

power over people. To keep supreme power over people, they say, is the only way to keep the foolish people of the world good. Therefore Jesus is, once again, sentenced to death. However, like Jesus, Alyosha remains silent during this attack on his beloved church. His simple faith does need philosophical arguments, only love. At the end of Ivan's perfect reasoning Alyosha gives his brother a kiss (reminiscent of Dostoevsky's own actions at his Christmas 'execution'). The argument is defeated by an act of love, not by reasoning.

As someone who thinks it is everyone's responsibility to be guided by reason and not gut instincts or romantic ideas I should find this infuriating, but I don't. And here is what I think we can learn from this.

Firstly, actions speak louder than words. Almost no one chooses their moral system on reasoning alone, they usually only use 'reasoning' to back up what they already have decided to believe. Humanists should be showing the value of atheist morality, not by barking rational arguments and calling religious faith a kind of insanity as Richard Dawkins does, but by our daily actions.

Secondly, I think, unlike Dostoevsky, that rebellion against conventional wisdom and the status quo is very healthy. However Dostoevsky challenges us to ask what are our true reasons for rebellion. Are we rebelling against God because of honest reasoning, or is this a symptom of anger at the church, our parents or something about ourselves? If it is the latter I don't suggest you run to God, only that we should beware the results of our rebellion. It could be argued that the Russian rebellion of 1917 was just the Tower of Babel that came crashing down as Dostoevsky predicted. □

Poetry Corner



Bush Recites Yeats

I will arise and fly now and bomb Iraq to bits
 And the small cabins torch there of clay and wattle made
 Fine bean rows will I bulldoze there, the hives of terrorists
 And kill alone in a jet loud glade.
 And I shall have some war there, for war comes dropping slow,
 Dropping from the flights of the morning to where the rocket sings;
 There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
 And evening full of bomber's wings.
 I will arise and scorch now, for always night and day
 I hear the Gulf oil lapping in tankers by the shore;
 While I destroy the roadways, and all the pavements grey,
 I stab Islam in the deep heart's core.

On Humanism

Old: God created the world and humanity.
 New: The world and humanity evolved.
 Old: Hell is a place of eternal torment for the wicked.
 New: Suffering is the natural result of breaking the laws of right living.
 Old: Heaven is the place where good people go when they die.
 New: Doing right brings its own satisfaction.
 Old: The chief end of humanity is to glorify God.
 New: The chief end of humanity is to improve ourselves, as individuals and as the human race.
 Old: Religion has to do with the supernatural.
 New: Religion has to do with the natural; the so-called supernatural is only the not-yet-understood natural.
 Old: Humankind is inherently evil and a worm of the dust.
 New: Humankind is inherently good and has infinite possibilities.
 Old: Humankind should submit to the will of God.
 New: Humankind should not submit to injustice or suffering without protest and should endeavor to remove its causes.
 Old: Salvation comes from outside humanity.
 New: Improvement comes from within. No person or god can save another person.
 Old: The ideas of sin, salvation, redemption, prayer, and worship are important.
 New: These ideas are unimportant.
 Old: The truth is to be found in one religion only.
 New: There are truths in all religions and outside of religion.

A Humanist Code of Ethics

Do no harm to the earth, she is your mother.
 Being is more important than having.
 Never promote yourself at another's expense.
 Hold life sacred; treat it with reverence.
 Allow each person the dignity of his or her labour.
 Open your home to the wayfarer.
 Be ready to receive your deepest dreams;
 Sometimes they are the speech of unblighted conscience.
 Always make restitutions to the ones you have harmed.
 Never think less of yourself than you are.
 Never think that you are more than another.

Psalms 151

1 The Lord is my shepherd:
 He'll cage me in His pen,
 and He'll shear off my fleece.
 2 He'll take away my lambs,
 He'll have them slaughtered,
 and He'll have them devoured.
 3 When He reckons my day has come,
 He'll render me unto the butcher, too.
 4 Yea, verily, the Lord is my shepherd.

Lothar Luken

Charles Francis Potter

Arthur Dobrin