Lecture II


The Legend’s main message develops the message of the previous chapter, “Rebellion,” but with a twist. Alyosha’s challenge at the end of "Rebellion" is that Ivan cannot accuse Jesus of injustice the way he accused God the Father. Ivan takes a different tack against Jesus: His demands on human beings are impossible. So Ivan rebels against Jesus too. Our job is to figure out Ivan’s argument and to assess its validity.

The story’s setting is the Spanish inquisition in the 1500s, and the spokesman a 90 year-old cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, who is made the spokesman for all social arrangements that seek to *make people happy*. See p. 16, repeated on p. 24 and p. 36, line 4. We’ll return to that word “make,”

**THE THREE STAGES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND FREEDOM**

The Inquisitor predicts (on p. 26) that the stage of history he represents will end and two more will follow. His stage began eight centuries before his time; it goes back to the time of the formation of the Papal States. (In the 750s the Pope took control over northeastern Italy, which together with Rome formed the country called "The Papal States" which lasted until the late 1860s when Italy was unified.) See reference to "eight centuries" having passed on p. 30. Ivan’s version of the history suggests the western church’s ulterior motive was to assume temporal power independent of the Emperor ruling from Constantinople. There followed a permanent schism between the eastern and western branches of Christianity during the time of the Byzantine patriarch Photius in the 800s AD. Thereafter the Popes were involved in the politics of the Holy Roman Empire.

The second stage is the reform movement, which motivates much of Western democracy from the seventeenth century on, beginning in a period called “the Enlightenment,” but maybe as early as the Protestant reformation or as late as the Industrial Revolution. The reformists will have their thousand years and will in the end fail, because they try to deliver happiness and freedom both. Science enters the story here, because freedom protects science, and so science promotes freedom. So the Inquisitor adds, "no science will give [the people] bread so long as they remain free" (p. 26).

Notice that Ivan, putting words in the Inquisitor's mouth, has Jesus and science on the same side here, advocating freedom. Ivan is speaking in the 1860s and putting words into the mouth of someone speaking three hundred years earlier. So the Inquisitor is foretelling that his regime will soon be supplanted by a thousand years of science and technological progress ("the tower of Babel"). Ivan, of course, knew the first three hundred years of that thousand. It’s often thought to be a secular reform movement. But Ivan puts Jesus on its side, and so "secular" is not quite right. But Ivan also says the sages oppose Jesus and erect their tower of Babel over Jesus’s temple. One way to keep Ivan’s story coherent is to think Jesus favors science, but the scientists mistakenly think he is their enemy. Whether secular or not, the era of technological progress, science, and free thought will fail by the end of the
thousand years, but then the Inquisitor’s side will return. Science promised "fire from heaven" (allusion to the Prometheus myth) but cannot deliver. The market mechanism which supposedly turns selfishness to social good will fail because it will create inequality ("never, never will [the people] be able to share between themselves" p. 26) to the detriment of the lower classes (cannibalism, p. 31).

Ivan and Dostoevsky intend the inquisitor's prophesy to clue the reader that all of western modern culture is being criticized, especially the strand called utilitarianism and welfare capitalism as portrayed in Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations (1776), whose central concept is the efficiency of markets in satisfying people's desires. Utilitarians are the most likely candidates for the sages who say "there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger" (p. 26).

What does Jesus offer instead, according to the Inquisitor? Existentialist freedom, just as Sartre described it (except for the atheism). Near the bottom of page 27, the Inquisitor says,

"Behold what thou didst further. And all in the name of freedom. I tell thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born."

On page 28:

"Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow thee freely, enticed and taken captive by thee. In place of rigid ancient law, man must hereafter, with free heart, decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only thy image before him as a guide."

Is there a Biblical basis for associating Jesus with freedom? Yes, there is. Read St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. Separate in your mind this existentialist freedom to valorize from the superficial freedom that we may characterize as "freedom-from."

The Inquisitor forecasts to Jesus a third regime, namely a return of the Inquisitor's own, when the second regime collapses by being self-defeating, not by being defeated from outside, on p. 31-32:

"...with us, all [people] will be happy and will no longer rebel and destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. ... They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them. Freedom, free thought, and science, will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet..."

The people will return to an "old testament" type of religion, not for Jesus's freedom of the "new testament," but to be made happy. The Inquisitor suggests that the third and final regime removes real freedom and science when it reintroduces the recipe for happiness
THE THREE INGREDIENTS OF A HAPPY SOCIETY (pages 24-34)

Assuming I am right in seeing a critique of modern western civilization here, the Inquisitor's portrait of the ideal society is intended to be a portrait of the modern society as it was being developed in Germany, France, and Great Britain in the nineteenth century and flourishing up to the present. Alyosha asks what the Inquisitor meant by "admonitions and warnings" that Jesus got (bottom of p. 24). It turns out they were from the devil whom Jesus met after his fast of 40 days. Here is the story in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 4, verses 1-11:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him "Again it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

The devil’s three temptations are the admonitions and warnings the Inquisitor refers to at the beginning of his speech (p. 24, 3/4 down the page). The rest of the 10 pages of the Inquisitor's harangue of Jesus are organized loosely around each of those three temptations. The Cardinal Grand Inquisitor interprets them as the devil’s ingenious recipe for achieving the happiness of mankind, which he is devoted to achieving.

The first temptation is referred to at the bottom of page 25. Ivan makes it into a warning that all that people want is bread, that is, satisfaction of their basic wants.

The second is mentioned near the bottom of page 28. People need the comfort of being programmed with illusions: "miracle, mystery, and authority." On p. 33 the Inquisitor reveals he does not believe men are good enough to get an afterlife. So “the next world” is part of the illusion. The Inquisitor does not rule out all afterlife, just that ordinary folk don’t deserve one. Similarly with miracles. Not all of them are illusory; after all Jesus got arrested because he performed some (pages 22-23) without permission of those who control the message.
The third starts at the bottom of page 30. The second ingredient protects the system against internal threats through mind-control, but unless the system takes over the world, there’ll be external threats. So it must dominate the world, and the people need a show of force to achieve it and maintain it.

Here’s my summary of the recipe: Jesus, don't give people freedom. Take it away and give them their (1) basic needs, (2) illusions and (3) a show of force. If you don't take it away, we will, because that’s what they want, and they will be happy...

**LET'S EVALUATE THE ARGUMENT: HAPPINESS VS. FREEDOM: WHY "VS."???

We might say Ivan is trying out the Inquisitor's position for size. When at the end Alyosha accuses him of agreeing with the Inquisitor, he just laughs (p. 36). But his argument, going back to the chapter “Rebellion,” is that Jesus does not bring the end of suffering. So the question from that chapter of God's justice remains unanswered. Is western civilization in league with the devil? Does our appraisal exonerate god from complicity or negligence in the occurrence of undeserved suffering? Is happiness vs freedom a false dichotomy?

In reply, for starters let’s note that Inquisitor makes it an either-or proposition; Either happiness for mankind or freedom, as he says on page 26 just below the middle of the page:

> The people "will understand themselves at last that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them!"

Let's appreciate the Inquisitor’s paradox in that "versus." It’s natural to suppose the two not only don't conflict, they are even necessary to one another. For with freedom one can act to achieve one's happiness, and one cannot be happy while feeling unfree. Nonetheless, the Inquisitor puts these two in a deep, inevitable opposition.

Others have followed Dostoevsky in seeing a necessary opposition; they are "inconceivable together." A student in 2012, Kelsi Caywood, brought to my attention the futuristic dystopian novel, *We*, by Yevgeny Zamyatin. Published in the early 1920's, it popularized Dostoevskian themes. One is the analogy of people to numbers in his vision of future society. Another is the opposition between freedom and happiness. In the first chapter, the future State announces the purpose of a star ship it is about to launch thus:

> "It is for you to place the beneficial yoke of reason around the necks of the unknown beings who inhabit other planets--still living, it may be, in the primitive state known as freedom. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically infallible happiness, we shall be obliged to force them to be happy."

In chapter 11, the Adam and Eve story is recapitulated by one of the State's people in the novel:

> "The old legend about Paradise--that was about us, about now. ... Those two in Paradise, they were offered a choice: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness, nothing else. Those idiots chose freedom."
Their disobedience was free. What’s so bad about freedom? As for happiness, first let’s deploy a familiar distinction:

**THE REAL ‘VS.’ AS IN: APPEARANCE VS. REALITY**

Concerning happiness, despite common usage which treats happiness as a kind of feeling, philosophers distinguish a subjective sense of happiness from objective happiness, which is often called “flourishing,” “self-realization,” "fulfillment," or “well-being.” Two components of well-being are a sense of one’s purposes within a larger purpose, and a sense of achieving one’s own purposes and contributing to the larger purpose. In the objective sense, a person could be happy although perpetually discontented (dissatisfied). And vice versa: a person could feel very contented (satisfied) but not be happy. By the substitutivity of identity, human happiness is not satisfaction. It is rather fulfillment. Of course, for most people most of the time, the fact that they feel happy is a reliable sign that they are really happy. Otherwise feeling happy would not have been biologically adaptive, and it would not have evolved by natural selection.

Recall Socrates’s remark when he proposed his punishment be free meals like victors in the Olympic games get, "the Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy; I make you be happy" ([Apology], 36e, p. 38). It was also said by the playwright Euripides in his play, Bacchae, which was performed in Athens six years before Socrates’s trial: To a woman who in her frenzy just murdered her son without even recognizing him, a character says, “if with luck your present madness lasts until you die, you will seem to have, not [really] having, happiness” ll. 1260-1. One can have an illusory sense of well-being, if one is addicted to wishful thinking and being in denial, and manages to fill one’s life with distractions. Even Ivan admits as much on p. 35 where he says the Inquisitor, out of pity for mankind, follows the devil’s advice to lead them in a way that "they may not notice where they are being led, that the poor blind creatures may at least on the way think themselves happy" (p. 35, lower half of page).

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The combinations 1&3 and 2&4 are what we might expect, for surely appearance and reality can and should coincide. But often they don’t, and the combinations 1&4 and 2&3 are possible too. Socrates, Euripides (and Karl Marx) thought 2&3 were all too common. Subjective feelings are momentary, but objective happiness would be long-term. But long-term suffering and deprivation do not seem compatible with happiness. Consider the American white underclass studied by Case and Deaton (mentioned at the end of the last lecture). Are they objectively happy? So our question is, what is objective human happiness? I assume it is a good thing for anyone to have. But it does not come out that way in what we are reading. What has gone wrong? (This is for you to answer.)
If you think "make" means "force" (as I suspect Dostoevsky wants us to) then it's ironic that Dostoevsky has the Grand Inquisitor report Jesus's frequent use of the same idiom, "I want to make you free" (based on the Gospel of John, chapter 8, verses 31ff: "The truth shall make you free"). Or perhaps no irony at all! Think of Sartre's "man is condemned to be free" (Sartre, p. R16). The Grand Inquisitor brags that he has managed to make the people think they are free while really not being free. So the difference between appearance and reality afflicts freedom as well as happiness. Complex slavery, like complex misery, is our condition, not authentic freedom.

Authentic freedom—what’s that? Should we contrast subjective and objective freedom also?

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The Grand Inquisitor thinks people prefer the combination B&C. D should make one feel miserable. What about the combination A&D? Socrates suggested, after he was found guilty, he himself fit it.

Now combine the two matrices.

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<td>APPARENT</td>
<td>3. subj happiness</td>
<td>4. subj misery</td>
<td>C. subj freedom</td>
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Ivan has the Inquisitor use the appearance and reality distinction to support his paradoxical thought that only 3 and C naturally go together, but that 1 and A inevitably conflict. So this, according to Ivan, is why Alyosha should be critical of Jesus. Jesus wants A for us; Ivan wants 1 for us and so should Alyosha. But you can’t have both.

Can we now rebut Ivan’s claim?: Even if A went with 4, that does not imply A cannot go with 1 too, since 1 and 4 can themselves go together. But also we may not infer that A can go with 1, simply because A can go with 4 and 4 can go with 1. That too is a fallacy.

**HOW TO AVOID THE INQUISITOR’S HAPPINESS/FREEDOM DICHOTOMY**

Can we use the appearance and reality distinction to get out of the dilemma? Can we turn the tables on Ivan and his Grand Inquisitor by using the very distinction he introduces in order to refute his position? Can we say this:

Objective freedom, Jesus's kind and the existentialist kind, the real kind, is incompatible with happiness of the subjective sort, but it is compatible with the objective sort of happiness that is genuine human fulfillment. You can’t have A with
3, but you can have A with 1. The existentialist tells us that the emotions of anxiety, forlornness, and despair accompany genuine objective freedom, and they do contribute to subjective felt misery.

Objective happiness, Jesus’s kind, genuine human fulfillment, is incompatible with freedom of the subjective sort, but it is compatible with the objective sort of freedom. On the tables, you can’t have 1 with C, but you can have 1 with A.

So far so good, but *maybe too facile*. Maybe the Inquisitor is not confused. He insists that real freedom leads to free thought and science, and they lead to technologies that increase the pace of social change which is disruptive, and they allow ever more intrusion into private life (middle of p. 26, top of p. 32), and he insists that it magnifies the selfishness of people, greed and violence against one another, leading to income inequality (high “gini coefficient”) and modern warfare. Surely if that’s so, real freedom does get in the way of objective happiness. And so vice versa too. Don’t say, well when that happens the freedom is not the real type. You don’t get out of this by definitions.

Ask instead, is the connection inevitable? Is it inevitably permanent? Remember, the Inquisitor’s thesis is that this is a necessary connection. We can deny the necessity while granting the frequency, and still score against the Inquisitor. We get a less facile solution to the dilemma Ivan and his Grand Inquisitor present to us. But the fullest answer would say how to increase the chances of finding objective freedom and objective happiness going together harmoniously.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE ISSUE CAN ONLY BE SETTLED BY EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

By "empirical investigation" I mean we should observe what is actually the case, and not try to solve the issue *a priori*. Fortunately for us, three Wikipedia articles summarize the data we need: "list of freedom indices," "world happiness report," and "list of countries by income equality" based on the “gini coefficient.” Search these titles in your browser, and you’ll find the articles. As you read down the three lists, note the place of Switzerland and New Zealand. They are among the freest and the happiest, and they are not very unequal economically either. *So, Grand Inquisitor and Ivan, your claimed "VS" is proven false by the facts!*

REAL HUMAN HAPPINESS AND DESIRES

We know how to tell a cat is happy. It is asleep. Animal happiness is hardly more than the satisfaction of its needs. Can a human being, in contrast, be never satisfied but happy nonetheless?

In chapter 31 of Zamyatin’s *We*, a freedom-loving character named I-330 utters these subversive words to the story’s narrator,
"And happiness ..., what is it, after all? Desires are a torment, aren’t they? And it’s clear that happiness is when there are no longer any desires, not even one. ... What a mistake, what a stupid prejudice it’s been all these years to put a plus sign in front of happiness."

An assumption of this statement is that, if the State arranges things so that its citizens are more likely to be happy than they would be without those arrangements, it is promoting a state of no desires, no motivation, cats asleep on the mat. Is this true? If so, this is a case of happiness killing action, and a fortiori free action. Subjective happiness may indeed kill the will to achieve further excellences, if it is a cessation of desire; indeed the Inquisitor is counting on it.

But maybe genuine happiness would actually unleash the desires for further achievement. If so, I’d see no incompatibility with freedom, if the happiness were the genuine sort.

Do human beings have insatiable desires? A desire is satiated when it is fulfilled. An insatiable desire is not a recurrent desire (like the desire to sleep). A recurrent desire goes away for a while once it is satiated, and returns sometime later. An insatiable desire is one that is never completely fulfilled and never goes away. Not everyone experiences insatiable desires (I think), but most of us do. If, for instance, desire for power, wealth, or fame has no limit, can one be happy having those desires? What if they unconsciously spring from a fear of dying, as though these provide the means of protecting oneself from dying? Can one be happy and fear dying?

Many people believe our desires are the cause of unhappiness, especially if we let them reduce our freedom; we lose control of them and they control us. See section (e), pp. 68-70. ("The Russian Monk and his possible significance," not assigned, but worth reading.) Real freedom requires that we have the power to reflect on our desires and weaken some and strengthen others. One reason we deny that children have psychological freedom is that they lack this power to reflect, intervene, and manipulate their desires.

Two things to consider:

1. Is happiness the state of fulfilled desires? When Socrates said 'I make you be happy" (Apology, 36e), was he saying he was eliminating poverty, and fulfilling all other desires? Of course not. There's also the matter of reprioritizing one's desires. If happiness involves having the right priorities, then it is not a will-killer for us as you will see it is for the underground man. Perhaps he (and Dostoevsky?) is just confused into a false dichotomy about the relation between happiness and having incentives.

2. Is it true that a state of happiness must be a condition of having no desires that are not satiated or can easily be satiated? Are there insatiable desires? Are our desires innumerable, in the sense that when we satisfy one, lo! another comes into being? (E.g., have enough to eat? Yes? Then let's aspire to haute cuisine.)

Surely there are insatiable desires for some people. Some are neither bad nor good, but "indifferent" like wanting more (and more and more) Facebook friends. Some generally involve
badness like greed, lust for power. How about good ones, like the desire for excellence, the desire to surpass the achievements of others, as in setting Olympic records? If they are good, then even if they are truly insatiable, then probabilifying—making something more likely to occur—the conditions under which they would thrive cuts through the false dichotomy that Dostoevsky and his followers are foisting on us.

Not only may freedom and happiness be achievable together, if we think of happiness made more likely in the long run, i.e., over generations, (something John Stuart Mill believed), but there may be a third goal that has priority and determines the limits of both happiness and freedom, namely, the goal of living a virtuous life. Maybe we should ask about which life is worth living, and that goal will put limits on our happiness-goal and freedom-goal both. A good book on this alternative is Michael Sandel, Justice (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009).

MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

[1] Is the novel anti-Catholic? Ivan is having the Grand Inquisitor speak on behalf of all those “building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last ...” (near the end of “Rebellion”). Putting the Catholic church and its cardinal in league with the secular humanists of the Enlightenment in this sort of endeavor is about as paradoxical as one can get, since they viewed each other as being opponents. But Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor believe the suffering, at least that of "the many," must be eliminated. The Church and the humanists are on the same side and against God—"God's work needs correction" (bottom of p. 33)—even if they are not in agreement on letting the end justify the means. (Contrary to what Ivan believes, the Inquisitor doesn’t mind causing some suffering provided it reduces suffering overall.) It helps Ivan’s argument to have everyone agree with the story’s main point, even the Catholic church of the sixteenth century.

Don’t think he’s showing just an anti-Catholic prejudice. Certainly he was doing that in making the Inquisitor use the imagery of the beast and the harlot (starting on page 31 and continuing to the end) to describe his own church. That imagery comes from the Bible’s "Revelations of St. John," chapters 13 and 17. Ivan and Alyosha also repeats things about Jesuits being the Pope’s “Romish army” (page 34). Although Dostoevsky was pro-Christianity and grew more so as he aged, I don’t think he had a high opinion of Protestantism either. Ivan calls Luther and Calvin heretics on page 20; they did not believe that fallen man could exercise free will. As for his own Russian Orthodox religion, he was respectful of its institutions, like monasticism, but I’m not sure just how deeply affiliated he felt or how orthodox (i.e., nonheretical) his religious beliefs were. Part of Dostoevsky's purpose in displaying anti-Catholicism is to have Ivan increase the shock value of his story, by having it seem he is allying himself with the historic "enemies" of Russian orthodoxy, allying himself, in other words, with the devil.

Dostoevsky (but not Ivan) was anti even capitalism. People of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thought the primary dichotomy between political ideologies revolved around centrally planned versus market economies. I doubt whether Dostoevsky intended to take sides on this issue. In Notes from Underground he seems to target market economies in these
words from Part I, ch. IX: “And, if we’re to say everything, why are you so certainly convinced that not to go against real, normal profits, guaranteed by the arguments of reason and arithmetic, is indeed always profitable for man and is a law for the whole of mankind?” In those words he targets the classical economic science of markets. After all, markets are just very efficient means for satisfying people’s desires, whether they be selfish and short-sighted, or not. It is neutral on the morality reflected in those desires. Dostoevsky also gave up the socialist ideals of his youth because the movement had begun to ally itself with irreligion and didn’t have its source in authentic Russianness. Dostoevsky was one of those who worried whether utopias, those planned or those brought about by the “invisible hand” of market forces, would turn out to be dystopias. (Etymology: “u” for Greek “eu” prefix for good, “dys” Greek prefix for bad, “topia” Greek for place.) As for "progress," it was illusion. (Sartre agreed (p. R34).)

One way Ivan is not anti-Catholic is that the old cardinal is allowed to portray his own motives without the author introducing elements that contradict the portrayal. In fact they are defended (pages 34-35). His motive for spending his life dedicated to human happiness is pity, pure and simple. His view of ordinary folk is unflattering, saddening but not contemptuous. If it were, he’d not concern himself with them. His view is condescending but not self-aggrandizing or prideful, at least not in the sense of vainglorious. He shows theological “hubris,” defiance of God in his rebellion, but so does Ivan in his. Nor is there any basis in the text, as far as I can see, that he's motivated by the quest for power or material gain as ends in themselves. The main way his motives contrast with Jesus's is that Jesus’s is self-sacrificial optimistic love and the cardinal’s is self-sacrificial pessimistic pity.

[2] Ivan leaves his inquisitor unnamed. He is not Torquemada, the first of the actual Spanish grand inquisitors, long serving and notoriously cruel. Torquemada was not a cardinal, although he had a cardinal uncle with the same name. He probably had about 40 people a year burned alive for the fifteen years he was grand inquisitor. Even the pope tried to torquemada his cruel policies, to no avail (Wikipedia).

The cardinal on the cover of your text was Guevara. He too was cruel, averaging about 80 burnings at the stake per year for the three years he was grand inquisitor. Most likely, however, Dostoevsky’s model was from the play, Don Carlos, by the German writer, Friedrich Schiller, who also did not name his inquisitor. But it would’ve been someone in the 1560’s, between Torquemada and Guevara.

[3] The Inquisitor tells Jesus that Jesus is promoting genuine freedom, which is inconsistent with happiness. But what does Jesus himself say? Nothing to the Inquisitor! Keeping silent is a paradoxical behavior for the "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). If "the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32), then should he not speak? The "official" reason for silence is given by the Inquisitor on page 23: "And Thou hast no right to add anything to what Thou hadst said of old." The point is that the divine revelation of the new testament came to a close with the death of the evangelists. Nothing further can be added to Christian doctrine. So Jesus can say nothing new. But Jesus might have unofficial reasons for his silence. Perhaps closest to Dostoevsky’s position is that the truth is grasped mystically, or by God’s grace.
What Jesus does do is kiss the old geezer on the lips. What’s the meaning of that? Think Russia, where everyone kisses everyone, and any family member might kiss another on the lips, even adult children kissing their parents on the lips. Not our way, I know.

I venture this conjecture about the kiss: Jesus is expressing God’s love, perhaps even forgiveness, for the old cardinal. He may be showing that he rejects the cardinal’s false dichotomy. After all, God is love, according to the first Epistle of St. John. Love trumps freedom as the message of the Gospels. Or, as I will suggest in the next lectures, the community bound together by love trumps the separating tendencies of individualistic freedom. But you may disagree. Do you think the kiss is ironical, or insincere?