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Part I: On how Alyosha becomes capable of the fusion of horizons

One of the key problems presented by Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is how Alyosha adapts from an inexperienced Christian disciple to a master interpreter capable of conducting the hermeneutical fusion of horizons with different horizons. From this capability, Alyosha develops his unique Christian horizon, enabling him to understand and reconcile the conflicts and tensions of his people, whether Kolya, Dmitri, or Ivan. Thus, he fulfills his vocation as "a monk of the world" (247) as directed by Father Zosima.

However, the story does not begin with Alyosha harnessing the ability to conduct the fusion of horizons. In fact, Alyosha does not possess this ability because he does not possess a horizon to begin with. Before discussing the possession of a horizon, however, we must first investigate the properties of a horizon, to begin with. Specifically, we must ask the question: what does it mean to possess a horizon or not? To help illustrate the scope of this problem, I would like to borrow Merleau-Ponty's notion of Gestalt theory¹.

Critical to this theory is the claim that when we visually perceive, we do not simply see a black-and-white, two-dimensional plane where everything in this perception is situated at the same level with the same color. Rather, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, we see a constellation of objects *prima facie* arranged by our perception so that this tree is farther than that flower from this point of view. The concept of the Gestalt is thus "the very heart of the whole" (7)—a phrase used by the narrator to describe Alyosha. Thus, Gestalt articulates the different forms and essences of objects and, more importantly, assembles these differences into a constellation while pinpointing the differences. To possess a perceptual horizon is to possess the ability to assemble this constellation and its various contents. Returning to Alyosha's world, one of his vocations throughout the story is assembling the various threads of differences—conflicts regarding

money, religion, and romantic relationships—into the grand constellation under the Christian God and faith. Harnessing the power of seeing the whole, Alyosha gains a profound vision of reality and can sort through the implications and significances of the elements of his reality, such as personalities, relationships, and cultural implications.

The problem, however, is that such a phenomenological horizon is granted to (most of) us so that we do not need to manually arrange the content of our horizons. However, Alyosha needs an intellectual horizon for his project—the horizon in the hermeneutical sense—and he does not possess such a horizon before his moment of epiphany at the Cana of Galilee. The difference, as Gadamer entails in *Truth and Method*, is that "the (intellectual) horizon is a range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of the narrowness of horizon... a person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him" (312). Being attracted to what is nearest to one, the person who does not yet possess a horizon may easily incline to what Gadamer calls "overhasty" (290) conclusions, for the 'answer' seems apparent to him. As we can imagine, this 'answer' is most likely not profound, for the world and our perception of it is not what is only nearest to us but the arrangement of a constellation of contents.

Moreover, to successfully assemble his contents, one must understand the profundity of his particular vantage point. He must recognize the significance of his personhood, his perspective, the influences on his perspective, and their corresponding significances, tradition, and many other elements. The fusion of horizons is key for Alyosha to bring to his brothers Ivan and Dmitri, Kolya and the children, Grushenka and Katerina, and many others. Alyosha wants the best for each person and wishes to bring them together by reconciling their conflicts. For his end, Alyosha must master the fusion of horizons to develop his unique Christian horizon, which

seeks salvation for everyone. However, Alyosha's mastery and development do not stem from the "love in dreams greedy for immediate action²."

Above is why, during the first half of the story, Alyosha does not possess an intellectual horizon. His lack of experience with the secular world and its complex controversies has to be mediated with "labor and fortitude" and active love (55). In the story, this is mostly reflected through his failure to understand, reconcile, and resolve the problems involving him and his close ones. His first failure occurs when Katerina invites him to intervene in Dmitri and Ivan's love quarrel reconciling. As the narrator claims, "(though Alyosha) loves them both, what could he desire for each amid these conflicting interests?... Alyosha's heart could not endure uncertainty because his love was always of an active character" (164). Alyosha is entrapped amid a dilemma of understanding: he does not know about love and women; therefore, he cannot decide between Dmitri and Ivan. On the one hand, he genuinely cares for the welfare of his brothers, which gives him the passion to resolve their quarrels, for he is "incapable of passionate love" and "if he loved anyone, he set to work at once to help them" (164). On the other hand, due to his lack of understanding, he is not capable of helping his brothers in this situation. As the narrator describes, Alyosha perceives the situation as "nothing but uncertainty and tangles on all sides" (164).

What exactly does Alyosha not understand, and why are uncertainties and tangles revolving around Alyosha? The clues given by Dostoyevsky lie in the description of Alyosha's inability to understand the word laceration, or *nary*—a word that entails the perverse act of hurting oneself and others for pleasure-seeking. Alyosha does not understand "the very first word" (164) of the whole speech of laceration because of his ignorance of the perversity of humankind. Alyosha cannot understand the complexity of pleasure-seeking through torturing, as

these two concepts seem to paradoxically coexist. Moreover, *nadryv*, according to Edward Wasiolek, is "the impulse in the hearts of men that separates one man from another" and "the impulse we have to make the world over into the image of our wills" (Wasiolek 160): this shows the narcissistic, solipsistic aspect of *nadryv* which Alyosha also struggle to understand, for the extent of this kind of perversity is unknown to his young soul. In doing so, *nadryv* perversely objectifies others for pleasure-seeking mediums, leaving the self as the possessor of these objects (and therefore the only subject who possesses the world). *Nadryv* is thus the intense focus of the part and the neglect, or ignorance, of the whole³.

Both the complexity and the perversity of people of the secular world are unfamiliar to Alyosha at this stage of the story. Such is why, when Alyosha is attempting to tackle these secular issues, he is bound to derive his responses 'instinctively' (164), for he has no rational sources to rely upon before the mastery of the fusion of horizons. Such is also why the narrator would use phrases such as 'rushed in' and 'meddled' to describe his state of mind during these events, for he is entrapped in the dilemma of understanding. As a result, he rashly and directly charges Katerina with loving Dmitri through laceration, causing Katerina to break down and say that Alyosha is "a little holy fool" (168). Alyosha's reason for his rashness that "though (he) acted quite sincerely, (he) must be more sensible in the future" (171) shows his lack of self-reflection: the foundation of his intellectual horizon. While he is sensible, he lacks the experience and the courage to experience the complexity of life, as he asks himself, "How could he be left without him (and the monastery life)" and "Where should he go (after leaving the monastery)." (72) His thoughts indicate how he is not ready to embrace and unpleasant experiences in the secular world.

Moreover, Alyosha's lack of knowledge of the complexity of the secular world is further portrayed in the "open air" scene, where he attempts to give the Captain's family 200 rubles commissioned by Katerina Ivanovna. We can say that when Alyosha hastily says that "There are the two hundred rubles, and [he swears the captain] must take them unless all men are to be enemies on earth!" (181), he does not see any problems or difficulties for the Captain to take the money. For Alyosha, it seems perfectly rational for the Captain to take the offer: his poverty, the children he has to feed, the disease of his son Ilyusha, etc. When we read the line "nothing could have been further from (Snegiryov) dreams than help from anyone—and such a sum" (181), we almost hear the free-indirect discourse of Alyosha mimicking the voice and making a claim for the Captain to the reader of how the Captain must take the money. Alyosha's expression that "unless all men are to be enemies on earth" (181) and usage of the word "dreams" hyperbolically indicate how he sees it imperative for the Captain to take the money.

Critically, therefore, he misses the important message from the Captain: "Listen, sir, my dear, listen, sir, if I take it, won't I be behaving like a scoundrel? In your eyes, Alexey Fyodorovich, won't I be a scoundrel? ... but inwardly, in your heart, won't you feel contempt for me if I take it, sir, eh?" (181), and to this, Alyosha cries to him that on his salvation, he won't. What Alyosha may have ignored is the dignity felt by the poor, which is something he does not yet understand, coming from his relatively wealthy background. The fact that he presses the Captain— "you must see that (the money should be taken), you must" (181)— indicates that he does not relate this matter to dignity and shame. Instead, he should have sensed these problems when he heard the word contempt, for if this matter happens naturally as he suspects, why would the Captain worry about his contempt? Therefore, as the Captain points out, "How should the rich know [about truth and justice]? They don't explore such depths once in their lives" (179).

Such is why Alyosha does not anticipate the line, "What should I say to my boy if I took money from you for our shame" (183). He is again unaware of a similar dilemma—the paradox between dignity and shame: he does not understand what 200 rubles mean to the family, and he does not understand what it means for them to take the money. On the one hand, money resolves many realistic problems for the poor family. Yet, on the other hand, taking this money is for the family to submit to their shame, forcing them to abandon their dignity. This shows his lack of knowing the diverse complexity of the world beyond his social status and Christian culture. While he does mention that "we are all like him" (188) with Lise, we can argue that he does not yet fully comprehend the connotations of his words.

After this incident, however, we begin to see Alyosha moving towards significant reflections on this complexity through his dialogue with Lise. Specifically, he begins to comprehend the reasons behind the Captain's motive. First of all, he recognizes the blunder he makes due to the statement, "It's awfully hard for a man who has been injured when other people look at him as though they were his benefactors" (187). This quote demonstrates Alyosha's ability to not only imagine the injured man—as he himself is rarely injured—but also his ability to imagine the injured man under a specific condition. While he is not under that condition, he can understand the implications of being so, and that is one key component to the fusion of horizons. Alyosha's move, according to Gadamer, is "transposing ourselves into a situation" (Gadamer 315). Importantly, Gadamer points out that transposing ourselves "always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other" (Gadamer 316). Alyosha's analysis, with the help of Lise, is therefore not out of empathy nor trying to subordinate himself to the perspectives of the Captain. Instead, Alyosha's analysis is his attempt towards this high universality that not only transcends his own particularities—being

a young and relatively wealthy man who has little exposure to the real world—but, more important, transcends the particularities of the Captain. This is to say, while Alyosha does not possess the very perspective of the Captain, he puts himself in the shoes of the Captain, thereby interpreting the Captain's situation. From this, we can entail that Alyosha is consciously developing his unique horizon, for Alyosha interprets the causes of the Captain's fury, which he arguably does not recognize⁴.

Further, Alyosha recognizes his capacity for conducting the fusion of horizons. When Lise questions his showing attempt for the poor man "in analyzing his soul like this from above" (188), Alyosha replies by claiming that "how can it be contempt when we are all like him, when we are all just the same as he is?" (188). Superficially, his claim may look like a contradiction to Gadamer's theories, for Gadamer's definition of the horizon necessarily entails a kind of irreconcilable difference between the perspectives of the interpreter and the interpreted. Thus, Alyosha's claim on sameness implies that there is no such difference. Nonetheless, we can interpret Alyosha's words as his claim towards the ground for the fusion of horizons through barriers—in this case, it is through people of different social hierarchies. As the Captain claims, the aristocrats have no intention of understanding the socially deprived. This means that no fusion of horizons can happen between the two classes, for no one in this situation would attempt to elucidate and recognize their prejudices toward each other due to a lack of communication. Alyosha's claim that we are "all the same" highlights the key that communication between the two classes is possible, and hence the clarification of corresponding prejudices following the fusion of horizons becomes possible. Being the same entails that we share the same capacity to interpret the conditions of others so that, despite our qualitative differences, we can potentially unite.

Nonetheless, Alyosha, at this stage, realizes only the potential of a fusion of horizons, for he does not yet know how to overcome the sharp differences between him and those whom he wants to assist. One of them occurs when Alyosha faces Ivan's atheist claims in the 'Rebellion' chapter, where Ivan announces that "Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth" (205). Following from this claim, Alyosha hears from Ivan the illustrations of how the innocent children suffer terrible torments—in fact, Alyosha becomes agitated and says, "Shoot him! (That is, the general who orders the little boy to be undressed) (210). Yet, his reaction is what Ivan anticipates: human beings cannot forgive the precursors of moral atrocities like Christ would. The fact that these children who have "no solidarity in sin" (212) are tormented and that these tormentors will be forgiven by Christ reveals why Ivan would "rather remain with unavenged suffering and unquenched indignation, even if [he] is wrong" (212).

Alyosha seems unprepared for Ivan's charge. In fact, when he hears about Ivan's atheist inclinations, he points to Ivan how Christ, because "he gave his innocent blood for all and everything" (213), is capable and righteous to forgive. While Alyosha's reply is decent and affirms the Christian teachings, he is surprised by Ivan's charge of why God does not have the right to forgive: namely, that God is the cause of all injustice and sin. Alyosha then hears Ivan's most powerful reply, the Grand Inquisitor poem, to his doubt about God being the source of suffering. "Thou wouldst have founded the universal state and have given universal peace" (224)—as the Grand Inquisitor says to Christ, but he chooses not to.

Alyosha replies that the GI poem is absurd: "Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of him ... It's simple lust for power, for filthy earthly gain, for domination—something like a universal serfdom with them as masters—that's all they stand for. They don't even believe in God, perhaps. Your suffering Inquisitor is a mere fantasy..." (226). The missing component in

this long reply of Alyosha's is Ivan's questioning of the human capacity to suffer as free people. While Alyosha disagrees and opposes Ivan's claim on the church's totalitarian power, he does not offer a reply to the essential question in Ivan's poem: whether God is evil and perverse or not. In fact, Alyosha cannot escape admitting the existence of sin and of the universal sufferings described by the fictional inquisitor. If this is the case, then Alyosha may need to admit that God, who could have prevented the happening of these universal sufferings, did not prevent our sufferings. In fact, this is exactly why, according to Ivan, those who loved mankind will strive after power, for that is the only way they can protect humanity from perils by offering them "miracles, mysteries, and authorities" (224).

From the above example, we by far see the greatest challenge against Alyosha and his plan towards a fusion of horizons, as Ivan launches an attack on the foundations of Alyosha's maturing horizon based on Christianity. As Alyosha replies to Ivan's rebellion, "You said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being (notice Dostoyevsky's change between the capital letter and the small letter), and He can forgive everything, all and for all, because He gave His innocent blood for all and everything." (213) We see that the Being is Christ, who gave his innocent blood for all and everything is the foundation of Alyosha's Christian horizon. If God is as benevolent as he describes, then Alyosha can surely establish his Christian horizon. Yet Ivan poses a challenge to this. How can Alyosha overcome Ivan's challenge?

I argue that having this challenge critically contributive to the deepening of Alyosha's Christian horizon, as embracing the significance of the implications of this challenge will provide profound reasons why Christianity is still worth believing, despite the many troubles we see on Earth. As such, while many mark the Cana of Galilee as Alyosha's turning point towards

his religious maturity, we should also value the GI as an important formation towards Alyosha's horizon. For example, after Ivan's poem and his aggressive claim that Alyosha has "no place for [Ivan] even in [his] heart" (229), Alyosha replies with a kiss that imitates Christ's for the GI. What Alyosha does here is an attempt to reconcile Ivan's antagonization and cynicism towards Christianity by imitating the image of Christ in Ivan's narrative. For Alyosha and Christ, the kiss represents their respect for the other's freedom and their wish for the well-being of the other. Unlike many immature Christians, Alyosha thoughtfully replied to this greatest challenge in a profound way. To explain this in Kantian terms, immature Christians, because of their lack of criticism of their belief system, follows the hypothetical imperative: that is, whatever their church or their religious leader indicates. The problem with doing so is that it prevents the formation of a horizon, for the person does not arrange his intellectual horizon: he does not evaluate what is preferable and why they are preferable. In contrast, Alyosha learns to follow Christianity with a categorically imperative approach, which enables him to follow Christianity despite the challenges he faces, as his position toward his objective will not be affected by these challenges. This would necessarily entail that Alyosha has arranged his intellectual horizon in his particular way so that he would know the implications of the challenges to his religion—such as the troubles and sufferings of humankind and the tools he has to overcome them—love, reconciliation, and respect.

As Gadamer indicates, "Every encounter with tradition (in our context, this is the Christian tradition) that takes place within historical consciousness (Alyosha's experiences with Dmitri, with the Captain, and with Ivan) involves the experience of a tension between the text (Christian teachings) and the present (Alyosha's situation and challenges). The hermeneutical task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in

consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present." (Gadamer 317) Paul-Ricoeur—one of Gadamer's followers in hermeneutics—describes hermeneutic approach to this tension as the second naivete: a post-critical interpretation of the Christian doctrine in contrast with the first naivete, which is the pre-critical approach that attempts to cover up the tension. If Alyosha chooses not to overcome the tensions, say, he continues to naively assimilate the tensions between his Christian teaching and the challenges he faces from Ivan into his intellectual horizon, he would fall into the category of the hypothetical imperative, for he would immediately disregard every single word in Ivan's poem. Then, since no profound challenges are made regarding the Christian faith, Alyosha would not have the motive and the materials to cultivate a horizon. Also, he would be actively ignoring the troublesome realities of humankind, which is fatal to his Christian-hermeneutical work of bringing everyone together in their best form. As Hans W. Frei's summary of Ricoeur's second naivete entails, the text (the Christian doctrine) and its "present re-entry must not be a function or predicate of the presently understanding of self—else its illusory self-projection." (Frei 132) Again, if Alyosha re-enters the biblical doctrines only to affirm his navigations on his "monk of the world" (247) project, then he is merely repeating the doctrines: that is the first naivete. Instead, Alyosha sees that while "the text is normative (in the sense that it transcends present understanding ontologically), [it happens] only in such a way that it is in principle hermeneutically focused toward the latter (that is, re-entering the temporal dimension at the point of the present)" (Frei 132): this is the approach of the second naivete, in which Alyosha overcomes the tensions between the text and the present dimension. The second naivete, therefore, becomes an important ground for Alyosha's Christian horizon.

The conversation between the two brothers plants the seed for Alyosha's epiphany by giving him the opportunity to overcome the significant challenges on the ground of his faith. However, no challenge is greater to Alyosha than the deterioration of Father Zosima's body in the "Critical Moment" chapter, where Alyosha claims that although he is "not rebelling against [his] God; [he] simply [doesn't] accept His world" (294). Yet, to rebel against Christ's world is to rebel against Christ, as the world is Christ's creation. Thus, troubled by the fact that God did not perform a miracle at Father Zosima's funeral, Alyosha becomes deeply disturbed: he even asks Rakitin for sausages and vodka—refreshments he would have never taken as a monk. Seeing the troubled Alyosha, Rakitin brings him to Grushenka's place (for us, the Onion chapter), where Alyosha profoundly understands the complexities of and hopes for humankind. What is most important in this scene that leads Alyosha to his reconciliation with Grushenka is not only the fact that she has once "give away an onion" (303), but most importantly, by repeating the story, she is actively repenting her deeds. Alyosha before the Onion story already sees Grushenka's difference when she expresses her love to Alyosha, that she loves Alyosha "in a different way (than romantic love): such is why he would claim that he "felt drawn to evil because [he] was base and evil [himself], and [he's] found a true sister" (302) in Grushenka. Seeing Grushenka's repentance, Alyosha realizes that while humankind is complex and sometimes nasty, everyone can be saved and forgiven as long as they are willing to repent and love. This is because, while giving away an onion is "the only good deed" (303) Grushenka has done, her action tells Alyosha that she is not devoid of hope and salvation: as long as some goodness remains, all will have their chances for redemption. Seeing this, and as a part of his hermeneutical work, Alyosha now gives Grushenka "an onion, nothing but a tiny little onion" (309), full of love and reconciliation. This becomes a central part of his Christian horizon developed later.

Alyosha gains his epiphanic transformation towards the master interpreter in the Cana of Galilee chapter. When Alyosha says he is afraid and dared not to look into God, we can intertextually assert his reaction to the GI conversation, for he has now heard about the potential maliciousness of God. In fact, he has rebelled against God himself. Yet, after having various experiences with the image of God, he now sees the real image of God who "is terrible in His greatness, awful in His sublimity, but infinitely merciful" (311). Alyosha would not have seen such a paradoxically described and yet merciful image of God if he knew only the Christian dogmas⁵. It is at this point that Alyosha's soul is "overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space and openness" (311): all are indications he is expanding his horizon to perceive God in a profound way, as he no longer questions or rebels against God. God, in reply, brings Alyosha's vision to the vault of heaven, the Milky Way, and reveals to Alyosha the mystery of the Earth. We can say that God gives these visions as a reward for Alyosha insisting on the expansion of the horizon. In this chapter, therefore, God gives him a wide, almost boundaryless horizon. He is no longer bound to the narrowness of his own world and his limitations but has transformed into a master interpreter of the realities of life. Now is when Alyosha enters into a more mature faith, tried by experience, and into a second naivete.

Part II: Alyosha, after the Cana of Galilee experience

After his epiphanic moment at the Cana of Galilee, Alyosha transforms into a hermeneutical interpreter who possesses a deeper, more mature Christian horizon, which gives him the ability to reach beyond his previous narrowness. Not only is he able to recognize the implications of his intellectual limits, but more importantly, he can utilize his limits as the foundation for the fusion of horizons. As a result, he can clearly see the troubles of those whom he wishes to help and their respective origins and is able to develop unique strategies to assist

them in their troubles. One must bear in mind, however, that Alyosha's hermeneutic interpretation is not a problem-solving machine, for the purpose of this interpretation is to lead its audiences toward the expansion of their horizons and not to fix their problems for them. What Alyosha does to his target audiences is essentially help them to recognize their state of being and give them their human freedom (which the GI denies) to self-navigate the courses of their lives.

Kolya

Alyosha is the only character who truly appreciates the qualities Kolya possesses, while other characters are either disinterested in them or unable to follow Kolya's train of thought. While Kolya is rather mature and perceptive compared to others close to his age, we do see him showing his buffoonish side when he talks about subjects he pretends to understand. Take, for example, his talk with Smurov, where he claims to be a socialist: the next moment, however, he contradicts his 'socialist' ideology by the line "one has to know how to talk to the peasants" (446). Anyone with a clear sense of the socialist ideology would recognize Kolya's self-contradiction, for the socialist ideology never discriminates against the peasants. In fact, Kolya himself said that socialism refers to a state "when all are equal, and all have property in common" and that Smurov is "not old enough to understand yet" (445). Ironically, Kolya himself also is not old enough to understand the connotations of socialism, as his condescending attitude against the peasants is incompatible with socialist inclinations.

Handling the precocious Kolya is, therefore, not an easy task. On the one hand, when we consider the Russian social structure, where adults have absolute power over children. Intelligent and perceptive children such as Kolya can easily express ideas that may enrage or annoy the adult man, as these children can be far more educated and perceptive compared to adults. If the adult becomes enraged, then it is likely that these children will be punished. If the adult becomes

annoyed, then it is likely that these children will be ignored. This is the dilemma for most adult Russian men who interact with children such as Kolya. On the other hand, not many adults can remove Kolya from his intense self-consciousness and arrogance, as doing so requires the adult to be intellectually adept. Thus, both criteria must be reached.

Alyosha simultaneously reaches both criteria, as he is neither enraged nor annoyed by Kolya's qualities—whether it is buffoonery or sharpness. In fact, "what struck [Kolya] most was that [Alyosha] treated him exactly like an equal and that he talked to him just as if he were 'quite grown up'" (454). Immediately we see Alyosha offering Kolya equality and respect, which are qualities Kolya arguably rarely experienced from other adults. Alyosha's offer of mutual respect and equal status to Kolya is the first step towards his bridging between his horizon and Kolya's vision, which has not yet developed into a horizon.

Critically, however, this quality of Alyosha's, which determines the success of Alyosha's work on Kolya, should not be taken for granted, as it embodies the Christian concept of kenosis—the emptying of self as an ego. In fact, Christ also puts himself at the same level as his people by descending from heaven to Earth and by being with them: in doing so, he empties his Godly dignity for the sake of humankind's welfare. We see this similar emptying of self-ego in Alyosha: unlike his accusation of Katerina in the earlier chapter, which is a quick insertion of his own judgment, Alyosha does not judge Kolya's buffoonery and lack of understanding. Instead, when Kolya questions Alyosha— "am I very ridiculous now" (470)—Alyosha replies that "Isn't everyone constantly being or seeming ridiculous?" (470) Importantly, this shows Alyosha's recognition of his own shortcomings as a common human fallacy: thus it reveals his humility and emptying of his ego, as he puts himself at the same level with Kolya. Alyosha's practice of the

kenotic tradition, therefore, forges his horizon into a uniquely Christian one, which is arguably more helpful to him when he does hermeneutical work than just any horizons.

Specifically, we know that only by emptying one's consciousness of one's ego could one lay the foundations for one and his counterpart for a conversation: an exchange between two open voices. As Gadamer says, "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus, it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says" (Gadamer 403). Indeed, what is fundamental to the *Gesprach*—the true conversation—is for both attendees of the conversation to be synchronous so that one can truly open oneself to the other for understanding. If there is an asynchronous element between the two, and especially if one sees oneself as the more prestigious/authoritative speaker, then it is likely that the conversation will be altered into other forms, such as a lecture⁶.

As an intertextual reference, we can contrast Alyosha's kenotic attitude with the GI, who claims to "have corrected [God's] work and have founded it upon miracle, mystery, and authority." (223). Under the GI's context, these three elements are established to eliminate conversations: miracle and mystery under this context are perceived as what is beyond the comprehension of language and thus unspeakable, while authority is the concept that dictates what can be spoken and how these matters, such as miracles and mysteries, shall be spoken. Since there can be no meaning beyond the interpretation of the GI, no fruitful conversations can occur. Without both the interpretation and the conversation, no fusion of horizons can take place.

Unlike the self-conceited GI, our hero Alyosha is successful in preventing such arrogance from happening during his conversation with Kolya. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Alyosha is not challenging Kolya's notions during the conversation: else, Alyosha would be just

like the typical Russian adult man who cannot keep up with Kolya's pace. For example, when the two exchanged opinions over the existence of God, Kolya brings up Voltaire's *Candide* and argues that Voltaire did not believe in God and loved mankind. Both arguments are instantly adjusted by Alyosha, who indicates that "Voltaire believed in God, though not very much" and that "I don't think he loved mankind very much either" (466). The highlight, however, is when Alyosha asks Kolya, "Have you read Voltaire" (466), and Kolya replies with confusion. Without giving us what he sees from *Candide*, Kolya redirects the conversation towards his 'socialist' beliefs. This tells us that Kolya may not have read *Candide*, and even if he has, his reading is not profound enough for him to generate any summarizations or perspectives. Again, Alyosha quickly picks up Kolya's 'socialist' belief and points out that Kolya is "not expressing (his) own ideas" (467). Kolya's responses to Alyosha's words prove Alyosha's point:

"Oh, where did you get that from? What fool have you made friends with?"

"...old Belinsky said that too, so they say."

"Belinsky? I don't remember. He hasn't written that anywhere".

"If he didn't write it, they say he said it. I heard it from a...but never mind". (467)

Thus, Alyosha knows Kolya's knowledge regarding his many claims is not profound. Yet, Alyosha does not see Kolya's problems as something Kolya should be ashamed of. In fact, as the hermeneutician, Alyosha sees potential in Kolya's intelligence, and it is his vocation to assist bright children such as Kolya to achieve their potential. As Alyosha says, "You are like everyone else, only you must not be like everybody else, that's all." (470). Alyosha first reminds Kolya that he should inhibit his arrogance and elitism, as everyone is inherently equal. Then, Alyosha tells Kolya that he should at the same time prevent himself from the unwanted qualities of others, whether that be arrogance, philistinism, dryness, and so on. After his reminder, Alyosha praises

Kolya for not being "ashamed to confess to something bad and even ridiculous" as "people have even ceased to feel the impulse to self-criticism." (470) It's not only Alyosha's knowledge that gained him Kolya's respect and friendship, but most importantly his acknowledgment of Kolya's uniqueness gained him Kolya's trust. Kolya, after being fully convinced by Alyosha's words and teachings, claims that Alyosha is better than him. Before Alyosha's bridging attempt, it was difficult to expect a conceited child to have such a high regard for anyone, especially to acknowledge that the person being praised is better than he is. For example, when Alyosha peremptorily asks Kolya to stop irritating the doctor, Kolya affirms and indicates that "there is only one man in the world who can command [himself]" (472), that is Alyosha, and he obeys Alyosha. In fact, now that Alyosha opens room for conversation and Kolya's capacity for self-criticism, we see the blossoming of the very first fusion of horizons (though not yet profound) between the two. This sets the place for the future fusion of horizons between Alyosha and Kolya, as seen in the final scene of the novel.

Dmitri

Alyosha has two important conversations with Dmitri after the arrest. Unlike his conversation with Kolya, which is centered around Kolya's self-consciousness and intellectual precocity, Alyosha's conversations with Dmitri—on whether he should escape to America or not—revolve around the idea of sin, judgment, and redemption: three important ideas in the Christian worldview and theology. Convicted for murdering his father, Dmitri falls into a state of dejection. He believes that he has sinned and that he will receive divine judgment regarding his inability to be redeemed. Dmitri, therefore, talks to Alyosha, whom he sees as the man of God, for consolation. For our purpose, we shall not go through Dmitri's long speeches but Alyosha's reaction to Dmitri's distrustfulness in him, which makes Alyosha cry as the narrator describes,

"all [of Dmitri's distrustfulness and dejection against Alyosha] suddenly opened before Alyosha an unsuspected depth of hopeless grief and despair in the soul of his unhappy brother. Intense, infinite compassion overwhelmed him instantly. There was a poignant ache in his torn heart." (504) As we can see, Alyosha experiences a sudden, almost epiphanic transition from grief to intense compassion.

Superficially, this transition reveals Alyosha's relative lack of observation during his previous exchanges with Dmitri, as he does not realize the "unsuspected depth of hopeless grief and despair in the soul of his unhappy brother" (504), along with what it means to be in hopeless grief and despair. He has not realized the depth of hopelessness and despair of his brother until the words of distrust come to him. However, it would be a crude judgment for us to say that Alyosha's hermeneutical interpretation is unsuccessful due to his relative lack of compassion, for the task of hermeneutical interpretation is complex and comprehensive, in the sense that the listening to words spoken from the speaker does not always lead to a quick and precise answer. Not only are Dmitri's speeches long and layered with many contents, but his non-verbal expressions are also varied between moments. When Dmitri becomes agitated, for example, "he held Alyosha with both hands on his shoulders, [while] his yearning, feverish eyes were fixed on his brothers. When he tells Alyosha about his plan of escaping, Dmitri "went close up quickly to Alyosha and whispered to him with an air of mystery" (502). Such non-linguistic gestures are also important parts of Alyosha's hermeneutical-interpretive work in this situation. Alyosha attends to these important details in the conversation and works them into his experience of Dmitri's struggles. Therefore, when Dmitri says to Alyosha that "[Alyosha] has given [him] a new life" (504), we have good reasons to believe Alyosha knows that Dmitri's troubles are unresolved. In order to truly redeem his brother, Alyosha has more work to do than this.

Here we face a problem, however, regarding non-linguistic ways of conversation and the fact that Gadamer highly values the importance of language in conversations and interpretations⁷ Consider Habermas' reply to Gadamer, for example: "The question is whether the extralinguistic modes of experience are not underestimated when one asserts, as I (Gadamer) do, that is in language that we articulate the experience of the world as something in common...are there no other experiences of reality that are non-linguistic?" (Gadamer 572)

Gadamer claims that while he acknowledges "that behind all the relativities of language, there is something common which is no longer language; nevertheless, there remains something that characterizes language as such, and that is precisely the fact that language as language can be contrasted with every other act of communication." (Gadamer 573) While Gadamer seems ambivalent to the importance of extralinguistic experiences, we must give credit to the importance of this "no longer language," extralinguistic experiences in Alyosha's interpretation task. For example, when Dmitri questions Alyosha's faithfulness to his innocence, Alyosha not only tells Dmitri that he has "never for one instant believed that [he was] the murderer!" (503), he even "raised his right hand in the air, as though calling God to witness his words." (504) The hand gesture is to Dmitri an indication of loyalty and honesty, as "his whole face was lit up with bliss" (504) after seeing the hand gesture. The hand gesture is, therefore, the powerful motivator that makes Dmitri believe in Alyosha's loyalty.

Nonetheless, we realize that when it comes to the task of interpretation, Alyosha must, after all, use language to transcribe Dmitri's actions into Dmitri's inner state, which is to contrast language with extralinguistic actions. By doing so, Alyosha can transcribe Dmitri's inner state into his own motivations—love, and compassion, in this case—to assist Dmitri. When Dmitri tells Alyosha his burden of escaping, Alyosha uses the power of linguistic expressions to

enlighten Dmitri, telling him, "Only to remember that other man always, all your life and wherever you escape to; and that will be enough for you." (636) Here, Alyosha takes the concept of the 'new man' from his brother and transforms its connotations through language into the 'other man.' For Alyosha to maintain a new/old dichotomy is for him to suggest Dmitri's false sins, as the re-established new replaces the corrupted old.

Indeed, as Alyosha says, there is nothing "new" about this other man, for Dmitri has not sinned to the extent that he must take over "the burden of the cross" (636) for the rest of his life.

Critically, however, Alyosha does not mean that Dmitri has never changed from a cruel and aggressive brute into a truthful penitent. Rather, Alyosha is saying that as long as Dmitri is willing to recognize the existence and embrace the qualities of this other man, then he is always redeemed and worthy of the greater duty Alyosha describes. Importantly, Alyosha's words will give Dmitri the inner strength to survive in America and return to Russia, for without this move, Dmitri is likely to live amid grief and self-condemnation. If this happens, then not only would Dmitri live unhappily, but he would also lack the strength that could sustain him through the incoming hardships. From this, I argue that Alyosha's unique Christian horizon, which reconciles the psychological dilemma of his brother, gives him the authority to speak of Dmitri's future. Not only does Alyosha wish his brother well, which is basic to the Christian horizon, but also the Christian teaching that as long as one is willing to turn towards God, then that person will be redeemed: this more profound understanding also shows the development of Alyosha's Christian horizon. Such is why Alyosha will add on, after the concept of the other man, the concept of the greater duty and not specify what that duty is. Doing so gives Dmitri an objective worth fighting for during the following years of exile life and prevents Dmitri from being entrapped in guilt and shame. As such, not only is he always saved, but more importantly, Alyosha points to him the

events ahead of Dmitri that are more desirable than being saved. Therefore, verbal language is the anchor of Alyosha's more profound Christian-hermeneutic horizon. With this powerful tool, Alyosha enlightens Dmitri. Alyosha's persistent work with Dmitri's continuous troubles also shows him consistently practicing "active love."

Ivan

Alyosha's hermeneutical work faces its greatest difficulty when Ivan becomes the subject of interpretation, for Ivan is inculcated with beliefs that seem irreconcilable—that is to say, these beliefs seem to be beyond the scope of the fusion of horizons. Ivan's inculcation of beliefs ultimately creates for him an inner devil—a powerful creation out of Ivan's delusion that makes Ivan schizophrenic. In fact, this devil is a projection of Ivan's cynical beliefs, for the devil knows the Geological Cataclysm and the Grand Inquisitor: both belong to Ivan. Thus, while Ivan is not the devil, the devil is a part of Ivan. Since the devil's words arguably hurt Ivan, it is, therefore, our task to contrast Alyosha's conversation with the devil and evaluate how Alyosha does his hermeneutical work to assist Ivan.

One of the paradigmatic claims the devil makes is that he is "perhaps the one man in all of nature who loves the truth and genuinely desires good" (544). Automatically, this claim rejects any possibility for a fusion of horizons, as the love of truth and genuine desires of goodness are concentrated on one solipsistic person so that that person is the only one capable of knowledge: such a person would naturally refute kenosis⁸.

Following this cognition, it is natural for Ivan's devil to see himself as the only one who develops a horizon and the only hope for humankind—for others are corrupted by Christianity. Ironically, therefore, Ivan's devil falls into the trap of Nietzsche's Messianism: the ideology in which a person sees and treats himself as the Christian savior, assigning himself the duty of

Christ. To wit, consider how the devil purposefully quotes this line of Ivan's: "...and then everything will begin anew. Men will unite to take from life all they can give, but only for joy and happiness in the present world. Man will be lifted up with a spirit of divine Titanic pride, and the man-god will appear." (546)

Here we see a striking resemblance between Dostoyevsky's and Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*—the man-god. While the idea of the man-god is for it to be pervasive amongst all human beings, it is clear to us that at this point, Ivan's devil sees himself as the only man-god, as he sees himself as the only one capable of "all things are permitted." (546) Ivan's devil has therefore dignified himself as God. The problem, however, is not the phrase "all things are permitted." Rather, the problem is that the pre-requisite for "all things are permitted" is the ability to control all things, such that nothing would go wrong under the "all things are permitted" schema. Yet, Ivan does not have the Godly ability to handle his schema: he makes very questionable choices: not only was he "very desirous of [his] parent's death" (517), but he also admits that he "incited [Smerdyakov] to do it (that is, murder his father). Events like these eventually drive Ivan into delirium, in which the hallucinating devil appears.

If Alyosha did not arrive on time, Ivan may have been fully engrossed by delirium and engulfed by his own words, and this is not what Alyosha wants to see. Thus, unlike the devil who continues to lacerate Ivan with his own words, when Alyosha sees Ivan, he immediately realizes that Ivan is deeply engrossed in a troublesome delirium—such that it is imperative for Alyosha to lay Ivan on a pillow with wet towels. Before talking to Ivan, Alyosha must let Ivan rest and recover. It appears, therefore, that Alyosha cannot use only the *Gespräch* to convince Ivan of the delirium, for the delirium is founded by profoundly troublesome beliefs, ultimately distorting Ivan's perception and capability of language as we can see from Ivan's speech,

"Cherub! A thunderous howl of the seraphim. What are seraphim? Perhaps a whole constellation. But perhaps that constellation is only a chemical molecule. There's a constellation of the Lion and the Sun" (548); his disorganized words and ideas reveal his lack of capability of any sane conversation. Can Alyosha still overturn his brother from delirium, Messianism, and guilt?

The answer is that Alyosha could, but not in terms of conversation. Instead, Alyosha is confident in the positive attributes of Ivan, which is different from the attributes of Ivan's devil, as he is confident that Ivan will go and give the evidence, and that "God will conquer" (551). To illustrate, Alyosha sees that while the devil is Ivan, Ivan is not the devil: for the devil is the demonstration of a twisted Ivan—twisted by his Messianic inclinations. Back in the Rebellion chapter, we hear Ivan saying to Alyosha that he does not "want anyone to suffer anymore" and that he does "not want the mother to embrace the tormentor who threw her son into the dogs" (212). Ivan's passion for the good of humanity, in general, pushes him into the reflection of the existing moral monolith—Christianity—which he sees as responsible for the catastrophes of human suffering. Based on this, he develops the Grand Inquisitor story, in which the GI takes over the work of God on Earth with an intense passion and love toward humankind. These analyses are enough for Alyosha to know that Ivan is not inherently evil—not in Smerdyakov's way, at least. For example, as we can see from Alyosha telling Ivan to "never mind [the devil], anyway; have done with him and forget him. And let him take with him all that you curse now, and never come back" (549), Alyosha differentiates and separates Ivan away from the totally evil devil. Casting out the devil is important, for Ivan's problem resides in his purposeful narrow vision and his view that the troubles of mankind are unresolvable unless he himself replaces God as a man-god. Being too narrow and thus unable to mimic the benevolence and wisdom of God; however, he falters into delusion and mania: this gives rise to the devil.

Alyosha's strategy to calm Ivan down is correct; by doing so, he draws Ivan, although temporarily, away from tunneling Ivan's ideas. We can characterize this as Alyosha casting away the devil from Ivan, for Alyosha is arguably suspicious of such a 'devil' in Ivan's mind since their exchange over the GI. Yet, Alyosha does not seek to immediately alter Ivan, for he is fully aware of how such rashness could be unhelpful to Ivan. As Gadamer says, "a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity," Alyosha is now fully aware of Ivan's "textual alterity," and he is prepared for Ivan's stories to convey radical notions. That said, Gadamer supplementally indicates that such minds are at the same time sensitive to "the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices" (282). Ivan's position and claims are rather narrowed, but his stories are profound and reflective of many realities. Changing him is, therefore, not the right thing for Alyosha to do. Instead, not only Alyosha correctly realizes "the anguish of a proud determination" (551) of Ivan, so he correctly believes Ivan will appear at the court and give his evidence and self-accusation, but most importantly, he prays for Ivan's welfare. The Christian/hermeneutical significance of prayer is that it allows Alyosha to trespass the barriers of fore-meanings and prejudices and give the judgments of these to God. At last, whether Ivan would "rise up in the light of truth" or "perish in hate, revenging on himself and on everything his having served the cause he does not believe in" (551) is beyond Alyosha's work. Through praying the best for his brother, Alyosha respects Ivan's freedom of action.

The Speech at the Stone: Seeing the Gestalt of the Novel as a Whole

The last scene of this story reveals Alyosha's hermeneutical wish, entailing what Alyosha's hermeneutical project is aiming for its ultimate achievement. What makes this scene important to our discussion is how Alyosha carries Ilyusha's coffin, together with the twelve children, to the

church while the "boys surrounded [the coffin] and remained reverently standing so, all through the service" (642). Before giving this detail a phenomenological analysis, one should instantly realize that the number recalls the twelve disciples of Jesus and that Alyosha, as the coordinator of the twelve children, would resemble the image of Christ. Like Christ, Alyosha works on establishing "active love" slowly and steadily in this world. This shows that Alyosha's work with the children is similar to Christ's work, for even if both ultimately leave their work of active love on Earth, such work could always be succeeded by fellow Christians who share the same vision as him.

Moreover, both Alyosha's action and speech characterizes his work towards a fusion of horizons with the children. What should be emphasized here is the word towards and not fusion of horizons since it is too early for the children to adopt a horizon. Alyosha's work towards it is, therefore, a symbol of active love: instead of aiming for an instantaneous outcome, he chooses to plant the seeds into these children so that they will eventually grow into fruitful trees. As Alyosha says to the children after Ilyusha's funeral, "You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and useful in life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, from the parental home" (645), he works towards a fusion of horizons by giving and wishing the children a good memory, which is to him "like spots of light out of darkness, like a corner torn out of a huge picture" (22). His memories of his mother, as he speaks, belong to the category of—"some beautiful, sacred memory, preserved from childhood," and that "is perhaps the best education." (645). Indeed, the word perhaps indicates his uncertainty towards his claim, for his mother did leave him early. Nonetheless, remembering "her all his life, her face, her caresses" (22), we realize how these memories protect Alyosha from submitting to the wickedness of life. Just as Alyosha says, "However bad we may become—when we recall

how we buried Ilyusha, how we loved him in stone, the cruelest and most mocking of us—will not dare to laugh inwardly at having been kind and good at this moment" (645), he sees the importance of spreading the same protection to the children. Therefore, Alyosha would appear as the main attendee and organizer of Ilyusha's funeral, bringing the boys to the "touching and impressive funeral prayers" (642), showing them how remembering their deceased friend can also be interpreted as an event of reconciliation and celebration. Therefore, we can argue that Alyosha genuinely cares about the well-being of Ilyusha, Kolya, and the children, as he brings them to the experience and remembrance of how a grief-filled life event can be transformed. This sets the ground for Alyosha to further his fusion of horizons with the children through speech.

After all, children are always the hope for a future change in the current status quo, and Alyosha knows the importance of educating children in profound ways. Specifically, now that he has shared some remarkable experiences with the children, he shall also share some of the contents on his horizon with the children to bring more positive influences. As he says, "Let us be, first and above all, kind, then honest, and then let us never forget each other, forget one of you: every face looking at me now I shall remember even for thirty years. Just now, Kolya said to Kartashov that we did not care to know 'whether he exists or not.' But I cannot forget that Kartashov exists and that he is not blushing now as he did when he discovered Troy but is looking at me with his nice, kind, happy little eyes." (645) Alyosha firstly offers recognition to the children that he sees and treats them equally and that he remembers their respective anecdotes, which reveals his close observations of the unique qualities of every child.

Notably, he does not preach by directly contradicting Kolya but chooses only to offer the light he sees in Kartashov. His strategy is way more effective than preaching, for preaching does not come into a fusion of horizons but forced dogma. It is not helpful to order the children what

they should or should not do, as the GI would do, for the reasons and implications of doing so will never come. Instead, Alyosha helpfully offers them a profound phenomenological experience and understanding of who they are and what they see, accompanied by reasons for why and ways for how they should be their best selves by coming together as a whole: this is the concept of the Gestalt we mentioned in the beginning. Firstly, the memory Alyosha sets for the children becomes the foundation for their shared horizons, as "however bad [they] may be," they "will not dare to laugh inwardly at having been kind and good at [the moment they buried Kolya]" (645): the very foundation of this memory is, therefore, a rudimentary benevolence.

While this may sound simple, it is crucial in terms of accessing the Gestalt: if one, like Ivan and the GI, does not have this benevolence, then their chance to profoundly experience this world in a phenomenological way is rare, for they would not know why and how to do so. Secondly, the fusion of horizons comes one step closer with Alyosha calling each child to learn and appreciate the distinct good qualities of each other: Ilyusha's intelligence and bravery, Kolya's generosity, and Kartashov's smartness and sweetness. The profound memory—a Gestalt "eternal and good in our hearts now and unto ages of ages" (646), as Alyosha says, serves as a fusion of horizons always capable (for the children) of returning. In fact, the manifold of our varied good qualities creates the Gestalt of human benevolence and reconciliation between differences. In this form, therefore, Alyosha and the children complete the connection from part to the whole and whole to the part and "go hand in hand" (646) to the funeral dinner⁹. Thus, Alyosha's hand-in-hand image with the children becomes the final image of the novel, not only symbolizing how individual beings can come together through the fusion of horizons but also how the fusion of horizons positively benefits and elevates the individuals. Together, they become the Gestalt of the light of humanity in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

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Endnotes

¹ As MP entails in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, “Gestalt theory has, of course, shown that the supposed signs of distance – the object’s apparent size, the number of objects interposed between us and the object in question, the disparity of the retinal images, and the degree of accommodation and convergence – are only explicitly known in an analytical or reflective perception that turns away from the object itself and rather bears upon the object’s mode of presentation” (48).

² If he does, then there is no fusion of horizons for us to talk about. Instead, he will be, as Contino points out, “(imposing) a totalizing and unblessed rage for order.” (Contino 10) This eager desire for order is what the Grand Inquisitor is searching and arguing for: he “annihilates human freedom in the name of love of mankind” (Contino 10) and eradicates any intersubjective relations, for all will do nothing but submit to the univocal. I find Contino’s univocal/equivocal juxtaposition very helpful when it comes to our understanding the essence of Alyosha’s project, and on how it is different from Ivan’s—if the latter has any projects, that is.

³ “Hell is other people”—so speaks Mr. Garcin, a character in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit*. In the play, Mr. Garcin is entrapped in an afterworld due to the sins he committed and is being gazed by two other female characters in a room he cannot leave. Without a mirror, Garcin can only observe himself through other characters: Garcin cannot bear this gaze and thus cries “hell is other people”. That said, perhaps the desperation for a mirror—something that grants one the ability to look into one’s image—indicates a narcissistic inclination, that one cannot sustain without being constantly aware of one’s own image. Yet we have good reasons and evidences in the BK to refute this kind of narcissism. In fact, the fact that Alyosha gradually found his vocation and horizon through conversations with other people will make a strong counter-case against Sartre’s character.

⁴ It seems that I and Contino’s opinion slightly differs when it comes to the concept of uncertainty, for the establishment of a horizon may seem like a search for certainty. At the same time, Contino claims that

Alyosha “needs to find the wisdom discovered in letting be” (Contino 87) and that Alyosha needs to embrace certainty. Are we in conflict?

To seek for a reconciliation, I will distinguish between “the uncertainty of events” and “the uncertainty of capabilities”. The former is simple: we for most cases do not have control over what events will happen and that is the uncertainty we should embrace, because it may turn out doing us good. However, we should prevent our uncertainty of our capabilities—that is, we will need to know how to react when unexpected events arise. What Contino is arguing is that we should not attempt to eliminate uncertain events, for doing so is vain. While I agree, I do think that we should eliminate our uncertainty regarding capabilities.

⁵ Contino’s idea of a both/and vision can be rather helpful for us to understand God’s paradoxical image. Unlike the either/or perspective which emphasizes on tension and dichotomy (A or B, just or evil), “both/and approach to reality recognizes both its complexity and wholeness” (contino 8) by acknowledging the co-existence of dichotomous and contrasting realities. While it is not the case that (divine) reality is beyond our comprehensive abilities, such a reality is incomprehensible under the either/or framework. Human beings have the tendency to adopt the either/or approach (which Contino points out on the same page) and that maybe what prevents us from a comprehensive understanding. Contino’s framework, I argue, is really similar to a hermeneutical framework, which emphasizes on mediation rather than juxtaposition.

⁶ To borrow an anecdote from one of Gadamer’s essays as an illustration: “I remember my time as a student in a seminar with Husserl...who was no master of conversation. In those seminar classes he started by setting forth a question, got a short answer then dwelled on this answer for 2h in an uninterrupted lecture. Once when he finished the class, he said to his assistant Heidegger: “today was an interesting discussion, for once.”” (Vessey 356) Husserl was obviously making fun of himself, for there can be no discussion for once. Nonetheless, it does reflect how even the wisest thinker can overlook the importance and implications of a conversation: he did not empty his own ears in order to hear others.

⁷ Consider Habermas' reply to Gadamer for example: "The question is whether the extralinguistic modes of experience are not underestimated when one asserts, as I (Gadamer) do, that is in language that we articulate the experience of the world as something in common...are there no other experiences of reality that are non-linguistic?" (Gadamer 572)

⁸ Nietzsche's ontology—*The Will to Power*—is very similar to what the devil is looking for. The key concept in *The Will to Power* is the ongoing expansion of individual power, which is taken from the collapsed old world and its establishments, such as morality, religion, royalty, etc. The new man will then arise from the eradication of these establishments.

Yet, when morality and religion collapses, everything is permitted—says Contino who describes how "the devil confronts Ivan with the proto-Nietzschean ideas that had inspired Smerdyakov." (Contino 148)

Surely, everything is indeed permitted on a physical level, that is, there are no physical forces preventing one from committing atrocities. However, Dostoyevsky would agree that not everything is permitted on a metaphysical level: we see this through Ivan's insanity and inclinations toward a demonic possession. Ivan has surely paid his price for the everything is permitted claim in the story.

⁹ And perhaps this final image may invoke us on why *The Fusion of Horizons* is a much preferable ontology compared to *The Will to Power*: because the feelings, intelligences, particularities, and differences, are shared by many and not owned by one. Moreover, where could Nietzsche's expansion lead us to, except solipsism? Even if the person is, as Nietzsche thinks, godly powerful, I think he will still prefer sharing his inner world with others, and by doing so, come to a common ground of mutual appreciation. "Share your reading experience in conversation with others" (Contino 193) says Contino. Though he did not explicitly mention why, I would supplement my reason in and say that conversations with others are the contributor towards a fruitful intellectual life.