

Chapter 5: Monotheistic Philosophy

Overview: How do you define God? We will address the same question we addressed last week, but this time from a more Western perspective. Concepts of God in the West are often monotheistic, the belief that God created the universe and is separate from it, but also interacts with us. This chapter will address some of the central arguments that monotheists have produced in relation to this sort of God, as well as the tension between faith and reason.

Major Ideas: After reading the material in this chapter and hearing the lecture, you should understand the following major ideas in depth, but other parts of the reading may appear on the assessment (besides names and dates).

St. Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna

Faith vs. Reason

Christian and Muslim Theology

The (Teleological) Argument by Design

The First Cause (Cosmological) Argument

The Problem of Evil

St. Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna

Before getting into monotheistic philosophy proper, it is useful to reflect briefly on exactly how it differs from pantheistic/panentheistic philosophy. Perhaps because many early Christians were students of ancient Greek philosophy and its focus on human reason, early Christian thinkers often addressed the interplay between faith and reason. What this means is that, unlike with Eastern philosophy, in Western philosophy there is a greater demand for rational arguments, evidence, consistency. Although stoicism technically arose in the West, it was unique in its approach to human living and bears more of a resemblance to Eastern than to Western philosophy.

For example, did the stoics provide any evidence or reasons as to why they think that God is in everything around us, as to why they think the logos *actually exists*? Not really. They just assumed that the logos exists, just as the Taoists did with the Tao, and just as Buddha did with many of his metaphysical claims. Many Western philosophers would accuse these worldviews of a fallacy known as *untestable explanation*. After all, if the claim is that God is in everything (pantheism), how could we possibly test as to whether it's *actually true*? Naturally the reply back to these philosophers is: faith. That's how we know. We have faith in things like the Tao or the logos.

But for many people, faith isn't enough to prove that something exists or is true. We need evidence, or we at least need sound rational reasons. After all, people all over the world have faith in different entities, from one God to another God, from one spirit to another spirit, and so forth. So who is right? Which Gods actually exist?

Monotheism is the view that there is a singular, usually personal God who created the universe and interacts with us in some way (usually through prayer and/or miracles). Notice that a key difference between this sort of God and a pantheistic/panentheistic God is that a monotheistic God is said to be *separate from the universe*. Since monotheists claim that God created the universe, we can ask *how*. What

is the evidence of this sort of creation event? In this sense, the nature of a monotheistic God lends itself to rational analysis more so than other concepts of God.

For these reasons, monotheists of the major monotheistic religions (especially Christianity and Islam) emphasize an interplay between faith and reason. One of the justifications for this interplay is that these monotheists themselves realize that reason cannot prove all of their metaphysical claims. Hence, many of these thinkers use reason to establish that there is some sort of higher power, but then use faith to establish the *nature* of that higher power.

Just for clarity, we already know that reason is defined as making rational *arguments*, using evidence and legitimate justifications for one's claims. Faith, on the other hand, can be defined as at least some level of hope or trust that something is true, or exists.

People who study a monotheistic concept of God are called *theologists*. *Theos* means God in Greek, so theology is the study of God. Because Christianity and Islam are the two most popular (in terms of number of adherents) monotheistic religions, most theologians are either Christian or Muslim. Because of this, in this chapter we will first be looking at some famous theologians from each religion, then focusing on their arguments for God. We will also look at a common argument *against* God, called the problem of evil.

St. Thomas Aquinas

Although it may get confusing since their names are similar, before getting into Aquinas it is useful to address one of his predecessors, St. Augustine (354-430 c.e.). Augustine is an interesting case study since his entire life was to some extent a struggle between faith and reason.

St. Augustine was a passionate, involved person. Before becoming a Christian he argued strongly against Christianity, then after becoming a Christian he argued strongly for it. Augustine himself struggled to reconcile faith and reason, and this struggle is evident in his famous work, *Confessions*.¹

In the end, Augustine rejected reason and the teachings of the likes of Plato and Marcus Aurelius. While most Greeks thought that reason could lead man to a just and righteous life, Augustine thought otherwise. He thought that faith is necessary *first*. Reason without faith is blind, he thought. While Aristotle and Epicurus thought that the soul is an essential component of life and the body (that is, physical), Augustine thought that the soul is immortal and immaterial.

And here we see a major difference between the ancient Greeks and the later theologians: the Greeks emphasized reason, while the theologians emphasized God, specifically their monotheistic understanding of God.

The great Christian figure St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 c.e.) was influenced by Augustine, though in the end Aquinas made more of an effort to preserve the wisdom of the ancient Greeks in his philosophy. For example, Aquinas loved Aristotle so much he simply referred to him as *the philosopher* in his writings. Aquinas greatly respected the Greeks, and believed that even believers in God should attempt to be rational. Nevertheless, faith factored into Aquinas' views as well.

Aquinas' most famous contribution is a multi-volume work in which he attempts to prove the existence of God, called *Summa Theologica*.² We will look at some of these proofs below, sometimes called *the five ways*. Aquinas was also one of the first in the West to rigorously cite his sources, a practice that is still with the academic world today.

¹ Augustine. (2009). *Confessions*. H. Chadwick (Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press.

² It is five volumes originally, here is a summary of it: Aquinas, T. (1990). *A Summa of the Summa*. P. Kreeft (Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.

Avicenna

In between the time of Augustine and Aquinas, the religion of Islam developed, and eventually thrived during what's called *the Islamic golden age*. One of the reasons the Christian philosophers just mentioned above even had access to Greek writings is because Muslim scholars preserved and translated them. Muslim philosophers, like Christian philosophers, greatly respected ancient Greek wisdom. However just like the Christian philosophers, Muslim philosophers combined their rational arguments with faith.

One of the most prolific and remarkable Muslim philosophers from the Islamic golden age is Avicenna or Ibn Sīnā (980-1037 c.e.). In addition to philosophizing about God, Avicenna wrote many other things, including a work that was used in the West for the next several hundred years, *The Canon of Medicine*.³ Avicenna was also known to be a *polymath*, a person who spoke many languages and was skilled at many things. Avicenna presented some of the first arguments for God. Some of these arguments were later borrowed by Aquinas.

As we will see, both the Islamic and Christian philosophers made similar logical arguments, but reached different conclusions with faith. Naturally, these thinkers saw the world through their respective religions, which is why it is important to briefly look at the core claims of those religions.

Christian/Islamic Theology

Let's begin with the agreement: both Christians and Muslims are *monotheists*, they believe in a singular, separate God who created the universe. They both also believe in a similar afterlife, a hell of suffering for sinners and a heaven of paradise for the righteous.

³ His theological views are most relevant to this class, which can be found in more depth here: Avicenna. (1951). *Avicenna on Theology*. A. J. Arberry (Ed.). London, England: John Murray Publishing.

The primary disagreements between these religions come down to the holy texts. Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God. Muslims believe the Qur'an is the word of God. Within both religions there are disagreements as to how their respective holy texts connect with God. Is it God's perfect word? Or is it God's message, imperfectly translated by men?

But the main disagreement, also drawing from the holy texts, comes down to the founders. For Christians, the prophet and son of God is Jesus. But for Muslims, Muhammad is the last and final prophet of God.⁴ Jesus is mentioned in the Qur'an, but only as a great teacher, not as God's son.

These differing theologies help to explain why Muslim and Christian philosophers came to different conclusions using similar logic, as we will see now.

The First Cause Argument (Cosmological Argument)

Aquinas' first three proofs for the existence of God are similar, and are often combined into what is called *the first cause argument* (sometimes called *the cosmological argument*). It is important to remember that an argument is more than just an opinion since it contains reasons that are logically connected to each other (an opinion alone can be completely irrational). To get the deepest understanding of this material, I strongly recommend putting your own views of God aside temporarily to honestly assess the logic of each argument on its own terms. Remember, for an argument to be a good one it means that you are assessing it *as a whole*, not based on the conclusion alone. In other words, if the conclusion says that God does exist (or vice versa), do the premises establish it?

⁴ There is copious scriptural evidence of Jesus' status in both religions, the best example possibly being this one from the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John, 3:16).

The first cause argument basically says that there must have been a beginning to our universe, and that our universe was set into motion by a God. Here it is in premise/conclusion format:

1. Nothing causes itself to exist.
 2. Something cannot come from nothing.
 3. There cannot be an infinite series of past causes.
- Thus, there must have been a God as the first cause to start everything.

The first premise says that nothing causes itself to exist, which means that everything we observe has some sort of origin outside of itself. Trees come from seeds, we come from our parents, our parents came from their parents, and so forth. This premise is a basic observation about how the world works. It is also important to note that this premise is consistent with our current scientific understanding of the world being started with the big bang.

The second premise is more of a logical point. It seems illogical to suggest that if there were ever nothing, that it could have given rise to something. How can something come from nothing?⁵

The third premise, like the first, again references causality, but this time the backward progression of causes. If every event has some sort of cause, then those causes stretch back into time, but for how long? Do the causes leading up to this moment extend back infinitely? This premise says that they can't, that an infinite series of causes is unintelligible.

To put it all together, these premises seem to lead logically to the claim that there must have been a first cause to the universe—hence the name of the argument itself.

⁵ See the following source for an argument that the universe *could have* come from nothing: Krauss, L. (2012). *A Universe from Nothing*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

But using reason is a process, meaning that we can consider counterarguments to arguments that are presented. Over the years, a few common counterarguments have been given to the first cause argument.

The first and probably most obvious counterargument is: if everything has a cause, and nothing causes itself to exist, then what caused God to exist? After all, the first premise does say that nothing causes itself to exist, and yet God, if he exists, had to come from somewhere, so what caused *him*? Where did God come from? But theologians have a common response here: God does not need a cause because he is self-caused, God is outside of time. Everything else that exists needs a cause, but not God. The counterargument continues, however, since the theologian's response is based on a hypothesis about God's nature. No one can prove that God is, in fact, outside of time; it must be assumed as a hypothesis. Thus, we could also just hypothesize that the universe itself is self-caused.

So we are now apparently at an impasse, since we can either hypothesize that God is self-caused, or that the universe is self-caused. However, some argue that one hypothesis is more likely using *Ockham's razor*. Ockham's razor is a technique that basically says the best hypothesis is the one with the fewest assumptions (sometimes it's characterized as the simplest explanation being the best).⁶ Because the universe being self-caused makes fewer assumptions, some argue, it is the best explanation, and the first cause argument fails to establish that there is a God. From an explanatory standpoint, it does seem that adding God into the mix adds a whole new, daunting level of explanation. It's already hard enough to explain the existing universe!

Another counterargument to the first cause argument is based on the conclusions that are commonly given. When Avicenna made the first cause argument, he used it to conclude that Allah, the Muslim God,

⁶ For more examples of the application of the principle see: Sober, E. (2015). *Ockham's Razors*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

exists. But when Aquinas made the argument, he used it to conclude that Yahweh, the Christian God, exists. Yet, we know that Christian and Muslim theologies are not compatible—both sorts of Gods can't exist simultaneously, can they? Or are they talking about the same God? Moreover, it's not clear why this argument can't also establish the existence of other Gods, like Zeus or even the Tao (pantheism). For most theological arguments about God, this is where reason gets overtaken by faith.

There are many interpretations of the first cause argument out there, and it can get even more complicated when we consider other factors like *how* God created the universe, if he did. Was the creation itself in or outside of time?

The Argument by Design (Teleological Argument)

The argument by design is intuitive, meaning that you may have considered its logic before taking this class. After all, the world around us is quite complex, and often profoundly amazing. There seems to be a purpose, or *telos*, to everything (recall from Aristotle that teleology is the study of purpose). Just look at one flower, or even a leaf, in nature closely and you will see the intricate structure. Or you might consider the way the human eye seems to be perfectly designed for seeing. Or you might reflect on the beauty of the sun setting on the beach, or the experience of falling in love. How could things and experiences like this that seem so incredibly perfect and/or profound not be designed by some benevolent creator? And that is the logic of the argument by design. Let's look at the argument itself in premise/conclusion format:

1. The world is like a machine.
 2. Humans create machines according to a plan.
- Thus, the world was created by a higher being with a plan (God).

The first point to make about this argument is that it fits a particular form known as an argument by analogy. Arguments by analogy make

comparisons between things, then draw conclusions about those comparisons. For example, I could argue that healthcare and education are both universal rights, so both should be funded by government programs. This is an argument because I drew a comparison between two things (healthcare and education) and drew a conclusion from that comparison (both should be government funded). However, if I just make a comparison, it is not an argument. If I *only* said that healthcare and education are similar, then it would not be an argument, and just an analogy.

The argument by design is an argument by analogy, since it says that the universe itself and human creations (like a computer) are both machine-like. It then draws a conclusion from that comparison—the conclusion being that the universe was created by a God with a plan.

But let's look deeper into the premises of the argument. What does it mean that the universe is like a machine? It means that the universe has working, coherent parts and processes that are often quite complex. For instance, one could argue that the laws of physics are coherent. One could also argue that things, like mountains and butterflies, appear to be quite complex.

The next premise says that humans create machines with a plan. First of all, the word *machine* should be understood loosely here. A hammer counts as a simple machine. So from hammers to airplanes, when humans create things there is a plan. It might be a simpler plan from one person, as in the case of a hand-carved chair. Or it might be a more complex plan that takes many people to put into action, as in the case of a car. As we will see, this latter possibility will factor into the critique of this argument.

And the conclusion is that God, like humans, created the universe with a plan. The question is, is the jump from humans to God justified logically? To what extent is God-creation similar to human-creation?

In fact, it is exactly this comparison that is criticized by David Hume, a philosopher whom we'll take a deeper look at in the next chapter.⁷ One of Hume's major critiques of the argument by design is that comparing God to humans is like comparing apples to pianos—there is no comparison. How can we compare God, an almighty being, with imperfect humans? How can we assume that God-creation is anything like human-creation? And yet, this *is* assumed by the argument itself, making it weak in Hume's eyes. Additionally, no one has actually experienced universe-creation, making it difficult to compare *anything* to it.

Another criticism Hume has of the argument by design is that, even if we assume that the logic of the argument is sound, it is not clear that the conclusion should point to monotheism, and might actually point to polytheism (many Gods) instead. After all, what happens when humans create something complex, like a car? What happens is that many people work on different parts of the car production process: there are the designers, the engineers, the assembly line workers, and so forth. So if the argument by design compares human-creation to God-creation, and if God creates anything similar to the way humans create, then it seems reasonable to suggest that many Gods created us, rather than one. After all, many people create cars and other complex machines, so maybe many Gods created the universe.

You may have heard the phrase *intelligent design (ID)*, a movement often traced to fundamentalist Christians from the United States in the early 20th century. There are also Muslim ID proponents. The intelligent design movement makes use of the argument by design. Although ID proponents claim that their theory is scientific, it is largely dismissed by most scientists as falling into the *untestable explanation* fallacy. In other words, it doesn't seem possible to test for the presence of a supernatural intervention into the universe, let alone to test whether that intervention

⁷ All his points about the argument by design can be found here: Hume, D. (1998). *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (2nd Ed.). R. H. Popkin (Ed.). US: Hackett Publishing Company.

is one type of God versus another. Complicating things further, Islamic and Christian ID proponents draw different conclusions about the nature of God based on their respective theologies.

Perhaps the most interesting argument in favor of intelligent design came from a biologist named Michael Behe (1952-present).⁸ Behe argued for something he called *irreducible complexity*, targeting a particular structure called the *bacterial flagellum*. Behe contends that this structure cannot have been produced by an evolutionary process, and thus must have been designed by a higher power—that is, the structure is irreducibly complex, it cannot be reduced to a previous evolutionary origin. However, since Behe made this argument, biologists do seem to have discovered evolutionary origins for the flagellum.⁹

Some people question whether the universe is, in fact, well designed in the first place. For example, as far as we know, in all the vastness of the universe, the earth's surface is the only place humans can live. Is this good design? There are also interesting examples in nature, such as jewel beetles who mate with beer bottles, killing themselves.¹⁰ Is this good design? But probably the most famous criticism of design is an argument in its own right: the problem of evil. The problem of evil questions whether the universe itself is so beautifully designed in the first place, with a special focus on evil.

The Problem of Evil

This is another one of those arguments that you may have thought of already before taking this class. After all, look around you at all the death and seemingly pointless suffering, from poor folks living in shacks outside Mexico City to historical events like the Holocaust. How could

⁸ Behe, M. (2006). *Darwin's Black Box* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

⁹ See it discussed in this professor's online textbook, updated to account for recent scientific discoveries: Todar, K. (n. d.). *Online Textbook of Bacteriology*. Retrieved from: http://textbookofbacteriology.net/structure_2.html.

¹⁰ See: Hadley, D. (2016). The giant jewel beetle that mates with beer bottles. In *ThoughtCo*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-giant-jewel-beetle-1968152>.

there be a good God who loves us with all the bad in the world? Why would a good God allow us to suffer so many evils? In a nutshell, this is the problem of evil. But when we dissect it, the problem gets a bit more complicated.

To be clear, the problem of evil is an argument *against* the existence of God, as opposed to the arguments that we just looked at above. The problem of evil also makes two very important assumptions. The first is that God is all powerful, knowing, and loving. If you believe in another type of God, like a panentheistic one, then this problem does not affect your belief at all. Nevertheless, the concept of God from the argument is a common understanding of the nature of a monotheistic God. The second assumption is that evil exists. This assumption is important because one could argue that good and evil are relative, or a matter of perspective (though this position runs into all the criticisms of relativism we saw with the Presocratics). But the problem of evil assumes that evil *actually exists*. Once these two things are assumed, then the argument runs as follows:

1. If God is all knowing, he knows every time an evil will occur.
 2. If God is all powerful, he has the power to prevent this evil.
 3. If he is all good, he should prevent it.
 4. He does not prevent the evil acts we observe.
- Thus, God is either not all powerful, knowing, or loving.

Again, notice that the conclusion of the argument suggests only that *this* type of monotheistic God does not exist. It is important to see that this is a logical argument; it should not be construed as blaming God. The argument suggests a logical incompatibility between the nature of a particular type of God and what we observe in the world.

There have been so many counterarguments to this problem from theologians over the years that it is hard to even keep track of them all. Nevertheless, there are some common threads to these counters. The real question is: is the presence of some evil in the universe truly

incompatible with a good God? Most theologians have said no. Some argue *the free will defense*, claiming that evil is the price we pay for the free will that God gave us. Notice that this defense also assumes free will, though as we saw earlier free will is far from an established truth. In other words, it is human error that leads to the evils we observe.

However, notice that there is a difference between *moral evils* and *natural evils*. Moral evils are man caused, like murder or corruption. But there are also natural evils, which are not man caused, like hurricanes or tsunamis. Notice that, if God is all powerful, he has control over *both* moral and natural evils, meaning that he could theoretically prevent both. The free will defense explains moral evils, but it does not seem to explain natural evils. Why wouldn't God prevent, say, an orphanage from getting wiped out by a tornado, killing all the children inside?

Some theologians argue that many evils don't make sense to us because we are not God, we can only see things from a human perspective. If we could see the universe as God sees it, then we would see that every evil event fits into his plan. Indeed, it may be the case that the experience of evil allows us to grow as people and as a society. However, this argument is criticized by some for being too hypothetical—no mortal human could possibly have any idea what God's plan is. Additionally, a distinction is sometimes made between *the logical problem of evil* and *the evidential problem of evil*. Some atheists will even agree that, logically speaking, there isn't necessarily an incompatibility between a good God and the presence of evil. But they will still argue that the evidence around them suggests that there is not a good God. For example, it is reasonable to suggest that a good God might put us through evils to allow growth, but why so *much* evil? Did we really need a holocaust to learn the lesson about people like Hitler? Couldn't that lesson have been learned without such a large amount of suffering?

One of the oft-cited works on the problem of evil is *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.¹¹ In the following passage, the characters Ivan and Alyosha discuss some events of the time that illustrate the problem. For Ivan, the suffering of children is too much to endure for the rest of God's plan.

“One picture, only one more, because it's so curious, so characteristic, and I have only just read it in some collection of Russian antiquities. I've forgotten the name. I must look it up. It was in the darkest days of serfdom at the beginning of the century, and long live the Liberator of the People! There was in those days a general of aristocratic connections, the owner of great estates, one of those men—somewhat exceptional, I believe, even then—who, retiring from the service into a life of leisure, are convinced that they've earned absolute power over the lives of their subjects. There were such men then. So our general, settled on his property of two thousand souls, lives in pomp, and domineers over his poor neighbors as though they were dependents and buffoons. He has kennels of hundreds of hounds and nearly a hundred dog-boys—all mounted, and in uniform. One day a serf-boy, a little child of eight, threw a stone in play and hurt the paw of the general's favorite hound. ‘Why is my favorite dog lame?’ He is told that the boy threw a stone that hurt the dog's paw. ‘So you did it.’ The general looked the child up and down. ‘Take him.’ He was taken—taken from his mother and kept shut up all night. Early that morning the general comes out on horseback, with the hounds, his dependents dog-boys, and huntsmen, all mounted around him in full hunting parade.

“The servants are summoned for their edification, and in front of them all stands the mother of the child. The child is brought from the lock-up. It's a gloomy, cold, foggy, autumn day, a capital day for hunting. The general orders the child to be undressed; the child

¹¹ Dostoyevsky, F. (2002). *The Brothers Karamazov*. R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky. (Trans.). New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

is stripped naked. He shivers, numb with terror, not daring to cry... 'Make him run,' commands the general. 'Run! run!' shout the dog-boys. The boy runs... 'At him!' yells the general, and he sets the whole pack of hounds on the child. The hounds catch him, and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes! . . . I believe the general was afterwards declared incapable of administering his estates. Well—what did he deserve? To be shot? To be shot for the satisfaction of our moral feelings? Speak, Alyosha!"

"To be shot," murmured Alyosha, lifting his eyes to Ivan with a pale, twisted smile.

"Bravo!" cried Ivan delighted. "If even you say so. . . You're a pretty monk! So there is a little devil sitting in your heart, Alyosha Karamazov!"

"What I said was absurd, but. . ."

"That's just the point, that 'but'!" cried Ivan. "Let me tell you, novice, that the absurd is only too necessary on earth. The world stands on absurdities, and perhaps nothing would have come to pass in it without them. We know what we know!"

"What do you know?"

"I understand nothing," Ivan went on, as though in delirium. "I don't want to understand anything now. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I try to understand anything, I shall be false to the fact, and I have determined to stick to the fact."

"Why are you trying me?" Alyosha cried, with sudden distress. "Will you say what you mean at last?"

“Of course, I will; that’s what I’ve been leading up to. You are dear to me, I don’t want to let you go, and I won’t give you up to your Zossima.” Ivan for a minute was silent, his face became all at once very sad. “Listen! I took the case of children only to make my case clearer. Of the other tears of humanity with which the earth is soaked from its crust to its center, I will say nothing. I have narrowed my subject on purpose. I am a bug, and I recognize in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. Men are themselves to blame, I suppose; they were given paradise, they wanted freedom, and stole fire from heaven, though they knew they would become unhappy, so there is no need to pity them. With my pitiful, earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly; that everything flows and finds its level—but that’s only Euclidian nonsense, I know that, and I can’t consent to live by it! What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows effect simply and directly, and that I know it?—I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. I have believed in it. I want to see it, and if I am dead by then, let me rise again, for if it all happens without me, it will be too unfair. Surely I haven’t suffered simply that I, my crimes and my sufferings, may manure the soil of the future harmony for somebody else. I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for. All the religions of the world are built on this longing, and I am a believer. But then there are the children, and what am I to do about them? That’s a question I can’t answer. For the hundredth time I repeat, there are numbers of questions, but I’ve only taken the children, because in their case what I mean is so unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It’s beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too,

furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for all their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension. Some jester will say, perhaps, that the child would have grown up and have sinned, but you see he didn't grow up, he was torn to pieces by the dogs, at eight years old. Oh, Alyosha, I am not blaspheming! I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed.' When the mother embraces the fiend who threw her child to the dogs, and all three cry aloud with tears, 'Thou art just, O Lord!' then, of course, the crown of knowledge will be reached and all will be made clear. But what pulls me up here is that I can't accept that harmony. And while I am on earth, I make haste to take my own measures. You see, Alyosha, perhaps it really may happen that if I live to that moment, or rise again to see it, I, too, perhaps may cry aloud with the rest, looking at the mother embracing the child's torturer, 'Thou art just, O Lord!' but I don't want to cry aloud then. While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself, and so I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It's not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat itself on the breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears to 'dear, kind God'! It's not worth it, because those tears are unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how? How are you going to atone for them? Is it possible? By their being avenged? But what do I care for avenging them? What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? And what becomes of harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price.

I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with the unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, even if I were wrong. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket."

"That's rebellion," murmured Alyosha, looking down.

"Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that," said Ivan earnestly. "One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me yourself, I challenge your answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

"No, I wouldn't consent," said Alyosha softly.