LITERARY APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING:
Job, Paradise Lost, and The Brothers Karamazov

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"The advantage and importance of poetry in general...is that it can coherently express attitudes that prove contradictory when worked out philosophically."  

Unknown

The rain it raineth on the just  
And also on the unjust fella,  
But chiefly on the just because  
The unjust stole the just's umbrella.

Another Unknown
1. God is omnipotent.
2. God is omnibenevolent.
3. There is evil (suffering).

Hume

The problem of evil is an arresting one. It arrests fifteen year-olds, in and out of Sunday school, truck drivers, and philosophers of religion, in my experience. It is often used as a proof of the non-existence of God: "Oh, yeah? If he's so great how come he didn't make it so I could eat as much chocolate as I want and not get fat?" It is often, more soberingly, brought up in personal crises. "I didn't deserve to get raped. How come God let me get raped and lose my job and my boyfriend and want to die, and he gets to go off like nothing happened? I think there isn't a God, and if there is, he don't care about me."

Ministers seem to be unable to answer the question. A minister in Wardensville, West Virginia, said she thought that sometimes we brought evil upon ourselves and sometimes the Devil caused it. This begs the question: if God is omnipotent and good, why does the Devil exist? Why were we not created good, so that we would not bring evil upon ourselves? A minister in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, said that there were three general themes in classical Christian answers, none of which he could accept wholly. The first is that suffering is supposed to teach one something. The fact is that often a sufferer is in no position to learn; it is doubtful whether an abused child would have anything positive to learn from her/his experience anyway.
The second theme is that suffering is a punishment for our sins. This again can hardly apply to children, and an even more striking weakness is the holocaust: did six million Jews sin so much more than the rest of the world? The third theme is that God curses those whom He blesses; suffering is the privilege of being allowed to share in Christ's suffering. Disregarding the fact that most of the world is not Christian and would be unlikely to benefit from such a reflection, the most glaring weakness of this idea is that such suffering serves no purpose within the scheme of salvation. It is the rare sufferer who has the devotion to want to share in Christ's sufferings; in general Christians are thankful to Him for having taken the suffering deserved by human beings upon himself.

The Swarthmore minister added that he could not tell people why there is suffering. When he is asked, it is by someone who does not want an intellectual reason, but wants comfort, relief and a sense that God is present and cares. Therefore he tries to provide comfort, relief and a sense that God cares. Another minister in Wardensville summed up his position by saying, "At best, we can only speculate. At worst, our answer could be wrong."

Ministers learn theology in seminary, reasons even the slowest of us. Has no theologian ever found a satisfactory answer to the problem of suffering? Is there no theodicy upon which everyone can agree? Philosophers have sophisticated approaches to the problem. They isolate terms, define 'omnipotent' and 'evil,' and often come up with very coherent, reasonable theodicies. Their methodology, unfortunately, handicaps them:
first, no philosopher can formulate a theory that cannot be im-
proved or invalidated by a younger, more energetic philosopher,
so that there is never a final, unanimous agreement. Second,
even the most elegant, modern proof must either be constructed
of vast generalizations so that it is difficult to apply indi-
vidually, or it must "die the death of a thousand qualifications,"
in Anthony Flew's words. Worse, as the Swarthmore minister said,
no intellectual explanation of suffering is appropriate to tell
a sufferer, let alone all sufferers. To explain to the woman
who calls a rape hotline at 4:00 a.m. that evil exists so that
we may perceive good does not support her trembling faith at all.
Niobe's knowledge that she had been punished for her pride in
her children did not comfort her or motivate her to revere the
gods any more.

In the face of overpowering odds, however, some people re-
tain their faith in God. Some people suffer unspeakable hard-
ships and undergo a strengthening of faith. The fact that the
question of evil, or specifically the question of suffering,
cannot be answered once and for all is not taken by many people
as a proof of God's non-existence. There is no doubt that some
settle for an inadequate explanation or push the question out
of their minds because the threat it implies to their faith is
too great for them to face. The more interesting faithful, for
our purposes, are those who have faced the problem of evil and
resolved it personally somehow, without being able to supply a
theodicy as logical or well articulated as the philosophers.

This suggests that resolutions of the problem of evil must
be very personal, intuitive and highly complex, constructed as much by the unconscious mind as by the conscious mind. The closest and finest approximations of such resolutions might therefore be found in literature. Literature, or fiction, creates its own truth, in a sense. A story creates a context for a series of events, gives value to the events and characters, entirely within its context, and thus validates itself, being a closed system. If it is a good story, the characters and events are persuasive enough to the reader that s/he is willing to suspend disbelief and participate in the story, identifying in some measure with a character or narrator. A story is made personal partly by the participation of the person reading or hearing it.

Literature is also highly intuitive and therefore complex. The devices of allusion, dialogue, dramatic alignment, ambiguity and manipulation of perspective, influence the reader on a less conscious level than the simple outlines of the action in the story can do. *Billy Budd* in outline form is not very interesting. It is when we discover prelapsarian Adam or Christ in *Billy* by means of Melville's literary devices that we are persuaded of *Billy Budd*'s importance.

We are interested in different levels of meaning in *Billy Budd*, to carry the example further, because we believe that some of the story extends beyond itself. We generalize from life on the ship to life in our world, and test hypotheses about the ship on our world. Part of the function of literature, obviously, is to tell us stories about ourselves. When it tells us about ourselves it cannot be formulaic. Literature expresses ambiguities
and tensions and even contradictions, and validates them by persuading the readers, by eliciting affirmation from the less conscious, less logically critical parts of the mind.

That is why fiction offers a complementary alternative to philosophy in the quest for theodicy. Philosophy cannot solve the problem of suffering partially; its methodology demands that the problem be explained or not explained, and so far there has been no unanimous conclusion that it has been explained. A fiction can persuade the reader to suspend disbelief, set up a problem and resolve the problem. The resolution is only wholly satisfactory within the work of literature (if then), but it can touch something in the reader and become part of her/his ever-growing personal theodicy. If T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* is read with suffering in mind, for example, the reader concludes by feeling that suffering is in part a result of our perceptual illusion of separation from the "still point of the turning world," the order and the orderer of the universe, God. To understand Eliot's message, I have to enter and accept his poem. He does not explain what he means; I understand only if I believe first. Once I understand, the problem of suffering is not resolved for everyone, always, but it is illuminated for me, sometimes, and not only on an intellectual level.

If all this is true, if literature does supply helpful and meaningful illuminations of the problem of suffering, then the great works of literature which have to do with the problem should offer some bases for comparison. *Paradise Lost* did not become every American family's Bible companion just because it explicates
the first three chapters of Genesis. Something in it appeals
to a common strain in humanity. The Brothers Karamazov is a
vastly different kind of work from Paradise Lost, but it speaks
to many of the same concerns. It, too, touches the reader on
less conscious levels than intellect. Surely an examination
and comparison of these two books might isolate some psycho-
logical or mythical truths which go into personal theodicies.

An examination of western literature concerned with the
problem of suffering would be grievously incomplete without a
chapter on the book of Job. Job is significant because it is
an ancient work, because it is a good work, and because it is
part of the canon of scripture sacred to Jews and Christians.
It has been approved by God, in a sense, so that alongside its
internal validation of itself is an external validation by
authority.

When I began to write this thesis, I did not know if or
how Paradise Lost, Job and The Brothers Karamazov might have in
common any significant ideas in their resolutions of the problem
of evil. By the time I finished I was sure that their subjec-
tive truths, even some of the underlying beliefs that can be
stated formulaically, were very similar, despite the tremendous
gaps in times and cultures between the books. That bespeaks
inspiration, or at least a high order of wisdom, in the authors,
consistency in human nature, and a strong claim to philosophical
and religious validity in the books.
CHAPTER 1

The book of Job stands as a precedent to Judeo-Christian literature concerned with theodicy. It has always been a source of difficulty for interpreters of the Bible; Job's apparently gratuitous suffering neither instills confidence in the benevolence of the Almighty nor supports any notion of rational order in the universe. Scholars have tried to justify God's behavior by suggesting that Job has, in fact, sinned and deserves his punishment, or that Job's sufferings are only a trial, and as such are justified since God may test us, or that the book itself has been so garbled by editors and time that it cannot possibly be read as it stands. None of these suggestions is satisfactory because each of them begs the central and valid question of the book: why do the innocent suffer?

Job himself counters the first suggestion in 9:2, saying, "Truly I know that it is so [that God will not reject a blameless man]; but how can a man be just before God?" He concludes, "I am blameless; I regard not myself, I loathe my life. It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked." (9:21-22)¹ No one can deny the authenticity of his experience, nor is it possible for even a blameless person to achieve perfection. The suggestion that his sufferings are a trial is also unsatisfactory. If God is omniscient, he does

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not need to test us to discover the degree of our fidelity. He needs even less to torment innocent creatures for the sake of proving to the adversary that his people are devoted to him, unless he is the insecure God Jung presents in Answer to Job. It is possible that the trial is meant to be a learning experience for Job, but that is not what we are told in the introduction to the story. It is hard to imagine why the poet would not give that as a reason if he wanted us to understand it from the beginning. The objection that time and wear have obscured the original story is also unsatisfactory, since it has been part of the Hebrew scriptures for so long in its present shape; clearly whoever decided to legitimize it as part of the canon perceived the book of Job as it is to be sanctioned by God.

We must come back to the face value of the story, which is precisely what makes it so compelling. Job is a righteous man, "one who feared God and turned away from evil" (1:1), who suffers the loss of everything he holds dear for reasons which he can never know. Job is the epitome of human misery. He has been betrayed by his final Authority, yet he retains faith in that Authority. If Job can be answered in his cry for justification, so can anyone. He is created as an Everyman figure.

The stage is set carefully to show that beside Job's claim to blamelessness, external evidence also supports him. (He is so blameless that he even atones for his children's possible sins—a conventionally pious act which reflects Hebrew corporate solidarity, but strikes modern readers as curious.) And yet God is not being wantonly cruel, we are told. He is proving to
Satan, the adversary, that people do not worship him because it is expeditious, but because they have faith in him. On the dramatic level at this point it is not evident why God feels compelled to prove anything to Satan; perhaps the adversary represents the human audience which asks the question of theodicy. This is an exciting idea on the literary, intellectual level, and one which the critic must retain, but it is not applicable within the context of the story. Within the story, we must see Satan as a particular character, and with that limitation it is difficult to accept his exchange with God as reasonable or plausible, given what we know about God. The reader now is supposed to accept that neither Job nor God is at fault as Job suffers, but Job does not know that. He is in the classical position of the sufferer, hurt without knowing why.

Job's first response is pious. Informed that his children, servants and cattle have been killed, he

...arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshipped. And he said, "Naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed by the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.  

(1:20-22)

Again, when his own body is violated he says to his wife, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (2:10) His friends also show commendable delicacy and respect for his situation when they arrive to mourn with him. They perform traditional acts of grief and do not speak to him,
"for they saw that his suffering was very great." (2:13)

After seven days and seven nights, however, Job can no longer bear his pain in silence, and he curses the day of his birth bitterly. "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not...?" (2:20-21)

His speech seems to remove the friends' hesitation to speak. Eliphaz immediately breaks into discourse intended to correct Job's impertinent view of the situation. "But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed. Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?" (4:5-6) Eliphaz offers a simple, orthodox doctrine: there must be a reason for Job's suffering, even though it is unknown to him. God is just, and no mortal is righteous before him. Therefore Job had best seek God and commit his cause to him. "Behold," says Eliphaz expansively, "happy is the man whom God reproves." (5:17)

Eliphaz's explanation betrays his fundamental misunderstanding about Job's position as he praises God's justice. "...He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety." (5:11) This is blatantly false in this life, and nowhere in the book of Job does anyone suggest that there is another life. The evidence is that some people lead lives of unmitigated misery, despite their best efforts. Job is beginning to understand such misery first-hand, and he does not hesitate to challenge Eliphaz's bright and empty promises.
"O that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances! For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words have been rash." (6:1-3) His disaster is disproportionately vast in relation to his sins, nor is there any sign that help is forthcoming.

It is hard to know whether Job would have continued lamenting if his comforters had not been there. He tells them what kind of comfort he needs at the beginning of the book, but their conventional wisdom and perhaps insensitive advice goad him into thirty-eight chapters of bitter complaint. He tells Eliphaz,

Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have erred. How forceful are honest words! But what does reproof from you reprove? Do you think that you can reprove words, when the speech of a despairing man is wind?

He also says, "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty." (6:14) Job does not want people to explain his situation to him unless they understand it, and Eliphaz, he implies, does not. Job does not reject comforters, but he would appreciate silent sympathy more than fatuous homiletics.

Eliphaz and the other two comforters should not be judged too harshly for their inadequacy. They supply Job with the traditional, authoritative wisdom of the Hebrew people, which they see as the most powerful, truest knowledge that human beings can hold. Their weakness is not foolishness or short-sightedness beyond ordinary human short-sightedness, but an inability to
respond radically to Job's desperate situation.

The theme of the proper role of the comforter reappears throughout the book. Job replies to the arguments of the comforters, but always with the conviction that he is suffering unjustly at God's hands, that human wisdom has no answers for him, and that he must and will be heard by God. He is scornful of the comforters, but though he uses sarcasm in his prayers, his tone to God is ironic more than blasphemous. "What is man, that thou dost make so much of him, and that thou dost set thy mind upon him, dost visit him every morning, and hest him every moment?" (7:17-18) Job asks, parodying Psalm 8. He would rather die than continue to suffer, but he never lifts his hand against himself, a sign of his faith in God. If he were sure that he had been abandoned by God, it seems likely that he might break the commandment against suicide in order to escape his earthly sufferings, but he makes it clear that jurisdiction over his life and death still belongs to God.

God does not answer this last speech, so Bildad leaps into the breach. "Does God pervert justice?...If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the power of their transgression. If you will seek God, and make supplication to the Almighty,...surely then he will rouse himself for you and reward you with a rightful habitation." (8:3-6) Bildad suggests that Job, as head of the family, is atoning for his children's sins. If he would beg God's forgiveness for what he has not done and what he does not know his children to have done, Bildad says, then God will relent. He cites ancient authority to support
his case, asserting that though the wicked seem to prosper, God always rewards the good and punishes the wicked, and that God will not reject or abandon a blameless man. This is a familiar theme, not only because we just heard it from Eliphaz, but because it is often repeated in other parts of the Bible, notably the Psalms.

I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt.
Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.
With the loyal thou dost show thyself loyal;
with the blameless thou dost show thyself blameless;
with the pure thou dost show thyself pure;
and with the crooked thou dost show thyself perverse.
(Psalm 18:23-26)

At one time this Psalm would have pleased Job with its logic and truth. He had been used to sacrifice to atone for his sons' sins on the theory that such action could remove God's displeasure with them. Now, in the knowledge that he is ineffectual before God, he turns back to Eliphaz. "...how can a man be just before God? If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times." (9:2-3) He is acutely aware of the difference in power between God and himself; this sounds like a gratuitous remark, but his comforters evidently do not believe that Job understands his humble position. He speaks of God's power in terms of his marvelous creation, not praising the Creator but emphasizing his own helplessness, much as God is to do later in the poem. Why should he try to be
righteous in the face of such power, Job asks. "If I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye, yet thou wilt plunge me in a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me." (9:30-31)

He is positive of his integrity. The absurdity of his position is that God the Judge and moral arbiter cannot be forced to do justice, that is, to respond to Job's complaint. "Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself." (9:34-35) There is a peculiar tension here for the reader, who knows that Job's integrity has not actually been condemned, but is being challenged for the purposes of research. On one hand, the reader must continue to believe that God is essentially just, since he is not punishing Job for any imaginary wrongdoings, but conforming to the terms of his bargain with Satan. On the other hand, it is difficult to trust a God who will allow such experiments to take place, shaking the confidence of a faithful believer. At this point the reader's private knowledge of the bargain does not give her/him any more understanding of God's ways than Job has, down on his ash-heap. Both Job and the reader want God to explain himself, to justify his actions. "I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why thou dost contend against me. (10:2) Is there any information that could help us to understand and condene Job's trial? By giving us a token explanation that is insufficient, the author implies that there is no such information. If, from the reader's cognizant point of view, God's ways are mysterious, then his ways are beyond the comprehension of anyone. The fact
that no explanation can be given, even to the reader, implies that whatever the story teaches us, it will teach us indirectly, through the fictive mode and interplay of contraries in dialogues, rather than through didactic theology. What we are supposed to learn from the story cannot be expressed logically or directly.

Zophar has not caught on to the complexity of Job's plight. He faithfully maintains the position previously advocated, that "God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves." (11:6) "Can you find out the deep things of God?" he asks Job, feeling that God's mystery and power have not yet been properly acknowledged. "If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure, and will not fear," he advises. (11:14-15)

Job, maintaining heroic equilibrium, replies, "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you." He understands his position, he assures Zophar; God's might has not escaped his notice. "What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God." (13:2-3) The crux of his complaint is not his material loss, but his unjust accusation.

At this stage Job separates clearly his concept of his relation to God from that of the comforters. The comforters, perceiving Job's complaint as a challenge to God, are concerned with the question of whether Job has the right to challenge God, given that God is so much bigger and better than he is. To oppose Job's protestations with the words, "As for me, I would seek God,...who does great things and unsearchable, mar-
velous things without number; he gives rain upon the earth and
sends waters upon the fields, etc." (5:8-10) is to assert that
might makes right, that what is good is good because it is
God's will. The comforters are not so Machiavellian as to think
that Job could manipulate God into relenting by a false show of
humility; they believe that Job should accept his fate meekly
because it is the will of God and therefore right. To ask for
an explanation is to challenge what is implicitly good and un-
questionably the result of some action by Job.

Job rejects this idea when he argues that he would be vin-
dicated if God would submit to a dialogue. "Behold, he will
slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face.
This will be my salvation, that a godless man shall not come
before him." (13:15-16) Job has committed himself to a logically
absurd position: he cannot see any justice in God's treatment
of him, but he is sure that God will treat him fairly.

It is understandable that the comforters cannot appreciate
the Kierkegaardian courage of Job's attitude, but in comparison
to him their stubborn insistence on the orthodox claim that the
fault must lie in Job seems to be a conservative response to
threatened security, rather than an enlightened act of faith.
Confronted with inexplicable suffering, it is much easier to
explain Job's fate to him, to tell him how to improve himself,
than to face the possibility that God does not conform to the
systems which people use to explain phenomena. "I have heard
many such things; miserable comforters are you all," says Job.
"I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could
join words together against you, and shake my head at you." (16:2-4) His observation points out the subjectivity of the comforters' arguments. They have not suffered; therefore they have not been desperate enough to ask Job's question, to challenge traditional Hebrew wisdom. To challenge their tradition is to them almost a declaration of atheism; if Job is suffering unjustly then God is morally inferior to human beings, their logic implies. No one could dispute the truth of Job's words when he says that the wicked are not punished for their sins (21), at least not according to human perception, but none of the comforters ever acknowledges this point. Each of them, in fact, delivers at least one homily to the effect that virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. Were the matter less serious, their confidence in the power of rhetoric would be endearing.

In Chapter 15 Eliphaz opens another round of discussion. The repetition of arguments into three cycles gives the story some of the authority of a fairy tale; the magic number three carries connotations of endless discourse. The poet is suggesting that this discussion did not happen just once, in a particular time and place, but that it is an eternal discussion, and all the wisdom of the ages has been brought together in the arguments of the comforters. They repeat their ideas at least partly because theirs are the sum of all the ideas concerning theodicy which humankind has produced.

On a dramatic level, the persistence of the comforters drives Job to extremes he might not have reached had he been left alone. If they had not continued to challenge his integrity he
might not have considered it an issue and committed himself to
the logical absurdity that God will treat him justly, although
he is not treating him justly now. As the rounds of discussion
wear on, Job abandons his sarcasm and his interest in the reason
for his suffering, and begins to address himself directly to
God, wanting to see him. This transferral of interest can be
seen as a spiritual rite of passage which will ultimately trans-
form Job's self-image as a religious actor; this movement is
motivated in him by the repetitive dialogue and is conveyed to
the reader's understanding by means of the dialogue form, in
which we see Job's interests shift as he becomes more desperate.

In Eliphaz's second speech he emphasizes the point that
Job has no right to challenge God. "What is man, that he can
be clean? Or he that is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?"
he asks. Job's reply is a litany of his griefs, which demolishes
Eliphaz's platitudes about God's system of justice. "Surely now
God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company. And
he has shriveled me up, which is a witness against me." (16:7-8)
His punishment does not fit his crime. The bitterest part of
his lot is that he fears that he will die before he has been vin-
dicated. "If I say to the pit, 'You are my father,' and to the
worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,' where then is my hope? Will
it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into
the dust?" (17:14-16) His speech is really about the futility
of argument; from now on he is interested only in seeing God,
vindicating himself with God's appearance.

Bildad's next contribution is a reminder that the reward for
a wicked life is calamity and bad reputation. "They of the west are appalled at his day, and horror seizes them of the east." (18:20) Job's response, elaborating on his speech in chapter 6, is an appeal for sympathy. He does not want the same thing from God and from his friends; he wants justification from God and comfort from his friends. "And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself. If indeed you magnify yourselves against me,...know then that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net about me." (19:4-6) His sins are an issue between God and himself; the comforters' place is not to judge. "Have pity on me, have pity on me, 0 you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!" (19:21)

Zophar's turn comes around again, and he uses the opportunity to advocate the idea that crime does not pay. Job, having given up trying to defend himself to the comforters, points out the fallacies in Zophar's argument.

Listen carefully to my words, and let this be your consolation. (21:2) Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? (21:7) They say to God, "Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?" (21:14-15) You say, "God stores up iniquity for their sons." Let him recom pense it to themselves, that they may know it. (21:19)

This speech beautifully summarizes Job's theological position and delineates the paradox of his faith. On one hand, he believes that the wicked are not punished for their sins. "They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down
to Sheol." (21:13) On the other hand, he believes that he will be vindicated, that in his case justice will be done. Satan had asked "Does Job fear God for naught," and Job's answer now seems to be that, although others disregard God for naught, he himself insists on a relationship, and a relationship in which each party is responsive to the other. The rift between Job and his comforters has grown impassible; Job has defined his beliefs in opposition to theirs, moving into a spiritual stage of development beyond theirs, and they have refused him comfort of the sort he had wanted.

Eliphaz, oblivious to Job's estimation of his capacity for rendering aid, has thought of a new argument for virtue. "Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself." (22:2) There is a certain pedestrian heroism in his willingness to stretch a point. If Job cannot be touched in any other way, Eliphaz reasons, surely he can see the utility of virtue. He goes on to assert again that Job must have sinned, and that as soon as he repents God will forgive him. "He delivers the innocent man; you will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands." (22:30)

Job, understandably, ignores this sally. He has lost hope that he will be acquitted by his friends, but he persists in his profession of innocence and his demand to see God. "Oh, that I knew where I might find him...I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me." (23:3-5) Again, he is not concerned with the recovery of his health,
family and possessions; he wants to see God. He wants to know that God is just and that he cares enough about Job to hear his prayers. This exemplifies the defining attitude of Job's second developmental stage, in which the question of theodicy has been superseded for him by the need for the vision of God. "Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?" (24:1) he asks in despair.

As the third round of discourse begins, the comforters distinguish themselves no more than before. Job continues unmoved by their speeches: "Far be it from me to say you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me." (27:5) In his final defense, he concludes that he no longer has God's friendship. He reviews the halcyon days of his past and contrasts them with his present misery. He admits that he had once taken God's benevolence for granted: "Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.'" (29:18) Now "God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry to thee and thou dost not answer me..." (30:19-20)

Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, and in his disaster cry for help? Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? But when I looked for good, evil came; and when I waited for light, darkness came.

(30:24-26)

Even the poor comfort that Job was able to offer to other sufferers, weeping and grieving for them, has been denied him. All his comfort has been ponderously stupid reproof, and God has not answered him.

The third round of discussion is confusing because the
speeches are not clearly attributed in some places. Childs suggests that the words of Zophar and Bildad (25:18-25, 26:5-27) were transferred to Job's mouth by a later editor to show that he did not reject all of Israel's wisdom, that he was still a sage. The effect of this is to attenuate the image of Job as a hysterical sufferer, completely lost to reason, and to prepare the reader for Elihu's speech, which treats the divine limitations on human wisdom in a more sophisticated way than the comforters have done.2

Finally, Job reviews his past behavior in terms of moral and religious dicta. He is innocent of all the crimes he can think of, and mindful of the punishment he could have expected from God had he transgressed. "If I have concealed my transgressions from me,...surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown." (31:33-36) If he knew of a sin that he had committed, he would carry the sign of it proudly, to show he had committed that sin and no other. His last words are a challenge to God to prove that Job deserves punishment. He is through defending himself; the burden of proof is now with the Almighty.

The three comforters "ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." (32:1) Their resources have been exhausted; if Job will not confess his sins as causes in a cause-effect scheme of things, they can think of no way to reach him. As far as Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar are concerned, Job is in-

The discourse of Elihu, which runs from 32:2 through 37:24, is probably a late addition to the poem. Elihu repeats many of Job's phrases and uses some parts of God's speech, as yet unheard. It is important to remember that the voice out of the whirlwind does not respond to Elihu's speech, because what he says is very different from what anyone else has said so far, and peculiarly similar to what God says. Elihu's thesis is that Job and the comforters take the wrong approach when they try to reconcile the fact of Job's suffering with the allegation that God is omnipotent and just. Divine wisdom is beyond human understanding, says Elihu, and it is arrogant to try to explain it. "For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it." (33:14) He grants that Job is innocent, but that does not mean that God is wicked or mistaken in allowing Job to suffer. Job "adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God." (34:12) When Job asked why he suffered he betrayed a lack of faith in divine wisdom, Elihu charges.

Elihu points out that God can get along without virtuous human behavior. "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him?" (35:6) He observes, carrying out a theme that is now familiar, that God's works are mighty and inexplicable. Elihu's point is not that Job should be frightened of such a marvelous God, but that God has a hidden purpose in all that he does.

Since neither Job nor God responds to Elihu's speech, it
has no effect on the dramatic movement of the story. His speech's real function now is to move the reader from Job's sense of despair, the sense that his search for God is necessarily fruitless, to an affirmation, however bleak it seems, of God's attention and purposefulness. He states what seems to be a paradox, with strong faith. "The Almighty--we cannot find him; he is great in power and justice." (37:23)

The fundamental weakness of Elihu's speech is that he is neither the sufferer nor the cognizant party. Even if his information is correct, his speech could never substitute for the speech out of the whirlwind. It must be as much a correction of the comforters' arguments as an answer to Job by this point, because Job has passed the stage of asking for information. He has reached the nadir of despair, at which argument is meaningless.

This is the point in the story where Job ceases to be Everyman and where he moves into the third stage of his rite of passage. Up to this point he has had in common with every sufferer the condition that he suffered at the hands of a just God without knowing why. He knew and said that he did not want explanations from people, but comfort. He realized after Eliphaz's first bumbling argument that only God could answer him, and now God does just that.

Who is this that darkens counsel
by words without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.
Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements--surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

(38:1-7)

Four chapters follow in similar vein, broken only once by
Job's peep, "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer
thee?" (40:3) God thunders from the whirlwind, speaking of
his knowledge and power as evidenced by the Creation, especially
those most terrible beasts, Behemoth and Leviathan. He challenges
Job again: "Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn
me that you may be justified? (40:8) His litany of rhetorical
questions finally ends, and Job collapses.

I know that thou canst do all things,
and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.
"Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
"Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me."
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees thee;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.

(42:1-6)

This speech marks the final stage of Job's spiritual de-
velopment. He has moved from the stance of the comforters, who
are concerned with the question of why there is suffering, to a
stage in which he wants to see God and be vindicated by his
attention, to the stage of enlightenment at which all facts
except the fact of God's existence are meaningless. The vision
of God might be said to be the only reality; neither theodicy
nor integrity is an issue in the context of the theophany. In
the speech out of the whirlwind, God essentially identifies himself. That identification, Job's experience of the fact of God's existence, is the end (in the teleological sense) of his spiritual development.

This is not the end of the story as we now have it, however. Some editor, feeling that the Lord's words were perhaps too harsh, added a simple folktale ending in which God chastises the comforters and restores Job's fortunes.

The former part, in which the Lord chastises the comforters, offers a pithy, down-to-earth comment on the behavior of the comforters and the ideal behavior to be exhibited by plodding mortals who do not understand God's ways.

My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore...offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

(42:7-8, my emphasis)

God is angry at the comforters for speaking falsely of him. The essence of what they have said is a) he is almighty; b) he is omnipotent; c) he behaves toward human beings in an intelligible, predictable way, i.e., he rewards the innocent and punishes the guilty. He cannot object to either the first or the second item; he himself has said as much. He must take offense at the third item. This conclusion is supported by the evidence—the logic of his workings is indeed not accessible to the comforters.
To recapitulate: unbeknownst to Job, God struck a bargain with Satan to test whether Job feared God for naught. Job accepted his suffering gracefully at first but, goaded by increased affliction and the comforters' accusations, he protested his treatment and demanded to see God. Never once did he say that God must not be good or almighty since he had broken the accepted code of interaction with humanity. It is the comforters who assumed that God was bound to be just and, by implication, is not God if he is not just. They were obviously wrong, and this is what angers the Lord. Only Job has the flexibility of true faith to see that, even without evidence, there is a God.

The comforters have made two mistakes: they have presumed to explain God's ways to Job; and they have had insufficient faith to believe that God could treat an innocent man so unjustly. Job had said to them that if they could not enlighten him they could comfort him (6:14; 24:26), but they preferred to repeat conventional wisdom to him as if they had expertise about God's ways.

Three conclusions can be drawn from this reading of Job. First, what instruction God gives is directed at the comforters and the reader. It is people outside of suffering who can afford to theorize about it, and God makes it clear that no one has final authority to explain him to a sufferer, though they may explore the question academically. The appropriate role of the comforters would have been to offer sympathy and whatever human resources were available.

Second, God answers Job, not with explanations but simply with his presence, and Job is satisfied. After the vision of God,
reconciliation with his Creator and Lawgiver, suffering is not an issue for Job.

The third conclusion is that one very important function of the book of Job as part of the Hebrew scriptures is to allow that the question of theodicy be asked within orthodox religion in the most radical and disturbing form possible. Just as it took great flexibility of faith for Job to believe in a just and loving God, so the book of Job demands that its readers accept the uncertainty of God's nature with faith (particularly on an experiential level). The question of why there is suffering if there is a good God must be asked within the context of faith. To avoid the question because there is no satisfactory answer is a breach of faith.

These conclusions, when formulated, sound wooden and moralistic, but the book of Job does not. This points to the power of the literary device of dialogue, which constitutes most of the poem's formal structure. The dialogue between God and Satan conveniently leaves unspoken what position it is that Satan holds, that such an arrangement as he and God make can take place; the reader is left in the disturbing position of having overheard an unpleasant conversation between two potentates, one of whom s/he must by nature adore and obey. The author thus forces the reader to accept the necessity of Job's divinely-ordained misery, but the author is not personally accountable.

The dialogue form leaves the reader holding the bag, so to speak.

The dialogues between Job and the comforters are discussions of the problems of all theodicies, but they also illustrate the
development of Job's spiritual perspective. As he turns from comforter to comforter, first responding to their arguments but later responding only to their function as annoyances, he is forced to challenge more fundamental assumptions of traditional religious wisdom. Again the reader can only watch as Job's spiritual development speaks for itself against human inadequacy and the void where God should be. No narrative "voice-over" steps in to explain; the dialogue is itself all the explanation the reader will get. We must accept the dialogue with all its informational gaps just as Job learns to accept what comes without explanation or guarantee of safety.
Milton's purpose in *Paradise Lost*, he says, is to "assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men." The structure of his statement implies, as is the case, that his theodicy will be directed from an omniscient perspective to the limited perspective of fallen human beings. He is sure of Eternal Providence; he has only to make it intelligible to his readers. His strategy is to begin the poem on a grand scale, to speak of celestial powers and fallen angels, good and evil writ large. Gradually his focus narrows to Eden, and the conflict between absolute good and evil becomes background for the psychological, human drama of Adam and Eve. The reader's part in this is to be manipulated mercilessly by the poet; on one hand, s/he is given access to God's every thought, so that there can be no complaints about his mysterious ways or the possibility that he has malicious motives; on the other hand, s/he is caught time and again, as Stanley Fish points out, sympathizing with the wrong side, not out of ignorance but out of corruption. The reader is forced to identify with "our General Parents" even as they fall, knowing at the same time better than they why they must not sin. *Paradise Lost* is a kind of epic sleight-of-hand; at the same time that Milton supplies the intelligence with every reason to obey God and trust his benevolence, he manipulates the passions into disobedience to God and reason.

The paradox at the root of Milton's theodicy is that Adam and Eve, though created sinless, fell freely. He differs from
the author of the book of Job in his assumption that suffering does have meaning, that its roots can be found in the history of humanity, namely in the story of Adam and Eve. People now suffer because of our fallen nature, according to Milton. His concern, therefore, is not to discover the logic of God's ways but to clear up once and for all any notion that God is somehow to blame for humanity's misfortunes. Once that is understood, he implies, the question of how any one innocent person can suffer is moot.

The theology behind *Paradise Lost* was well known in Milton's time, but it is not merely a restatement of basic Christian doctrine. One reason it is a poem rather than an essay is that Milton is thereby able to bring the doctrine to life, to 'show' rather than just 'tell.' The characters and their dialogues act out and make compelling the truth of the doctrine and Milton often uses allusion to add layers of meaning to one event; for instance, Eve's dream refers to the real fall and contrasts suggestively with it because she does not eat the apple in the dream.

Milton manipulates the sequence of events in the poem so that the reader's moral sense becomes progressively more refined. That is, he presents his theodicy in stages of increasing moral sophistication, beginning with the basic character and mode of behavior in the principle of evil.

Satan seems heroic and admirable at first, obviously the father of the Byronic hero. Terribly defeated in battle, keeping to himself the knowledge that he can never achieve the happiness
that he could have had in heaven, knowing that ultimately he is condemned to eternal torment, nevertheless he proudly rallies his forces and urges them to hope, to build their own heaven in Hell. The critical reader will pick up hints that Satan's heroism is an illusion; for instance, Satan's giant stature is emphasized as if size had moral value, as if hugeness were heroic, but at the end of Book I the fallen angels have built a hall so large that they are all dwarfed. We are given a ludicrous picture of Satan and his advisors, far within this yawning cavern, "in close and secret conclave," (I:795) with a thousand demi-gods. This play with size suggests that Satan's heroism, symbolized by his size, is at best relative, and more probably illusory. One of the reader's first lessons, therefore, is that s/he is naturally inclined towards evil, that the illusions which Satan uses to legitimize and aggrandize himself are tricks by which we like to be deceived.

We are still interested and stirred by Satan's courage as he leaves to explore the firmament, though, and we find the stable, paternalistic, unconquerable court in Heaven somewhat tedious. Many readers have complained that God (especially the Father) is an unsympathetic character. This is another misconception which the reader must 'be educated away from,' in a sense, if s/he is to understand the poem. The real function of God is to set forth and clarify from outside the dramatic action the meaning and importance of events within the drama.

It is possible to understand the significance of Adam's and Eve's actions in the Fall only in light of the facts which
God lays down apparently coldly and imperiously earlier in the poem. In Book III, lines 80-134, the Father sketches out the conditions that will make the Fall possible.

For Man will heark'n to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole Command,
Sole pledge of his obedience: So will fall
Hee and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?
Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

(III:93-99)

Note that God does not say, "They will fall because they are ignorant," or because they are weak or inclined towards evil. He has no reason, no knowledge of an inherent fault in Adam and Eve, to know that they will fall; he made them "sufficient to have stood." He knows that they will fall because he is omniscient, because it is his nature to know everything, not because there is anything about Adam and Eve that would give an observer reason to believe they might fall. God seems to be on the defensive in this speech, since he says no less than five times within thirty-eight lines that the Fall is wholly the choice of Adam and Eve. This impression is our misfortune if it obscures what he says. It is very hard to believe that the Fall occurred freely; that is why he repeats himself. "Ingrate" is a significant term: it suggests that Adam's and Eve's disobedience will arise from inattention to the primary fact of their existence, that they owe themselves to God.

It is very important to Milton to show how it is necessary that Adam and Eve be free. A reader might justifiably wonder
why God could not have created them happy, loving and not free to fall, but this would be to deny the validity of their loving response to God.

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
Where only what they needs must do, appeared,
Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despised,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not me.

(III:103-111)

God wants human beings to choose to love him, to give him their love because they know that he and only he is the right object of worship and love. If Adam and Eve were not free to fall, they would not be free to choose God over the other options.

As we have noted, Milton deliberately formulates most of his doctrinal message so that it is part of the dramatic content of the poem, placing concepts and arguments in the persons of Adam, Eve, Raphael and their various dialogues. An advantage of this is that the reader identifies with the human characters and unguardedly enters into their activities so that s/he is educated as they are educated and s/he falls just as they fall. Thus Milton forces on us a recognition of our own incorrigible sinfulness and our share of blame for the state of the world.

The other advantage, again, is that the poet is able to express through his fiction events which have always seemed contradictory when stated in logical form, for instance, that the Fall happened freely and yet Adam and Eve were created good.
Milton introduces Adam and Eve with a strong emphasis on their dignity and freedom, establishing the first premise of his poetic statement of the paradox of the Fall. First, they are "erect and tall,/ Godlike erect, with native Honor clad,/ ...in thir looks Divine/ The image of thir glorious Maker shone."

(IV:288-91) The innocence of the first parents is far from simplemindedness; it reflects the divinity of their origin. They stand apart from other living creatures, literally and figuratively.

The difference between the two, which help to define their personalities and typefy the differences between women and men, are also the characteristics crucial to the Fall. Adam is formed for contemplation and valor; Eve for softness and "sweet attractive Grace." More important, he is formed "for God only, shee for God in him." Discounting advances in the common understanding of women's capabilities (relinquished reluctantly for the sake of scholarship), this is an ideal portrait. They complete each other.

Adam, perhaps by virtue of his priority, has a more direct link to God. He is more speculative and thus more vocal about worship than Eve. He finds it natural, given any opportunity, to reflect aloud on God's goodness, as his first speech implies. (IV:411-439) "Sole partner and sole part of all these joys,/ ...needs must the Power/ That made us.../ Be infinitely good..."

He has thought about their situation and finds it eminently comfortable; he speaks with ease about the prohibition, having considered it as only hypothetically possible that he would disobey,
and dismissed the thought. "Then let us not think hard/ One easy prohibition, who enjoy/ Free leave so large to all things else..." He appreciates the Creation actively by seeking to know more about it and thus about God, and takes pleasure in teaching Eve what he knows as she takes pleasure in learning from him. We see an example of this early in the story, in Book IV, when Adam proposes discursively that they go to bed. Yes, Eve agrees, "God is thy Law, thou mine; to know no more/ Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise." (IV:637-38) If God is Adam's law, she can do no harm by obeying God through Adam, and she enjoys the contact with Adam as he enjoys contact with superior beings. In the same speech she asks why the stars shine if no one is awake to see them, and Adam is delighted to teach her with all the assurance of a theoretical scientist.

Adam is active in contrast to Eve's womanly passivity. He usually speaks first, and he is the initiator of mutual activity, especially sex: "Yielded with coy submission, modest pride, /And sweet reluctant amorous delay." (IV:310-11) He asked for Eve in the first place, persuaded her to join him once she was created, and continues to be the pursuer rather than the pursued, if such terms can describe their prelapsarian relationship.

Eve is first presented as beautiful, and then as naturally responsive to sensory impressions. It is typical that when Adam first addresses her with the speech about how lucky they are and how good God is, her response is to reflect what he has said in terms of a specific experience, in this case her first moment of
consciousness. "For wee to him indeed all praises owe,/ And
daily thanks, I chiefly who enjoy/ So far the happier lot, en-
joying thee..." (IV: 444-46) She concurs with his sentiments,
then goes on to describe the world as she sees it and loves it.
Eden is, above all, beautiful to her. When she looked into the
lake, she saw her reflection, so beautiful she could look at
nothing else. She was unaware that it was a reflection of her-
self; the only value it had for her is that it was lovely to see.
Her interaction with the reflection shows that Eve tends to ob-
serve rather than to participate; she was content to respond to
the reflection and "pine with vain desire" until the voice of
God pulled her away. The sight of Adam, fair but "methought less
fair,/ Less winning soft and mild, less amiably mild,/ Than that
smooth wat'ry image" (478-80) impelled her simply to stop look-
ing at him, to turn her eyes back to the more attractive sight.
It is true that Eve changes her mind about Adam and sees his
virtues, but she puts wisdom in her own terms: it is "fair."
"I yielded, and from that time see/ How beauty is excelled by
manly grace/ And wisdom, which alone is truly fair." (489-91)
Although she respects his thirst for knowledge she does not
imitate him.

Eve exhibits other conventionally feminine qualities at their
best. She prepares the food, an act of nurturing that might also
imply a closer partnership with the earth than Adam has. Cer-
tainly she appreciates the garden's beauty, apart from its sig-
nificance as a sign of God's love, more than Adam does; we see
that later when they are told that they must leave Eden and she
cries, "O flow'rs!" (XI: 268ff) Milton essentially presents us with the conventional male and female principles—intellect and intuition, abstract thought and concrete thought, introversion and extroversion—animated and softened by small idiosyncrasies and their great love for each other. The characteristics which make each of them realistic and persuasive and peculiarly female or male are also the characteristics that are active in the Fall (they do not incline them to fall), the characteristics with which the reader is meant to sympathize and identify.

The complementarity of Adam and Eve is Milton's device for making the free Fall plausible. It is also an illustration of the structural problem of being human, the fact that human beings are two or more, and God is one. God is unity and pattern, in Eliot's sense; he is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent because he is one, infinite. Human beings are finite; we take up space and time, and have limited perceptions and limited knowledge, power and goodness. Because our perception limits our awareness of God's infinite presence and goodness, and makes us aware first of ourselves and then of other selves, we need to trust, love and depend upon each other to construct common, unified perceptions of the world, as Adam and Eve do. Milton wants us to see that God created them to help each other, to be each a bridge for the other to God, in a sense. The point of view created from two points of view, especially if they are Adam's and Eve's, is limited but it is better than the two separate points of view. Adam and Eve depend on each other for the vision
of God. He is one and sees all; when they are closest to one, closer to his nature, they see more. Adam's and Eve's complementarity is a way for them to achieve more divine wisdom, if they work together. This is an individual limitation and a joint benefit.

With the aid of hindsight we can see Eve's characteristics as shortcomings. It is important to emphasize, however, as Stanley Fish does, that Adam and Eve were created flawless. What look like shortcomings to hindsight are simply personal characteristics with the freedom to be used well or ill. It is impossible to trace a chain of predictable causes for the Fall; our purpose in reading Paradise Lost is to see better how value-free traits were freely used to an evil end by good people.

Eve's pragmatism, in contrast to Adam's thirst for wisdom, and her enjoyment of his teaching over Raphael's, lead her to move away casually on the day of Raphael's visit (VIII:40ff). It is true that she has heard what Raphael came to say, his warning about the Fall, but her casual reception of his words shows that she expects Adam to inform her of anything else she really needs to know. She does not expect to have to make any important decisions on her own, yet on the morning of the Fall she insists on putting herself into a situation in which her fatal decision is directly influenced by Adam's absence.

This is another point in the poem where Milton manipulates the sequence of events, devoting almost three books to a flashback. The flashback is as much a part of the education of the reader as it is of Adam and Eve. Now that we are halfway through
the epic we finally learn the background to the events in Books I and II. Satan's pride, so great that it blinds him to the glory of God, is shown more clearly, and Christ's sacrifice is foreshadowed in his role in the heavenly battle. Milton is drawing his nets tighter; he is focusing more specifically on the first rebellion and the first expulsion, and he is looking forward already to Christ's redemption of those who have yet to fall. He focuses on this pattern by drawing back, setting the pattern in the vast historical context of Raphael's story, but Adam and Eve, unaware that they are at the center of a temporal scheme that reflects backwards and forwards, do not realize that Raphael's account of the expulsion from Heaven is in a way a paradigm for the sin which they will soon commit.

Eve is certainly off her guard when Satan beguiles her; she takes Raphael's warning so casually that she does not suspect treachery. Satan tries several tacks when he beguiles her, especially flattery, but what catches and holds her attention is the fact that the serpent can speak. She is too secure in the knowledge of her worth to be swayed by praise; she is caught by his novelty. Presented with the Tree, she initially refuses to consider eating its fruit, saying,

But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch; God so commanded, and left that Command Sole Daughter of his voice; the rest, we live Law to ourselves, our Reason is our Law.

(IX:651-55, my emphasis)

This is a fatal slip. Letting Reason be her Law, she leaves
herself open to argument, a field in which Satan is superior to her. Milton does not mean that reason is in any way evil or the property of evil, but he would maintain that it can be used properly only within faith, subordinate to obedience. Eve should have said that faith or obedience was their law, for that is her advantage over the serpent. She implies that obedience is a law prior to reason when she says that reason applies to everything except God's sole command, but she is still so unaware of the possibility that she might actually disobey God that she scarcely thinks of obedience as an issue. She assumes that she would always obey God.

There are several other possible motivations for her emphasis on reason; she is dealing with an animal and reason is supposed to distinguish human beings from animals. Perhaps, too, the morning's argument with Adam is fresh in her mind, and she wants to prove her self-reliance. In any case, she overlooks the most important feature of reason: it is shared, not independent, property. "Our Reason is our Law." Adam and Eve are meant to complement each other, to function as a unit in the best sense. Eve on her own is removed from the immediate sense of God's presence more than Adam usually is. She thinks more of Adam and the garden, and is thus more vulnerable to those arguments which divert her attention from her most important duty of obedience. Were Adam with her during the temptation, although he might as easily fall prey to the serpent's rationality, he would also remember Raphael's admonition better, since it was Adam who was most interested in Raphael's information.
Eve does well when she takes her lead from Adam. Without him, in a way, her connection with God becomes more tenuous.

Just before eating the apple, Eve speaks in complete confusion. "The Tree gives knowledge, which is good, so I must partake of it. God cannot mean that we should not improve ourselves. Anyway, the serpent has not died, so the whole command must be a deception." So runs her argument, roughly. She has allowed herself to be distracted from what she knows, which is the absolute, sole command, and to be lured into a field which is not her best, logic. Eve falls deceived, not originally deceived, because she knew God's injunction and she had heard Raphael's warning, but deceived by Satan. Her value-free or even good feminine characteristics are turned to weaknesses in Adam's absence. Her deference to Adam's wisdom becomes intellectual inadequacy; her love of Eden, without the natural theologian's speculative awe, becomes a false sense of possession and control; her secure complementary relation to Adam becomes inferiority.

Shall I...keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
Without Copartner? so to add what wants
In Female Sex, the more to draw his Love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior: for who inferior is free?

(IX:817-825)

Eve sounds suspiciously like Satan in heaven now. She had never considered God's construction of her to be deficient before. Now with guilt, possessiveness and a sense of inferiority beginning to eat at her, she becomes jealous. What if she does die?
...then I shall be no more,
And Adam wedded to another Eve,
Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
A death to think. Confirmed then I resolve,
Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe;
So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
I could endure, without him live no life.

(IX:827-833)

Suddenly this story has become a tragedy. It has been
interesting up till now, even though we knew how the story ends,
to try to figure out why Adam and Eve will fall. It has been
difficult, but with the help of hindsight it was possible to
conceive. Now, with Eve's speech that expresses and foreshadows
all the misery that love will entail for her descendants, we
realize the enormity of the Fall. Eve truly was the fulfillment
of womanhood, but only with the grace of God. On her own she is
miserable, dreadfully familiar.

Humanity was not lost at the specific moment when Eve ate,
though. It remains for Adam to be tempted, which must take a
course wholly different from Eve's temptation. His pleasant
anticipation of her return turns to horrified recognition of
her condition, as Eve blithely announces that God's threat is'
unfulfilled, she has achieved godhead, and he should do the same
"lest thou not tasting, different degree/ Disjoin us, and I then
too late renounce/ Deity for thee, when Fate will not permit."
(IX:883-885) If Adam had not fully understood the choice before
him, Eve's last words make it plain: choose God or wife.

"How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,/ Defac't, deflow'r'd,
and now to Death devote?" (IX:900-901) Adam moans in soliloquy,
echoing the "distrust," "disloyal," "disobedient," and other consonant words that open Book IX. He cannot bear to leave all the blame with her, though she acted freely, so he adds, "Rather, how hast thou yielded..." He loves her too much to admit that she could do such an abominable thing; in fact, he simply loves her too much. His very proper need for a partner, which God had commended, has turned to idolatry: "Certain my resolution is to die;/ How can I live without thee...?" Adam, who was accustomed to think exalted and pious thoughts when he experienced something wonderful, can think only of Eve and death when he faces her loss. He allows himself to forget all his former confidence in God's omnibenevolence and omnipotence; the possibility that he might lose Eve impels him to fall on his own resources, to distrust God's mercy and goodness. "He scruplus'd not to eat/ Against his better knowledge, not deceivus',/ But fondly overcome with Female charm." (IX:997-999) He chooses the lesser good over the greater good.

Adam's manly characteristics, untempered by Eve's usual contribution, become weaknesses. We have already noted the corruption of his speculative faculty; the natural theologian abandons God when he has no one with whom to share him. His activity, or self-reliance, becomes panic when he sees that he must follow a course already taken or lose Eve. It was good for him to be active and make decisions when he knew he could count on Eve to respond properly. When she makes the first decision and turns his world to chaos, his normal mode of functioning is disrupted so that he is at a loss. Panic drives away his fundamental loyalty
to God and impels him to rely on his own resources too heavily.

To say that Milton sees human disobedience at the root of suffering is to give only half the story. The other half is that the sharing of moral responsibility for that radical act of disobedience was the result of the interdependence of Adam and Eve and simultaneously, could have been avoided by proper use of their complementarity. On one hand, they each fell at a moment when the influence of the unfallen other would have prevented them. Eve was diverted into temporary ignorance of God's absolute command. She 'forgot' her primary loyalty to God, being very susceptible to immediate perception and likely to depend on Adam for a sense of the sublime and distant. Adam did not "forget" God; he fell undeceived, understanding the implications of his choice. His fall is characterized by a distortion of values; while before his center had been God and Eve - a sign of God's goodness, now he centers himself on Eve, which centering is idolatry, and he devalues God. This would not have happened in the presence of Eve unfallen because, again, Eve had been a sign of God's goodness to Adam. Only in the panic of losing her could he shift his priorities so drastically.

To state the other side of this is redundant but necessary for clarity. The other side is that Adam and Eve would not have fallen (at least not as they did) had they not had the complementary relationship they did. Had Eve not lacked Adam's rational religiosity she would not have 'forgotten' God, nor would she have wanted to attain a property of Adam's. Had Adam not needed Eve to respond to him and be loved by him he would
not have idolized her. It seems that the proper condition of humanity is fellowship or even union, but that such a condition is a temptation away from God if his priority is not recognized. It also seems that the moment at which the Fall occurred cannot be specified. It was a bipartite act whose parts cannot be separated.

The dramatic effect of Book IX is to grieve the reader. The question of how there can be suffering has been plentifully answered. Suffering is the result of an historical act, the first sin, which was committed by our first parents. When they freely alienated themselves from God they laid themselves and their descendants open to every kind of weakness, from whence comes suffering. The first example of this is Eve's jealousy: the realization that there may not be enough love to go around. The reader's grief has two causes--s/he is grieved for the sake of Adam and Eve, that two such attractive characters were so self-destructive, and s/he is grieved because suffering has been justified historically, on an intellectual level, and there is no promise of escape for modern sufferers.

That is the dramatic effect, which discounts God's role in the story. God is a difficult character(s) to incorporate emotionally because he is pure intellect, pure goodness, pure power and so on. His pronouncements must be regarded as outside explication, not as the lines of a character within the drama, or he ends up looking like a cold, self-important tyrant with a sycophantic Son. God's speeches must not be read dramatically, as if there were a character behind them. They must be understood
as literal truth, interjected at specific points where it is right and useful to know the truth.

God has made it clear in previous speeches that he will redeem humanity (III:131-134). This inside information, given not as part of the story's action but to assure the reader beforehand of God's omniscience and goodness, nevertheless provides little emotional support at the end of Book IX. Theoretical knowledge of grace is inadequate consolation to the sentimental reader, who has unwarily identified with Adam and Eve and is now miserable at their grief. Until grace is actually extended to them, it is hard to appreciate God's mercy.

At the beginning of Book X, God only alludes to his promise (X:58-62), emphasizing instead what is to be done with Adam and Eve. In fact, although the Son's mission to Eden is supposed to be a sign of God's mercy and continuing love, Adam and Eve are not made aware of his gift of redemption until after they have made up with each other (X:914-965) and have rediscovered faith by God's "Prevenient Grace."

...Remember with what mild
And gracious temper he both heard and judg'd
Without wrath or reviling; wee expected
Immediate dissolution, which we thought
Was meant by Death that day...
...his timely care
Hath unbesought provided, and his hands
Cloth'd us unworthy, pitying while he judg'd;
How much more, if we pray him, will his ear
Be open, and his heart to pity incline...

(X:1046-1061)

Relief from the tragic situation is provided by Adam's and Eve's reconciliation, and when the Father orders Michael to
"reveal/ To Adam what shall come in future days" (XI:113-114) to soften the blow of being expelled, we finally feel the effects of God's much-heralded grace. Milton could have ended Paradise Lost with the exodus from the garden, as Genesis ends chapter 3. He had already provided the necessary information about the Fall: it happened freely, God knew about it before the fact, and it was to be forgiven by virtue of the Son's self-sacrifice. God himself says all this, so it must be accepted as truth. Yet Milton extends the story so that he can demonstrate the effects of grace--this distinguishes him as a dramatist beyond his function as a theologian.

What Michael shows Adam is interesting in several ways. We see Adam acquiring the knowledge of experience that allows him to distinguish between appearance and reality; we see the blossoming of every type of sin from the one, multi-faceted sin of disobedience. We see that the hope expressed by Adam and Eve after their repentance is brought closer to realization. "Oh goodness infinite, goodness immense!" (XII:469) exclaims Adam at the close of Michael's eschatological speech. "Full of doubt I stand,/ Whether I should repent me now of sin/ By mee done and occasion'd, or rejoice/ Mich more, that much more good thereof shall spring ..." (XII:473-476) The devastating temporary effects of sin--jealousy, envy, hatred--are forgotten for the moment; Adam can see only God's far-reaching goodness. Even the Fall can be called Blessed.

With this fortification, Adam and Eve are prepared to leave Paradise with renewed faith. The last lines of the book are a
combination of regret and tempered optimism.

Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon;
The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide;
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitary way.

(XII:645-649)

"Wand'ring steps and slow" connotes the struggle involved in exercising will in a difficult world. They can no longer be sure that they are always doing right, but hand in hand, "with Providence thir guide," they dare to trust God's mercy.

The sense of the conclusion softens the stark set of facts that God has presented earlier to justify the existence of suffering. It is the case, as we said, that suffering is the result of an original sin, freely committed by people who were the fulfillment of human potential, and that release from suffering will be possible only for those who repent of their sins and accept Christ's redemption. This is an attractive doctrine in some ways, but difficult to accept as a theory when one has evidence only of misery and alienation. The effect of the end of Book XII is to infuse hope in the reader by example. The cognizant perspective which we have been privileged to use throughout Paradise Lost has, as in Job, been of less value than one might hope. While we knew what was going on, as opposed to our position in Job, which was not much higher than his own, we still did not really understand why Adam and Eve fell. There can be no flaw in their composition which is visible to us, because they are the ideal woman and man; finally we can only identify
with them, which is what Milton intends. Although we cannot always accept the fact of suffering, even within the intellectual framework provided by Christianity, we can identify with the renewed hope and faith of Adam and Eve as they leave the garden.

Whereas the book of Job focuses on an individual and his personal reconciliation with God, Milton chooses to regard suffering as a condition of the species. He does locate the origin of evil in the world in the actions of two individuals, but the implication of Adam's panoramic vision of the world's corruption is that all kinds of suffering, childbirth and death, war and disease, jealousy and hatred, are symptomatic of the same species condition. This condition is only remediable by repentance and acceptance of God's grace. The power of Paradise Lost as theodicy lies in Milton's shaping of this general human potential in such a way that the reader is continually reminded of the ultimate good which God brings out of evil. That is, although any individual may feel that the treatment of suffering as a universal species condition cannot speak to particular instances of suffering, the emphasis at the end of Book XII is on God's transformative goodness that brings the greatest beatitude out of humanity's shameful disobedience. Adam's speech in XII:473-476 places suffering in a positive perspective--it is the precursor to the realization that God takes the presence of evil as an opportunity to offer the gift of eternal life to sufferers, including individuals. Although we know the universal origin of suffering, that is not the reason that Paradise Lost is a
powerful theodicy. It is powerful because, even as we watch Adam and Eve leave Paradise, we are aware that possibilities of greater happiness are now open to them and their children, despite and because of their sin and their suffering.
Dostoevsky sets up the problem of suffering in *The Brothers Karamazov* by taking the unjust suffering of Job and subtracting the vision of God as it becomes the context of his suffering. Over and against Milton's justification of suffering in the context of salvation he sets the story of the Grand Inquisitor, challenging as a poor excuse the doctrine that God in his grace forgives all sins and provides sufferers with eternal life. He undermines the literary use of Job as a representative of humanity by showing that those individuals whom Job represents do not share in his personal relief, and he undermines Milton's broad doctrine of universal salvation by showing that the doctrine is existentially meaningless to the great masses of the world's oppressed. The challenge is so emphatically and persuasively stated that many readers have thought that Dostoevsky was indeed trying to undermine Christianity, identifying with Ivan as he says,

"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."

(p. 291)³

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³ All citations, unless otherwise noted, are from Constance Garnett's translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York: Random House, 1955.
The temptation to believe that Dostoevsky created Ivan in his own image and also wanted to "return Him the ticket" is partially justified. Certainly Ivan's argument would not be so convincing if the author were not troubled by the problem of suffering. However, Ivan's challenge--and the entire story of the brothers Karamazov--is framed by the story of the devout novice Alyosha, whose natural piety and devotion to his elder, Father Zossima, and his kinship with Ivan and Dmitri, represent the tension which Dostoevsky tries to resolve in this book.

Alyosha is the first brother to receive more than a cursory description. Dostoevsky stresses that Alyosha is not a mystic, but simply "an early lover of humanity" (p. 16) who adopted the monastic life because he saw it as the way to the "light of love," the vision or kingdom of God. His guide on the monastic path is the elder, Father Zossima, who is a mystic and who, in a sense, forces on Alyosha what might be called a mystical relation to God, which finally determines the nature of Alyosha's reply to Ivan.*

To say that Zossima 'forces' a mystical relation to God on Alyosha may be misleading, but that dynamic is an integral part of the structure of monasticism in Russian Orthodoxy. Absolute obedience to the elder is required. This has its roots in the

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*I am using 'mystical' to indicate that for Zossima (and eventually Alyosha) the vision of God, or direct experience of God, is the highest goal, and that it is accessible only when the monk has rid himself of all ego attachments. The experience of God might be characterized crudely as the experience of all-embracing unity. (See Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, "Mysticism")
valuation, best represented by St. Theodosius the Studite, of
the ideal Christian life as an imitation of Christ's selfless
and obedient descent to humanity, rather than being a meditation
on Christ's divine nature and ultimate resurrection.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours
in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form
of God, did not count equality with God a thing
to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the
form of a servant, being born in the likeness of
men. And being found in human form he humbled
himself and became obedient unto death, even
death on a cross. Therefore God has highly
exalted him...

Philippians 2:5-9

Christ, in emptying himself, was able to overcome the
separation from God into which human beings are born. In
abandoning his self, or the notion (which is supported by sen-
sory perception) that he was an entity apart from others, he
became perfectly free of perceptual limitations, perfectly free
to see and do God's will. Absolute obedience to God is synony-
mo us and simultaneous with the clarity of vision which reveals
the transitory nature of all other attachments and the rightness
of love as a response to God's creation.

"Obedience, fasting and prayer are laughed at,
yet only through them lies the way to real,
true freedom. I subdue my proud and wanton
will and chastise it with obedience, and with
God's help I attain freedom of spirit and with
it, spiritual joy. Which is most capable of
conceiving a great idea and serving it--the
rich man in his isolation or the man who has
freed himself from the tyranny of material
things and habits? But we shall see which will
be most zealous in the cause of brotherly love."

p. 377
"If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love."

p. 383

These are Father Zossima's words of instruction to his disciples, who are taught on another level by the structure of his relationship to them.

An elder was one who took your soul, your will, into his soul and his will. When you choose an elder, you renounce your own will and yield it to him in complete submission....This novitiate, ...is undertaken voluntarily, in the hope of self-conquest, of self-mastery, in order, after a life of obedience, to attain perfect freedom, that is, from self; to escape the lot of those who have lived their whole life without finding their true selves in themselves.

p. 27

This is the model of Christianity which Alyosha follows, and which the book presents as containing his final response to the problem of suffering.

An interesting comparison might be made here with Paradise Lost, XII:561-573. Michael has revealed the future history of the human race, and especially God's most gracious intervention in history, the Incarnation, which turns humanity's sin into a greater good than their original state. Adam responds,

Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best, And love with feare the onely God, to walk As in his presence, ever to observe His providence, and on him sole depend,...
Adam's appreciation is expressed by his desire to obey God always and absolutely, but not because such obedience brings him into any kind of unity with the One. His obedience is a rational acknowledgement deduced from events, that God's will is better than anyone else's will, that obedience is the only way to bring about harmony in this world. Zossima would not disagree, but he would say that human beings can act harmoniously only when they realize existentially their unity with the creation and the Creator. A rough restatement might be that Adam is thinking about how to act in the world and Zossima is thinking about realizing the ontological status of himself and the world, about participating in its being. Adam is reforming his behavior; Zossima is restructuring his sense of place.

Ivan is Alyosha's older brother, and in a sense his spiritual counterpoint. Ivan is an intellectual, a learned atheist. He is not an atheist out of carelessness; his thoughtful and controversial treatise on the position of the ecclesiastical courts testifies to his deep interest in the Church as an agent of social justice. In fact, his discussion of his article is an important preface to his discussion about suffering with Alyosha for the light it sheds on his attitude toward the Church.

Essentially Ivan's article proposes that the Church include the whole State, rather than occupying a position within the present secular State, so that the justice exercised over criminals would be God's justice, within the context of the covenantal relationship, rather than the secular justice that can be rejected by any woman or man. "If everything became the Church, the Church
would exclude all the criminal and disobedient, and would not cut off their heads....(The excluded) would be cut off then not only from men, as now, but from Christ." (p. 71) The corollary to this, as Father Zossima says, is that the Church in practice rarely excommunicates criminals but "tries to preserve all Christian communion with criminals. She admits him to church services, to the holy sacrament, gives him alms, and treats him more as a captive than as a convict." (p. 73)

Ivan's article shows him to be deeply concerned with eliminating the form of human misery known as crime, and at least tempted by the idea that the Church as the vehicle of God's will on earth in the only true and able agent of such reform. On the other hand, as Miusov tells us, Ivan has also argued that anyone who does not believe in God or immortality must inevitably and honorably turn to crime. That is, while Ivan maintains faith in the Church as the only correct and effective tool for social improvement, he feels compelled to exclude himself from it, to commit actions which he believes are evil, insofar as they are socially destructive, because he will not accept God and immortality. He is torn between commitment to the Church as society's only salvation, and destruction of the Church because it is not effective. Ivan is absolutely logical, wholly committed to reason. Zossima tells him, "...you too, divert yourself with magazine articles, and discussions in society, though you don't believe your own arguments, and with an aching heart mock at them inwardly....That question you have not answered, and it is your great grief, for it clamours for an answer." (p. 79)
In the meeting with Alyosha at the teahouse Ivan lays out his argument openly. He begins "as stupidly as possible" by saying that though he accepts God, he does not accept the world created by him. By way of explanation he tells Alyosha a number of stories (which Dostoevsky knew to be true) of the monstrous and undeserved suffering of little children.

"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.

Ivan's point is that someone has consented, that such suffering continues and is excused on the ground that all will be forgiven when the kingdom of God is established upon the earth. In fact, the torture of children is not even directed toward a purpose like the creation of harmonious society; it is completely meaningless. Because the children are innocent, and could not have understood the decision even if they were explicitly given the option of being tortured in order to build a perfect society, Ivan rejects the idea of universal forgiveness and harmony. No one, he says, has the right to forgive the torturers except the tortured, and they are incapable of understanding the decision.

This exemplifies the contrast between Milton's and Dostoevsky's views of suffering. Milton, concerned with making persuasive the traditional doctrine of salvation through grace, that
God brings good out of evil, gives Adam and the reader a panoramic vision of human history. He presents salvation as a gift to all of humanity. Ivan, without denying the truth of that doctrine, subverts it by focusing closely on those individuals who, although members of the human race, are denied the chance to sin and the chance to be forgiven because they are only children. If salvation is personal and experienced in this life, these children died before they were old and corrupt enough to experience God's grace. If salvation is a blanket justification for injustice in this world, promising retribution or universal forgiveness in the next world, Ivan cannot accept it. It is too late.

Alyosha's answer is that Christ, who suffered for the sins of the world, is the one who has the right to forgive all the torturers: "on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they cry aloud, 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!'" (p. 292) This is what Ivan has been waiting for; what he wants is to hear a translation of this doctrine into existential, rather than symbolic, terms. Ivan knows the doctrine that Christ has suffered for even the general who had the little boy torn to pieces by hounds. He says earlier, "Even if parallel lines do meet and I see it myself, I shall see it and say that they've met, but still I won't accept it." (p. 280) He will not accept Christ's forgiveness of the general until it makes sense intuitively, perhaps until the general's act can fit into a scheme which Ivan can regard as beneficial and coherent.

He also tells Alyosha, "Perhaps I want to be healed by you."
(p. 280) Ivan senses that Alyosha has access to the knowledge that would make the general's behavior forgivable, and with the poem about the Grand Inquisitor he pushes Alyosha to take hold of that knowledge and heal his "aching heart." The poem is basically concerned with freedom as the capacity which is humanity's fatal weakness, the attribute which allows greed, envy and all insecurities to be expressed through the ill-treatment of others.

The Grand Inquisitor, visiting Christ in the prison cell where he has had him thrown, tells him that Christ failed most cruelly when he insisted that faith be given freely. Not only did he allow the perpetuation of greed, envy, and the other facts of life, but he made it impossible for everyone to believe in him and thus receive eternal life.

"Thou didst reply that man lives, not by bread alone. But dost Thou know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against Thee and will strive with Thee and overcome Thee, and all will follow him, crying, 'Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!'"

p. 300

When Christ resisted the temptation to create bread from a stone, the Grand Inquisitor charges, he did an injustice to the millions who are too hungry to be able to worship. He deprived humanity of a common god which would be worshipped by everyone.

"Instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and
evil?...Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as if Thou didst not love them at all-Thou who didst come to give Thy life for them!"

(p. 302)

Ultimately humankind must conclude that "He who made them rebels must have meant to mock at them." (p. 304) The only solution to the ills of humanity, the only loving thing to do, is to deprive human beings of their freedom. The freedom to follow Christ, as the Grand Inquisitor sees it, is a freedom which makes faith inaccessible to the weak and suffering, mostly by virtue of the fact that it is also the freedom, exercised by stronger fellows, to tear little children apart and execute ignorant day-laborers. In the Grand Inquisitor's ideal society the people are protected from the agony of atheism and the agony of physical suffering by the deprivation of their freedom. God's existence is proven through miracle, mystery and authority, and the people are fed so that they may worship. Even the 'mighty ones' who have seen the "horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them" will confess to the Jesuits that they are right, that their way is the true salvation of humankind.

Too, too well they know the value of complete submission! And until men know that, they will be unhappy....Oh, we shall allow them even sin, they are weak and helpless and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin. We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves.

(p. 307)
The Grand Inquisitor imagines a scene at the last judgment, should there be one, in which he and the "hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil" will present Christ with the "thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin" in comparison with the few strong and proud true followers of Christ. "And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say, "Judge us if Thou canst and darest.'" (p. 308) The Grand Inquisitor believes that sinlessness is a condition made possible only by the suppression of the possibility of sin. No one is strong enough in herself/himself to resist sin, so the capacity for sin, being prior to resistance, must be destroyed by taking away responsibility for one's actions, the experiential knowledge of good and evil. The "happy children" who have known no sin are not sinless through strength or grace, but by omission. They have not been permitted to disobey God, nor have they been permitted to obey him. The Grand Inquisitor is well aware that their sinlessness is not the kind Christ wants of his followers, but he rejects Christ's whole system. As long as suffering is a possibility, the freedom to inflict suffering or alternatively, to choose not to inflict suffering, must be denied.

Having delivered this stunning and radical critique of Christianity, the Grand Inquisitor waits for Christ's response.

The old man longed for Him to say something, however bitter and terrible. But He suddenly approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips. That was all his answer.

(p. 311)
Christ's answer is a double message. The kiss signifies love, even and especially for the old man who has rejected Christ, embraced atheism and forbidden the freedom of Christianity within his domain. The silence which accompanies the kiss is an affirmation of what the Grand Inquisitor said at the beginning of his speech: "Thou has no right to add anything to what Thou hadst said of old. (p. 297) Whatevsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago." (p. 298) Christ affirms what the Grand Inquisitor has rejected; freedom of faith is still dearest to him, even in the face of all the suffering he had seen that day in Seville. He will not speak.

The poem of the Grand Inquisitor goes part of the way in giving Dostoevsky's message about the problem of suffering, but it is deliberately an incomplete answer, left so by Ivan, who wants to push Alyosha into completing the answer for him, and by Dostoevsky, who saw that the answer could not be completed within the context of the poem, as we shall see. The poem establishes that the freedom to follow Christ necessitates the freedom to commit crimes (i.e., the freedom to choose not to commit crimes), that deprivation of this freedom makes people into the kind of mindless, happy automatons that Milton's God refused to make Adam and Eve in the beginning, and that Christ would rather allow suffering to continue than enforce a kind of sinlessness by omission or deficiency, which precludes direct experience of God. In Dostoevsky's mind, suffering and the
knowledge of good and evil are necessarily co-origin, at least as a stage prior to the absolute freedom to be reached by obedience to God, and although misery is not a desirable state, if it is co-origin with knowledge it is infinitely more desirable than ignorant bliss.

This points up an interesting difference between Milton's and Dostoevsky's perspectives on freedom as part of the analysis of their theodicies. Milton emphasizes Adam's and Eve's freedom to disobey, the freedom which I have just called the stage prior to absolute freedom. He makes this his emphasis because he is telling the story of how humanity came to be corrupt from its created state of sinlessness. Even prelapsarian Adam and Eve are not mystics; mystical union with the One is, perhaps, the sophisticated development of generations of established sinners. Their minds are always their own. Even when Adam says at the end of Book XII that he now sees the virtue of obedience, he does not mean kenotic obedience. He means that in any given situation in which one has the choice to obey or to disobey God, for instance, God's injunction to Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, it is more productive to obey than to disobey, no matter what one's own perceptions of the situation are. He is making a point about Providence, God's ability to turn evil to good by mysterious means, and about universalizable human responsibility within the context of Providence.

This is the same concept of freedom which the Grand Inquisitor has, but he does not believe in divine providence, so that freedom in his mind is a socially destructive capacity except
in those few of iron will. The freedom of the monk on the other hand, which Father Zossima represents, is the radical absolute freedom that comes as a gift from God, a sense of unity with God. Despite this characteristic sense of unity, the monk's freedom is much more an individual, personal experience than the Miltonic freedom, which is simply a component of human makeup. It is a step beyond natural, essential freedom, in a sense, but it is a step which is taken individually.

What this means for the story is that Ivan's focus on individuals in order to subvert the universal doctrine of salvation makes Dostoevsky's presentation of kenotic freedom in Father Zossima particularly appropriate. Dostoevsky's modern, existentialist point of view demands that he point out that the universalizable dogma of eventual eternal bliss for the saved and the innocent is unacceptable in the face of the agony of some of the innocent, but having pointed up the problem which the individual poses to Milton's universalizable rule, he suggests that God has also provided for the individual. This is not to say that abused children should become mystics; it is simply to note that the author is manipulating the reader's initial focus on individual problems (courtesy of Ivan) around to a focus on individual salvations. He turns Ivan's subversion of Milton to greater good.

Ivan, compelled by his allegiance to logic alone, can see the human condition only as essentially enslaved, either to the corrupt urges of the individual or to an absolutely powerful authority. He is torn between his revulsion at the suffering he described in the previous chapter and his inability actually to
accept the state which the Grand Inquisitor would create. "Surely you don't suppose I am going straight off to the Jesuits?..? Good Lord, it's no business of mine. I told you, all I want is to live on to thirty, and then...dash the cup to the ground!"

(p. 312) His only choice is to avoid commitment, even by means of suicide. He is not trying to change Alyosha's mind, for he has no happier system of belief. He wants to be healed by his brother.

Alyosha is unable to give a complete answer to Ivan immediately after the poem is finished, but he gives a provisional answer: "Alyosha got up, went to him, and softly kissed him on the lips."

(p. 313) Alyosha expresses unconditional love for Ivan, who will not renounce the formula, 'all is lawful,' and he expresses faith in Christ's providence, whatever it may be. The rest of his answer, even if he knew it at the time, could not be given in discussion in the tavern.

Father Zossima articulates some of what Alyosha needs to know to give Ivan a more complete answer, though at first it seems that the chapters in "The Russian Monk" have little to do with Ivan's global questions. The story Father Zossima tells is the story of a man who suddenly discovered the absurdity of attachments to worldly things--fame, fortune, romance--in the context of God's creation and love. He had been ready to kill a man for the sake of pride when he realized the truth of his brother's words, "Mother, my little heart, in truth we are each responsible to all for all, it's only that men don't know this. If they knew it, the world would be a paradise at once." (p. 356)
He recognized the relatedness of all living things and his own status as simply—and magnificently—one creature among many.

"Gentlemen," I cried suddenly, speaking straight from my heart, "look around you at the gifts of God, the clear sky, the pure air, the tender grass, the birds; nature is beautiful and sinless, and we, only we, are sinful and foolish, and we don't understand that life is heaven, for we have only to understand that and it will at once be fulfilled in all its beauty, we shall embrace each other and weep."

(p. 358)

This realization of his relatedness and the tremendous joy which that affords, over and against the pleasures of worldly attachments, which must eventually turn to grief and bondage, is what made Zossima decide to be a monk. In formulaic terms, joy in what is, on a basic level, motivated him to empty himself entirely so that he could always recognize and rejoice in what is, on the most basic level. Realization of his essential status as God's creature, no more and no less, was direct and immediate experience of God. Direct and immediate experience of God happens only when one frees oneself from the bondage of thinking that one is anything more or less than a creature among creatures, and the monastic way of obedience is the discipline through which this freedom is reached. What should be stressed here is that the impetus toward freedom and the state of freedom are not negative, in the sense of lacking the pain of attachment, but positive; the joy is substantive.

Alyosha, not a mystic, may understand intellectually what Zossima says, but he does not understand its truth experientially.
Earlier Dostoevsky said that he had the simple faith in the elder that the peasants had, faith that Zossima could somehow bring the kingdom of God to earth.

He was not at all troubled at the elder's standing as a solitary example before him.

"No matter. He is holy. He carries in his heart the secret of renewal for all; that power which will, at last, establish truth on the earth and all men will be holy and love one another, and there will be no more rich or poor, no exalted or humbled, but all will be as the children of God, and the true kingdom of Christ will come." That was the dream in Alyosha's heart.

(p. 31)

Perhaps Alyosha idolizes Father Zossima a little bit. He is shaken to the core when Father Zossima's body begins to decay, a sign that the deceased was not a saint. "Can you be with those of little faith?" asks Father Paissy, seeing Alyosha's look of betrayal after Father Ferapont's condemnation of his elder, and at that moment, Alyosha has lost his faith. He had expected a miracle.

Two experiences restore his faith. The first is Grushenka's sincere and simple responsiveness to his grief. He comes to her to drown his despair in debauchery, in "the Karamazov way," and is touched by her pious, sympathetic response to the news of the elder's death. "'I came here to find a wicked soul--I felt drawn to evil because I was base and evil myself, and I've found a true sister, I have found a treasure--a loving heart. She had pity on me just now.'" (p. 422) The demonstration of sisterly kindness by one whom he expected to victimize him reopens his
eyes to the beneficence of the creation.

That revelation of relatedness takes him back to the monastery, where Father Paissy is reading the Gospel over Zossima's body. Although the window is open, indicating that the smell of decay had become stronger, Alyosha no longer feels that his faith has been betrayed. "But yet there was rejoicing in his soul a sense of the wholeness of things--something steadfast and comforting--and he was aware of it himself." (p. 433) The passage from which Father Paissy reads is the story of the miracle at Cana. "Ah, that sweet miracle! It was not men's grief, but their joy Christ visited, He worked His first miracle to help men's gladness..." (p. 433) As Alyosha contemplates the celebration of the feast he has a vision of Father Zossima--"he, too, had been called to the feast." Zossima tells him that the celebrants have each at some time "given an onion to a beggar"--that is, made a gesture of sister- or brotherhood to a fellow creature, in imitation of Christ. "He has made Himself like unto us from love and rejoices with us." (p. 435) Again, the imitation of Christ, which entails and includes self-emptying and the direct, immediate experience of God, brings the disciple to the realization of and action on her/his relatedness to all living creatures. The kindness which Grushenka offered to Alyosha and his responsive act of love established them with Zossima as guests at the feast. "He is expecting new guests, He is calling new ones unceasingly for ever and ever..."

Alyosha is deflected from his idolatrous desire to see Father Zossima perform a miracle by his encounter with the power
and rapture of love. Grushenka's gesture of love sent him back to the monastery; now the story of Christ's love at the wedding of Cana sends him outside the cathedral, where he throws himself on the earth to embrace it. "But he kissed it weeping, sobbing and watering it with his tears, and vowed passionately to love it, to love it forever and ever." (p. 436) The experience of love leads him into the feeling of relatedness to all things (specifically 'nature') that Dostoevsky portrays as almost synonymous with direct and immediate experience of God.

There seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds of God, liking his soul to them, and it was trembling all over "in contact with other worlds." He longed to forgive everyone and for everything, and to beg forgiveness....It was as though some idea had seized the sovereignty of his mind--and it was for all his life and for ever and ever. He had fallen on the earth a weak boy, but he rose up a resolute champion...

(p. 547)

Alyosha had always obeyed his elder, but now he obeys with the consciousness of love and relatedness from which Zossima had preached. He has been freed from a most important attachment, the attachment to Zossima's personal ability to perform a miracle, and now nothing can shake him. He loves God for his own sake, not for the happiness with which he can bless women and men, and loves the creation for its own sake simply because it is God's and he is part of it. "Within three days he left the monastery in accordance with the words of his elder, who had bidden him 'sojourn in the world.'" (p. 437)

Alyosha's experience can now begin to suggest an answer to
the challenge of the Grand Inquisitor. In the first place, it is the greatest crime imaginable to deprive human beings of the knowledge of good and evil. On one level it is correct to say that the freedom to follow Christ necessitates the freedom to commit evil deeds, since the latter option can be resisted virtuously only if it is an option. In this case Christianity serves as an intellectual justification of the independent principle of evil, a placebo for the suffering masses. On another level, that argument is misleading: evil is not an independent principle which has to be explained away or counterbalanced by a system of good laws. When freedom is seen as the option of doing good or ill, it is not freedom but attachment to one's own will. Deprivation of the right to exercise one's own will diminishes the chances that people will hurt each other, but it does not free the person behind the will of attachments. True freedom is the freedom of absolute obedience to God, since that leads to a true apprehension of the nature of the self, the creation and God. When Zossima realized that attachment to his will or to any other human being's will came from ignorance of his relatedness to the whole creation and stood in the way of the only appropriate response to the creation, love, he emptied himself of attachment to his self, or his will, and in so doing actually fulfilled his nature. Only the servant of God is free, according to Dostoevsky. That is why it is worse to prevent suffering as the Grand Inquisitor does than to allow it and try to mitigate it partially, as Zossima does, knowing that he can never succeed completely. Zossima would say that the sinless and
Tipton--72

Untormented state of the Grand Inquisitor's 'children' is a frustration of their nature because he himself believes in God. That is, submission *per se* is not good or natural; it is frustrating and prevents growth. Only submission to God (through the elder) is good. God is what a submissive, kenotic soul should be filled with. Submission to the discipline of an atheistic tyranny does not make room in the soul for God; indeed, it dehumanizes the citizen. The Grand Inquisitor would deny this because he does not believe it is possible to be filled with God, and it is certainly not possible for the ignorant, starving laborers of the world to reach mystic oneness. His first point (atheism) is simply a stalemate if it comes to debate; the second is true. Zossima could only reply, if he did reply, "'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" (Matthew 19:26) The sinless and untormented state of the Grand Inquisitor's 'children' is a frustration of their nature; suffering is very bad but it is part of the humanity which allows us the possibility of discovering true freedom.

This argument is insufficient, and Dostoevsky probably would not have liked to see it stated explicitly, as we shall see. It is important to understand that Alyosha's 'answer' to the Grand Inquisitor is an answer in the sense that Ivan's poem becomes part of the context out of which Alyosha acts. He does not formulate a directed response to the poem, but his actions, insofar as they are the actions of the man for whom the poem was told, are reactions. It will be important to note also that although Ivan's dilemmas are always based on logic--thus the
conclusion that "everything is lawful"—Alyosha's 'answer' has little to do with logic.

The second part of Alyosha's answer to Ivan is his ministry to Dmitri and to the group of boys that had tormented Ishusha. Dmitri thinks to expiate his sins and transform himself by suffering for a crime he did not commit. Alyosha does everything he can to mitigate Dmitri's suffering, and finally tells him,

Listen; you are not ready, and such a cross is not for you. What's more, you don't need such a martyr's cross when you are not ready for it. If you had murdered our father, it would grieve me that you should reject your punishment. But you are innocent, and such a cross is too much for you. You wanted to make yourself another man by suffering. I say, only remember that man always, all your life and wherever you go; and that will be enough for you.

(p. 925)

Explicitly Alyosha gives Dmitri specific advise about his situation, saying that his personal needs are important, and more generally, that suffering is not good per se; it is not to be sought after. Implicitly Alyosha tells Mitya that he is acceptable to God and to his brother as he is. This message both diminishes the source of Mitya's suffering and tells him that such expiation is unnecessary, it is not God's will.

Alyosha's ministry among the boys amplifies the answer to Ivan implicit in his behavior toward Dmitri. Toward a group of hero-worshipping boys who torment the sick, sensitive Ishusha and his pitiful father Snegirov, Alyosha demonstrates understand-
ing and kindness. He wins the allegiance of the group's leader, Kolya, with his perspicacity and good faith, and persuades the whole group, by his example, to alleviate the sufferings of Ilusha and his family. Two accomplishments come out of his involvement with the boys. One is the group's acceptance of responsibility for and success in relieving the Snegirovs' suffering. The other is his use of their relationship with Ilusha as grounds for a lesson on love and unity.

But however bad we may become—which God forbid—yet, when we recall how we buried Ilusha, how we loved him in his last days, and how we have been talking like friends all together, at this stone, the cruellest and most mocking of us—if we do become so—will not dare to laugh inwardly at having been kind and good at this moment! What's more, perhaps, that one memory may keep him from great evil and he will reflect and say, "Yes, I was good and brave and honest then!"

(p. 938)

Alyosha teaches the boys most, again, with the implicit message of his actions. He teaches them that even someone at whom one throws stones can and should be loved, to the benefit of both parties, and he teaches this by example, just as he was taught to imitate Christ's example. By taking responsibility as a group for comforting the Snegirovs, the boys become more conscious of their interdependence and the rightness of community. "Let us be, first and above all, kind, then honest and then let us never forget each other!" says Alyosha.

Alyosha's response to the challenge of the Grand Inquisitor, therefore, is first to affirm the primary value of freedom.
Dostoevsky has shown this in his long presentation of Zossima's autobiography and in the subsequent story of Alyosha's return to faith by way of the love and unity which Zossima had described. The actual experience of love and unity brings home to Alyosha the true value and meaning of obedience, which Dostoevsky had emphasized as vital to Russian Orthodox monasticism in his opening description of Alyosha. Again, it is a misapprehension of freedom to say that it necessitates evil or suffering and is therefore a mixed blessing. Real freedom is the apprehension of one's right relation to God through apprehension of one's right relation to his creation, which is characterized by love. Real freedom makes moot the question of personal strength, which concerns the Grand Inquisitor so much. The second part of Alyosha's response is a personal effort to mitigate the suffering of individuals. What seemed like digressions on monastic discipline and the life of a saint become the structure for Alyosha's activity, which is also defined by its contrast with Ivan's logical, rhetorical polemic against the Church. Alyosha completely sidesteps the abstract question of theodicy, a question on a grand scale, and instead, working directly out of his experience of relatedness to others, tries to relieve their suffering. His efforts are not the results of his own virtue; they are the movements of God in one who, being truly free, does only God's will.

The figure of Alyosha transformed by his experience of oneness is very powerful, and Dostoevsky has made it more powerful by creating Alyosha and Ivan brothers. Their 'dialogue,'
the challenge of Ivan and Alyosha's action and renewal of faith in the contexts of the poem and Zossima's death scene, represents the eternal dialogue between secular thought (logic/atheism, in Ivan) and the religious actor. Ivan and Alyosha are not alien to each other; they are both Karamazovs and they both commit themselves to their convictions with Karamazov intensity. Dostoevsky makes their brotherhood mean several things. It means that the dialogue can never end--Ivan tries to cut off communications with Alyosha several times in the book, and always ends up in conversation with him again. Brothers cannot end their relationship. It also means that the dialogue is conducted lovingly--Ivan says, "Perhaps I want to be healed by you," and Alyosha commits himself to a life of healing, though he does not fully understand how to heal. Their dialogue is not merely an exchange of opinions, but an act of reaching out, of commitment to a relationship despite their opposing beliefs. By making Ivan and Alyosha brothers, Dostoevsky implies that there is a bond between even atheists and monks, logicians and religieux, which is deeper and stronger than their oppositeness. They are related in essence, prior to their differences. Alyosha and Ivan were brothers before they were representatives of opposite sides of a debate, which suggests that Dostoevsky means the reader to see that that relationship is true of all human beings. The mystic's experience of oneness, an experience of his true relation to the creation, encompasses atheists and peasant women, Grand Inquisitors and saints. This is not Christian charity; it is the way things are, and it is much more convincing to the
reader to see such relatedness demonstrated than to be told about it didactically, as it is often presented in treatises about charity. Just as Alyosha did not fully understand Zossima's words about oneness until he experienced it, so the reader understands relatedness by means of the model of brotherhood which Dostoevsky designed.

The reason Dostoevsky would not have liked to see Alyosha's 'answer' to the problem of suffering formulated explicitly is that to see his actions as an answer that can be articulated or stated as a formula is to miss the point of his actions. The question should not be answered because it presupposes a frame of reference that excludes Christianity. Christianity, for Dostoevsky, is an individual experience of community and a fulfillment of the individual's nature as a member of the community. In that context suffering should be relieved as much as possible, but it cannot become an issue that supersedes the primary importance of the experience of love. That is not to say that suffering is unimportant, because as we have seen it troubled Dostoevsky enormously. The point is that asking why suffering goes on or trying to eliminate suffering on a grand scale by violating human nature misses the reality of Christ's gift.

But it can be claimed that theodicy is in a way sub-Christian. The Christian puts all the weight not on the perfection of the world as it stands, but on the putting right of what for whatever reason is far from perfect through the Christian practices of identification and sacrifice.

Alyosha can be said to answer the question of suffering by displacing it. He responds to individual suffering by relieving the individual, out of his personal experience of love and relatedness. The tension remains between the fact that children die cruelly and unjustly, in tremendous numbers, and the assertion of the Church that God is good and all-powerful, but Alyosha acts as if there were no such tension and as if suffering could be eliminated. Finally, according to Dostoevsky, the only appropriate response to the problem of suffering is action coming out of faith, even absurd action, in free obedience to God.
CONCLUSION

What can be said about any two of these works, let alone all three? Are there grounds for comparison? Can any good synthesis come out of Nazareth? The most important common characteristic of the book of Job, *Paradise Lost* and *The Brothers Karamazov* is that each of them displaces the question of theology. Each book addresses itself to a reader who is asking how there can be suffering if there is a good God, and each book directs the reader's attention away from that question, toward a positive statement about God in the world.

In Job, as we have seen, his suffering is the disruption of a static condition of piety and contentment. At first his hardships are the only issue for him in a world that has been coherent and pleasant up till now; he says, "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?" (3:11) In fact, his first set of questions is almost rhetorical; it is the three rounds of discussion, the author's repetition of the endless debate in which the comforters push him to think about the reason for his suffering, his relation to God, that move Job to examine his notions about God and ask not, "Why am I suffering?" but "Where is God and what does he think of what is happening to me?" The latter question pushes his suffering into the background so that it is no longer a misery *per se*, but a misery because it brings up unanswerable questions about God. The search for a responsive God becomes the issue: "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" (23:3)
Eventually God does respond, not to the question of why Job suffers, but to the demand to see him. The substance of his reply is not an explanation of anything; it is more an identification of himself, an elaboration on his statement to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." (Ex. 3:14) His identification is made in terms of his power and his role as Creator, standard divine characteristics that Job and we had known about before, but had never encountered in such a direct, emphatic way. As far as we can tell—and we must remember that ultimately this is God's answer to Job, and to no one else—seeing God is enough for Job. "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (42:5-6) After the vision of God, how can he think of his own suffering? The poet has moved us to a new context, the context of God's self-revelation, in which suffering is not an issue. The original question, which the comforters held on to all the way through the book, goes unanswered, but Job ceases to ask it because it is no longer important to him.

If we go back to the adversary's question, "Does Job fear God for naught," we can see that this is the most powerful answer that could have been given. On one level, no, Job does not fear God for naught, because we can see that he fears God no matter what happens. On a more important level, the answer again is no, Job does not fear God for naught because of who God is. God is the Creator, the all-powerful, the divine, and is unquestionably the One to be feared, if anyone is. The revelation of God to someone else is not an answer to the problem of
suffering that will hold up as an objective answer that can be evaluated logically, but the fact that the story of that theophany is offered is surely an indication that another context is possible which eliminates the question as stated.

This is essentially Milton's message as well. Milton "justifies the ways of God to men" by attributing the existence of suffering to a particular event, shows how this event was freely brought about by humanity, and then shows how God in his infinite mercy turned the Fall to our advantage. In a sense he improves on the author of Job because Milton shows in no uncertain terms why there is suffering in the world; but what is really important to him is not that God can be excused from responsibility for all the world's misery, but that God will forgive and even exalt the fallen; that his love is so great that he takes the occasion of the first sin as an opportunity to give women and men far more than Adam and Eve ever had. Milton finds the most meaningful theodicy to be contained in the doctrine of the Blessed Fall. It has been said that Paradise Regained is contained in Paradise Lost; that is the crucial feature of Paradise Lost insofar as it is theodicy.

Again, Milton's answer does not stand up under objective logical scrutiny simply because his explanation of why there is suffering cannot relieve any one reader's suffering. That is, knowing the origin of generic suffering cannot explain any individual case of suffering and mitigate it in that way. However, Milton's aim is to put suffering in its proper context, the
context of salvation. That is why his point of view is panoramic. According to *Paradise Lost* suffering, while not in itself a positive thing, can lead to the greatest good. Because it is an experience, it contains within itself the question of why it exists, and the question leads to the realization that by the grace of God human sinfulness can be amended and sinners raised to a state even higher than innocence in Eden. The offer of salvation, unlike the explanation of generic suffering, is made on a personal level to the reader when Milton gives us the scenes of Adam's and Eve's relief, mutual forgiveness and acceptance of God's forgiveness, and it is meant to encompass the issue of suffering so that it is no longer an issue. Because *Paradise Lost* does finally find the structure of its answer in the structure of Christian doctrine rather than in general human experience, as Job and *The Brothers Karamazov* do (Christianity in *The Brothers Karamazov* depends very heavily on nature and subjective experience for its validation), its answer is much less acceptable to modern readers than those of the other two books, but within the Protestant community Milton's message cannot be ignored, if only as part of a multi-faceted answer to the problem.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky presents what is perhaps the least comfortable and most optimistic answer of the three works studied here. In his book the simple existence of suffering is so appalling that it can never be excused or explained. To explain it is to trivialize it. Because the hero is a Christian, though, he must somehow come to terms with the problem, and he eventually does so by trying to eliminate suffer-
The purpose of framing Ivan's challenge (and, in fact, the whole book) with the story of Alyosha is to show how the problem of suffering is to be handled in a context of Christian faith, and to show that suffering is an inseparable part of the condition of freedom, something that is hard to accept in propositional form. Without the possibility of suffering there is no possibility of the vision of God.

Suffering is not nullified in the context of the possibility of the vision of God, but the alternative to suffering, the Grand Inquisitor's Brave New World, is incomparable worse. Because human beings constitutionally have the potential for absolute freedom, the vision of God, and there is no way to eliminate suffering without first stifling that potential, Alyosha, who is committed to the Church, must be the hero of the novel. Ivan's tension of absolute logic, between the inability to accept a God who permits suffering and the desire for the Church to take over and embrace the world, cannot be endured. The experience of God makes commitment to the Church inevitable; once committed, one must try to eliminate suffering, absurd as such efforts are.

Dostoevsky's answer is the least comfortable of the three because it never resolves the facts that the little boy was torn to pieces by hounds, that the little girl was beaten, smeared with excrement and locked in an outhouse. These souls are out of reach, never to be comforted by another human being. His answer is the most optimistic because it shows how Alyosha's religious experience of relatedness and comprehensive love fosters at least the potential for more such experiences in the boys,
and, at least as important, makes him able to behave as if suffering could be eliminated by devoting himself to its elimination in specific situations. The experience of relatedness makes it impossible not to try to eliminate suffering.

An answer to the problem of suffering based on Job, *Paradise Lost* and *The Brothers Karamazov* is, in a sense, no answer at all, to no one's great surprise. Logical discussion, analysis of propositions and systems, provide correct and incorrect answers. Fiction provides new contexts, rearranges situations, displays and displaces questions, moving ever so imperceptibly and irrefutably toward personal, psychic resolutions. This examination has yielded insights that may be stated roughly in two propositions, ideologically unsound as that is.

First, the problem must be handled in the context of faith. If the question is asked without faith in God, as we see from Ivan's example, it is no longer a problem. Only with the premise that there is a beneficent purpose to the universe can the question be asked and answered. Second, once there is faith, once the beneficent purpose is established, the issue of suffering is no longer isolated. Either suffering becomes a stage in Job's spiritual development, or it becomes a manifestation of humanity's spiritual condition which contains the opportunity for salvation, or it becomes a necessary part of the state of freedom which allows human beings union with the creation, the experience of God. Suffering, evil and unacceptable as it is, is somehow linked with greater good. It would be overstating the case to call it a mixed blessing, and it would also be missing my point. The re-
Tipton--85

religious faiths of the Job poet. Milton and Dostoevsky make it clear that we do not have the option of subtracting suffering from the human experience to see if we like that world better. A mixed blessing can be done without; suffering cannot. It is not an isolated phenomenon, but a mysterious, integral part of being human.
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Ben Ezra on the eve of Yom Kippur prayed long and ardently in the synagogue, much to the distress of the waiting rabbi. His impatience overcome by his curiosity, the rabbi at length inquired of his zealous worshipper, "Ben Ezra, what is it that you say to the Master, that it takes you so long?"

"I will tell you what I have been saying," said Ben Ezra.

"To the Master of the Universe I say, 'These are my sins and I confess them:

I argued with my wife. But you know my wife.
I lost patience with my children. But what parent doesn't?
I cheated a little in the shop. But just a little, Among friends.
How small my sins are, Master of the Universe!
Now consider your sins.
You dry up the sky, and our crops wither.
Other times they burn up because you send too much sun.
You let the rains come before the poor man has the roof repaired.
You do not stop war, and young men die.
The marriage bed is empty; there is no child in the womb.
You take away the light from the eyes of a child, and he is blind.
You take away our loved ones, and we are left alone until we die.
These are your sins, Master of the Universe, and they are very great. But I will make you a proposition:
You forgive me my little sins, and I will forgive you your great ones!'

That was my proposal, Rabbi, and I ask you, was that so wrong?"

The rabbi did not answer for a long time. "No, Ben Ezra," he said at last, "it was not wrong; it was not wrong. But why, but why, did you drive so small a bargain? For sins like these you could have asked him to send the Messiah. You could have asked him to redeem the world."