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Ivan Karamazov's Devil and Epistemic Doubt

In his January 1876 *Diary of a Writer* (*Дневник писателя*) article, "Spiritism. Something about Devils. The Extraordinary Cunning of Devils, if Only They Are Devils"/«Спиритизм. Нечто о чертях. Чрезвычайная хитрость чертей, если только это черти», Dostoevsky cleverly argues that since discord is the devils' signature device, the societal discord surrounding the Commission investigating the phenomenon of spiritism would serve as the greatest proof of the devils' existence, if devils, in fact, exist. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky portrays a devil who exacerbates Ivan Karamazov's internal discord by planting seeds of doubt about his existence within Ivan. Yet doesn't Dostoevsky also act like Ivan's devil? By planting seeds of doubt about the existence of Ivan Karamazov's devil in readers, he creates cognitive discord in us. Like Ivan, we are given contradictory proofs of the devil's existence. Like Ivan, we must decide whether or not Ivan's devil is a hallucination. Yet Dostoevsky provides no definitive proof, material or otherwise, so how do we decide? Do we believe, like Alyosha, that Ivan's hallucinatory and nightmarish devil is proof of Ivan's "deep conscience"/«глубокая совесть»? Do we accept the devil's claim that he is both a servant of discord and an agent of God? Does Dostoevsky create epistemic doubt in readers in order to plunge us into the ethical and metaphysical action of his novel?

Dostoevsky generates epistemic doubt by providing multiple, conflicting accounts about the devil in the last two chapters of Book 11. In Chapter 9, entitled "The Devil. The Nightmare of Ivan Fyodorovich"/«Черт. Кошмар Ивана Федоровича», the narrator, Ivan, and the devil all provide epithets for the devil, yet the narrator's differ from Ivan's, and the devil's differ from both the narrator's and Ivan's. In Chapter 10, entitled "'He Said That!'" /«'Это он говорил!'», Ivan's assertions about his interaction with the devil conflict with material proofs to the contrary.

Finally, the narrator's account of Ivan's encounter with the devil in Chapter 9 differs from Ivan's account in Chapter 10.

Dostoevsky's narrator plants the first seeds of doubt about the devil's reality in Chapter 9 by reporting the visiting medical specialist's diagnosis that Ivan may be experiencing hallucinations. While Dostoevsky may have experienced hallucinations following epileptic seizures, his probable sources for clinical descriptions include Esquirol's 1838 handbook on mental illness and Brierre de Boismont's 1845 book on hallucination.¹ Brierre describes Esquirol's definition of hallucination "as a cerebral or psychical phenomenon, acting independently of the sense, and consisting in external sensations, that the patient believes he experiences although no external agent acts materially on his senses."² Brierre's compressed definition of hallucination – "to see what no eye perceives, to hear what no ear hears, to be convinced of sensations to which all are incredulous"³ – resembles Dostoevsky's definition: "when a person begins at times to lose the distinction between the real and the spectral"/«когда человек начинает временами терять различие между реальным и призрачным» (30.1:192).⁴ Similarly, R.P. Bentall, a twentieth-century psychiatrist, suggests that hallucinations result from a failure of the metacognitive skills

¹ For a discussion of Dostoevsky's knowledge of contemporary psychology, including the work of Esquirol and Brierre, see James L. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art: An Essay in Literary and Medical History* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985): 111-18, 147-52. As Rice points out, J.E.D. Esquirol's *Des maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médicaux, hygiéniques, et médico-legaux* (1838) was the most widely acclaimed clinical handbook on mental illness. The original would have been available in Petersburg, and Dostoevsky may well have borrowed it from the library of his physician Yanovsky.

² A.A.F. Brierre de Boismont's *Hallucination: or, The Rational History of Apparitions, Visions, Dreams, Ecstasy, Magnetism, and Somnambulism* was originally published in France in 1845 (Paris: Balliere). It was reprinted in 1852 and 1862 with minor revisions. I have cited the 1853 translation of the 1852 edition; Brierre (1853): 31. Brierre cites a second definition of Esquirol's, which he considers "more brilliant than correct": "The professed sensations of the hallucinated are images, and ideas, reproduced by memory, associated by imagination, and personified by habit" Brierre (1853):32-3.

³ Brierre (1853): 31.

⁴ Citations are from F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-90). Volume and page number are given within parentheses.

involved in discriminating between self-generated and external phenomena.⁵ Raising the question of hallucination thus foregrounds Ivan's, and readers', metacognitive skills.

In creating the devil chapters, Dostoevsky draws on many sources. As Robin Feuer Miller notes, Dostoevsky establishes generic criteria for reader uncertainty by employing multiple genres throughout *The Brothers Karamazov* – the uncanny, the fantastic, the melodramatic, the gothic, and the metaphysical – all of which “share a preoccupation with dread, with a free-floating, intense anxiety that affects both the characters and the reader.”⁶ She suggests that Dostoevsky used the genres of the uncanny and the fantastic in the devil scenes to make readers experience a conflict of judgment.⁷ Like Ivan himself, readers question the devil's reality. Dostoevsky highlights this epistemic doubt by tapping into the Russian literary tradition established by Pushkin's “Queen of Spades”/«*Пиковая дама*» and developed in Gogol's “The Nose”/«*Нос*» and Dostoevsky's own *Double*/«*Двойник*»,⁸ three works that leave readers wondering whether the events depicted are real or fantastic, psychological or supernatural. As Dostoevsky wrote to an aspiring author: “you believe that Hermann actually saw a ghost, one commensurate with his view of reality, but nevertheless at story's end . . . you do not know how to solve it: did the vision arise from Hermann's nature, or was he actually one of those who came into contact with another world, evil spirits hostile to humankind . . . Now, that is art!”/«И вы верите, что Германн действительно имел видение, и именно сообразное с его мировоззрением, а между тем, в конце повести, то есть прочтя ее, Вы не знаете, как решить: вышло ли это видение из припруды Германна, или действительно он один из

⁵ R.P. Bentall, “The Illusion of Reality: A Review and Integration of Psychological Research on Hallucinations,” *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 107, No. 1 (1990):82-95, p. 82.

⁶ R.F. Miller, *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007):130.

⁷ Miller (2007):130.

⁸ In creating the devil scenes, Dostoevsky also draws on other sources, including his portrait of Stavrogin, a character who experiences hallucinations complete with devil (*Demons*); the figures of Martin Luther and Goethe's Faust, both of whom interact with devils and both of whom are mentioned in the novel; and portraits of devils from 1860s and 1870s journals. See Deborah A. Martinsen, “The Devil Incarnate,” in Predrag Cicovacki and Maria Granik, eds., *Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov: Art, Creativity, and Spirituality* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER, 2010):47-9.

тех, которые соприкоснулись с другим миром, злых и враждебных человечеству духов (NB. Спиритизм и учения его.) Вот это искусство!» (30.1:192).⁹

Dostoevsky creates a similar epistemic uncertainty by having his narrator offer simultaneous, conflicting accounts of Ivan's encounter with the devil. In Chapter 9, Ivan vacillates between two positions I call «это я» and «это не я», i.e., he sees the devil either as a self-projection or an adversary with an objective reality. As Chapter 9 ends, Ivan concludes that he was not dreaming, and in Chapter 10 he repeatedly dissociates himself from the devil by taking a position I call «это он» (It's he), thereby resolving his indecision and affirming the devil's objective existence. Dostoevsky's narrator, by contrast, offers a realistic, seemingly eye-witness depiction of Ivan's nocturnal visitor throughout Chapter 9, yet concludes that Ivan *was* dreaming. In Chapter 10, as Ivan repeatedly insists on the devil's reality (это он), the narrator provides material evidence to the contrary. Moreover, as Ivan raves deliriously to his brother Alyosha in Chapter 10, he makes claims about what the devil said that do not match the narrator's account in Chapter 9.

Dostoevsky also creates uncertainty by providing ambiguous titles for the two chapters – “The Devil. Ivan Fyodorovich's Nightmare”/«Черт. Кошмар Ивана Федоровича» and “He Said That!”/«Это он говорил!»». By juxtaposing the words “devil” and “nightmare” in the title

⁹ The aspiring author was Yuliya Fyodorovna Abaza; the letter was written 15 June 1880. Emerson and Rosenshield both discuss the story's interpretive ambiguity. Caryl Emerson, “‘The Queen of Spades’ and the Open End,” *Pushkin Today*, ed. David Bethea (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992):31-37; Gary Rosenshield, *Pushkin and the Genres of Madness: The Masterpieces of 1833* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003):21-36. E.I. Kiiko notes that the night after writing the letter to Abaza Dostoevsky wrote the first draft of his chapter on Ivan Karamazov's devil, which had not been foreseen in the plans for the novel. E.I. Кийко, “Реализм фантастического в главе ‘Черт. Кошмар Ивана Федоровича и Эдгар По,’” *Достоевский. Материалы и исследования*, VI (1985):256-62. “Имея в виду этот эпизод романа, Достоевский писал своим издателям: ‘...я давно уже справлялся с мнением докторов (и не одного). Они утверждают, что не только подобные кошмары, но и галлюцинации перед ‘белой горячкой’ возможны. Мой герой, конечно, видит и галлюцинации, но смешивает их с своими кошмарами. Тут не только физическая (болезненная) черта, когда человек начинает временами терять различие между реальным и призрачным (что почти с каждым человеком, хоть раз в жизни, случалось), но и душевная, совпадающая с характером героя: отрицая реальность призрака, он, когда исчез призрак, стоит за его реальность” (П., IV, 190)” (258-9).

of Chapter 9, Dostoevsky's narrator suggests that the second word, "nightmare," may explain the first, "devil," thereby encouraging us to view Ivan's nightmare as a physical manifestation of psychological distress as well as (with "nightmare") a psychological manifestation of physical distress. Thus, as Ivan experiences a metacognitive crisis while seeking material proof of a metaphysical reality, readers experience a conflict of judgment while seeking material proof of a psychic reality.

Dostoevsky further complicates readers' interpretive task by supplying discordant evidence: the narrator's and Ivan's views of the devil conflict.¹⁰ The narrator reports the nightmare scene mostly as a matter of fact, yet occasionally hints that the conversation has no objective reality in the world of the novel. Initially characterizing the devil as "some gentleman, or rather a certain type of Russian gentleman"/«какой-то господин или, лучше сказать, известного сорта русский джентльмен» (15:70), the narrator ironically refers to him six more times as a "gentleman," a common euphemism for the devil (15:71,73,74,75,79,81).¹¹ He compares him to a "hanger on in *bon ton*" /«приживальщик, хорошего тона» (15:71), who is taken for a "decent person" /«порядочный человек» (15:71). The narrator evokes Fyodor Pavlovich's earlier claim that he, Fyodor Pavlovich, houses a small-caliber "unclean spirit" /«дух нечистый» (14:39), allowing Dostoevsky to link father and son by having a devil who resembles Fyodor

¹⁰ Because I am discussing Dostoevsky's strategy for creating epistemic uncertainty in Chapter 9, I am limiting the following discussion to descriptions of the devil from that chapter.

¹¹ Linda Ivanits notes that the folk generally did not call the devil by name, "fearing that the devil would appear the moment his name were uttered." She provides a comprehensive list of folk euphemisms for the devil, many of which Dostoevsky uses. Linda Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989): 39. Wigzell discusses the folk use of the term "gentleman." Faith Wigzell, "Dostoevskii and the Russian Folk heritage," *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow (Cambridge University Press, 2002):21-46, p. 36. In his May-June 1877 *Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevsky also associates the word "джентльмен" with liberalism and with the alienation from Russia of Russians living abroad: "К тому же хоть ли в либеральном духе воспитываем деток, да ведь всё ж джентльменами, - а в этом ведь и всё главное. Будут они витать в сферах исключительных и высших, а либерализм в высших сферах всегда обозначал и сопровождал у нас джентльменство, ибо джентльменский либерализм для высшего-то, так сказать, консерватизма и полезен, это всегда у нас различать умели" (25:139).

Pavlovich in Ivan's soul.¹² Most frequently, the narrator calls the devil a "guest"/«гость», a common euphemism for the devil (15:70, 71, 73, 75, 80, 84). Near chapter's end, however, the narrator shifts from his realistic account by observing that Ivan is desperately trying not to believe "his delirium"/«своему бреду» (15:75). Shortly thereafter, the narrator refers to the devil as a "voice"/«голос» (15:83), notes that Ivan throws his tea glass at "the orator"/«в оратора» (15:84),¹³ and finally calls him "that one"/«тот» (15:84), yet another common euphemism for the devil. By observing that Alyosha's knocks at the window continued, "though not quite as loud as it had just now seemed to him in sleep"/«но совсем не так громко, как сейчас только мерещилось ему во сне» (15:84), the narrator suggests that the dialogue was a dream. The narrator thus starts Chapter 9 by treating the devil as an actual visitor, yet concludes by treating the encounter as a dream, using the verb «мерещиться» to reinforce the idea of hallucination.¹⁴

By contrast, Ivan initially treats the devil as part of his unconscious self: "it's I, I myself speaking, and not you"/«это я, я сам говорю, а не ты!» (15:72); "You are the embodiment of me myself, but only one side . . . of my thoughts and feelings, only the most nasty and stupid ones"/«Ты воплощение меня самого, только одной, впрочем, моей стороны . . . моих мыслей и чувств, только самых гадких и глупых» (15:72); "you are I, I myself, only with a different mug"/«ты – я, сам я, только с другою рожей» (15:73); "you are I, you are I and nothing else!"/«ты – я, ты есть я и более ничего!» (15:77). Ivan also calls the devil a "nightmare"/«кошмар» (15:72,74,81), a "dream"/«сон» (15:74,79), and a "lie"/«ложь» (15:72), "my illness"/«болезнь моя» (15:72), "a specter"/«призраку» (15:72), "my hallucination"/«моя галлюцинация» (15:72), "rubbish"/«дрянь» (15:77), and "my fantasy"/«моя фантазия» (15:77). He claims to have seen him "in sleep"/«во сне» rather than while awake/«наяву» (15:72). He calls him names that evoke his father Fyodor Pavlovich – "hanger-on"/«приживальщик» (15:72) and "Buffoon!"/«Шут!» (15:80), the latter being yet another common euphemism for the

¹² See Deborah A. Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame: Dostoevsky's Liars and Narrative Exposure* (Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003): 207-16.

¹³ Deborah A. Martinsen, "Ivan Karamazov and Martin Luther: Protestors and their Devils," in *В направлении смысла: Mezhdunarodnyi sbornik statei pamyati professora Natal'i Vasil'evny Zhivolupovoi* (Нижний Новгород, 2012):122-35.

¹⁴ By depicting Ivan's increasingly unsuccessful attempts to stave off illness through sheer will power, the narrator bolsters his diagnosis of Ivan's condition.

devil. He calls him the same names that he calls Smerdyakov – “ass”/«осел» (15:76),¹⁵ “lackey”/«лакей» (15:83 twice) and “stupid”/«глуп» (15:73,75 twice). He calls him “banal”/«пошл» (15:73). He also calls the devil “Fool!”/«Дурак!» (15:74) and “scoundrel”/«негодяй» (15:80). As the scene ends, however, Ivan swears “It was not a dream! No, I swear, it was not a dream, it all happened just now!”/«Это не сон! Нет, клянусь, это был не сон, это все сейчас было!» (15:85). The stakes for Ivan are very high: to accept the devil as part of himself means Ivan must acknowledge base thoughts and feelings, despised aspects of himself that he associates with his father and unacknowledged half-brother. To deny that association means Ivan can protect himself from the shame of relation. Ivan clearly prefers denial, telling Alyosha, “I really would like him to be *him*, in actual fact, and not me!”/«я бы очень желал, чтоб он в самом деле был он, а не я!» (15:87).

Dostoevsky further compounds readers’ epistemic uncertainty by having Ivan’s devil introduce his own self-descriptive epithets. Like the narrator and Ivan, the devil refers to himself as a “hanger-on”/«приживальщик» (15:72). Using the narrator’s terms, the devil declares “I want to be a gentleman”/«джентильмен» (15:73) and “Now I only value my reputation as a decent person”/«порядочного человека» (15:73). He taunts Ivan with the epithets Ivan has used of him: “your fantasy”/«твою только фантазию» (15:73), “a specter”/«призраку» «призрак жизни» (15:73, 77), “a fool and a lackey”/«дурак да лакей» (15:73), “your hallucination”/«твоя галлюцинация» (15:74), “your nightmare, and nothing more”/«твой кошмар, и больше ничего» (15:74). He mocks Ivan for having “such a banal devil”/«такой пошлый черт» (15:81) and reproves Ivan for calling him “stupid”/«глуп» (15:76,82). Yet the devil alone invokes Khlestakov by claiming to be a writer of “little vaudevilles”/«водевильчики» (15:76), accuses Ivan of taking him for “some graying Khlestakov”/«поседалого Хлестакова» (15:76), and deliberately misquotes the well-worn Latin line from Terence, “I am Satan and nothing human is alien to me”/“*Satana sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto*” (15:74), establishing his originality by demonstrating his own derivativeness. The devil alone calls himself a “person”/«человек» (15:73, 76, 82), “a scapegoat”/«козла отпущения» (15:77), “an x in an indeterminate

¹⁵ This evokes the early scene “Over the Cognac” in which Smerdyakov is called “Valaam’s ass” (14:21). Ivan also calls the philosopher of his own legend about paradise an ass - “Вот осел-то!” (15:79) - for getting up to walk the quadrillion kilometers necessary to get to heaven.

equation”/«икс в неопределенном уравнении» (15:77), and “the indispensable minus”/«необходимый минус» (15:82). By adding the devil’s self-definitions, Dostoevsky forces Ivan and readers to wonder whether the devil’s seemingly self-generated words prove his independent existence.

In Chapter 10, Dostoevsky makes Alyosha witness two material proofs that the devil is Ivan’s hallucination: the dry towel and the unflung tea glass. By Book Eleven, Alyosha has already passed through his own crucible of doubt and become an insightful confessor. Since Alyosha’s judgment about Ivan’s physical condition coincides with the narrator’s, Dostoevsky reinforces readers’ perception of the narrator’s reliability just before creating a narrative gap between what Ivan tells Alyosha in Chapter 10 and what the narrator relates in Chapter 9.¹⁶

Chapter 10 also reveals Ivan’s most secret shame – his fear that he will go to court and take responsibility for his father’s death not because it is morally right but because he wants to be praised for his self-sacrifice. This fear frames his nightmare and reflects a long-standing philosophical debate about human nature and motivation: do we act out of self-interest as the egoists and utilitarians contend, or do we act out of love for others as the altruists and theologians contend?

Chapter 10’s title, “He Said That!”/«‘Это он говорил!’» immediately raises the question: where do we place the stress? On content or speaker: «‘*Это* он говорил!’»? or «‘Это *он* говорил!’»? Is it both? Does the third word – говорил – make a claim about the event’s reality? In this chapter, Ivan deliriously insists that the devil exists: “He teased me!

¹⁶ Alyosha’s arrival and the narrative gap also allow Dostoevsky to deploy what I call the underground narrative strategy of saving the most painful revelation for last. Just as Mitya reveals his most secret shame – the calculation involved in saving half of Katerina Ivanovna’s three thousand rubles – only after his interrogators have worn him down, so Ivan reveals his most secret shame only after the devil has worn him down. Dostoevsky not only uses this strategy in *Notes from Underground*, he has his underground man explain the psychology behind it: “In every man’s memories there are certain things that he will not reveal to everyone but only to friends. And there are things that he will not reveal even to friends, but only to himself and even then in secret. But there are, in the end, such things that he’s afraid to reveal even to himself”/«Есть в воспоминаниях всякого человека такие вещи, которые он открывает не всем, а разве только друзьям. Есть и такие, которые он и друзьям не откроет, а разве только себе самому, да и то под секретом. Но есть, наконец, и такие, которые даже и себе человек открывать боится, и таких вещей у всякого порядочного человека довольно-таки покопиться» (5:122).

And you know, he did it deftly, deftly: [he cites the devil] ‘Conscience! What’s conscience? I do it myself. Why do I torment myself? Out of habit. Out of a universal human habit for seven thousand years. Throw off the habit and we will become gods’. He said that, he said that!’/ «Дразнил меня! И знаешь, ловко, ловко: ‘Совесьть! Что совесьть? Я сам ее делаю. Зачем же я мучаюсь? По привычке. По всемирной человеческой привычке за семь тысяч лет. Так отвыкнем и будем боги’. Это он говорил, это он говорил!» (15:87). Ivan’s claim that *for seven thousand years* the devil has been tormenting himself rather than others reminds us more of Ivan’s atheist philosopher, who protests the fact of eternal life by lying down for centuries before walking his quadrillion to get to heaven, than of Ivan’s devil, who wants to be incarnated as a 250-lb merchant’s wife¹⁷ (15:73-4,77-8). Ivan’s devil is a bourgeois wannabe, not a self-tormenting intellectual like Ivan. Ivan’s claim also reveals a metacognitive breakdown signaling that the devil is a projection of Ivan’s psyche, a possibility raised 400 pages earlier in the tavern scene where Ivan paraphrases Voltaire’s famous dictum about man creating God in his image as he tells Alyosha: “I think that if the devil did not exist, and therefore he was created by man, then he created him in his own image and likeness”/«Я думаю, что если дьявол не существует и, стало быть, создал его человек, то создал он его по своему образу и подобию» (14:217). Although Ivan disavows hated parts of himself by attributing them to the devil, his projective dissociation breaks down here. By claiming that the devil calls himself a self-tormenter, Ivan comes close to uncomfortable truths about himself, suggesting that the devil tormenting him may be the voice of Ivan’s own conscience.

After Alyosha arrives with news of Smerdyakov’s suicide, Ivan insists that the devil exists and fashions him into a prosecutorial adversary who makes two accusations: 1) that Ivan will testify because he wants public praise, and 2) that Ivan will act virtuously despite his doubts. The devil makes the first accusation mockingly: ““All right, he says, you will go out of pride, but still there was always the hope that they would convict Smerdyakov and send him to prison, that they would acquit Mitya and judge you only *morally* (you hear, he laughed at that), and that others would praise you. But now Smerdyakov is dead, he hanged himself – so who’s going to believe you by yourself in court now?”/«Пусть, говорит, ты шел из гордости, но ведь всё же была и надежда, что уличат Смердякова и сошлют в каторгу, что Митю оправдают, а другие так и похвалят. Но

¹⁷ Martinsen, “The Devil Incarnate” (2010).

вот умер Смердяков, повесился – ну и кто же тебе там на суде теперь-то одному поверит?» (15:88). Ivan heatedly defends himself against this accusation: “He lied about that, Alyosha, he lied, I swear to you”/«Это он солгал, Алеша, солгал, клянусь тебе!» (15:87); “That’s a beastly lie!”/«это зверская ложь!» (15:88).

The devil’s second accusation reveals Ivan’s self-knowledge: ““You are going to perform a feat of virtue even though you do not believe in virtue – that’s what makes you angry and torments you. That’s why you are so vindictive.” That’s what he said to me about myself, and he knows what he is saying”/«Ты идешь совершить подвиг добродетели, а в добродель-то и не веришь – вот что тебя злит и мучит, вот отчего ты такой мстительный.’ Это он мне про меня говорил, а он знает, что говорит...» (15:87). The devil also suggests that Ivan’s hesitations and self-torment arise from his metaphysical anguish: “Why are you going to drag yourself there, if your sacrifice will not help anyone? . . . You will go because you do not dare not to go. Why you do not dare – that’s for you to figure out, there’s an enigma for you!”/«Для чего же ты туда поташишься, если жертва твоя ни к чему не послужит? Пойдешь, потому что не смеешь не пойти. Почему не смеешь, – это уж сам угадай, вот тебе загадка!» (15:88). The devil thus hints that Ivan believes in God by pointing to his conscience, i.e., to non-material evidence. Alyosha likewise reads Ivan’s suffering as “The torments of a proud decision, a deep conscience!”/«Муки гордого решения, глубокая совесть!» (15:89).

By linking the question of hallucination with the devil, Dostoevsky links Ivan’s physical, psychological, and metaphysical agonies. Ivan’s dialogue with the devil in Chapter 9 reveals a man tormented by metaphysical doubt, whereas his delirious ravings to Alyosha in Chapter 10 reveal a man tormented by self-doubt. By conjoining Ivan’s metaphysical agony and his self-doubt with the question of the devil’s existence, Dostoevsky effectively merges Ivan’s shame (embodied in the devil) with his guilt (represented by his conscience). While it would be easy to create a dichotomy between evil devil and angelic Alyosha, the merger of shame and guilt in Chapter 10 makes a simple dichotomy impossible. Ivan’s nightmare occurs after his third visit to Smerdyakov, who accuses Ivan of murdering his father, something the devil definitely does *not* do. The devil may embody Ivan’s shame, but he reminds Ivan of his conscience in a passage that Dostoevsky highlights by using it as his chapter title ““He Said That!””: ““Conscience! What is conscience?” . . . It’s he who said that, it’s he who said that!”/«Совесть! Что совесть?» ...Это он говорил, это

он говорил!» Ivan's iterative claim is met by Alyosha's iterative rebuttal: "And not you, not you?"/«А не ты, не ты?» (15:87) – a rebuttal that echoes his earlier statement "It was not you who killed father, not you!"/«Не ты убил отца, не ты!» (15:40). In both cases, Alyosha speaks to Ivan's conscience, thereby reinforcing the narrator's position that Ivan's devil is a dream, a product of his own conscience, and not, like Smerdyakov, an external accuser.¹⁸

In these two remarkable chapters, Dostoevsky exploits the epistemic properties of hallucination. As Ivan's metacognitive capacities break down and he loses the ability to distinguish between self-generated and external phenomena, readers' metacognitive faculties rev up. Like Ivan, we experience epistemic doubt as we try to determine whether or not the devil is a hallucination. In Chapter 9, Ivan intuits that the devil may be one of his own making, but he does not want to accept a messy, fallen, shame-filled world, in which children suffer, Fyodor Pavlovich is his father, Dmitry his brother, and Smerdyakov perhaps his half-brother. Unlike his flamboyant father, who flaunts his shame, Ivan internalizes his in devil's form. Significantly, the devil and Ivan use different idioms in arguing about the devil's reality: the devil uses "in actual fact"/«в самом деле» (15:72,80), whereas Ivan uses "one's self"/«сам по себе» (15:74,76), the phrase Gogol's unimaginable Nose uses to boldly refute Major Kovalyov's assertion that it should know its proper place. In *The Double*, Dostoevsky played ironically with this idiom by having Mr. Golyadkin use it as a mantra to reassure himself of his right to exist and have a life of his own. When Ivan adopts this phrase, Dostoevsky evokes these and other Petersburg works whose ambiguous endings suggest that the events related may be a dream, yet leave open the possibility that they are not.¹⁹

In Chapter 9, the evidence is ambiguous. The narrator reports that Ivan wets a towel and places it on his head as his dialogue with the devil begins and that Ivan throws a cup of tea at his interlocutor as their dialogue ends, yet he concludes that the devil was a dream. In Chapter 10, evidence for

¹⁸ Smerdyakov misreads Ivan, because he dismisses Ivan's conscience. Владимир Кантор, *В поисках личности: опыт русской классики* (М. 1994):169.

¹⁹ In Chapter 10, Ivan adopts the devil's phrase "в самом деле" once (15:87), as he tells Alyosha, "I really would like him to be *him*, in actual fact, and not me!" /«я бы очень желал, чтоб он в самом деле был *он*, а не я!» (15:87). While this example demonstrates that Ivan is aware of his metacognitive dilemma, his use of a phrase previously attributed only to his devil indicates the beginning of the breakdown between the two that we see in Ivan's statement attributing self-torment to the devil which occurs a few lines later.

hallucination mounts. First, Alyosha finds a dry towel on its rack and a teacup on the table. Second, Smerdyakov's suicide is not mentioned in Chapter 9, while in Chapter 10 Ivan swears to Alyosha that the devil spoke of it and even claims, "He spoke only about that, if you like"/«Он только про это и говорил, если хочешь» (15:88). Third, as their conversation begins, Ivan tells Alyosha that he has waking dreams: "I walk, speak, and see . . . yet sleep"/«я хожу, говорю и вижу – а сплю» (15:86) – words that Alyosha remembers at chapter's end (15:88). But does hallucination answer the question Ivan's devil asks Ivan earlier: "Who knows whether proof of the devil is proof of God?"/«И наконец, если доказан черт, то еще неизвестно, доказан ли бог?» (15:71-2). If Ivan's devil is a hallucination, and thus self-generated, is he a manifestation of Ivan's conscience? And is proof of conscience, proof of God?

In writing the devil scenes, Dostoevsky reframes the question of hallucination, making it a question of ethics and belief. He thus takes epistemic doubt from the Russian literary tradition and moves it, and his readers, into the realm of ethics and metaphysics. By having readers experience an epistemic crisis similar to Ivan's, Dostoevsky forces us to confront the eternal questions.