of the Hegelian dialectic via the Phoenix imagery in the novel. Critic Donald Watt notes that at the close of the novel, Granger compares man to the Phoenix which consumes himself in fire but then rises reborn from its ashes. He notes that the question Granger raises, leaves unexplored "whether man can ever transcend the cycles of construction and devastation that have characterized history. Granger’s hope notwithstanding, one must remember the phoenix-disc is also one of the fireman’s symbols" (211).

However, critic Mogen David would argue that the Phoenix is a positive symbol in the novel rather than an ambiguous one when he makes the following statement: "Yet the cyclical pattern Bradbury describes also suggests the positive implications of one of the book’s central symbols, the
Phoenix: for, like the Phoenix, mankind always arises from the ashes to rediscover and refashion a desecrated cultural heritage" (107). Far from viewing the Hegelian dialectic as negatively or ambiguously as Watt does, Bradbury critic Mogen David views it as regenerative because man, like the Phoenix, will always arise from the ashes. He states:

Fueled by Bradbury’s lifelong passion for books and for libraries, by his indignation at seeing American ideals defiled, Fahrenheit 451 succeeds in warning of fire’s seductive appeal while also affirming the capacity to be warmed with inner illumination in desperate circumstances, to endure and rebuild new hearths in the ashes of history. (111).

Surely then, this positive interpretation of the significance of the Phoenix symbol in the novel is closer to authorial intention because in the Dostoevskian paradigm, Montag makes the choice for freedom and responsibility rather than for a non-thinking commitment to Beatty’s authority.

In the final analysis, perhaps no other Dystopian work of American literature so clearly delineates the dialectic between the warming faith of a Christ figure versus the chilling reason of a Grand Inquisitor. In Bradbury’s novel Montag represents one half of the dialectic—the impulse toward freedom—while Beatty represents the other—the
impulse toward security at the cost of man's freedom. In her article "The Post Apocalyptic Library," critic Susan Spencer speaks of the optimistic way in which Bradbury closes his novel when she states:

Bradbury closes the novel, however, with an optimistic view: the text will prevail, and man will be the better for it. This is shown symbolically in the escape from the city by Montag and Faber, the only two literate men in the story besides Beatty—who, also symbolically, perishes in the same manner as the many books he has burned. (335)

The author not only warns future Americans about the dangers of increased centralization of the state via new technology, he also warns of the dangers of unexamined and unquestioned commercial messages directed towards manipulation of the masses. Specifically, Bradbury warns the future about the dangers of destroying the dialectic in human political discourse because a dialectic provides choice. To destroy the dialectic leads to the nightmare world of Orwell's 1984 in which the protagonist has no choice - only the illusion of one. In Fahrenheit 451, the protagonist makes his choice for human freedom over stifling security and "happiness," Bradbury implies that despite his dire anti-utopian predictions, hope for our future remains.
CHAPTER V

PLAYER PIANO: THE STRUGGLE
TO RETURN THE HUMAN SPIRIT TO THE MACHINE

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Player Piano* is a traditional dystopian work in that the society depicted is set in the future, the depiction of this future society is negative in that it consists of a government rigidly controlled by machines, and there is a rebel group called the ghost-shirt society which is set up in opposition to the deterministic utopian government control. That Vonnegut's novel is a depiction of a dystopian world should be no surprise because the author freely admits that he "cheerfully ripped off the plot of *Brave New World*, whose plot had been cheerfully ripped off from Eugene Zamiatin's *We*" (Schatt 18). One puts it succinctly when he states the following:

*[Player Piano] society is a pyramid topped by an elite, with the great mass of people faceless and nameless--the line of descent runs direct from the blue-clad workers [of Well's *When the Sleeper Awakes*] through Huxley's Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons to Orwell's Proles. As usual the elite rules with the help of a strong police force, who employ the latest, most efficient means of surveillance. . . . And as usual [it is] a
machine civilization, one in which machines are replacing men. (Hillegas, gtd in Hughes 108)

In his article "The Ghost in the Machine: The Theme of Player Piano," David Hughes argues that man’s enslavement in Vonnegut’s novel is more "terrifying because it is inner-directed, unlike that of Brave New World or 1984" (108). Hughes argues that although some individuals in Vonnegut’s dystopia rebel against the system, most either collaborate with the system or acquiesce to it. Leonard Mustazza agrees with Hughes on this point, but he argues that Vonnegut’s novel is not a traditional anti-utopian novel in the conventional sense because the book is less a warning against the dangers of machines than it is a warning about the dark side of the human psyche. Mustazza asserts, "Quite unlike Huxley’s and Orwell’s visions of political oppression in societies whose monolithic ‘evil’ is never questioned, Vonnegut’s vision is, as always, complex, and the source of human evil lies less in forms than it does in unconscious human action" (101). However, whether or not Vonnegut’s novel is derivative or original is less important to this study than is an acknowledgment that Player Piano has similarities with other famous dystopian novels, and the dialectic between freedom and happiness is one of the chief characteristics the novel shares with its predecessors.

Like Zamiatin’s We or Huxley’s Brave New World, there is a character in Player Piano who works for the government
but who eventually becomes co-opted by the rebel forces.
This character is Dr. Paul Proteus, the protagonist of the novel who attempts to rebel against the machine-state of Corporate America. Paul is the counterpart to Zamiatin's D-503 character, and he must choose between the happiness offered by the ordered society controlled by machines or the freedom symbolized by the rebel ghost-shirt society. Although Paul is a key government worker, unlike D-503 he never escapes his dystopian world. In Vonnegut's novel, Paul does move in the direction of freedom even though he arguably never achieves his goal.

*Player Piano* is essentially Vonnegut's warning against the dangers of technological progress, especially that aspect of Enlightenment rationalism which, taken to its extremes and coupled with computerization of the workforce, would lead to the dehumanization of humanity. Vonnegut warns his readers that as machines become more and more efficient, the individual's work life will become less and less satisfying, and life will become more and more inhuman. Vonnegut depicts a world in which only a few benefit from technology while the rest of the populace suffer from boredom because there is nothing for them to do since machines have made them redundant. The leader of the rebel society sums up the problem succinctly when he states, "People are finding that, because of the way the machines are changing the world, more and more of their old values
don't apply any more. People have no choice but to become second-rate machines themselves" (251).

Vonnegut's dystopian world is roughly divided along class lines with the managers living north of the Iroquois river near the machines they maintain, and the rest of the population living south of the river in Homestead. The Homesteaders are comprised of members of the "wrecks and the wrecks" (i.e., the reconstruction and reclamation corps) and the rest of the citizenry most of whom have joined the army. None of the citizens have worthwhile jobs in Homestead because the machines have taken most of their work and stripped them of their dignity.

At one point in the novel, the protagonist explains to his wife how the managers and their machines have taken away any sense of purpose people once had. Paul Proteus states, "In order to get what we've got, Anita, we have, in effect, traded these people out of what was the most important thing on earth to them--the feeling of being needed and useful, the foundation of respect (151).

Apparently, the city of Illium represents American society, and critic Stanly Schatt notes that the setting "deliberately contrasts the demeaning and unheroic role of man in technocracy with the glory and grandeur of Homer's Troy" (17). Scholar Richard Giannone concurs with Schatt when he notes that Illium "stands not as a patrician monument to the grand American dream, but rather, as a
reminder of the need for a genuine rebirth of culture and feeling in American life" (6). The big difference between Vonnegut's work and Orwell's or Huxley's is that Vonnegut is critiquing American capitalism while the British writers satirize socialism.

As previously mentioned in this study, Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 is a critique of the excesses of capitalism, also, and Vonnegut's novel is similar to Bradbury's in that they both critique American society's dependence on, and manipulation by, the media. For example, in Player Piano, when the Shah of Khashdrahr asks what people do with their free time, a citizen tells him that they all watch a lot of television. Media critic David Rushkoff comments on how American government manipulates the populace via t.v.:

The liberal intellectuals of the thirties and forties believed that the general populace is too stupid to understand the intricacies of running a country. Instead, a select group of well-meaning intellectuals needs to determine the best course of action and then "manufacture consent" of the citizens for things they don't want, but that are in their best interest. Rather than persuading the public through intellectual argument, public relations experts seek only to oversimplify issues and evoke an emotional response from spectators.

(23)
As a former public relations writer for General Electric, Vonnegut was well aware of the ways in which the media influence the masses to promote the interests of the military-industrial complex, and he uses anti-utopian satire to poke fun at this form of manipulation. For instance, in the following passage, Vonnegut exposes how politicians manipulate the media for their own ends:

The more Halyard thought about Lynn’s fat paycheck, the madder he got, because all the gorgeous dummy had to do was read whatever was handed to him on state occasions: to be suitably awed and reverent, as he said, for all the ordinary, stupid people who’d elected him to office. . . . (104)

Vonnegut is also aware of how business interests, working in tandem with the government, crush the spirit of the individual in their attempt to create mindless mass consumers, and he would probably agree with the following statement about conformity to American culture made by his contemporary Henry Miller: "I feel that America is essentially against the artist, that the enemy of America is the artist, because he stands for individuality and creativeness. . . . I think that of all countries . . . America is the most mechanized, robotized, of all" (Plimpton 178).

Anti-utopian satire is stronger in *Player Piano* than in
1984, *Brave New World*, or *Fahrenheit 451*, and this is what gives the novel more of a comic flavor. Anti-utopian satire is quite evident in Vonnegut’s chapter on "The Meadows," which is a spoof of the General Electric managerial retreats; and because the satire is so biting, General Electric discontinued its version of The Meadows after the novel was published (Schatt 25). This critic sums up the importance of the scene at the Meadows when he states:

> The managers believe in the invincibility of the machines. Finnerty and his followers also believe they cannot possibly fail. The Meadows reflects Vonnegut’s distrust of any large organization that expects devotion from its members even at the cost of their own individuality. (26)

When one young manager fails to conform by shouting out the slogan, "White’s going to win!" during a solemn memorial service at the Oak in the Meadows, Vonnegut implies that the young man has doomed his chances during the next two weeks and will be ostracized by his society: "The older men looked at him with sadness, with melancholy rebuke. Now was not the time for such horseplay. . . . The youngster’s outburst of infinite bad taste would poison his next two weeks and probably his career" (171).

Anti-utopian satire in the novel is perhaps strongest in the Shah-of-Bratpuhr chapters in which Vonnegut critiques
the absurdities of American culture from a more objective outsider's viewpoint. In the Shah's country there are only the elite and the "takaru" (i.e., slaves), and Vonnegut seems to be implying that the society of Ilium, New York is similar: there are only the elite managers and the slaves of Homestead. One comic scene has the American host, Dr. Halyard, introduce the Shah to some "citizens," and the Shah promptly labels them "slaves." Later in the novel, when the Shah is introduced to members of the army, he states, "Niki Takaru." A general in the army subsequently asks Halyard what the Shah said, and Halyard replies that the Shah called them "a fine bunch of slaves" (57). Vonnegut is apparently implying that in the dystopian world of Ilium, man is so dominated by machines that he has little or no free will; therefore, he is ultimately a slave. The Shah of Bratpuhr subplot is interesting because it combines the comedic qualities similar to that found in Voltaire's Candide with the expose of human folly in the manner of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

The Shah of Bratpuhr allows Vonnegut to critique man's dependence on technological society from the outside looking in. For instance, he calls the EPICAC a "false god," and it is this machine which serves as the dominant symbol of control in the novel, as critic Thomas Hoffman notes in his article "The Theme of Mechanization in Player Piano" (130). Hoffman also points out an interesting irony
in the Shah's term for "citizen" when he states, "Vonnegut's irony may seem a bit gimmicky here when we realize that "Takaru" reversed is "urakat" (u-r-a-kat), but his questioning of the real danger of technology is profoundly serious" (134). This bit of "gimmicky irony" is an important nuance of the novel to note because in an opening chapter, Paul's cat is sucked into a machine, and after the cat is spit out of the it, he jumps on an electric fence and is fried to death. Vonnegut is ironically implying that in this nightmare world of technology, there is no escape for the individual from the dehumanization of the machine. Vonnegut believes that the Paul Proteuses of the world have become merely expendable cogs in the machinery of the state.

Many critics such as James Lundquist criticize Player Piano precisely because the sub-plot chapters fail to complement the main story line. Lundquist quite rightly observes:

While the stories of Paul and the Shah complement one another, they do not quite mesh. The Shah remains a device (and an old one besides) that enables Vonnegut to work in a commentary on the failures of American democracy. Another problem in the novel is that, even though the book is a warning about mechanization, there is something mechanical about the book itself. (24)

Lundquist may be criticizing Vonnegut's novel for being too
mechanical because the characterization is so mechanical. Lundquist also notes that Vonnegut uses stock characters in the novel, and his writing apparently lacks sophistication (10). This critic is right when he argues that *Player Piano* consists of two plot-lines that do not really mesh well and this lack of coherence may be the reason that the book seems rather contrived when compared with *Brave New World* or *1984*. In those novels the proleptic worlds appear to be more fully realized than Vonnegut's, and perhaps this is so because his anti-utopian satire often gets in the way of readers' willing suspension of disbelief.

However, Vonnegut is probably portraying his characters in a mechanical and lifeless manner for a specific reason in order to advance the plot. Critic Stanley Schatt notes that the author "portrays virtually all his characters as mechanical, lifeless, and passive, while the machines dance in human fashion" (29). Therefore, Vonnegut's mechanical description of his characters may not be a flaw in the work so much as a conscious attempt to depict the machine-like nature of individuals in a mechanized society. Thomas Wymer substantiates this interpretation when he notes that one of the major ways that human beings give up their humanity is "by accepting that artificial framework of thesis/antithesis in which they can make no real choices. Thus they make machines of themselves" (44).

The descriptions of Paul's wife, Anita, for instance,
certainly are examples of how Vonnegut depicts one of the more mechanical characters in his novel. Vonnegut writes of Anita's having the "mechanics of marriage down pat." He states that her "approach was disturbingly rational, systematic, she was thorough enough to turn out a creditable counterfeit of warmth" (Mellard 183). The following passage is one of the most haunting in the entire novel, and it concerns Paul's relationship to Anita:

He felt oddly disembodied, an insubstantial wisp, nothingness, a man who declined to be anymore. Suddenly understanding that he, like Anita, was little more than his station in life, he threw his arms around his sleeping wife and laid his head on the breast of his fellow wraith to be.

(Mellard 184)

The least mechanical character of Vonnegut's novel—next to the rebel Ed Finnerty—is protagonist Paul Proteus (so-called because of his changeable allegiance) who is faced with the dystopian dialectic: he must make the choice between the "happiness" of his privileged social class or the freedom offered by the rebels of the Ghost-Shirt Society. Critic Kermit Vanderbilt speaks of the significance of Paul's choice after being confronted with the possibilities offered by the Ghost Shirt Society in the following manner:

The novel pivots on the rather bemused rebellion
of Proteus. He allows more forceful visionaries to thrust him into leadership of the insurgent "Ghost Shirt Society." Vonnegut has amply shown the distressing paradox, in which the utopia of progressive thought, when consumated, may generate a restless discontent and become dystopia. (143)

After joining the rebel society, Paul says that machines "have exceeded personal sovereignty willingly surrendered to them by the American people for good government. Machine and organization and pursuit of efficiency have robbed the American people of liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Mellard 181). One critic sums up the rebel agenda that lies behind Paul's words in the following manner: "The object of the revolutionary plot worked out in the novel...is the overthrow of the machine, the breakup of mechanical society, and the movement beyond unilinear history" (Mellard 180).

The leader of the Ghost Shirt Society is the Reverend Paul Lasher who wishes to restore the "old values" of human dignity and worth to society. Scholar Rodney Allen notes that in Vonnegut's critique of corporate capitalism, the adherents of corporate America are the villains while the rebels are the heroes. He states, "Vonnegut underscores his sympathies for the leaders of the Ghost Shirts by making them the intellectual pragmatists rather than the fanatical 'true believers'" (33). The Reverend Lasher understands that his rebel society is doomed to failure, but there is a kind
of virtue in rebelling anyway.

When Paul takes up with this Luddite group, he begins to believe he could find utopia (Schatt 20). Paul subsequently buys a small farm and entertains dreams of taking up farming and getting back to nature. But Vonnegut seems to be implying that modern man can never go back to nature, and that believing one could escape man-made society is a great fantasy. Critic Stanley Schatt concurs:

Unfortunately for him, the farm in reality proves to be inadequate. When he attempts to grasp the "hand of nature," he soon discovers it is "coarse and sluggish, hot wet and smelly" (224). Paul finds he cannot be a farmer because the conditioning he has received from an industrialized society has not only prepared him to work with machines but completely divorced him from nature. (Schatt 20)

Just as there is no escape for the cat caught in the machine at the beginning of the novel, there is no escape for Paul from his mechanized society.

Thomas Wymer points out a further irony when he asserts that Paul Proteus really is not even allowed any real choices in the novel. For instance, Paul tells Kroner that he is the leader of the rebels, but later during his trial, the prosecutor asserts that his act of rebellion against the managers is not an act of sedition but is an
unconscious act of rebellion against his father due to an oedipus complex. Also, when Paul is given the choice to join the rebel movement, he is told that he will be executed if he does not aid the revolutionaries. Lasher's tyrannical command "Do as we say or get killed," essentially robs the protagonist of making a choice between the "happiness" of the so-called utopia of the machine state or the "freedom" offered to him by the rebel society. Like Winston Smith in 1984, Paul seems to lack autonomy.

When viewed from this perspective, the novel becomes almost as pessimistic as that of Orwell's dark dystopia 1984. And just as Winston Smith in that novel had no real choice between freedom and happiness, Paul apparently has no real choice either. Therefore, in Vonnegut's novel, as in Orwell's earlier anti-utopian work, the dialectic between freedom and happiness breaks down. The dialectic in dystopia offers choices, and in Orwell's and Vonnegut's novels the protagonists lack any positive real choices. When characters in dystopia lack positive choices and become one with the machine state, they have no real freedom because everything is determined for them. In her work The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction, Patricia Warrick makes a statement about the protagonists in a mechanistic Dystopian system that could easily apply to Paul Proteus. She states, "Man as a smaller unit of this mechanistic system, is also viewed as a machine. Since all the parts of
the system are deterministically locked and strict causality is present, man's free will is seen as an illusion" (132).
In many of Vonnegut's novels, including *Player Piano*, free will for many of his characters is an illusion.

Although the Dostoevskian dialectic breaks down in *Player Piano*, the Hegelian dialectic is evident in the novel, and one critic makes the following observation:

Vonnegut's first novel, *Player Piano*, represents an attack on technology—the thesis layer—on those dehumanizing forces of mechanization and efficiency which have finally created a society of scientific elites and slaves. A rebellion occurs and numerous machines are destroyed, but the effort fails, most obviously through the indifference and the irresponsibility of the "saved." The rebel leaders, however, who represent the antithesis layer, are undercut in a number of ways. (Wymer 41)

As mentioned previously, one way in which the credibility of the rebel leaders is undercut is that they are just as tyrannical as the machines in their methodology.

Vonnegut's dystopia is more pessimistic in its application of the Hegelian dialectic than is that of Ray Bradbury, his predecessor in the dystopian genre. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury suggested that a band of freedom fighters would always rise, like the Phoenix, from the ashes
of a corrupt and regimented utopian society. Vonnegut is more pessimistic in his assessment of human nature because his novel ends with the members of the rebellion picking up smashed machines in an effort to rebuild what was destroyed. David Hughes comments upon this destruction and construction:

At the end of the book, after the people have risen in a fit of rage and demolished the machines, they cannibalize the remains in order to begin to fashion new machines—specifically, the absurd orange-0 machine. As always, they labor at the instruments of their own demise. (113).

Vonnegut seems to be implying that the rebel Americans lose not so much because the machine state is more powerful, but because Americans have an inner psychological impulse toward progress which must be satisfied. One critic sums it up in the following manner:

Though Ilium itself is reduced to rubble, the bureaucrats have surrounded the revolutionaries; our final view of Vonnegut's satirical utopia suggests that it is the American dream realized and regretted, but destined to be rebuilt because the bricks and mortar and computers of Ilium are but the outward signs of an inward condition: the penchant for invention and gadgetry that marks the American characters and underpins a mechanistic
Essentially, Vonnegut seems to be implying that the rebel managers are just as controlling in their own way as the managers who run the government. For instance, at the end of the novel, Ed and Paul congratulate each other on what good managers they were, and critic Wymer asserts that these rebels are as much manipulators of human beings as those who control the society when he states:

These men, rebelling against the reduction of men to cogs in a social machine are themselves essentially social engineers trying to replace one mechanism with another. Those who would save man from dehumanization become the new manipulators, the new dehumanizers who regret that man is not malleable enough to fit their wonderful plan. The saviors... blindly become the thing they most despise. (Wymer 42)

And so, Vonnegut suggests, the cycle of thesis and antithesis, construction and destruction, will continue.

Vonnegut critics do not use the term "Hegelian dialectic" in their work, but this kind of dialectic is evident in Player Piano and gives the work its characteristic open-endedness. Lawrence Broer in his article "Is Kurt Vonnegut Winning His War with Machines?" speaks of the "lack of resolution in the novel," and he notes that this aspect of the novel is in part a result of
Paul's passivity which causes others to make his decisions for him.

In the Dostoevskian dialectic between freedom and happiness, Paul remains split: he cannot or will not commit himself to making a choice. Because of this duality, many readers may wonder which side he is really on, and many critics may argue whether the novel ends on a negative or on a positive note. Of Paul's double consciousness, critic Broer states:

Paul will remain irresolute in his dualistic commitment to and against tyrannical systems of control ("split . . . right up the middle") as long as he continues to muffle the cry of conscience and to relinquish his will to others. (144)

While some critics view Paul's abdication of choice as negative, others such as Thomas Hoffman view Paul's situation and the novel's ending as more positive. Hoffman writes:

The ending is affirmative because it reassures us that humans will continue to rebel against this prisonhouse of their own creation despite the failure of this rebellion, this man, or this period of history. (Hoffman 138)

Hoffman also mentions that "the desire for community will always vie with the desire for competition to maintain the constant state of transition" (128). Although Hoffman does
not use the term "dialectic," he does speak of the tension between "static" and "dynamic" in the novel. Paul is ambivalent when faced with the choice of remaining where he is or of making a change and becoming dynamic.

About the only choice Paul does make in the novel occurs at the end when he changes his choice of words: Rather than make a toast "to a better world," Paul changes his mind and drinks a toast "to the record." Critic David Mayo claims that Paul changes his mind "after realizing that the people are 'eager to recreate the same old nightmare'" (15). Mayo further asserts that "Paul, and the novel, choose history rather than utopia. Perhaps progress is not our most important product" (15). Speaking of history, Vonnegut obviously views in a Hegelian manner, and David Hughes comments on the Hegelian dialectic of destruction and construction when he attempts to sum up Vonnegut's meaning at the end of the novel:

What he is saying is that human beings are fallen and that, being fallen, whatever they conceive or create will carry within it the seeds of destruction. To the extent that Player Piano conveys these convictions, it is a more disturbing book than We, Brave New World, or 1984. (113)

Or, another way of putting it is that totalitarian control may seem to derive more from within than from without in Player Piano than in the former novels.
Therefore, when Paul changes his toast "to the record," it is in acknowledgment that there is something in the American character—the penchant for technological progress—that must be viewed with a healthy skepticism if individuals are to prevent the construction of dystopian societies. Otherwise, Americans are doomed be the servants of their technology instead of the masters. Speaking of the tyranny of technology and the machine, one critic states: "At the least, it has failed to give man any of the various kinds of bliss he has sought, and offers little hope that it ever will. Meanwhile man stands in an unnatural, mechanical world that is his legacy, one eye resting uneasily on the past, the other on the future" (Whaley 1).

In the final analysis, the main characters in these dystopian novels are faced with the dialectic—a dialectic which presents them with a choice. In Vonnegut's novel, it is the rebel Ed Finnerty who makes the choice to rebel, and his character is a foil to that of the vacillating protagonist. Critic Rodney Allen makes the following observation about Finnerty's influence on Paul Proteus:

This initial attempt of Finnerty to recruit Paul ends with Finnerty "savagely improvising" on the bar's player piano—the source of the novel's title, and an obvious symbol for the individual's stubborn need to perform his own unique song rather than listen to the mechanical score of the
In the world of dystopia, characters who listen to the beat of the machine instead of choosing to act as individuals and listen to the beat of their own drummer have lost their humanity. Chad Walsh in his seminal work *From Utopia to Nightmare* speaks of such characters in the following manner:

> Those who are thoroughly conditioned and brainwashed are something less than real human beings; henceforth, they are more akin to the wretches who have submitted to an actual lobotomy. If real goodness and altruism are to exist, rather than the benign motions of puppets, men must be free to choose between good and evil. (167)

However, in Vonnegut’s novel, Paul Proteus appears to be nothing more than a puppet. In fact, at one point near the end of the novel, Vonnegut remarks on Paul’s inability to act independently in the following line: "Through all his adventures, he had been a derelict, tossed this way and that. He had yet to lay a firm hand on the tiller" (265).

In terms of the Dostoevskian dialectic, then, Paul is offered a choice, but he does not make it. Therefore, to view *Player Piano* in the most negative light, perhaps Paul’s indecision in making the choice Finnerty has already made is Vonnegut’s way of saying that his protagonist has really lost his human spirit and has become nothing more than a ghost in the machine.
CHAPTER VI

THE HANDMAID’S TALE: A FEMINIST’S DYSTOPIAN NIGHTMARE

In his article "Utopia and Dystopia in Contemporary Science Fiction," political scientist Lyman Sargent makes the following distinctions between utopias and dystopias: 1) in utopias, equality is stressed while dystopias are characterized by a rigid hierarchical social system. 2) in utopias, individual differences are encouraged, while in dystopias, conformity is taken to an extreme 3) in utopias, there is little sexual control while in dystopias a minority controls who sleeps within, and finally, 4) the political system of a utopia is either none at all or is governed by a benign elite, while in a dystopia, there is some kind of political dictatorship (96). Margaret Atwood’s novel exhibits all of the above characteristics of a dystopia, and arguably, the Dostoevskyan dialectic is evident but is presented in a more understated way than it is in the previously mentioned anti-utopian novels. Also, the Handmaid’s Tale is perhaps the most believable or fully realized dystopia written by an American author, for it is not as polemical as is Fahrenheit 451 and is not filled with stock characters as is Vonnegut’s Player Piano.

The narrator, Offred, lives in the Republic of Gilead which is Atwood’s vision of a future U.S.A. where the moral
majority has taken over the government via a military coup. Perhaps Atwood had in mind a right wing paramilitary group like the Posse Comitatus or the Michigan Militia seizing power and creating a hierarchical theocracy based on religious fundamentalism. Kate Fullbrook correctly observes the connection between religious fundamentalism and patriarchy when she writes:

In *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985 Atwood responded to the worldwide rise in religious fundamentalism linked with political fanaticism, and especially to the increase in power of Christian fundamentalism as a political force. . . . *The Handmaid's Tale* is, however, more than a satirical dystopia of the near future. It is also a passionate protest against the reactionary reassertion of women’s traditional roles that has followed in the partial backlash against the most recent phase of feminism as well as in some varieties of feminist work which may support a return to gender stereotypes. (187)

In this ruthlessly patriarchal society, the color of the uniform each character wears reflects the rigid caste system the novel delineates. For instance, the Commanders who run the society wear black while their wives wear blue. The workers and servants wear green, and somewhere in status mid-way between the commanders and the servants are the
handmaid's who wear red. Finally, the aunts who are above
the handmaids in status, but below the Commanders, wear
brown uniforms. Finally, the Eyes who wear gray are the
Republic of Gilead's version of the secret police, and they
ride around in black vans with a white eye painted on the
side.

In Atwood's novel, there are few choices in dystopia,
for the narrator is a handmaid, one of the few females who
has survived the environmental catastrophe in which the air
gradually became "too full . . . of chemicals, rays,
radiation, and the water swarmed with toxic molecules"
(143). In this new society where most machines have been
outlawed, handmaids are placed on pedestals, but there is a
price they have to pay. Roberta Rubenstein observes the
following: "The handmaid Offred . . . subject to sexual
exploitation masquerading as religious fervor and worship of
procreation, experiences herself as utterly subordinated to
the procreative function" (103). They are sent to a birthing
and fertility center known as the Red Center where their
function is to bear children for the Commander's families.
Interestingly, they are not allowed to test for birth
defects even though a handmaid might give birth to a
mutation, "an unbaby with a pinhead or a snout like a dog's
(143). Thus, Rubenstein has noted, "maternity is both wish
(handmaids are discarded after three unsuccessful attempts
at pregnancy) and fear (the baby, unless deformed and
declared an 'Unbaby,' becomes the property of the handmaid's Commander and his wife)" (103). At the Red Center they are taught how fulfill the role of a Handmaid and to serve their society by bearing children for the families of the Commander's. Thus, in the patriarchal society of Gilead, the Handmaids are little more than breeders and are treated not much better than slaves in that their activities are so closely monitored and restricted. One critic observes:

Women's power, which lies solely in their fertility, has been captured and colonized. The women themselves are negligible, mere biological buckets from which healthy and whole children may possibly emerge. (Fullbrook 188)

In this fiercely capitalistic dystopia, women are commodities, and like p.o.w.'s in Nazi concentration camps, the Handmaids are tattooed because they are "natural resources" (85). M. Keith Booker observes that the wives are "literally 'issued' to successful males as rewards for loyal service to the community, demonstrating the thorough commodification of women in Gilead" (163). Booker's observation about the commodification of women is important for understanding that North American dystopias are situated in a capitalistic context rather than a socialist one like their Soviet and British counterparts.

In order to ensure those natural resources from leaving the country, they are restricted from travelling without
passes and are forbidden to congregate in groups larger than two or three. At one point in the narrative, Offred muses about how she is not even allowed to get to know the household servants when she states, "The Marthas are not supposed to fraternize with us" (15). Not only is there social restriction between members of different castes, individuals within each caste are trained to spy on each other as is evident when Offred explains why she is so wary of her fellow handmaid. Offred states, "The truth is that she is my spy. If either one of us slips through the net because of something that happens on one of our daily walks, the other will be accountable" (26).

M. Keith Booker correctly observes that in the novel "sexuality in general functions not as a counter to political power in Gilead, but as one of the most effective tools through which power is manifested" (165). The Handmaids are trained at the Red Center which is controlled by the Aunts who instill each Handmaid with state propaganda and with proper etiquette. The power situation is subtly hinted at when the Aunts are described as wearing cattle prods on their belts. Only later in the novel does it become evident that the cattle prods are necessary to keep the handmaids in line. Incidentally, even their red uniform is a means of social control; not only does it differentiate them from other castes, but it actually restricts their movements. For instance, handmaids must wear white hoods or
"wings" which act as blinders Offred says, "to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen" (11). Dorothy Jones observes that in the novel, the sexual politics of patriarchy are observed at their most extreme" (32).

Both the Marthas and the Handmaids cannot leave the compound unless they are veiled, and Offred speaks of the Marthas' uniform in the following manner, "She puts on the veil to go outside, but nobody much cares to see the face of a Martha." Not only does the line imply that the Marthas have extremely low status, it reveals that perhaps Atwood is thinking of the Muslim women in Iran's theocracy, who as Second class citizens, may not leave their house unless veiled.

In fact, the narrator's perspective is so limited, it is as if she were viewing the world through a veil. Atwood writes in selective omniscience so that readers are given only pieces of the entire perspective of the puzzle that the total picture of Gileadian society represents. Atwood's narrative, then, allows readers to experience things in much the same limited way that Offred must makes sense of her world, and the result is an eerie, haunting, nightmarish experience of being ordered about and of being kept in the dark. Just as her readers are only given one piece of the dystopian society at a time, rather than the whole autocratic picture, Offred says that because of their blinders, the handmaids "have learned to see the world in
gasps" (40). Hers is the experience akin to that of a child ordered around by omniscient adults who don't want the children to speak unless spoken to. Only gradually does Offred educate herself to the point where she can begin to make adult decisions by the end of her narrative. In the beginning of her tale we see her merely trying to comprehend her nightmare world.

Just like D-503 in Zamiatin's *We*, Offred does not question things at the beginning of the novel, and in chapter one she states, "There's a lot that doesn't bear thinking about. Thinking can hurt your chances, and I intend to last" (10). What she means by this line is that she wishes to survive amidst a world of torture and murder. Every day she walks by the wall on her way to market, and she sees abortion doctors or homosexuals called "gender traitors" who have been executed and hung on the wall to serve as a warning to others who do not conform to religious dogma. Another threat used to keep the Handmaids in line is that of being sent to the colonies to starve with the "Unwomen," a euphemism for women who are diseased and who cannot bear children. (Later in the novel, it is revealed that not only are homosexuals and abortion doctors hunted down and executed but so are Quakers and Baptists—the latter presumably are heretics who are not evangelical enough to suit the ruling elite.)

A wall is a common motif in dystopian fiction, and the
wall upon which are hung the corpses of society’s rebels in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is reminiscent of the Green Wall in Zamiatin’s novel *We* which contains the supposedly utopian society of the Well-Doer. Walls are what contain Offred in Atwood’s novel; Walls contain Offred in her room where she stares apathetically at the ceiling or at the curious Latin phrase written on her wall. Rubenstein notes that, “the physically confining rooms, walls, and other actual boundaries of the Republic of Gilead corroborate the condition of reproductive ‘confinement’ to which the handmaids are subject” (103).

Of the Wall surrounding the compound where she lives, Offred states, “There are red bricks, there are the searchlights, there’s the barbed wire, there are the hooks. Somehow the Wall is even more foreboding when it’s empty like that” (214). And it is fitting that at this wall, the barrier between the unknown outside world and the Republic of Gilead, Offred first learns that her sister handmaid Offglen may belong to the seditious May Day resistance movement.

In Atwood’s dystopia, sexuality is rigidly controlled, unlike the sexual freedom found in utopian fiction. Offred must submit to the advances of the Commander, but the monthly impregnation ceremony must take place in the presence of the Commander’s wife.

Atwood’s description of Serena Joy is reminiscent of
the right wing traditionalist Phyllis Schlaffy. Serena Joy was a former t.v. preacher before she became a Commander's wife, and Offred notes that "her speeches were about the sanctity of home, about how women should stay home" (60). The following description is also reminiscent of former t.v. evangelist Tammy Faye Bakker: "We'd watch her sprayed hair and her hysteria, and the tears she could produce at will, and the mascara blackening her cheeks" (61). It is quite evident that Serena Joy regards Offred as a necessary nuisance at best and as a sinful prostitute who will function as a temptation to her husband at worst. In fact, at times Offred turns her sexuality which was formerly used against her into a weapon such as when she deliberately tempts the Guardians when she knows that she is off-limits to them. Also, Dorothy Jones notes that "When her Commander signals needs beyond those allowed for in the system, Offred recognizes yet another opening: 'It's like a small crack in a wall, before now impenetrable.' Sexuality and reproduction can also disrupt the regime which tries so obsessively to control them" (35).

To a large degree, The Handmaid's Tale is a feminist novel, and according to Shannon Hengen, the majority of book reviewers read the novel as a critique of American feminism (98). Critic Dorothy Jones calls it a novel which explores "female resistance within a patriarchal society" (31). The novel posits a not-so-distant-future in which the feminists
have lost the culture wars. In fact, there are numerous flashbacks in which the narrator remembers her mother taking her child Offred to feminist rallies. During one book-burning flashback scene, feminist protestors burn books in a manner eerily prescient of the book burnings the right wing evangelists who take over the country may do in the future; when the little girl who later becomes Offred in the revolutionary society tosses an S & M magazine into the fire on the command of her mother, readers are left to question whether women are better off under the old system of exploitation or the new one of the Republic of Gilead. One critic observes the following:

At the Rachel and Leah Re-education Centre, Aunt Lydia explains to the future handmaids that there is more than one kind of freedom. "In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don’t underrate it."

(Rubenstein 34)

The constant flashbacks prior to the right-wing coup allow readers of Atwood’s novel the chance to compare how women were treated as objects in the past vs. how they are objectified in the dystopian future, and the author seems to imply that little has changed. At one point Aunt Lydia shows how women were mistreated by the decadent society of the past by letting Offred and the other handmaids view a pornographic movie in which women were "tied up or chained
with dog collars around their necks, women hanging from trees . . . women being raped, beaten, or killed" (152). Aunt Lydia explains to the handmaids how to properly interpret the film when she indignantly states, "You see what things used to be like? That is what they thought of women, then" (152). Kate Fullbrook sums up Offred's situation quite succinctly when she states:

That freedom that Offred recalls as lost was freedom to think 'there were no contingencies, no boundaries; as if we were free to shape and reshape forever the ever-expanding perimeters of our lives.' That freedom, which contained dangers and distortions—of pornography, rape, violence—and which inspired thinking in absolute categories by its opponents, has been succeeded by total absolutism that has substituted worse abuses for the ones it has supposedly suppressed. (189)

Essentially, Atwood's novel posits a future characters in the manner of a Grand Inquisitor have instituted their blueprint for protecting the populace.

In terms of the Dostoevskyan dialectic, then, the Commanders have taken up the mantle of the Inquisitor or a Well-Doer. In Atwood's dystopia, the Commanders are in total control, and their objectification and ownership of women's bodies is evident even in the handmaids names. Rubenstein notes that Offred's name "encodes her indentured sexuality:
both "offered" and the property "Of-Fred . . . " (103). When Offred meets some Japanese tourists on her way to the market one day, the tourists ask her if she is happy living in such a structured society. She replies that she is happy, and she thinks to herself, "What else can I say" (39)? Offred's reply cuts to the crux of the problem with the dystopian state. The Inquisitors and Well-Doers of society create their own versions of utopia in which their goal is to make citizens happy, but citizens like Offred are unhappy and try to rebel. In The Handmaid's Tale, the Commander is the legatee of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor.

The Commander looks over his Handmaids as if he were "taking inventory" (112), as if he were weighing whether or not to purchase a slave on an auction block. What Offred really wants is not to be objectified. Aside from wanting more autonomy, she wants to be valued for more than her good looks or breeding capability. She states, "I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name, remind myself of what I once could do, how others saw me" (126). Her subsequent line, "I want to steal something," reflects her desire for some measure of autonomy over herself. Sadly, she can only be in control in her fantasies as is reflected in the scene in which her Commander orders Nick the chauffeur to summon her; and she fantasizes that Nick is a romantic figure who really wants an illicit sexual liaison.

Time and again, however, Offred is jarred out of her
fantasy world and into the reality that she is no longer living her pre-revolutionary life in which she had a husband named Luke and a child. Luke is presumably dead, and her child has been given to one of the other Commanders to raise as his own. The nightmarish truth of this feminist anti-utopia is that Offred is completely alone, and she states, "I lie in bed still trembling . . . This is what I feel like: this sound of glass. I feel like the word shatter. I want to be with someone" (131).

Aside from being a feminist novel which interrogates women's place in patriarchy, Atwood's dystopian novel is also a bildungsroman in that the narrator is in a quest for identity. At one point she states:

There's nobody here I can love, all the people I could love are dead or elsewhere. Who knows where they are or what their names are now? They might as well be nowhere, as I am for them. I too am a missing person. (132)

However, the novel is not just a search for identity; the novel asks the question: What is identity? Everything has been taken away from Offred except what makes her human: her thoughts and feelings. Speaking of her missing family, she states, "Who knows there they are or what their names are now? They might as well be nowhere as I am for them. I too am a missing person. . . (113). She has her autonomy even if it is only in her fantasies.
narrator doubts not only her own perception of reality; she doubts her own fantasies as well as her own memories. She calls her narration of anecdotes a "reconstruction." In this sense, Atwood's dystopia is very Post-Modern, for Offred keeps telling stories and then tells us that the stories are stories, thus calling into question the very nature of reality and ultimately leaving the reader at times confused as to what is true and what is made up in her narrative. Dorothy Jones states, "Offred warns that much of her account is necessarily speculative, insisting that she is an unreliable narrator: 'I made that up. It didn't happen that way'" (41).

When Offred later states, "Context is all" (187), it is evident that what she lacks is historical vision, something that is denied to all citizens of dystopias. At one point she states, "I need perspective. . . . Otherwise you live in the moment. Which is not where I want to be" (185). Context is what Montag in Fahrenheit 451 so desperately craved; it is what Beatty the Fireman wishes to deprive him of by rewriting history. Context is what Offred needs because books are also burned in Atwood's dystopia.

In The Handmaid's Tale, Offred gains context only when her commander falls in love with her and turns her into a mistress. When she joins him for an illicit rendezvous, she becomes privy to the few secret books available which the evangelical elite has not destroyed because in the words of
the commander, these books are "dangerous in the hands of multitudes. . . " (202). In the Commander's study, Offred, for the first time, ceases to be an object, and she says to herself, "To him, I'm no longer merely a useable body. To him, I'm not just a boat with no cargo, a chalice with no wine in it. . . . to him I'm not merely empty" (211). Prior to this she had been defined as an object, as a baby-making machine. Earlier in the novel she states, "We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (146).

Because the novel is in part a search for identity with Offred moving between the polarities of the traditionalists represented by the Aunts and Wives vs. the feminists represented by the author's mother and her rebel friend Moira one may realize the novel contains a dialectic, one in which the narrator is offered one of her few choices: to embrace the freedom her friend Moira represents or to retreat into the security offered by the Aunts of the Red Center and other traditional females.

This is, therefore, the Dostoevskyan dialectic of freedom and submission. Offred has ambivalent feelings and often is torn between the two polarities. For instance, during one of her secret liaisons with the Commander, Offred feels that she is being treated like a pet. Rather than maintaining her feelings of rebellion, she begins to enjoy her captivity when the Commander entertains her in his
study. At other times, she wishes she could be stronger like her friend Moira who is angry at men and who does not wish to be treated in a traditional patriarchal manner.

When Offred loses Moira, however, she loses one of the solid anchors she has grounded her hope of resistance to the regime upon. Moira used to belong to a women's collective and served as a symbol in the fight against gender oppression, but when Offred finds her friend in the Commander’s compound, she fears that Moira has sold out. Offred is only reunited with Moira when her Commander takes her to an illicit outing in the Commander’s compound where a former hotel called Jezebels serves as a brothel of "rentals," women who are not able to be assimilated into the role of a traditional female under patriarchy. Offred notes how she would like her friend Moira to resist more openly, to escape for good. She states, "I didn’t want her to be like me. Give in, go along, save her skin. That is what it comes down to. I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, singlehanded combat. Something I lack" (324).

When the Commander’s wife sets Offred up in a secret liaison with the servant Nick in the hopes that Offred will become pregnant in order to validate the Commander’s status in society, Offred becomes more content with her lot because she has a new lover. Perhaps, like Moira, Offred has lost the will to resist when she states, "The fact is that I no longer want to leave, escape, cross the border to freedom."
I want to be here with Nick. . ." (348). When she visits Nick, she asks him if it is too late for their meeting, and she says that this "ritual politeness" of asking the question allows her to feel that she has a choice. She states, "It makes me feel more in control, as if there is a choice, a decision that could be made one way or the other" (346).

However, Offred really has no choice, and the Dostoevskyan dialectic in dystopian literature allows for choice between the polarities of security and bread vs. freedom and insecurity. Like Winston Smith in Orwell’s anti-utopia 1984, but unlike Montag in Fahrenheit 451, Offred will most probably give in to the side of security and bread, and she admits as much when she makes the following statement:

They know where my child is. What if they bring her, threaten something to her, in front of me. . . . Or my mother or Moira or almost anyone. Dear God, don’t make me choose. I would not be able to stand it, I know that; Moira was right about me. I’ll say anything they like, I’ll incriminate anyone. It’s true, the first scream, whimper even, and I’ll turn to jelly, I’ll confess to any crime. . . . (366)

However, readers are never certain what choice Offred will ultimately make, or whether or not she will even really
be offered a real choice when Nick directs her to go to a waiting van. Will the van be taking her to join the May Day resistance or taking her to a governmental place of punishment and death? After witnessing, Offglen's suicide, some of Offred's final haunting words are these:

I'll accept my lot. I'll sacrifice, I'll abdicate. I'll renounce. I know this can't be right but I think it anyway. . . . I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject. I feel, for the first time, their true power. (368)

Atwood ends the novel on an ambiguous note with Offred's last words as she enters the van to leave her Commander's house. Offred states, "And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light" (378). Rubenstein calls this line an ambiguity that "corroborates the earlier conflations of death and birth" (111).

Interestingly enough, another kind of dialectic in Atwood's novel is the Hegelian one of thesis/antithesis, and this dialectic is evident after reading the epilogue at the end. We learn from these "Historical Notes" that Offred has presumably escaped from the Republic of Gilead and set down a record of her tapes for posterity. The society of Gilead is no more, and another society based in Canada or the Arctic north is now the dominant society in North America:
it is a more democratic antithesis to the totalitarian thesis that Gilead presents.

Viewed from the perspective of these "Historical Notes" which are being analyzed by a group of professors at the Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies held in Nunavit (None of it?), the novel's ending is less uncertain as it would appear had the epilogue been missing from the novel. Arnold E. Davidson asserts: "Within the tale itself, Offred's end is uncertain, yet the very existence of the tapes suggests that, aided by Nick, she did elude the rule of Gilead" (116).

Canadian critic Michael Foley in his article "Satiric Intent in the 'Historical Notes' Epilogue of Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale" does not view the inclusion of the Epilogue as an optimistic ending of the novel; he views it as a dark dystopian warning against non-democratic elements located even in the university--"one of the temples of Western democracy." He writes:

... the deeply rooted sexual, racial or other biases of academics can anesthetize their critical faculties. In consequence, the yielding of status to qualified women members of racial minorities and the professed respect for the convention of scholarly objectivity can, in practice, become mere smokescreens that do nothing to prevent the spectacle of a prestigious speaker ... making
warmly applauded statements of contempt for victims and admiration for their totalitarian oppressors. (44)

Here, Foley refers to the scene in which Professor Pieixoto makes light of Offred's story. Pieixoto intersperses his talk with sexist commentary that goes unchallenged by his presumably lower status female colleagues. One critic notes that the professor "trivializes the status of The Handmaid's Tale as a document precisely because he trivializes women's role in society--in Gilead society, in his own society" (118).

The epilogue is perhaps Atwood's way of showing that little has changed over successive generations concerning the objectification of women under patriarchy. David Cowart in his book History and the Contemporary Novel has observed:

Atwood also introduces this additional historical dimension into the novel to encourage readers silently to supply its complement--to go backward two centuries in their minds. The reader who does so . . . will realize that the utter . . . victimization of the narrator and her sisters scarcely belie the historical powerlessness of women, the historical lie of women's being "protected" (the words acquire a painful irony in this tale). (108)

Arnold Davidson concurs when he observes that "perhaps
Gilead embodies not such a radically different order after all" (113). He states:

The Handmaid’s Tale portrays the advent of that society as an easy slide into 'final solutions' only slightly less brutal than those attempted by Nazi Germany (but solutions given a thoroughly American habitation and name) and thereby fulfills the traditional function of the dystopia. (113)

Davidson views the epilogue perhaps in an even more pessimistic light than does Michael Foley. Davidson asserts: "Even with the lesson Gilead readily at hand, the intellectuals of 2195 seem to be preparing the way for Gilead again" (121). Seen from this perspective, then, the novel serves as a warning that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, for there will always be elements in society--the grand Inquisitors or the Commanders of a Moral Majority--who "know what's best" for the more complacent Offreds of the world.

However, there is a more positive reading of the epilogue: If the novel represents Offred’s search for voice in an oppressive patriarchal culture, then her recorded narrative is a testament to her finding that voice, and ultimately, to finding an audience. In her work In the Chinks of the World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction, Sarah Lefanu discusses the aspect of females finding their voice in Dystopian literature when she writes:
The dystopian tradition . . . draws on and extrapolates from contemporary political forces, and in particular the expression of class and gender hierarchies. We have seen female characters taking tentative steps out of darkness and silence, towards finding speech for themselves. For there is a hidden utopian streak in these dystopian novels by women. They contain an element of hopefulness that rests on a belief in the power and efficacy of women's speech. (75)

In fact, Atwood claimed in an interview that she included the epilogue to "show optimism" (Davidson 44). Booker writes of the ending of the novel in the following manner:

There is, however, a certain note of hope in Offred's continual attempts to resist the overwhelming oppression to which she is exposed. In particular, Atwood echoes Elgin by depicting language as an aspect of both patriarchal tradition and feminine resistance. The very fact that Offred records her diary indicates her insistence on her own articulateness and refusal to accept the official Gileadean line that women are vastly inferior to men in their linguistic abilities. (167)

However, any optimistic reading of Atwood's text is undercut by the failure of Offred's narrator to find a receptive
audience.

Whether or not the novel has an optimistic ending, Atwood’s dystopia remains a haunting nightmare vision of what American society may become if intolerant elements of society are allowed to gain control. David Cowart notes that right-wing elements in American society have already coalesced into a loose confederation of fanatical groups united by the writings of William Pierce. These groups, calling themselves the National Alliance, are not simply suspicious of government—they are paranoid. Cowart writes:

These organizations have bred terrorists who are well armed and well financed. Pierce’s novel The Turner Diaries, contains blueprints, as it were, for the assassination of journalists, the bombing of FBI headquarters, the mortaring of the Capitol, and the planting of nuclear weapons at the Pentagon. (111)

Atwood’s novel is, then, a warning against the intolerant attitudes of these right-wing, self-proclaimed "Sons of Israel," and it is probably no coincidence that in her novel the ruling elite call themselves the "Sons of Jacob."

Atwood appears less concerned with big government than was George Orwell and more concerned with intolerance in religious groups or misogynistic groups that might one day threaten Western democracies. But like the narrator in 1984, Offred does not appear to have the capacity to make choices
when presented with the dialectic between freedom and security; she remains ambivalent until the end. In the final analysis, however, perhaps not since British author Katherine Burdekin in her anti-utopian novel *Swastika Night* has a woman created such a powerful statement in the dystopian genre as has Margaret Atwood, and her novel could easily be labeled a feminist *1984*. 
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: THE DIALECTIC--FREEDOM

AS A SUBVERSIVE ART

The proleptic literature of the twentieth-century dealing with human institutions and state organization is characteristically dystopian, as opposed to utopian, in nature. The anti-utopian trend is strongly reflected in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and therefore the dystopian genre can be associated with Romanticism in its rebellion against the mechanism and determinism of utopian rationalism whose roots are in the Enlightenment. M. Keith Booker notes that utopian visions "are largely an Enlightenment phenomenon, an extension of the Enlightenment belief that the judicious application of reason and rationality could result in the improvement of human society" (4).

Swift, the first enduring critic of reason fostered by the Enlightenment, realized not only the impotence of reason alone, but also the ultimate insanity of unbridled reason. Plato's *Phaedrus* had outlined how reason reines in the white horses of emotion and the black horses of passion, but Swift realized that emotion and passion must, in turn, rein in the charioteer of Reason; otherwise, man becomes dehumanized in the way the misanthropic Gulliver loses his humanity. In the 20th century, dystopian writers delineate the evils of
Utopian rationalism, the kind of logic that ironically becomes illogical when taken to an extreme. Frankfurt School thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue in *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment* that "in the Enlightenment reason is ultimately enslaving, rather than liberating to humanity (Booker 7). The excessive, exclusive reason, which becomes ideology, thus serves as the creator of totalitarianism because it restricts man's freedom while professing to bestow freedom.

Therefore, a dystopia, the depiction of an imaginative society, delineates a state-controlled future in which choice is negated by the ruling elite. The concept of choice is eliminated by the totalitarian state's limitation of language. Dystopian states further deprive the individual of choice by negating the concept of the dialectic. When the individual knows only one side of what could be a dialectic, there can be no freedom, only the illusion of freedom, such as that found by Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*. However, if a dialectic is present as in the Grand Inquisitor parable, then the possibility of freedom exists because an individual can make choices when informed by the alternatives presented by the dialectic.

Utopian states present only one viewpoint; in contrast, writers in the dystopian tradition frequently make use of the dialectic in order to present the whole. Because the political state wants to retain totalitarian power, the
controlling officials attempt to allow only one perspective, but the individual struggles against this suppression of the dialectic as does Montag in Fahrenheit 451 when he attempts to realize the truth of history rather than blindly accept the history books created by the state. The dialectic becomes the means whereby truth is revealed, and knowledge of truth results in freedom for the individual. Dystopian writers, using the dialectic, present polemical ideas in contrast with each other so that one side of an issue is analyzed in the light of another. For instance, the truth of Christ is seen in counterpoint to the lies of the Inquisitor, or the enslavement of the One-state is contrasted with the freedom found beyond the green wall. Although Swift in 1726 initiated criticism of the excesses of reason in imaginative literature, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s parable of the Grand Inquisitor (1880) is the prototype of the dystopian state. And, more importantly, Dostoevsky’s parable is the clearest example of the dialectic used to argue for the freedom of the individual against the dehumanizing collectivity of a state based on utopian rationalism.

Dostoevsky shows what later, twentieth-century, authors delineate: that the individual is defined through his choices and creates his unique existence through the act of making choices. Dostoevsky’s parable is also the paradigm for depicting how the individual is faced with the awful
dilemma the dialectic presents: he must assume the responsibility of making a choice or abdicate his freedom to make choices, a freedom that is essential to his humanity.

Therefore, most twentieth-century dystopian writers would probably view the Christ and the Grand Inquisitor parable from the following perspective: Dostoevsky’s Ivan, faced with the dilemma of choosing between the impulse toward freedom and life and the impulse toward submission and death, makes the wrong choice. He abdicates his responsibility, and therefore allows others—the Grand Inquisitors of the world—to make a decision for him. On the other hand, his counterpart, Alyosha, at least moves in the direction of making the right choice. Apparently, he has chosen the path of freedom and life symbolized by his farewell kiss to his brother. Alyosha does not give up his responsibility for autonomous choice, and in this respect, he becomes the precursor of the existential rebel of twentieth-century dystopian works.

In the final analysis, the dialectic in the dystopian literary genre ironically becomes subversive. This dialectic subverts the totalitarianism necessary for utopian rationalism and collective industrial materialism, two ideologies that have increasingly alienated the individual from nature, from God, and from the self since the publication of Francis Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* in 1606. The dialectic empowers the individual to criticize
all miracles and mysteries, especially science and its creation technology. Novels employing the Dostoevskyan dialectic pose the following fundamental questions: how much will modern man be governed by his own technology? And will man ultimately abdicate his capacity for choice by allowing machines to make his decisions for him as does Paul Proteus in Vonnegut's *Player Piano*.

Dystopian writers such as Bradbury or Vonnegut predict the emergence of anti-utopian technocracies in contemporary society, and at the same time they attempt to prevent dystopias from occurring by establishing the dialectic in the reader’s mind. The results of the dialectic can be self-understanding and the capacity for informed choice. Social historian Amos Vogel noted in 1974 that dystopian horrors are currently becoming realized in the modern state in which an Alyosha of the world finds himself at odds with society:

Wherever he turns he sees exploitation and magnificent wealth. . . . He sees control of all communication by the few and the rise of the new media that holds the technological potential of more repression . . . and the rise—as permanent and monstrous institutions--of war economies and their intolerable burden upon society as a whole. He witnesses the phenomenon of manipulated democracy and an electorate whose voting power is
increasingly denuded of meaning, since the real control rests elsewhere. (324)

Vogel believes that the individual must remain ever subversive if he is to guard against the curtailment of his freedoms. Like Zamiatin, he is an advocate of perpetual revolution, perpetual subversion.

And if the dialectic is a major factor in the subversion of dystopia, it is so because it sets forth oppositions and works toward clarifying the worth of the opposites as well as the possibilities of the synthesis of what is good from each of the opposites. Finally, the dialectic—as it is presented in dystopian literature—offers the most hope for the individual in the face of the totalitarian state. Two of the opposites involved in the dialectic are reason and faith, each incapable to conquer wholly and each unable to surrender completely, and so long as humanity is able to choose and to synthesize, there will remain hope.


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