

The Prison of Skepticism

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As a presupposed definition for the following theory, it will be granted that the fundamental property of a rational being is the ability to ask questions, for what is the faculty of reason, but an individual's freedom to doubt. It is the principles of skepticism that allow for said individual to make the distinction between appearances and their converse. Consequently, this distinction necessitates the individual to either believe or disbelieve, thereby instituting a standard of truth in opposition to its privation: falsity. With an idea of objectivity established, rational beings were then able to understand the causes of natural phenomena, through both their observations and their ability to doubt. Everything from the behavior of animals to the phenomenon of gravity can be understood, and thereby calculated, through rigorous investigation; however, one phenomenon in particular appears to become more obscure, in proportion to the laws of nature becoming less obscure: the human psyche.

Before the individuals composing humanity could be considered rational, their singular desire was that of instinctual self-preservation and, in some senses, they were enslaved to themselves, due to their inability to desire anything else. With a limited supply of knowledge, the determination of their fate was merely the product of their instinct working in conjunction with what little was offered to their senses. For it is an infallible fact that a creature may never intentionally choose what they do not know to be an option and, from this, it is obvious that an individual's ability to choose one idea over another is entirely dependent upon there being two ideas in the first place. The services provided by scientific progression allowed for rational individuals to invoke their faculty of preference; but what is an individual's idea of liberty when they do not know what it is

that they desire? Creatures deemed irrational have no choice; but to act in accordance with the doctrine of self-preservation, for their ability to reason does not preside beyond this conviction. It is the rational individual that is cursed with knowing the indissoluble incongruity existing between their desire for self-preservation and their desire to serve an entity existing independent of them. The opposing nature of this relationship results from both components being two conflicting remedies for a singular affliction, an affliction that oftentimes goes by the name of reason. Although in many instances an individual is free to utilize their faculty of reason to will what they prefer, over the alternative, the fallout of this ability will eventually enslave them, if they do not know what it is that they ought prefer. It would appear then that the definition of freedom is dependent upon the context in which it is used, for, in the words of Dostoevsky, "There is nothing more seductive for man than the freedom of his conscience, but there is nothing more tormenting either" (254).

When humanity first began to portray signs of being rational, they had an exceedingly small repository of knowledge, for science had yet to progress. This deprivation of notions necessitated the attribution of many natural phenomena to unexplained causes, an example of which would be the association of lightning with the Greek God Zeus. The belief that the order of nature acted according to the whims of multiple Gods was primitive humanity's method of explaining what was originally perceived as both unknowable and unpredictable. Nevertheless, as the systems of knowledge developed, specifically mathematics and science, what was perceived before as an act of the divine was then understood to be a calculable and, therefore, predictable, event. It would appear that the progression of humanity is merely the

doubting of what is deemed unpredictable, in order to discover previously unknown phenomena, thus providing individuals with the means of adapting to the aspects of said phenomena that initially impeded their liberty. A definition of fate may be posited as the struggle between an individual's ability to will what they prefer, in the case of irrational beings, self-preservation, and the impregnable laws that go by the labels: necessity, probability, and the unknown. An individual is able to attain what they prefer through the utilization of their will, if they can determine what must necessarily occur from the action they choose to produce. Necessity, as a general term, is the force that will disallow an individual to determine what must necessarily occur, in that by its effects being unknown to the individual, the existence of their liberty becomes subject to mere probability.

Locke writes in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that, "a Man may prefer what he can do, to what he cannot do; the State he is in, to its absence or change, though Necessity has made it in it self unalterable." (45). This puzzling statement asserts that one may choose to be free, by not willing that which has been made impossible by the forces imposed by necessity. With the discovery of mathematics, humanity was able to discern an order to the laws of nature and this allowed its populace to decipher the effects of nature, through the conjunction of their unique paradigm of scientific knowledge and their faculty of will. It would seem that fate is a term whose definition is utilized as a way of not having to explain the reason why an individual's destiny resulted in the way that it did or, in other words, ignorance.

Nevertheless, to an individual endowed with reason, the unknown probabilities of nature lose their power, in that their effects may be evaded through the utilization of previously

established scientific axioms. Therefore, in respect to natural phenomena, one's ability to determine their own fate is contingent upon their specific reservoir of knowledge.

Thus far, it would appear that the primary inhibitor of an individual being in a state of liberty is what is designated as the unknown, for it has already been noted that it is not possible to choose what is not known to be an option. So, the inference of any unknown phenomenon, in respect to its cause, would be attributed to probability. The power by which an individual is able to aggregate ideas within the mind is through the impressions they experience with their senses and after said ideas have been formulated into a calculable system, one may assert that they have, at the very least, a negligible quantum of knowledge. The process by which this marvel takes place is made explicit in David Hume's essay, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in which he begins by making the distinction between impressions and ideas. The former exist as actual phenomena that are manifested by an individual's sensory perceptions, while the latter exist as the memories said individual is able to retain, concerning the experienced impressions. With these two definitions established, Hume inquires what it means to know and postulates that knowledge is the product of experience, in that an individual's paradigm of ideas, in the memory, are derivations from the impressions made upon the senses. He then writes that principles of knowledge are determined through cause and effect, and that it is an individual's unique series of impression that lead them to make inferences regarding presently unobserved causes.

Concerning cause and effect, Hume states, "In general, it may, I think, be established as a maxim, that where any cause is known only by its particular effects, it must be impossible to infer any new effect from that cause" (414). This assertion

necessitates the establishment of definitions concerning induction and deduction, the former being the inference of a universal notion through the experience of particular stimuli, and the latter being the inference of particular stimuli by reference to previously induced notions. Therefore, according to Hume's terms, one may conclude that induction is the inference of a universal cause from the perceiving of its particular effects, and that deduction is the inference of a particular effect by reference to a previously induced universal cause. According to Hume, deduction is by no means a precise form of reasoning, for a portion of its capability is made obscure by the phenomena of probability. The justification for this inference is that when one uses deductive reasoning they presume a certain principle, it being that, "other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects." (329). This is the assumption that the future must necessarily resemble the past and although this may usually be the case for many phenomena, it is by no means a self-evident idea, for Hume states that to deny said notion would not imply a contradiction with reality. From this, he concludes that the use of deduction is not entirely substantiated by reason and, therefore, is partially a product of custom, and probability. So, in respect to deducing future effects by reference to unobserved causes, he finds it appropriate that one be a skeptic.

Hume's analysis concerning deduction indicates that an element of an individual's faculty of choice is established upon the notion of probability, in that inferences concerning the future can be denied without contradiction; however, in respect to mathematical principles, this is not necessarily the case. To deny a Common Notion in Euclid's *Elements* is to simultaneously deny all propositions inferred by

reference to it. This is due to mathematical demonstrations exhibiting the ability to be universally applicable in the same way that they were before, on the condition that the most general of the mathematical principles are assumed to be self-evident. So, if it is demonstrated that the whole is greater than the part in a particular geometric figure, then the whole will be greater than the part in all other similar geometric figures.

Physics is the application of mathematics to matter and Newton's Preface to *Principia* describes how the principles of mechanics, such as the drawing of tangible lines and circles, are the foundations for geometry. It would appear that it is through an individual's observation of particular geometrical figures that allow for the induction of geometric axioms and by reference to said axioms, one may demonstrate further propositions, and so on indefinitely. However, mathematical objectivity exists only in the theoretical senses and its application to matter, in the calculation of natural phenomena, remains subject to probability, due to nature being in a state of constant flux.

Nevertheless, Newton propounds, "that from the phenomena of motion we may investigate the forces of nature, and then from these forces we may demonstrate the rest of the phenomena." (4). Proportional to the aforementioned relationship between the procedures of mechanics and the demonstrations of geometry, observations of motion, regarding natural phenomena, allow for the induction of general principles, thereby allowing for the demonstration of further inferences.

With the objectivity of science endorsed, due to its ability to free individuals from the constraints imposed by necessity, its users happily accept its systematic process as the moderator by which all ideas can be determined as true or false. And through an interminable multitude of rigorous investigations, the scientific method has managed to

channel the understanding of many natural phenomena into a comprehensible structure, thus bringing objective knowledge to the masses. However, this obedience to the scientific method enables a disobedience to previously maintained philosophical ideologies, insofar that the scientific method's ability to employ mathematics leaves all other doctrines susceptible to the imputations of skepticism. The distinction between mathematics, and everything existing independent of it, is the fact that the former exhibits the power of universal applicability, thus leaving everything that does not partake in it subject to Hume's contention; that an individual may not assume any necessity in the future resembling the past, and that in doing so, they do not act in accordance with their faculty of reason. Therefore, as scientific systems become continually more precise through the reconfiguration of previously established notions, the foundation of many philosophical enquiries become obsolete. And thus, it was philosophy's continuous assertions concerning doubt that annulled the existence of any sort of inference made without the use of reason.

Contrary to the doctrine of skepticism, Soren Kierkegaard cites Descartes in *Fear and Trembling*, whereby he quotes, "we ought to submit to the Divine authority rather than to our own judgment even though the light of reason may seem to us to suggest, with the utmost clearness and evidence, something opposite" (4). The distinction between reason and the Godhead is elucidated in *The Bible's* Book of Genesis, for when Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; their banishment from the Garden of Eden indicated a separation of their identities from that of God. An interpretation of Original Sin could be that their decision to disobey God was the doubting of existence as a singularity, thereby dividing existence into

appearances, and their converse. This division allowed for the manifestation of the self, and its faculties of will, reason, and morality, all of which exist only in relation to what they are in opposition to, and it was by this event that humanity was able to both reason, and rebel. For as Herman Melville propounds in *Moby-Dic*, "if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists" (48). It is apparent that the development of a categorized system of facts, or in other words, knowledge, would not be possible without a community of rational individuals agreeing upon a general consensus concerning what is true, and what is false. So, as humanity accumulated further scientific knowledge, this idea of communal law was imprinted within the human psyche, as an entity with the purpose of limiting an individual's ability to act in accordance with the goal of self-preservation. The limit was the general law that one may not engage in a preference that negatively affects the whole of society. So, in respect to knowledge, an individual's observations incite a determination and said determination is executed through their faculty of will. Obviously, this is all on the condition that their knowledge provides them with the option of preferring one outcome to another, and that said preference is not made impossible by the forces imposed by necessity. But what is an individual to choose if they do not know what it is that they ought to prefer?

In respect to whether an individual's will is free, Locke scoffed at the fact that such a question would even be asked, due to its paradoxical nature. The will, an individual's ability to prefer motion or rest, is a separate faculty from that of liberty, the state in which one's existence is in accordance with their preferences, and an absurdity results from the equivalency of both ideas. In respect to the will, it is an ability, not an

action, for the act of an individual exercising their will in the attainment of a preference is called volition; however, an individual's preferences may be inclined towards that which is not in their power to will, and therefore, one's volition is their ability to will that which has not been made unalterable by the laws of necessity. To ask the question of whether one has a will is redundant, for the answer is obviously yes, given that an individual is subject to preference, and may will that which is not impervious to their volition. To ask whether an individual's ability to choose is free is also a redundant question, for the will is not required to act as an intermediate between their self and their consent to be in a state liberty. For it would appear, in Locke's description, that the essence composing an individual's identity is defined by the unique series of impressions they receive through experience, by which they are endowed with ideas concerning cause and effect.

However, it would appear that he dismissed this question as foolish because he made an assumption concerning the will's intentions, for he believed the will to act in accordance with whatever an individual deemed preferable and that the only force with the power to obstruct the will's ability would be the unknown laws imposed by the forces of necessity. However, what are individuals to do when they are able to justify acts of self-preservation and simultaneously have their faculty of reason oppose them from within. By this, one asks what is humanity to do when their very identities are separated into two opposing desires, one being that an individual ought to choose that which will bring the most amount of pleasure to the self and the other being that which forsakes sensual pleasure, in order to better that which exists independent of their body.

The description of the will as an individual's ability to produce a cause, and not as the effect of an action produced by the self, is a necessary distinction, for the it

allows an inference, concerning the simplest element composing the self. The most fundamental principle in the determination of an individual's identity is, ultimately, what judgments they choose to enact. The danger with conceptualizing the will, the self, and the faculty of volition as the three interacting components of a singular entity is that these notions, as separate entities, assume that one chose to exist. "for, when an action in his power is proposed to his thoughts, he cannot forbear volition; he must determine one way or the other" (47). By this, Locke indicates that the faculty of volition necessitates an individual's existence being unequivocally preferable; but although they maintain their ability to choose their preferred action, they are enslaved to the fact that they must distinguish between what is preferable and what is not. He describes the force inciting individuals to make determinations, as degrees of uneasiness, and that a state of liberty is an existence which exhibits the least possible amount of this uneasiness. There is no being on Earth that requested to be born, and thereby be enslaved to the incessant pains that come with the maintenance of their transient existence. An individual does not possess the ability to forbear their volition, and, by default, their faculty of preference. Their existence necessitates that they perceive, and if said perceptions cause uneasiness, the individual's preferences may manifest themselves into determinations with the aim of negating of said pain, even if this action results in the cessation of their consciousness.

According to Locke, the capabilities of an individual's consciousness occur in two parts, as cause and effect, for, "to receive ideas or thoughts from the operation of any external substance is called a power of thinking: but this is but a passive power, or capacity. But to be able to bring into view ideas out of sight as one's own choice, and to

compare which of them one thinks fit, this is an active power” (51). So, when any living being comes into existence, they have no choice but to endure certain discomforts, and when the pain becomes no longer bearable, the victim’s appetite will execute a motion that will, ideally, offer some form of temporary relief. And although irrational beings must act according to ideas, however elementary they may be, the multiple differences made between the will of irrational and rational beings has been made explicitly clear. The distinction being that the former does not exhibit the ability to use their faculties of will, and reason, to negate the restrictive laws sanctioned by necessity, beyond what powers they are able to enact by way of their bodies. So, while the passive aspect of existence is to endure, and the active aspect is to determine, the contrasting of the two may induce an assumption. It being that the curse brought on by an individual’s sentience is caused by the former aspect, while the latter provides the means by which they may circumvent any sensations that produce existential uneasiness. It has been established that the ascertainment of an individual being in a state of liberty is contingent upon them making a judgment, willing said judgment into an action, and determining whether the effects of said action are in accordance with the initial judgment. The true curse of existence is not that an individual must exist out of necessity, but that their existence necessitates the use of judgments. With mathematics as the only objective certainty in the world, the human psyche is ceaselessly assaulted the lawlessness of probability, thereby leaving all rationalist philosophy subject to indictments of skepticism. The accumulation of knowledge has assisted humanity in conquering many of the adversities mandated necessary by the laws of nature, but the final frontier appears to be an individuals inability to conquer the self.

The judgments of rational beings are not curses in themselves; however, the ability to question allows for them to inquire as to what is it that they ought to desire? For irrational beings, that answer is obviously an their survival, but for the rational, the existence of the conscience is made self-evident by the fact they will oftentimes utilize their faculty of reason to cause an effect that is detrimental to the preservation of their body. There is only so much a rational being can learn on their own, and the nature of objectivity resides in the common denominator of the manifold subjective presumptions held by the individuals that constitute a community. So, it is evident that morality is the act of an individual utilizing their knowledge, and making a decision whose outcome will be preferred by an entity existing independent of them. The act of self-sacrifice appears to be an action that is contrary to reason, for its aim is to inflict displeasure upon the self. Reason is an individual's ability to negate the rules imposed by necessity; however, the act of self-sacrifice appears to be an instance in which an individual prefers the forces of necessity to whatever justifications they consider necessary in the preservation of their body. Therefore, the act of self-sacrifice opposes the necessity of an individual's desire to preserve the self, while not opposing the forces of necessity imposed by nature. So, self-sacrifice is that which is unnecessary, on the condition that an individual's singular goal in life is that of self-preservation.

The torment of existence lies not necessarily in an individual's ability to choose, but rather why it is that they ought to choose what they choose. Fyodor Dostoevsky makes the nature of this choice explicit in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In a poem called "The Grand Inquisitor", Ivan Karamazov, discusses a theoretical situation, in which an individual is able to perceive the miracle of Christ coming back down to Earth. The

paradoxical nature of this phenomenon is better understood by defining the nature of a skeptic, and Dostoevsky appears to do so, when defining a realist:

“A true realist, if he is not a believer, will always find in himself the strength and ability not to believe in miracles as well, and if a miracle stands before him as an irrefutable fact, he will sooner doubt his own senses than admit the fact. And even if he does admit it, he will admit it as a fact of nature that was previously unknown to him. In the realist, faith is not born from miracles, but miracles from faith” (25).

The paradox lies in the fact that, if a realist were to bear witness to the coming of Christ, they would not call it a miracle, but a natural phenomenon that was previously unknown to their senses. Therefore, a realist will never believe anything on the basis of faith, but rather experience, and to perceive an entity such as Christ, thereby believing in God, would not be an act of faith, but an act of reason. The Grand Inquisitor begins by questioning Christ’s intentions for coming back to Earth, for the very action negates the human faculty of freedom. This is due to the aforementioned phenomenon in which an individual is forced to choose between the self and that which exists independent of it, despite the fact the former is perceived to be actually in existence. Nonetheless, if an individual were to believe in God, through their faculty of reason, their belief would only be a testament of their fear of authority, and would not be a representation of their decision to have faith, for even a realist must necessarily believe in God after bearing witness through by the faculty of their senses. Next, the Grand Inquisitor posits the theory that if Christ had replaced the desert with bread, humanity would follow him

based on logic, thereby replacing the aspect of faith with that of reason, in that the sustenance that is derived from bread allows for the preservation of an individual's self. Therefore, an individual following God would resultantly preserve the self; however, this is, once again, not an individual's choice, but the witnessing of a miracle, and the reasoning, concerning their self-preservation negates their decision to have faith. An individual's only evident notion concerning morality is the tormenting retaliation they receive from their conscience when they act in a way that is beneficial to the self, but simultaneously detrimental to an entity existing independent of them. So, the opposition between these two forces drive an individual to despair, for what are they to choose when either option leads them to anguish. One should not confuse the act of self-sacrifice as being akin to an individual consenting to the authority of the their country. For an individual only relinquishes a portion of their liberty on the condition that, in exchange for their subservience, one may partake in the multitude of amenities offered by society, the utility of which allows for the preservation of their self. The fact that their loyalty is based upon a condition allows for them to rebel against the entity they initially obeyed.

The three gifts the devil tempted Christ with were miracle, mystery, and authority, and the use of any one of them would have negated humanity's ability to rebel. This is evident from the fact that individuals only rebel when they have faith in their rebellion, and, in this instance; rebellion is a disbelief in God. However, those who lead the masses of individuals on earth utilize the devil's last gift: authority. By acting as the absolute arbiters of justice, while simultaneously being a source of security for the livelihoods of those they rule, the leaders of Earth act as false idols. And by following

these falsities, an individual may feel a temporary alleviation from the despair that defines their existence, for the serving of an idol is able to simultaneously serve the self and something existing independent of it.

The distinction between the Godhead and false idols is explicated in *The Brothers Karamazov*, when Pyotr Alexandrovich quotes Ivan, in that:

“every separate person, like ourselves for instance, who believes neither in God nor in his own immortality, the moral law of nature ought to change immediately into the exact opposite of the former religious law, and that egoism, even to the point of evil doing, should not only be permitted to man but should be acknowledged as the necessary, the most reasonable, and all but the noblest result of his situation” (Dostoevsky 69).

This opinion entails the notion that if an individual adheres to the will of the state simply because they do not want their own will to be in opposition to it, then they are not sacrificing their faculty of choice for the betterment of the community, but merely out of fear of punishment. And fear of punishment is synonymous with preferring the preservation of the self; nevertheless, while utilizing the conveniences of society an individual may still believe that the evils they enact, as long they are not perceived by others, are justified by the doctrine of self-preservation. This is akin Thrasymachus claiming that, “justice is what is advantageous to the stronger” (988), or, as Alyosha Karamazov put it, “everything is permitted” (26).

It would appear that in the age of science, God is no longer necessary, for what was initially unknown has been calculated and thereby understood as naturally occurring phenomena. With an abundance of knowledge at its disposal, contemporary

society allows for individuals to feel secure in their survival. That is until the necessity willed by their desire for self-preservation is inevitably overwhelmed by omnipotent necessity imposed by death. No more is humanity subject to the whims of nature, and its deliverance permits its populace to partake in acts of leisure. The sensations derived from these acts develop the individual's identity and, in that state of bodily rest, they find themselves believing that their existence is of greater significance than anything else, for it appears to be the foundation of all that they can conceive. But this vain falsehood is crushed by the fact that rational individuals must live while simultaneously being aware of their own mortality. For while contemporary society is capable of feeling secure in their subsistence, they become insecure in why it is that they ought to live, and in the words of The Grand Inquisitor, "the mystery of man's being is not only in living, but in what one lives for. Without a firm idea of what he lives for, man will not consent to live and will sooner destroy himself than remain on earth, even if there is bread all around him." (254). The idea of what an individual chooses to live for propounds the distinction between their faculty of reason and the cause that precedes it. The doctrine of self-preservation is the default setting when an irrational being makes any determination; however, society allows for individuals to evade phenomena that would normally be unavoidable, thus making the doctrine of self-preservation, at sometimes, unnecessary in the act of survival. The only problem left is what one ought to do with the time they are given? The irony of this query is that one may only posit said question through their faculty of reason, and although reason is perceived to be the means by which one exercises their will, why did nature necessitate its development within the minds of humanity? It is painfully obvious that no sufficient answer to this

question currently exists, and without a solution, certain individuals are doomed to see the laws governing their faculty of choice as both arbitrary and meaningless. Thus, in this way, their ability to be at liberty appears subject to lawlessness: an insatiable void, in which one's faculty of preference is confined only by their eventual death. So, when an individual's faculty of will is freed from the limitations imposed on it by necessity, their faculty of preference extends to the class of desires deemed unnecessary. And when their ability to be in a state of liberty necessitates an indefinite variety of unnecessary preferences, they will then desire to will that which will forbear the faculty of preference.

As was stated earlier, an individual willing the forbearance of their faculty of preference is impossible, except through the act of suicide. In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, the protagonist, Ishmael, begins the novel by stating:

"whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off-then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball"

(Melville 1).

It would seem that, instead of committing suicide, Ishmael goes to sea, and this interchange is somewhat equitable, for the sea's nature is the epitome of phenomenon acting by the forces of necessity. This leaves his fate subject to the laws of probability, and thus not within the power of his will. So, it would appear that scientific progression

has negated the aspect of mysticism within contemporary society, by its ability to negate the inhibitions exhibited by the forces imposed by necessity. And in respect to the mystery of an individual's creation, if they do not know what it is that they ought to believe, they will not see the necessity of deducing any sort of meaning from their existence. For why should one feel the need to entertain such a notion, when the determinations made by science have already established what is necessary to know for an individual living within boundaries of society. When the mystery of existence is entirely removed from an individual's life, they are lost in the meaningless chaos that is despair, and the abandonment of hope, in its most agonizing form, is the decision to take their own life.

Suicide stems from the aforementioned notion that "everything is permitted", and, because it is an act of self-gratification, must necessarily assume that the death is cessation of an individual's consciousness into nothingness, the intention being that nothingness is better than existence. The latter notion implies that the act of renouncing God annuls the existence of evil, thereby deeming any act of self-preservation as the most intelligent action an individual can will. However, the freedom that is attained, through the replacement of the Godhead with the faculty of reason, comes at a terrible price. It has been established that it is through an individual's the faculty of reason that they are able to decipher the phenomena of probability, and thereby negate the forces that were previously imposed upon them by necessity. However, although reason exhibits the power to negate many of the limitations sanctioned by necessity, an individual's freedom to prefer that which was previously thought to be unobtainable, due the suppressive rules fixed by necessity, becomes subject to the privation of necessity,

and, therefore, what is unnecessary. This notion of an individual's preferences being regulated by that which is unnecessary is another way of stating that an individual's inclination for self-preservation has mutated into a limitless propensity for excess.

Reason has turned preference into an infinite horror, and Kierkegaard asks, "If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the bottom of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that twisting in dark passions produced everything great or inconsequential; if an unfathomable, insatiable emptiness lay hid beneath everything, what would life be but despair?" (14). From what has been inferred thus far, the validity of this statement shall be assumed. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's assertion is, in a sense, theoretical, in that he asserts that this may not be true, given that one has faith. The beginning of the argument stems from the notion that, in contemporary times, the scientific method allows for new generations to hold previously demonstrated principles as self-evident and, because of this, ideas not founded upon mathematics are forever subject to accusations of skepticism. Human history is merely a series of events in which notions that were previously deemed true are doubted, and thereby amended. Skepticism allows for scientific ideas already in existence to be transmuted into conclusions deemed more approximate, and the fluctuating metamorphosis of science progresses in this manner indefinitely. Is there a point in which scientific knowledge will terminate, or is its purpose to continue on to infinity? And what exactly is being sought through this process? The idea that reason could give rise to an infinitely extending gestation of desires, indicates that it is in need of some of the limitations imposed upon it by the forces of necessity. For an individual, the definition of their existence is their particular answer to why it is they consent to live, and until science

makes a determination concerning its final intention, it will never suffice as an answer. In the same manner that Locke mocked the notion of “free-will”, due to the will being an ability and not an action, likewise, when attempting to provide an answer to the mystery of an individual’s existence, their ability to reason may be the means by which they achieve their end; however, the means by which an end is obtained is in no way synonymous with the end in question.

In respect to this end, Kierkegaard asks if humanity is, “so convinced of having reached the heights that there is nothing left but piously to believe we still haven’t come that far, so as at least to have something to fill the time with?” (149). For what is scientific progression, but humanities ability to not be constrained by the laws of nature, and thereby no longer prompted to attend to the fluctuating forces of nature and necessity. The correlative of said development is the contemporary societal notion, concerning an individual’s assured preservation, and this benefit allows for said individual to partake which are, at least in relation to their survival, entirely unnecessary. With the negation of what was necessary, what is unnecessary now occupies the void that necessity initially contained. If the purpose of one’s life extends past self-preservation and into self-gratification, the notion of order no longer limits their faculty of preference, and their desires become subject to the disorder of constant flux. Therefore, when a rational being is not utilizing knowledge to negate the necessities exhibited by entropy, the omnipotent necessity being that they must inevitably die, they are engaging in what is unnecessary, for, as was asked by Kierkegaard, what else are they to do with their time? And if that answer is the doctrine of self-gratification, reason will endow them with the ability to justify anything.

It would appear that one might finally extrapolate why reason is not an appropriate replacement for the Godhead, through an understanding of why reason is unlimited. The idea that an individual's will abides by no law, other than that of hedonistic self-gratification, is synonymous with the aforementioned notion that, "everything is permitted". With reason as means and self-preservation as the end, an individual may justify any action through their faculty of reason, on the condition of course that the prophesied effects of said action are in accordance with the arbitrary terms dictated by the flux that is their faculty of preference. It would appear that the faculty of reason, being utilized with the aim of self-gratification, is self-fulfilling prophecy whose end and means are synonymous terms. Reason may provide an answer on how one is to survive, but it cannot be the answer to why an individual continues to live; however, the application of God, instead of reason, as the agent arbitrating the order of what is unnecessary, ultimately amounts to faith. For to perform an action whose foundation is completely independent of reason is as unnecessary as doing something unreasonable. To act according to the will of God, is to act without any sort of condition, and it is to act in an unreasonable manner, thereby forbearing an individual's faculty of preference.

The paradoxical conditions attached to the notions concerning liberty appear to subsist only in relation to each other, for the notion that a rational being is freed from what is necessary, only to be enslaved by what is unnecessary, indicates that freedom has two different meanings in both contexts. As a method of elucidation, one may posit that when an entity, sentient, or not, is in a state of freedom, it is when they are not in a state of service. For that which is unable to serve, thereby inhibits other phenomena by

its existence and can be understood to be a force being imposed by necessity.

Therefore, any force with the ability to be calculated is in service of the entity making the calculations, and an individual endowed with reason who acts purely for sake of self-gratification, exhibits the ability to be calculated. Their necessitation for their preferences concerning the gratification of their self induces the notion that their actions will always be executed with said preference as the fundamental cause. Therefore, they are not free, but have in fact made their ability to be in a state of liberty entirely contingent upon the limitless number of preferences they have transmuted into necessities. And the more preferences they indulge in, the more actions they must will, in order to be in a state of liberty. And, reciprocally, the more they wills, in order to gratify the self, the more they indulge in.

Abraham's reason for sacrificing Isaac was that, "he had faith for this life. Yes, had his faith inly been for a future life it would indeed have been easier to cast everything aside in order to hasten out of this world to which he did not belong" (Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, *Speech in Praise of Abraham*). It would seem that the reasoning behind faith is the same as suicide, in that its execution is founded upon the notion that the soul dies with the body. Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac on the condition of a divine reward, for to act in a virtuous manner, as the means of entering heaven, and, by default, being saved from hell, is not to act out of faith. Assuming that one truly believes in heaven and hell, why should they not reason that to prefer the former to the latter is better for the gratification of their self? Nevertheless, the intentions of an individual acting virtuous in expectation of divine reward are the same as those pursuing the good for the sake of honor. A skeptic would posit that one may never

know, until it is their time, what happens to their soul after death; however, an act of faith is to act in a manner not bound by reason, and therefore, is to acknowledge that, although it is a possibility that an individual's soul may die with their body, to act in accordance with their faith is what one ought to do with their existence. It would appear that only an action independent of reason can evade being deemed a determinable necessity, and these are acts of faith, for it does not abide by the order of arbitrary conditions instigated by reason. An act of faith is the only instance in which one is able to choose, for there is nothing that necessitates its choosing, and it is solely in this mode that virtue exists, virtue being that which is done unconditionally.

The necessity of faith in the age of scientific discovery lies in the abject notions of meaninglessness that knowledge leaves in its wake, for to contemplate further than faith is skepticism, and further than skepticism is nihilistic despair. A recapitulation of Dostoevsky's notion concerning realists not possessing the ability to have faith, allows for the illustration of said assertion be proportional to the fact that irrational beings do not exhibit the convictions of nihilism. The intentions behind this exposition were not to support the existence of any particular religious deity, but only to propose that the amenities provided by science cannot suffice as a replacement for an individual's faculty of spirit. The conceptualization of this faculty, without the aid of reason, is a difficult to imagine; however, it appears that Kierkegaard interprets it as the void that was eventually filled by reason. He asserts:

“the obscure Heraclitus has said, ‘One can never walk through the same river twice.’

The obscure Heraclitus had a disciple who didn't remain standing there but went further

and added, 'One cannot do it even once.' Poor Heraclitus to have had such a disciple! This improvement changed the Heraclitian principle into an Eleatic doctrine denying movement, and yet all that disciple wanted was to be a disciple of Heraclitus who went further, not back to what Heraclitus had abandoned" (Kierkegaard 152).

From this quote, the insatiability of reason becomes evident. Heraclitus seems to represent the foundation for the human faculty of reason, for the cause of knowledge is the doubting of that which has yet to be questioned. Any cause concerning phenomena not yet subject to questioning, is assumed to be unalterable force, imposed by necessity. It would appear that the student of Heraclitus utilizes the latter's skepticism in order to doubt his teacher's ability to doubt, thereby representing the doctrine of nihilism. For Eleatic doctrine denying movement is identical with Zeno's Paradox, an instance in which logic is able to deduce that an individual may never move from point A to B, because before they could cover said distance, they would have to cover half of it, but before they could cover half of AB, they would have to cover half of the half of AB, and so indefinitely. Therefore, the individual in question would never move. So, if Zeno's paradox is granted as true, by what faculty can they consent to move? Should Hume's declaration be universally accepted, that is unreasonable to believe that the future must necessarily resemble the past? Perhaps they may even find it reasonable to infer that the transient nature of their existence necessitates the privation of any sort of meaning, and if so, why is it necessary that they should live?

The difference between faith and nihilism is made explicit when one considers the reason Abraham chose to obey God and sacrifice Isaac. Other than the objectivity

derived from mathematics, nihilism sees no order to the chaotic horrors of existence. Through that belief, their preferences are not bound any restriction, or order, thereby enslaving them to their perceptions, even when said perceptions incite a preference that is not in their ability to acquire. Thus, this is what makes the life of a self-serving individual unendurable, seeing that the aforementioned cause of the pain that comes with existence was an individual's inability to negate the faculty of volition, as described by Locke. It would appear that the necessity of preference is inescapable for the nihilist, except through the act of suicide; however, Abraham, as the ultimate example of faith, was willing to do what was the least in accordance with both his faculties of preference, and reason, simply because God deemed it necessary. And although a determination concerning God's intentions will remain forever unknown, it has been stated earlier that Locke's assertion, concerning an individual's ability to prefer that which they can will over what they cannot, is what allows for them to be in a state of liberty, even when they are restricted by the forces imposed by necessity.

A truly satisfactory definition of this faith appears forever subject to obscurity; however, Kierkegaard describes the faith of Abraham as a, "power whose strength is powerlessness, great in that wisdom whose secret is folly, great in that hope whose outward form is insanity, great in that love which is hatred of self" (16). It would appear that this notion somewhat elucidates the definition that began this exposition. For the freedom to doubt implies the idea of appearances, and the latter's existence is contingent upon the existence of the actualities it resembles. And what an appearance is to an actuality is what a subjective idea is to an objective one; therefore, the self is an idea whose existence is contingent upon the existence of that which exists independent

of it. So reason is not the affliction of existence, but merely the means by which the self was actualized. This conclusion also appears to echo the aforementioned Melville quote, concerning an individual's obedience to God necessitating a disobedience to the self, the difficulty being that there is no logical justification to obey the former. Although the necessity of faith cannot be proven directly, it may be posited that, without faith, the answer to why one would consent to live remains empty. It would appear that the nature of faith is indeterminate; an assumption of its existence is the means by which one is able to acknowledge that the faculty of reason cannot be the answer to the mystery of an individual's existence. Therefore, faith shall suffice, that is unless someone posits a more explicit, and agreeable answer in the forthcoming future.

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