Very few twenty-century scientists made as a lasting influence on modern society as Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud. Physicists routinely use the theories Einstein developed a century ago to analyse and comprehend cosmological and quantum phenomena. Similarly, some of the vital models contemporary psychologists routinely apply in order to explain psychosexual developments and human psyches are credited to Freud. Perhaps less known to the general public is the magnitude of influence Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy had on both Einstein and Freud. Einstein once declared: “Dostoevsky gives me more than any scientist, more than Gauss.” Freud too ranked Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* alongside the works of Shakespeare in terms of its literary significance. Tolstoy had likewise influenced Einstein and Freud.

*Two of the subjects, which interested all of them in common and with comparable magnitude, were God and the purpose of human life. All of them, without exception, had passionately been occupied by and written and talked extensively about these subjects. The purpose of this book is to closely examine the beliefs of the quartet based on the books and articles they produced over a span of many years. The author has made a great effort to make their views as comprehensible as possible for the general reader without diluting or oversimplifying them.*

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The Reason for Life
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What They Believed: Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy

Waltenegus Dargie
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What was to be the value of the long looked forward to,
Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity
And the wisdom of age? Had they deceived us
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders,
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?
The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,
The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets
Useless in the darkness into which they peered
Or from which they turned their eyes. There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.

T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*
Introduction

Very few twenty-century scientists made as lasting an influence on modern society as Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud. Physicists routinely use the theories Einstein developed a century ago to analyse and comprehend cosmological and quantum phenomena. The ripples in the fabric of spacetime physicists observed on September 14, 2015 at the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) confirmed for the first time the existence of gravitational waves, which Einstein, using his Theory of General Relativity, predicted a hundred years ago. Similarly, some of the vital models contemporary psychologists routinely apply in order to explain psychosexual developments and human psyches are credited to Freud. We also owe it to Freud for most of the psychoanalytical expressions we ubiquitously apply to convey the psychological states of mind, such as neurosis, phobia, repression, fixation, projection, Oedipal complex, compulsion, transference, death instinct, erogenous zones, Freudian slip, disavowal, displacement, identification, libido, narcissism, and paranoia.

Perhaps less known to the general public is the magnitude of influence Dostoevsky and Tolstoy had on both Einstein and Freud. Einstein once declared: “Dostoevsky gives me more than any scientist, more than Gauss.” To appreciate the weight of this declaration it suffices to remark that without the prior foundation laid by Gauss and his students (most notably Riemann), perhaps it would have been impossible for Einstein to develop his General Relativity Theory. Freud too ranked Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* alongside the works of Sophocles and Shakespeare in terms of literary significance. Tolstoy had likewise influenced
Einstein. The pacifist and anarchistic philosophy to which Einstein subscribed for nearly three decades before the advent of the Second World War and his lifetime mistrust of the military establishment were, for the most part, due to the influence of Tolstoy.

Two of the subjects, which interested all of them in common and with comparable magnitude, were God and the purpose of human life. All of them, without exception, had passionately been occupied by and written and talked extensively about these subjects. Indeed, almost all of Dostoevsky’s books contain frequent references to God and intense dialogues about the meaning of life and many of his literary characters are well versed in the Bible. Tolstoy became overtly occupied with religion shortly after the publication of *Anna Karenina* when he was turning fifty and for the next twenty-five years it became his primary occupation. Besides, in his autobiography he succinctly describes how he had been searching for the meaning and purpose of life for a long time and how he eventually believed in God and in moral principles, and argued why he considered the teaching of Jesus timeless and universal in its application. But he also unequivocally rejected the deity and supernatural conception of Jesus, the existence of miracles and prophecies, and the sacredness of the Bible. Furthermore, Tolstoy attempted to reconstruct the “original” narration of the New Testament by editing and “harmonising” the four Gospels. His book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* is a culmination of thirty years of careful diagnosis of the faults and ills of modern societies and a passionate but rational entreaty to the prescription of *The Sermon on the Mount* in order to correct the faults and to heal the ills.

Freud investigated the origin of religion for more than forty years. In *Totem and Taboo* he investigates the anthropological and
psychological roots of religion. In *Moses and Monotheism* he applies psychoanalysis and reasons about the emergence of Judaism and Christianity and offers an alternative account of how the Israelites “actually” made their exodus out of Egypt. In *The Future of an Illusion*, he makes an in-depth study of the multifaceted relationships between religion and neurosis. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud links the sense of guilt and the emergence of conscience in humanity to a secret wish for punishment, which in turn is linked to an original crime committed by humanity, the murder of the primordial father. Freud considered his study on religion as a well-connected and consistent development.

Even though the intensity of his interest in religion varied throughout his life, for Einstein it was a matter of great interest. Whilst living in Europe, he often shared his views among a few close friends and acquaintances, but during the latter part of his life, after he took residence in the United States following his persecution by the Nazis, he became publicly assertive and published a number of articles on religion and its relevance to modern societies. Einstein took his belief in God seriously and considered that all his scientific discoveries were consistent with his belief. Indeed one can justifiably argue that the main reason for Einstein to reject (or regard as incomplete) the claims of quantum physics is due to his religious outlook.

Notably my subjects represent diverse religious views. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were born into Russian Orthodox Christian families; Dostoevsky never departed from his childhood religion whilst Tolstoy rejected his, becoming an atheist for two decades, then rejecting atheism, and eventually finding his own religion. Freud and Einstein were born into Jewish families. Freud rejected his childhood faith when he was still a youth to become an outspoken atheist. Einstein never seriously adhered to Judaism but never
renounced it either. Instead, he accepted the existence of an impersonal God who has created a perfect and beautiful universe, but who does not interfere with his creation. The combined published works of this quartet on religion is a century old, an indisputable and uninterrupted chain of intellectual thinking on the existence of God and the purpose of human life.
The oldest among them, Dostoevsky, was born on 11 November 1821 in Moscow whilst the youngest of them, Einstein, was born on 14 March 1879 in Ulm, the Kingdom of Württemberg in the German Empire. In between these dates come Tolstoy and Freud, respectively, the former born on 9 September 1828 in Yasnaya Polyana, Russia, and the latter on 6 May 1856 in the Moravia town of Příbor, Austrian Empire.
These men possessed extraordinary intellectual independence and originality. Dostoevsky studied engineering at a well-known military academy in St. Petersburg and started off with a promising job in the same city as a lieutenant. But a year later, at the age of twenty-two, he resigned from the army in order to become a full time writer. Within a few years he won accolades from some of the most prominent literary critics of his time in St. Petersburg and was admitted into their inner circles. But he also became a subject of much ridicule and criticism within those same circles on account of his Christian faith and steadfast opposition to socialism. His position on these two subjects remained essentially unchanged throughout his life. Dostoevsky believed that even if it were humanly possible to attain the ideals of socialism on earth, the implementation of such ideals would rob individuals of their freedom to choose and to take responsibility for their own life. Dostoevsky strongly maintained his position that individual freedom is to be valued above the individual as well as the collective wellbeing.
There was every indication that Tolstoy would conform to the patterns of the society into which he was born, for he was born a Count to a rich family. Even though he grew up an orphan, his upbringing was by and large similar to other aristocratic minorities. As a young man, he enjoyed his privilege fully (he had his own servant since childhood, who was condemned to serve his master even when he was in a university prison), frequented fancy and expensive high society balls, and gambled and caroused. He joined the University of Kazan at the age of sixteen but withdrew from it after a short stay. His professors labelled him as “unable” and “unwilling” to study. At the age of twenty-three and after having pursued a variety of avenues in search of happiness, losing a large sum of money in gambling, and burying himself deeply in debt, he suffered intense mental anguish and a sense of worthlessness. At this time it occurred to him that something in his life was fundamentally wrong, outright false, and superficial. He craved a fresh and authentic life and decided to leave everything behind him and lead a simple and hardworking life in the Caucasus. It was there in Caucasus that he tried to write seriously. The beauty of the open fields and the majesty of the mountains, the simplicity of life, the honesty of the people, brought out the best in him. Now away from the bustle and hassle of city life, he was able to recognise the illness of the society with which he had hitherto proudly identified himself. Aylmer Maude, Tolstoy’s biographer, lists some of these ills: lies were easily told; etiquette demanded the adoption of French (albeit a borrowed language and imperfectly spoken); governmental positions were obtained through relationships and connections; young and old, men and women alike were infected by a viral and insatiable appetite for gossip at all levels of society; all sectors of society from the youth to the elderly were afflicted by a spirit of lasciviousness; people in his social circles wore fake and
inconsequential religious masks; no authentic work was done in any governmental establishments; and everyone strove to get rich without risking investment and as quickly as possible.

In Caucasus Tolstoy joined the army as a non-commissioned officer and went to Crimea to fight against the allied forces of France, England, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Sardinia. He fought for two years bravely but Russia lost the war. Three months later he resigned from the army and for the next six years spent much of the time writing books and traveling in Europe. At the age of thirty-three he returned to his ancestral estate and settled there for the rest of his life, leading a reclusive life devoted to farming and literature.

Tolstoy’s intellectual independence asserts itself in many ways. His stories about the Crimean war give candid accounts of the grimness of war as experienced on both sides (unlike the popular literary culture which romanticised battles and heroic death). His mature novels consistently lament the banality, shallowness, and moral deprivation of the Russian aristocracy. Later in life Tolstoy would pointedly attack the Russian Orthodox Church for having been an instrument of oppression and for having markedly departed from her initial purpose of existence. His criticism was consistent with his chosen lifestyle and his endeavour to change the lives of ordinary people. He abdicated virtually all forms of material ownership, refused to be served by anyone, not even by house servants and maids; he earned his own living, not only by writing, but also through hard labour in the field. As he grew old, his criticism of the established way of life became harsher and sharper. This is how he describes his feeling in his autobiography: “The life of our class, of the wealthy and the learned, was not only repulsive to me but had lost all meaning. The sum of our action and thinking, of our science and art, all of it struck me as the
overindulgences of a spoiled child. I realized that meaning was not to be sought here. The actions of the labouring people, of those who create life, began to appear to me as the one true way. I realized that the meaning provided by this life was truth, and I embraced it."

An appreciation of the intellectual independence of Freud may be gained by considering the vast amount of controversy surrounding his theories and philosophy on human psychosexual development, the instincts of life and death, the Oedipal complex, the interpretation of dreams, and women’s sexuality, to mention some of them. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna and embarked on a scientific carrier as a neurologist with a research focus on dysfunctions of microscopic regions in the human brain’s nervous system. The apparent difficulty of explaining some nervous disorders physiologically persuaded Freud to gradually transfer his research focus away from neurology and towards the study of the psychological origins of these disorders. Freud thus immersed himself for the rest of his life deep into the study of human psychology, proposing several models and theories to comprehend, explain, synthesise, and govern the human psyche.ii

It would be presumptuous to write about the intellectual independence of Einstein in a brief introduction but it suffices to state that he was 26 years old when he questioned the fundamental premises of classical physics. Besides, he made some fundamental discoveries, including the existence of photons; and proved the existence of atoms and molecules. He demonstrated the inadequacy of Newtonian physics to explain the behaviour of objects traveling at a speed approaching the speed of light or those interacting inside a high gravitational field. He was not an

1 LTCON p. 68.
established scientist at the time; neither did he hold a doctoral degree which would qualify him for a proper research carrier. Many years later Einstein once again asserted his independence by rejecting quantum mechanics as an incomplete science, even though he was unable to disprove Heisenberg’s *Uncertainty Principle*. The exceptional intelligence and literary insight of my subjects was well known to and recognised amongst themselves. In reviewing *Anna Karenina*, Dostoyevsky once wrote:

> Anna Karenina as an artistic production is perfection. It appears most opportunely as a thing to which European literature of our epoch offers no equal. Moreover, its idea is something of our own—native to us, distinguishing us from the whole European world—it is our national “new world” or at least its beginning, a word such as one does not hear in Europe, yet which, for all her pride, she greatly needs.²

In turn Tolstoy, in a letter he wrote to the philosopher Strakhov on 26 September 1880, expresses the following:

> Just recently I was feeling unwell and read *House of the Dead*. I had forgotten a good bit, read it over again, and I do not know a better book in all our new literature, including Pushkin. It is not the ton, but the wonderful point of view—genuine, natural, and Christian. A splendid, instructive book. I enjoyed myself the whole day, as I have not done for a long time. If you see Dostoevsky, tell him that I love him.³

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² AM pp. 399.
³ JF p. 846.
During his brief correspondence with Freud, Einstein acknowledged in a letter he wrote on 26 April 1931 the solid contributions of Freud to the study of human psychology:

I greatly admire your passion to ascertain the truth—a passion that has come to dominate all else in your thinking. You have shown with irresistible lucidity how inseparably the aggressive and destructive instincts are bound up in the human psyche with those of love and the lust for life. At the same time, your convincing arguments make manifest your deep devotion to the great goal of the internal and external liberation of man from the evils of war.4

Whereas the scientific community has closely examined the scientific works of Einstein and Freud, their philosophical works on the meaning and purpose of human life and what they believed about God are not as closely examined. The same can be said of the philosophy of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy on these subjects, even though their novels are widely read and their literary merits are well acknowledged. The purpose of this book is to survey the beliefs of the quartet as exhaustively but also as comprehensibly as possible by relying primarily on the body of works they published about their belief over a span of many years.

The book consists of three parts. The first part deals with God as the origin of life and his significance to human existence. Except Freud, who is an atheist and believed that life is an accidental phenomenon, all the others believed that God is the origin of life. This part surveys the different views of my subjects about God and the justifications for their views. The second part deals with the philosophies of my subjects about the meaning and purpose of

4 NNEIN pp. 86-203.
human life. The third part deals with the significance of the Bible for modern life. As they develop their philosophy, all of them, without exception, considered it indispensable to examine the Bible and its claims. Indeed, Tolstoy and Freud went to the extent so as to rewrite parts of the Bible in order to “re-establish” accounts which they believed were deliberately removed, distorted, modified, or added to by biblical writers and editors. The final chapter provides a compact and comprehensible summary of the book.

\footnote{Freud defends Dostoevsky’s position in \textit{Civilisation and Its Discontents} where he writes: “It does not seem as though any influence can induce human beings to change their nature and become like termites; they will probably always defend their claim to individual freedom against the will of the mass. Much of mankind’s struggle is taken up with the task of finding a suitable, that is to say, a happy accommodation, between the claims of the individual and the mass claims of civilisation. One of the problems affecting the fate of mankind is whether such an accommodation can be achieved through a particular moulding of civilisation or whether the conflict is irreconcilable (SFCIV p. 33).”}

\footnote{Stefan Zweig, the famous Austrian writer, once expressed his view about Freud as follows: “I believe that the revolution you have called forth in the psychological and philosophical and the whole moral structure of our world greatly outweights the merely therapeutic part of your discoveries. For today all the people who know nothing about you, every human being of 1930, even the one who has never heard the name of psychoanalyst, is already indirectly dyed through and through by your transformation of souls (PG p. 457).”}
Part I
The Significance of God

In this part I shall examine the subject God and its significance in human existence. Except for Freud, who believed that God is the creation of human existential anxiety, all the others accepted the existence of God and attribute to him the creation of the universe, including human life. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy believed in a personal God for whom human actions and behaviours (choices) are important, whilst Einstein rejected the notion of a personal God and claimed that human actions and behaviours are determined by infinite causes and effects in the same way the motion and rest of corporal objects are causally determined. Therefore, human beings are not responsible for their actions and behaviours. In other words, Einstein rejected the assertion that human beings possess freewill.

The analysis on Freud highlights (1) the different theories Freud proposed to explain the origin of God (God as a result of the externalisation of psychic realities) and (2) his attempt to interpret religion as the psychological conditions of neurosis and mass delusion. Freud explained God as the projection of human fatherhood into two ways. In his first explanation, he alleged that the sons of the first family which achieved self-consciousness murdered their primal father on account of their contention with him for the women he exclusively possessed and jealously and violently guarded. The murder experience induced in them deeply-felt regret and an insatiable desire to atone for the wrongs they committed as well as a fear of the spirit of the dead father.
who, they believed, would avenge himself. These emotions perpetuated the memory of the primal father and eventually elevated him to the status of a god. In his second explanation, Freud viewed God as the exalted father who was once regarded by the child as an omnipotent authority. The analysis on Einstein highlights Einstein’s recognition of (1) design in the configuration of the universe and the higher mathematics required to comprehend a very small portion of it and (2) the “apparent absence of evidence” comprehensible to the rational mind to suggest divine intervention. It also examines the relationship between Spinoza’s causal determinism and Einstein’s scientific discoveries, most importantly, his General Theory of Relativity. Einstein agreed with Freud that the biblical depiction of God is essentially anthropomorphic, for the biblical writers supposedly ascribed to God their own emotions and wishes, but rejected Freud’s claim that God is the creation of human fantasy and existential anxiety. Instead, Einstein ascribed human beings’ deepest craving for experiencing and worshipping God to an innate cosmic religious feeling. This same feeling, according to Einstein, is the primary motivation for scientific inquiry and discovery. He maintained that God not only instils in human beings the desire and capacity to seek and experience him, but also made his universe and the laws governing it accessible to human scrutiny, so that they can pursue the knowledge of God and love God. Einstein identified such persons as Democritus, Moses, Jesus, Francis of Assisi, Copernicus, Newton, and Baruch de Spinoza as people in whom the cosmic religious feeling was well developed.
The analysis on Dostoevsky’s belief in God highlights (1) Dostoevsky’s admiration of good stories and his recognition of good stories in the Bible, (2) his identification with the suffering of Biblical characters and appreciation of the authenticity with which their suffering is related, and (3) the experimentation in his great books with ideas and actions which are contrary to biblical values and their detrimental impact on personal and social life. Dostoevsky emphasised that disappointment with God is often a result of acutely perceived divine indifference and lack of meaning in the suffering of creation, and argued that love and freewill (that is, human freedom) would have been impossible without admitting suffering into creation. Interestingly, the rebellious characters in Dostoevsky’s books who reject God on account of divine indifference and the absence of justice in the world order he established end up rejecting justice altogether and become themselves indifferent to life.

The analysis on Tolstoy highlights Tolstoy’s long time strive to attain perfection in all aspects of his life (physical, mental, and professional) and his discovery of perfection in Jesus Christ and in his Sermon on the Mount. Tolstoy, like Dostoevsky, maintained that the pursuit of perfection necessarily entails pain.
Freud

For more than forty years Freud explored the origins of God, demons, spirits, hell, and the afterlife, and how human beings first developed the consciousness of sin and guilt. He applied psychoanalysis techniques on children, paranoids, neurotics, and “primitive tribes” in order to establish the relationship between the processes of psychic externalisation and religion, maintaining that the claims of religion are essentially the product of psychic externalisation. Freud identifies three essential components of religion, namely, the origin of the capacity or tendency in human beings to experience religion, the substance of religion, and the process by which the substance of religion is developed. According to Freud, human beings have affinity for religion because they are fearful of life and yearn to be unified with the world wherein they regard themselves as individual and isolated beings. Let’s consider the conception of afterlife, as an illustration. Freud identifies two interconnected primary causes for it. Accordingly, the ancients believed that the spirit of the dead desperately wished to return to his original dwelling, the body of the dead, and always remained in the vicinity of the body. At the same time, they believed that the spirit envied the living for enjoying life without him and wished to punish and draw the living after him. The living, fearful of revenge and never feeling safe, buried the dead far away from their immediate surroundings, in a location, as it were, beyond a river which marked the boundary between one’s dwelling place and the wild, or on an island. So, for the ancients, the spirits of the dead were thought to live literally beyond the river; and the expression “here” and “beyond” originated in this way. Freud maintains that civilised races
unconsciously and gradually abstracted the distance separating the two physical locations and in this way, heaven is considered an extension of the “beyond”.

Freud claims that the origin of the strong yearning and the capacity for religion in human beings are the emergence of self-awareness and the feeling of incompleteness it gives rise to in human psyche. According to Freud, normally “we are sure of nothing so much as a sense of self, of our own ego. This ego appears to us as autonomous, uniform, and clearly set off against everything else.” In reality, however, this is a delusion, for “the ego extends inwards, with no clear boundary, into an unconscious psychical entity that we call the id, and for which it serves, so to speak, as a façade… yet externally at least the ego seems to be clearly and sharply delineated.”¹

Freud maintains that this clear and sharp external distinction the ego perceives of itself is not an inborn awareness; it is rather a gradual acquisition of reality which comes through experience and pain. Initially, an infant’s ego does not distinguish any frontier between itself and the world. Indeed, not only the infant does initially feel its unity with the world, but also considers the world as belonging to it entirely. Its realisation of the distinction between self and the world it lives in begins to emerge partly as a result of pain. “It must make the strongest impression on him that some sources of stimulation, which he later recognises as his own physical organ, can convey sensations to him at any time, while other things—including what he most craves, his mother’s breast—are temporarily removed from him and can be summoned back only by a cry for help. In this way the ego is for the first time

¹ SFCIV p. 3-4.
confronted with an ‘object’, something that exists ‘out there’ and can be forced to manifest itself only through a particular action.”

Thus the infant begins to realise its distinctness and to separate off the external world from itself. But the initial sense of unity, the strong feeling of “an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole” remains inside, side by side with the newly acquired knowledge, even as the latter solidifies and becomes dominant as the child matures. Neither is the boundary between the ego and the external world indestructible, Freud warns, and indicates both normal and pathological conditions which can dissolve the frontier, the normal condition being the state of love:

At the height of erotic passion the borderline between the ego and object is in danger of becoming blurred. Against all the evidence of the senses, the person in love asserts ‘I’ and ‘you’ are one, and is ready to behave as if these were so. What can be temporarily interrupted by a psychological [i.e., normal] function must of course be capable of being disturbed by morbid processes also. Pathology acquaints us with a great many conditions in which the boundary between the ego and the external world becomes uncertain or the borderlines are actually wrongly drawn. There are cases in which parts of a person’s own body, indeed parts of his mental life—perceptions, thoughts, feelings—seems alien, divorced from the ego, and others which he attributes to the external world what has clearly arisen in the ego and ought to be recognised by it. Hence, even the sense of self is

2 Ibid. P. 5.
3 Ibid. P. 5.
subject to be disturbances, and the limits of the self are not constants.\(^4\)

When abnormal conditions obliterate the ego’s boundary, they tend to isolate and shrink it rather than enlarge and unify it with the external world, in which case, the ego is susceptible to be desirous of religion through which it yearns and strives to attain unity with the external world. In which case, according to Freud, psychic externalisation, a process by which an individual attributes an internal (psychic) reality to an external object or being, becomes the root source of the substance of religion. It typically occurs when the individual is simultaneously confronted with strong but opposing thoughts, one of them being the cause of intense mental anguish. Freud particularly identifies two primary types of externalisation mechanisms which give rise to religion, namely, projection and displacement.

During projection, the individual attributes ownership of his or her own thought to an external object. Freud lists several instances of this behaviour in human beings; one of them being the reaction of a person when another person she at once loves (admires) and hates dies. She grieves because that person is no longer alive but she also feels relieved because a secret death wish is now fulfilled. Such ambivalence creates anxiety and distress and a sense of guilt and leads the living person into believing that the departed person envies and hates her because she still enjoys life, and now wishes to punish her (to kill her) for being fortunate. Thus, the living dreads and perpetuates the existence of the departed in the psychic world and invents mechanisms (taboos) to protect herself from him.

\(^4\) Ibid. 5.
The double feeling—tenderness and hostility—against the deceased, which we consider well founded, endeavours to assert itself at the time of bereavement as mourning and satisfaction. A conflict must ensue between these contrary feelings, and as one of them, namely, the hostility, is altogether or for the greater part unconscious, the conflict cannot result in a conscious difference in the form of hostility or tenderness as, for instance, when we forgive an injury inflicted upon us by someone we love. The process usually adjusts itself through a special psychic mechanism, which is designated in psychoanalysis as projection. This unknown hostility, of which we are ignorant and of which we do not wish to know, is projected from our inner perception into the outer world and is thereby detached from our own person and attributed to the other. Not we, the survivors, rejoice because we are rid of the deceased, on the contrary, we mourn for him; but now, curiously enough, he has become an evil demon who would rejoice in our misfortune and who seeks our death. The survivors must now defend themselves against this evil enemy; they are freed from inner oppression, but they have only succeeded in exchanging it for an affliction from without.5

Displacement is similar to projection, but here the individual seeks or finds a third object to which they can transfer psychic reality, such as fear or hatred or libidinal impulses. Freud observes that displacement is a ubiquitous attribute of normal as well as psychopathological conditions and its formation may be simple or very complex. For example, a child may hate and fear a tiger it has never seen in real life (but of which it has heard a lot or which it

5 SFTOT p. 48-49.
has seen on a paper) because it unconsciously associates the tiger’s strength and autonomy with the strength and autonomy of the father it fears and admires at the same time. Thus the child transfers its feelings of ambivalence towards its father to the tiger and experiences the same intensity of ambivalence (anxiety and admiration in their mixed state) whenever it encounters a representation of a tiger.

Freud shares another instance of displacement he once experienced during a therapy session in Vienna:

My patient demanded that a utensil which her husband had purchased and brought home should be removed lest it make the place where she lives impossible. For she has heard that this object was bought in a store which is situated, let us say, in Stag Street. But as the word ‘stag’ is the name of a friend now in a distant city, whom she has known in her youth under her maiden name and whom she now finds ‘impossible’… the object bought in Vienna [becomes] just as taboo as this friend with whom she does not want to come into contact.6

In its positive sense, the formation or manifestation of displacement may not be apparent. Human beings may unconsciously or consciously transfer their affection to someone or something with which they associate some attribute of a person or an object they love. For example, a man may fall in love with a woman who reminds him of his mother, towards whom, according to Freud, he is (unconsciously) sexually attracted.

Freud maintains that externalisation is not limited to thoughts and feelings. In fact, the most elementary externalisation process begins with sexual impulses in childhood. These impulses exist

6 Ibid. p. 27.
from the very beginning but first they are dissociated from one
another and are not directed towards any particular object.
Instead, gratification is sought within one’s own body, mainly
through the experience of sensation. Then the child enters into a
second phase in which the sexual impulses become more united
but still object selection does not take place. Instead, the Ego
becomes the object of gratification and the child acts as if it were
in love with itself. With maturity, externalisation and with it object
selection takes place. Even in its matured stage, however, the state
of falling in love, Freud observes, contains an instance of a psychic
displacement, for one is bestowing to an object the love that
initially and essentially belongs to the ego:

To a certain extent man remains narcistic, even after he had
found outer subjects for his libido, and the objects on which
he bestows it represent, as it were, emanations of the libido
which remain with his ego and which can be withdrawn into
it. The state of being in love, so remarkable psychologically,
and the normal prototype of the psychoses, corresponds to
the highest stage of these emanations, in contrast to the state
of self-love.7

Similar externalisation processes, Freud claims, must have led to
the emergence of religion and everything that belongs to it. Ever
since human beings became conscious of their existence and the
existence of a mostly hostile and trying universe surrounding
them, they have tried to harmonise internal realities with external
realities. In the beginning, they overestimated their power and
believed that harmonisation could be attained through strong
wishful thinking, but gradually they began to grasp their true place
(namely, their insufficiency compared to the vastness of the

7 Ibid. p. 64.
universe and the overpowering forces of nature) and, with the evolution of their perception, their ability to harmonise with nature changed, undergoing complex psychological transformations and adaptations. In the process, according to Freud, human beings unconsciously gave expression to their fleeting but precious feelings by personifying them in order to rediscover them outside of themselves. According to Freud the traces of these developments can be detected in primitive people, neurotics, and children.

…spirits and demons were nothing but the projection of primitive man’s emotional impulses; he personified the things he endowed with affects, populated the world with them and then rediscovered his inner psychic processes outside himself, quite like the ingenious paranoiac Schreber, who found the fixations and detachments of his libido reflected in the fates of the ‘God-rays’ which he invented.8

A neurotic person, Freud explains, believes that contact between real objects can be established in the same way it can be established between psychic realities. Because he can bring together thoughts and wishes which are temporary and spatially far removed from each other in a single act of fantasy, he mistakes an ideal connection (i.e., existing only in thought) for a real one and imagines that the control he has, or thinks he has, over his thoughts also enables him to wield corresponding control over real objects. For example, a neurotic person considers himself as a real murderer because he nurses a death wish towards someone, and firmly believes that the death wish will lead to actual death. Consequently, he suffers from a strong guilty feeling that is comparably equal in intensity to the guilt of a true murderer.

8 Ibid. p. 66.
Likewise, Freud supposes, in the beginning man must have externalised intense internal realities (wishes) towards external beings and seriously believed in his own fantasy. Based on these essential premises, Freud proposes different theories to explain the emergence of religion as a consequence of externalised psychic realities. One of these theories is based on a child’s early experience with the parents it idealises. The child realises that its parents gave life to it (“created it”) and from its birth on supplied everything it needs to develop as a human being. As the child grows, its perception of the world progressively matures, but with this maturity so does its awareness of the vastness of, and the danger in, the world, and of the limitation of its parents as its providers and protectors, increase as well. So through an act of wishful thinking, it psychologically transfers the role of the parent to a more powerful and more loving being whom it can, through an act of fantasy, access always and everywhere. Within this scheme, however, God as the creator, provider, and protector is nothing more than a projection of the parents, particularly, of the father.

The limitation of this theory is that in his theory of displacement, Freud identifies a third target entity, which is a real object or person, to which an internal ambivalence is transferred or attributed. In this theory, however, Freud implicitly rejects the existence of a third entity, God, (who, according to Freud, is rather a product of the child’s imagination). So, the theory makes sense if only the child first creates God and then projects (attributes) the role of the parent to him. But in none of the cases of neurosis he investigated did Freud encounter patients who first created a non-existent object and then attributed or transferred psychic reality to it. If a man falls in love with a woman who reminds him of his mother, the woman is a real person; if a wife
transferred her hostility of her maidenhood friend to a utensil, the utensil in question is a real rather than an imagined object; if a child transfers his ambivalence of his father to a paper tiger, the picture is a representation of a real tiger the strength of which is associated with the father.

Freud’s second theory is based on the relentless striving of human beings to conquer and subdue the forces of nature and to make them useful for their own advantage. In the early stages of civilisation, Freud maintains, human beings perceived these forces (thunder, storm, earth quake, flood) as an expression of a strong emotion, rage. Since only living beings can produce and express rage, primitive people believed that the rage must have come from living beings who were invisible and much stronger than they, yet who were more or less like themselves. In the same way human beings invented physical tools to subdue and tame nature and increase their productivity; they created psychological tools, namely, worship and sacrifice, to pacify these beings and to use them for their own advantages. In this respect, religion is simply a historical and psychological means of production.

The third theory, which is perhaps Freud’s most profound endeavour to explain the essence of religion, is based on an existential tragedy that concerns the primal father. According to Freud, right in the beginning of human civilisation, the system of Totem took the place of all religion and social institutions. Even at the time he wrote Totem and Taboo (around 1913), he alleged that this was the case among several primitive tribes of the world which organised themselves in small clans, each clan taking the name of its totem.

A totem can be an animal, a plant or a force of nature, but most often an animal. A totem, according to Freud, is a projection of the tribal ancestor of a clan and its tutelary spirit and its protector.
Freud identifies five prevailing taboos concerned with Totemism, and psychoanalyses their significance to uncover the underlying psychic realities they represent. Accordingly, first of all, members belonging to the same totem pledge allegiance to support each other in times of need. Secondly, marriage or any form of sexual relationship between members of the same totem is prohibited. Violation of this prohibition is punishable by death or by lifetime banishment from the clan. Thirdly, the totem animal shall not be killed except as a sacrifice during a solemn ritual or festival. However, on this occasion, all members shall come together, kill the totem, and partake in the sacrificial meal, eating the entire meat and leaving no part of it. Fourth, children inherit their maternal totem instead of their paternal totem.

Taboos, Freud explains, express themselves in prohibitions, renunciations, and restrictions against strong inclinations in the unconscious mind, for what is not desired to be done need not be forbidden. This characteristic is particularly apparent in compulsive neurotics, paranoids, and hysterics who impose upon themselves taboos in their attempt to displace unconscious desires and wishes. Freud claims that two compelling and innate wishes are encoded in the taboos of the totem animal. These wishes are the desire to commit incest and to murder those who are nearest and dearest. These wishes are by no means specific to primitive tribes, Freud underlines, rather they are inherent in all human beings, even though they may not be apparent or remain latent throughout a lifetime, never manifesting themselves to the consciousness mind. The more unconscious they remain, however, the less accessible they are for correction and, therefore, the stronger and the more active they function, influencing and shaping overt actions and behaviours. These two desires are intimately interrelated. A child’s first ‘sexual’ relationship, Freud
asserts, is with its mother through the act of touching or attachment. Since touching is the beginning of every act of possession, the child, psychologically speaking, starts to consider the mother as its exclusive love object. But the mother also belongs to the father, a fact the child quickly and painfully recognises and in consequence of which develops hostility towards its father and wishes him death, for the father has by now become a rival. At the same time, however, the father is also the child’s protector and its provider. In this manner and at quite an early age the child learns to accommodate opposing and distressful feelings (Freud labels this condition as Oedipal complex). Through time, the child discovers other channels by which it can defuse erotic tensions thereby reconciling with the feeling of ambivalence and attaining psychic equilibrium. Freud maintains that the failure to discover alternative erotic channels is the prime cause of neurosis. The same cannot be said of primitive men, Freud presumes. The primal horde father, who was jealous, possessive, and violent, not only took away the mother (emotionally speaking) from the child, but also literally took all the females for himself and drove away all of his grown up sons from his place and fiercely protected the women. Freud builds his theory on a hypothesis proposed by Thomas M. Savage who, in an article he published in the Boston Journal of Natural History (Vol. 5, pp. 1845-47), makes the following observation:

We may indeed conclude from what we know of the jealousy of all male quadrupeds, armed, as many of them are, with special weapons for battling with their rivals, that promiscuous intercourse in a state of nature is extremely improbable... If we therefore look back far enough into the stream of time and judging from the social habits of man as he now exists, the most probable view is that he originally
lived in small communities, each with a single wife, or if powerful with several, whom he jealously defended against all other men. Or he may not have been a social animal and yet have lived with several wives, like the gorilla; for all the natives agree that only the adult male is seen in a band; when the young male grows up a contest takes place for mastery, and the strongest, by killing and driving out the others, establishes himself as the head of the community. The younger males being thus driven out and wandering about would also, when at last successful in finding a partner, prevent too close breeding within the limits of the same family.

According to Freud, right at the beginning, soon after the first primal father and his household became self-conscious, the sons the primal father drove out joined forces, came back, fought with their father, and defeated him. Then the brothers slew and ate the father and thus put an end to his dominion.

Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority. Of course these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind’s first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion.9

9 Ibid. p. 97.
After the event, Freud explains, the brothers experienced a series of fluctuating emotions; now a sense of exalted liberation, now a sense of consuming guilt; now a festive joy, now mourning; now a sense of satisfied triumph, now remorse; now relief, now an extraordinary longing for the father and a desire to atone for the horrible crime they committed. “They hated the father who stood so powerfully in the way of their sexual demands and their desire for power, but they also loved and admired him.”  

After all, that same violent and oppressive figure was their chief protector. Thus the brothers began to accommodate opposing psychic forces, which gave rise to strong ambivalence, and sought an external object towards which the ambivalence can be displaced. Which is how the totem animal came to existence, Freud concludes:

They undid their deed by declaring that the killing of the father substitute, the totem, was not allowed, and renounced the fruits of their deed by denying themselves the liberated women. Thus they created the two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the sense of guilt of the son, and for this very reason these had to correspond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever disobeyed became guilty of the only two crimes which troubled primitive society.

By treating the totem animal with respect the brothers expressed their respect to the father. But, by that same action, they were also declaring that had the father treated them the way they treated the totem animal, they would not have killed him. The slaughter of the animal and the partaking of the sacrificial meal were reminders to the brothers of what had actually taken place, and that each had

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10 Ibid. p. 98.
11 Ibid.
contributed to the deed and should therefore overtly acknowledge his responsibility. Since the root cause of the problem was considered to be the ownership of all the females by a single male, the brothers agreed to remain monogamous and the prohibition of incest and the introduction of monogamy were thus introduced into the totem taboo.

Furthermore, unless they renewed their pledge with one another by means of a repeated ritual of sacrifice and communal meal, Freud asserts, the brothers knew that their pledge would eventually become weak and ineffective and that the bond that tied them together would break, endangering the existence of the tribe. That is how the totem ritual established itself and was passed over to subsequent generations. In the long run, according to Freud, the murdered father was exalted to the position of a protective spirit and then to a god.

Freud took his theory very seriously. He published Totem and Taboo in 1913 and took it as his primary reference for all the subsequent books and articles he was to write on religion. The last book he published was Moses and Monotheism in 1939, a few months before his death. In an article he wrote in 1928 about Fyodor Dostoevsky, he pointed out that it is not by accident that the central themes of three of the greatest works of literature are parricide and incest. He was referring to Sophocles’ Oedipus the King, Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov. In Oedipus the King, both parent and son try their best to avoid a fateful oracle, but in the end Oedipus kills his father and marries his own mother. In Hamlet the king father is murdered by his brother who marries the queen and claims the throne. In The Brothers Karamazov, a wicked father is brutally murdered by his

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12 SFDOS
illegitimate son but all the legitimate sons contribute to the murder, consciously or unconsciously. Here as well, women are portrayed as the prime motive for the murder. Father and son (Dmitri) bitterly compete to win the heart of a young woman and Ivan Karamazov is in love with his brother’s fiancée.

If one removes poetic moderation from the stories, Freud explains, all three works deal with one and the same theme, which is the inextricable connection between parricide and incest. In *Oedipus*, poetical moderation displaces the child’s wish to murder the father and commit incest with his mother to fate. In *Hamlet*, the displacement is made towards the uncle, but Hamlet’s procrastination in killing him may be seen as an involuntary admission of his identification with the murderer. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the wish to murder the father is made explicit whereas the desire to commit incest is implicit.

Freud sees a great externalisation at work in Dostoevsky’s novel. Whilst murder plays a significant role in all Dostoevsky’s mature books, it plays a particular role in *The Brothers Karamazov*, his last and most significant literary achievement, in which also Freud identifies a personal confession. In this book the real murderer of the patriarch figure is an epileptic just like Dostoyevsky himself. By identifying himself in this way with the murderer, Dostoevsky was neurotically admitting his own contribution to the murder of his father, Freud claims. The contribution was, of course, in the form of a death wish, which he had developed as a child and had subsequently suppressed to the extent of barely being conscious of it, until the actual death of his father came to pass when he was eighteen years old. Freud referred to two biographical incidents in Dostoevsky’s life to defend his assertion. As a boy Dostoevsky suffered from the terror of death and used to leave a message when he went to bed, beseeching his family not to rush to bury
him if he failed to wake up in the morning. Then in his adult years, Dostoevsky became epileptic and remained so for the rest of his life. Freud supposes that the epilepsy must have started when first Dostoyevsky heard the murder of his father and characterises the epilepsy as affective as opposed to a physical ailment of the brain. (Dostoevsky had a difficult and exacting father who suffered from nervous disorder).

These two incidents, Freud alleges, indicate the coexistence of a strong death wish and an equally strong ambivalence manifested by a sense of guilt and hysteria. As a boy, Dostoevsky dealt with the death wishes by taking the place of his father and wishing the death upon himself, which produced in him a terror of dying. Similarly, when he first heard of the death of his father, Dostoyevsky’s impulsive reaction must have been to rejoice, Freud alleges, but soon a strong sense of guilt took its grip and produced a strong desire for punishment. The epilepsy was the punishment Dostoevsky inflicted upon himself.

To Freud, the greatness of the three literary achievements lies not merely in the greatness of the theme they admirably treat (Oedipal complex) but also in their capacity to reveal at once the three principal dimensions of aesthetic experience: the psychology of the protagonist, the psychology of the author, and the psychology of the audience, both implicating and illuminating one another. Thus, Hamlet the book discloses at once (1) the unresolved Oedipus complex by which its Prince is haunted and (2) serves as an oblique testimony to the Oedipal drama of its author and to the unfinished emotional business with which he is still wrestling. (3) The readers, in being deeply moved by the story, betray a clue to
their discovery in the tragedy of the prince of their own secret history.  

Freud maintains that the origin and significance of the two great monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity, can be explained by the theory of the murdered primal father. In both cases Freud recognises God as a powerful and harsh father and as the undistorted projection of the image of the murdered father. According to Freud, the murder story and the wish to atone for the guilt it generated are made explicit in Judaism and in its concept of atonement for sin while Christianity at once projects and replaces the primal picture. With the sacrificial death of the Son, Christianity unreservedly acknowledges the offence committed against the primal father and thereby satisfies human being’s deepest wish to atone for it. It also serves as reconciliation with the father, for Christianity “renounces” women for whose sake the sons rebelled against their father. In making the ultimate sacrifice, however, “the son also attains the goal of his wishes against the father. He becomes a god himself beside or rather in place of his father. The religion of the son succeeds the religion of the father.”  

Freud considers Christianity as a deception, for he depicts Jesus the Son as one who has stolen the glory of the primal father.

Freud was not the first to claim that the externalisation of psychic realities was responsible for the creation of God and religion. Already half a century previously Ludwig Feuerbach in his The Essence of Christianity had taken a radical position by claiming that instead of God having created man in his image, exactly the opposite was true. Feuerbach defines religion as man’s (man as a

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13 PG p. 318.
14 SFTOT p. 104.
15 LFESS
collective rational being rather than as an individual entity) attempt to reflect to himself his most treasured and most sacred inner values and ideals, and for this purpose he devised a mirror. This mirror is God. Feuerbach regards religion as a sort of consciousness, only in a mistaken form. According to Feuerbach, the primary reason for the existence of God is man’s misunderstanding of three psychic realities.

a) Firstly, man mistakes his deepest wish for perfection and completion for perfection and completion existing outside of him.

b) Secondly, man mistakes his ability to pursue and synthesise knowledge for knowledge existing independently of him.

c) Thirdly, man mistakes his ability to abstract and generalise ideas for an intelligent being that is divine and transcendental, existing outside and independent of him.

Thus, God, as an infinite and transcendent being, comes into existence. Feuerbach asserts that, in reality, God is nothing more than an expression of man’s wish to become complete, purified and infinite and to transcend the individual mind and existence, in order to achieve collective consciousness and unity. Similarly, Feuerbach sees the afterlife as the consummation of human perfection and Christ as the fulfilment of the greatest human desire, which is, to overcome death and become (like) God. Man satisfies his longing for immortality through the resurrection of Christ.

The essential difference between Feuerbach and Freud lies in that, whereas Feuerbach ascribes man’s innate positive nature to the creation of God whom he endows with good qualities (love, sacrifice, wisdom), Freud ascribes this to man’s worst instincts, his selfishness, inadequacy, helplessness, viciousness, and anxiety.
If one were to accept Freud’s *theory of externalisation*, one would be compelled to draw the following conclusions. First of all, the root cause of religion is a serious crime committed at the beginning of man’s existence as a conscious being. Secondly, this crime was committed against a father or an authority figure. Thirdly, the guilt feeling, which was eventually pushed into the unconscious, was seminally transmittable (that is, inherited from the primeval sons only) to all subsequent generations. Fourthly, even though the females were the cause of the offence (albeit indirectly), the males were the prime culprits. Fifthly, the oldest religion is monotheism (the exaltation of the primal father) and that religion requires monogamy. This, of course, is the essential essence of both Judaism and Christianity, except that these religions claim that the disobedience of Adam was directed against God, who nevertheless, is regarded as the father of all. Even so all the descendants of Adam inherited the sinfulness of Adam the primal son, who rebelled against God, his father.
Einstein

“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion. Knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds — it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man.”

Indeed, Einstein believed in God, but he describes him in his writings as an impersonal God who possesses infinite intelligence and creative power. This God has created everything that exists, and governs it with a set of deterministic, timeless, harmonious, and potentially comprehensible natural laws. These laws are perfect (in that they are complete); therefore, there is no need for God to interfere in his creation. According to Einstein, the notion that God interferes in his creation makes God weak, irrational, and haphazard.

Einstein’s idea of an impersonal God attempts to reconcile two existential paradoxes. On the one hand, there is an apparent and highly complex intelligence manifested in the construction and operation of the universe; but, on the other, there is no scientific evidence lending itself to rational scrutiny to suggest God’s interference in his creation, in violation of the natural laws.

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16 AEIDE p. 11.
Einstein did not accept the assertion that the universe is an accidental phenomenon. He referred to the high standard of mathematics required to comprehend even a very small fraction of the universe. To him all existing scientific observations suggest that things are put together with care and are conditioned by each other in a precise and deterministic order. Besides, although the universe may be subjected to scientific scrutiny, the task, nevertheless, requires painstaking discipline, singular devotion, and great mental strain, all of which exclude the possibility of accidental qualities in nature.

Einstein believed that it is possible to establish a concept of God through science as well as spiritual revelation, albeit an inherently incomplete one. Even an incomplete concept cannot be the achievement of an individual or a group of individuals, or even of a particular people or generation. Rather it is a result of a collective and gradual effort. However, some individuals may get a glimpse of the divine mind through exceptional endowment and devotion. (Among these, according to Einstein, are Democritus, Francis of Assisi, Spinoza, Kepler, and Newton). Einstein calls the scientific longing to unravel the mystery of creation and thereby experience God, a cosmic religious feeling, “without which pioneer work in theoretical science cannot be achieved.” 17 The characteristic feature of this feeling is a deep conviction about the rationality of the universe and a belief that the only way to approach it is by rational examination. Persons who are induced by a cosmic religious feeling seek God dispassionately, with no wish for a reward or gain. A God who rewards and punishes human actions is inconceivable to them, because they consider that humans are

17 Ibid. p. 39.
not responsible for their actions or inaction any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motion it undergoes. Einstein maintained that the primary reason for a religion based on a personal God (who more or less resembles human beings and possesses desires and emotions similar to human desires and passions) is existential fear. When primitive man, whose grasp of causal relations in the objective world was poorly developed, was confronted by hunger, wild beasts, sickness, and death, he imagined illusory beings (gods) more or less resembling himself, to whom he assigned the cause and control of the objects of his fears. As his cultural and social awareness developed, Einstein explains, man found additional functions for the gods; he realised that fathers, leaders, and elders could not always provide protection and comfort as well as a sense of continuity and permanence to their community. It was only natural to transfer these responsibilities to immutable, immortal, omnipresent and invincible gods (or God) to whom every member could turn in times of need. But the new role required a reciprocal commitment. On their part, the believers committed to serve and worship the gods and to refrain from displeasing them or provoking them to anger. In this way the concept of religion emerged. No matter how advanced and exalted the idea of a personal God may appear, Einstein maintains, such a religion is conceived by man to satisfy deeply felt human needs and to assuage pain.

On several occasions, over a period spanning more than three decades, Einstein declared that he believed in the God of Spinoza. Even though different philosophers had influenced Einstein (Kant, Hume, Schopenhauer, and Mach, among others) in his lifetime, Spinoza’s influence on Einstein, both in his personal and professional life, was profound and lasting. His commitment to a deterministic universe, his imitation of the philosopher’s
unpretentious life style, his lengthy and tireless odyssey in search of a single mathematical expression to unify gravitational and electromagnetic forces, his profound fascination with the subject of ethics, and his rejection of quantum physics as an incomplete science, may all be attributed to his belief in the God of Spinoza. Spinoza asserts that since God’s existence is not self-evident, it must be inferred from ideas that are incontrovertibly true. These ideas must be singular (atomic), comprehensible to common sense, and definite, so that no conceivable postulate should be found to refute them.

In order to explain the essence of God, Spinoza began in his *Ethics* by categorising everything that exists into two fundamental classes: *substance* and *modes*. Since existence is a reality, substance is what necessarily exists, uncreated. It is the primary cause of everything else. Spinoza refers to substance as “God” or “Nature”. God may be conceived of as having infinite intelligence and infinite attributes. Without such attributes, he maintains, it is impossible to establish any idea about God. God’s attributes in turn manifest themselves through the modes they bring into existence (the word *mode* etymologically descends from the Latin word *modus*, which may mean *measure*, *extent*, or *quantity*. The word *modification* is conceptually linked to mode. Hence, in Spinoza’s concept of modes, the nature of created things mirrors the nature of God, however imperfectly, due to the infinity of God’s attributes). Spinoza further classifies modes into *infinite modes* and *finite modes*. Infinite modes directly originate from God’s attributes, whereas finite modes are causally brought to existence by infinite modes or other finite modes. In other words, a contact with finite modes does not necessarily bring one into contact with God. The

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18 BSCOM pp. 213-382.
most important infinite modes are the natural laws, which determine the course of finite modes.
In Spinoza’s universe, substance and modes are intimately woven into infinite and deterministic chains of causes and effects. None of them can exist independently. There are two causal chains emanating from God and extending to modes. These are the chain of Thought (ideas) and the chain of Extension (physical objects extending in time and space). It is these chains and their eternal arrangement which determine how things should act or acted upon. Nothing and no one is free to determine its own course.
The two chains do not cross each other, but they are both the manifestations of one and the same thing. For each conception of an idea in the realm of Thought, there is a corresponding physical manifestation in the realm of Extension. Likewise, for each action taking place in the realm of Thought, there is a corresponding action taking place in the realm of Extension, happening at the same time. Accordingly, it is erroneous to presume that a thought may precede a physical event or vice versa or that ideas and physical objects are linked with one another. From this essential assumption of independence, Spinoza concludes that the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body; something of it exists indefinitely: “In God there is necessarily a conception, or idea, which expresses the essence of the human body and which therefore is necessarily something that pertains to the essence of the human mind. But we assign to the human mind the kind of duration that can be defined by time only insofar as the mind expresses the actual existence of the body, an existence that is explicated through duration and can be defined by time. That is, we do not assign duration to the mind except while the body endures. However, since that which is conceived by a certain eternal necessity through God’s essence is nevertheless a
something, this something, which pertains to the essence of mind, will necessarily be eternal (Ethics, proof of Proposition 23). 19”

Einstein, on the contrary, believes that the tenure of the human mind is limited by the life of the body. When the body perishes, so does the mind associated with it perish forever: “Neither can I nor would I want to conceive of an individual that survives his physical death 20 ”.

Spinoza also rules out the existence of God outside of his creation. Neither does he accord him freewill. Subsequently, God exists necessarily, and, out of this necessity he causes the world and everything in it to exist. God could have created the world in no other manner or in no other order. Everything that should exist exists out of necessity and God left nothing uncreated that should have existed. Since creation and its relationship with God are complete, there is no reason for God to interfere in nature. Hence, God does not and cannot displace, replace, or modify natural causes or effects. Spinoza (and Einstein, too) also asserts that God does not have a particular purpose for the world he created. The desire to ascribe personal qualities to God, he alleges, arose from man’s erroneous concept of cause and effect.

Human beings find in their surroundings certain things readily available for their use and certain things requiring their design and craftsmanship. From the experience of producing tools for their own use human beings erroneously conclude that someone must have designed the things they found readily available—including the entire universe—for their exclusive use. Because they create tools on purpose, they likewise think that God must have created the universe for some purpose. Similarly, Spinoza maintains that

19 Ibid. p. 396.
20 AEIDE p. 11.
human beings do not possess freewill, for their actions and behaviours are determined by the chain of events surrounding their life, which, in turn, are determined by other causes and effects, *ad infinitum*. Therefore, he concludes that nothing exists or occurs by chance. It is only that humans ascribe to chance or miracles the causes of events they are unable to locate in the infinite chain:

…whatever the Jews did not understand, being at that time ignorant of its natural causes, was referred to God. Thus a storm was called the chiding of God, thunder and lightning were called the arrows of God; for they thought that God kept the winds shut up in caves, which they called the treasuries of God. In this belief they differed from the Gentiles, in that they believed the ruler of the winds to be God, not Aeolus. For the same reason miracles are called the works of God, that is, wonderful works. For surely all natural phenomena are the works of God, existing and acting through the divine power alone. So in this sense the Psalmist calls the Egyptian miracles ‘the powers of God’, because, to the surprise of the Hebrews, they opened the way to salvation in the midst of perils, thus evoking their extreme wonder (*Theological-Political Treatise*). 21

While Einstein agreed with Spinoza’s essential concept of an impersonal God, he, nevertheless, seems to have differed from Spinoza on two points. Firstly, Spinoza was optimistic about knowing God adequately through rational analysis, whereas Einstein believed that God, as well as the universe, is ultimately beyond human comprehension. Secondly, Einstein seems to have

21 BSCOM p. 422.
accepted the separation between God and his creation. His reply to the question as to whether he was a Pantheist was equivocal: I am not an Atheist. I do not know if I can define myself as a Pantheist. The problem involved is too vast for our limited minds. May I not reply with a parable? The human mind, no matter how highly trained, cannot grasp the universe. We are in the position of a little child, entering a huge library whose walls are covered to the ceiling with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books, a mysterious order, which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of the human mind, even the greatest and most cultured, toward God. We see a universe marvellously arranged, obeying certain laws, but we understand the laws only dimly. Our limited minds cannot grasp the mysterious force that sways the constellations. I am fascinated by Spinoza's Pantheism. I admire even more his contributions to modern thought.  

On the singular issue of causal determinism, however, Einstein agreed wholeheartedly and consistently with Spinoza. Einstein’s commitment to causal determinism was not a matter of mere ideological consent; instead he made causal determinism the whole foundation of his scientific enquiry. In his *Ethics*  Spinoza declares:

Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same, that means, the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen, and

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22 GSV pp. 372-373.
change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, namely, through the universal laws and rules of nature. Some of the fundamental assumptions made by Einstein in his *Special and General Relativity* theories are due to his earnest commitment to causal determinism and belief in the universal applicability of the laws of nature. One of these is the *equivalence principle*, which asserts that objects in a gravitational field (for example, on earth) behave exactly in the same way as objects in an accelerated field (in space). This simple observation enabled Einstein to establish how the geometry of the entire universe influences the motion of massive bodies and how these massive bodies, in return, influence the geometry of the universe.

The significance of a scientific theory is often judged by three criteria, namely, by its prediction, explanation, and testability features. Between 1915 and 1919, Einstein’s General Relativity (*GR*) fulfilled the first two conditions, but there was no empirical data at the time to substantiate whether it fulfilled the third criterion. In May 1919, however, during the total eclipse of the sun, an opportunity presented itself for the acquisition of empirical data by which the claims of *GR* could be tested.

For more than two centuries prior to the introduction of *GR*, scientists had been trying to determine why, and by what magnitude, light was deflected (or bent) when propagating near a massive body (such as the sun). Newton made a plausible but tentative observation in 1704 but does not seem to have ever seriously dealt with the issue other than remarking that light

23 BSCOM p. 278.
24 Refer to SHTIM pp. 5-6.
consists of tiny particles and, therefore, like any other ordinary particles, should be subject to gravity. A century later (in 1801), the German astronomer Johann Georg von Soldner provided the first model to calculate the angle of deflection by taking light as a bundle of tiny particles moving at a very fast speed and by applying Newton’s laws of motion and gravity. Within his calculation, a light that barely touches the surface of the sun would be deflected by an angle of 0.9 seconds of arcs. A century after Soldner’s calculation, Einstein applied his newly developed theory to estimate the angle of deflection, and his calculation produced a value double that of the one calculated by Soldner. Einstein could not confirm the accuracy of his result for the lack of empirical data required in order to draw comparison with his theoretical prediction. In May 1919, however, two British expeditions were organised independently to take a picture of the region of the sky centred on the sun during a total eclipse, and to determine the deflection of light around the sun. The photographs were taken and analysed, and the outcomes of the empirical observation proved consistent with Einstein’s prediction. Since then measurements obtained with the help of advanced cameras and powerful lenses have made it possible to make repeated observations, both within and outside of the solar systems, and all the observations confirm the accuracy of Einstein’s model. When Einstein was first informed of the outcome of the investigation by the British expeditions, he was not surprised. His faith in causal determinism had already convinced him that the natural laws that apply to everyday objects here on earth apply also to other things everywhere in the universe, producing predictable outcomes. Yet hardly a decade passed before Einstein’s causal determinism was put to a tough test. During the time span within which he
developed the special and general relativity theories, the research field of quantum mechanics was also emerging, attracting some of the brightest minds of that time. The primary concern of this field is the determination of the fundamental particles that make up an atom and their properties and how they are related to, and conditioned by, one another. From the very outset, some of the experimental observations and the mathematical models proposed to explain the observations were unconventional, and, in some instances, even contradicted the laws of classical physics.

Ironically, it was Einstein himself who discovered photons (one of the fundamental atomic particles) and accurately determined their properties. These particles are massless, exhibiting properties that can only be attributed to waves (interference and the property of being at multiple places at one time), and yet, they produce effects that can be produced by massive particles.

Traditionally a wave is understood as a disturbance of some medium (air and water, for example) and the magnitude of the disturbance at any given point in time and space can be accurately described by a wave equation. If photons were to be taken as a wave, then what medium would this wave disturb and propagate through? If, on the other hand, photons were to be taken as particles, how could a single photon be in multiple places at the same time and how could multiple photons interfere with one another without displacing or deforming one another? Einstein called this phenomenon wave-particle duality. Since then quantum physicists have gone so far as to assert that indeed reality is nothing but a series of fields. When these fields are given sufficient energy they vibrate, and from this vibration different sorts of massive particles come into existence. When, on the other hand, the particles give up their energy, they virtually disappear and become fields once again.
The physicists Louis-Victor de Broglie and Ervin Schrödinger were foremost among their contemporaries seeking to establish the scientific foundation of quantum field theory. The former claimed, and experimentally proved, that an electron, which has a definite mass, also acts as a wave (in other words, the wave-particle duality is not an exclusive property of photons). In fact, according to de Broglie, all corporal objects act as waves; we do not experience them as waves in real life only because they have very small wavelengths. By accepting de Broglie’s wave claim, Ervin Schrödinger proposed a field equation by which the state and energy of an electron in an atom can be predicted. The equation is perhaps one of the most consequential developments in the field of quantum mechanics, but it also belongs to a group of equations in quantum mechanics which are counter-intuitive. By definition, a wave or a field equation should express (in a deterministic sense) the magnitude and position of a wave as a function of time and space, but Schrödinger’s equation suggests that it is not possible to precisely locate an electron around the nucleus of an atom; one can only build a probable sense of its whereabouts.

This admission of uncertainty is further underpinned by Werner Heisenberg, who discovered an unsettling inequality in a vital equation relating the momentum of an electron to its velocity. This inequality led to his famous uncertainty principle. Simply put, it states that under no condition can one determine both the position and momentum of an electron with arbitrary precision. The more accurately one of them can be determined, the more uncertain one becomes of the other, regardless of the quality of the measurement apparatus one employs. Indeed the margin of error has nothing to do with the measurement apparatus; it is mathematically impossible to reduce the margin of error below a
set limit. Since then scientists have discovered several pairs of properties of subatomic particles which cannot be determined simultaneously with arbitrary accuracy.

One of the earliest phenomena supporting the quantum field theory is the creation of W+ bosons inside the sun as a result of the conversion of protons into neutrons. A single proton is made up of two fundamental particles, two up quarks and one down quark. Similarly, a neutron is made up of two down quarks and an up quark. In a process called beta decay or radioactive decay, a single proton can be transformed into a neutron; in the process, another fundamental particles, which is called a W+ boson, which is 80 times heavier than its parent proton, is created! The heavy boson, however, does not survive for more than a fraction of a second before it degenerates into two other fundamental particles, namely, a positron and an electron neutrino. Two questions, as regards this process have been challenging physicists ever since:

(1) How can so many fundamental particles emerge from a single conversion process when they were not a part of the proton in the first place? (It is not that a proton is smashed to pieces and its fundamental building blocks are disintegrated.)

(2) How can a proton produce a neutron (having a comparatively an equal amount of weight) and a boson in addition, which is 80 times heavier than proton?

Theoretical physicists refer to Heisenberg’s *uncertainty principle* to explain this phenomenon. The equation that relates the error in the position and the error in the momentum of a particle to a constant number (Planck’s constant) can also be expressed in terms of the error in the energy and the error in the lifetime of a particle. In plain terms this means that a particle with a large amount of energy (or mass) can be created out of nothing,
provided that the particle exists only for a short time. Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle seriously challenges the assumption that the universe is a self-sustaining, predictable system, which is governed by a set of deterministic rules. It also suggests that the universe requires a fresh and perpetual supply of external energy to hold everything together. Max Planck, the father of quantum mechanics, in a speech he delivered to a group of scientists in Florence in 1944, suggests the existence of an intelligent force outside of the universe, which sets the universe in a perpetual motion:

There is no matter as such. All matter comes into being and persists only by the virtue of a force that vibrates the particles of an atom and holds them together in the tiniest solar system. Since in the entire universe there is neither an intelligent force nor an infinite force—man is so far unable to invent the desperately longed for mechanism that sets things into perpetual motion—, so we have to assume the existence of a conscious intelligent spirit behind this force. This spirit is the origin of all matter.  

Einstein, however, did not accept this assertion and rejected quantum mechanics as incomplete science, adhering to causal determinism to the end of his life. Einstein’s uneasiness with quantum mechanics is not merely due to its potential contradiction with Spinoza’s causal determinism but also due to its fundamental clash with human intuition. In classical physics, the motion of an object (or more generally, any change the object undergoes) is a result of a cause. This essential property is called causality. The object remains in its initial state indefinitely if nothing causes it to change its state. Newton’s laws of motion essentially describe this
simple fact. The imparting of energy to the object, which changes its state as a result, manifests a cause. The sum total of energy of the cause and the object before and after their interaction remains preserved. The same is true to the sum total of momentum. The laws of conservation of energy and momentum govern the preservation of energy and momentum. Causality upholds predictability or deterministic behaviour. For example, if the initial position and velocity of an object of specific mass is known, and a known amount of energy is imparted to the object, then it is possible to precisely determine its position, velocity, acceleration, and energy at any given time, regardless of where in the universe this object is found. This is essentially the mechanism by which scientists determine the position, velocity, and mass of planets and stars that are millions of light-years away from the earth.

Often, however, the complexity of real-world systems makes it difficult to determine their behaviour precisely, not because they are indeterminate by nature, but because determining all the interactions between their constituting elements and their surrounding is difficult. A typical example is determining the weather of a particular location, which is a result of several forces acting upon each other. Towards the end of the nineteen-century, Professor Ludwig Boltzmann introduced the concept of statistical mechanics to describe the properties of and interaction between complex systems and to make their behaviour predictable in a probabilistic sense. However, in classical physics, the term probability is simply associated with the difficulty of accounting all forces acting upon a deterministic system. Hence, classical physics essentially complies with Spinoza’s causal determinism. In quantum mechanics, however, the subatomic particles, which have the most basic structure and the action and reaction of which should be the simplest both to condition and determine,
nevertheless, exhibit properties which are inherently indeterminate and do not subject themselves to the principle of causality or conservation of energy.

Since the time of Newton, mathematicians and physicists have developed models and equations by which the laws of physics (such as the laws of motion, the laws of thermodynamics, and the laws of electrodynamics) can be expressed. The essence of these models is that they are logical and intuitive. Similarly, the early quantum physicists, notably Heisenberg and Dirac, developed the mathematical models and expressions by which quantum reality can be explained. These models, however, are phenomenological, in that they yield results which agree well with experimental results but are not easily supported by theory; they are also neither intuitive nor rationally explainable.

Let us consider once again the problem of beta decay, which I briefly raised above. During beta decay, one of the up-quarks inside a proton (recall that a proton is made up of two up-quarks and a down-quark) gives up its energy and thereby transforms the proton into a neutron (which is made up of two down-quarks and an up-quark). The energy, which is radiated from the transformed proton, in turn, creates an electron and a W+ boson, but after a short while, the W+ boson itself decays into a photon and a positron.

One of the interesting aspects of this process is that the electron and the positron are said to be in an entangled state. The two particles are essentially the same but exhibit opposite properties—the electron is a negatively charged particle whereas the positron is a positively charged particle; if the electron spins in a clockwise direction, the positron spins in an anticlockwise direction. After the pair is created, the positron and the electron may part in any two arbitrary directions at a speed of light. Suppose, the two take
opposite directions to be infinitely away from each other. As it were, any modification we make to one of them will necessarily affect the other, regardless of the distance of separation between them. If we make the electron to spin in an anticlockwise direction, for instance, the positron will necessarily change its direction and spins in a clockwise direction. Which is why the two particles are said to be in a state of quantum entanglement.

The existence of this property has been time and again experimentally confirmed and seems to be a consistent property of sub-atomic particles. It applies not only to the spin of particles but also to their position, momentum, and polarisation.

One aspect which deeply puzzles quantum physicists since the time of Einstein is how the two particles exchange information, so as to reposition or reconfigure themselves whenever one of them undergoes a change in its quantum state. There can only be two possibilities, Einstein, argues in a paper he published with two of his colleagues at Princeton University in 1935:\footnote{EPR}

1. The two particles must exchange instant messages to tell each other the moment they undergo a change. Or,
2. They knew a priori what possible states each of them will undergo in future and make use of this knowledge to adjust their own future state (in other words, the two particles are already predetermined to act in all possible complementary ways in future, a position Einstein considered as plausible, since this will be consistent with Spinoza’s causal determinism).

The first possibility contradicts with one of Einstein’s seminal discoveries, the Theory of Special Relativity; because it leaves the possibility open for a message to travel between the two

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particles at a speed faster than the speed of light. According to special relativity theory, the maximum speed that can be attained in our universe is the speed of light. The second possibility is equally implausible because it assumes that the two particles have a memory faculty, which enables them to remember. Experiment results seem to exclude the second possibility but they have so far not been able to positively confirm the first possibility either. Another serious implication of quantum entanglement is that it seems to suggest that the way we regard the physical world essentially modifies its configuration or state.

Einstein called quantum entanglement spooky, and attributed it to the inadequacy (or, more precisely, the incompleteness) of the mathematical models or representations, which are used to describe quantum realities.
Dostoevsky

“I know not how it is with the others, and I feel that I cannot do as others. Everybody thinks and then at once thinks of something else. I can’t think of something else. I think all my life of one thing. God has tormented me all my life,” confesses one of Dostoevsky’s characters, Kirillov, in The Devils. Kirillov, like Dostoevsky, is an engineer by training and at the threshold of becoming an epileptic. His confession reflects to a certain extent Dostoevsky’s own state of mind. His intense preoccupation with God is visibly manifested in all of his books. Indeed, because of his extraordinary preoccupation, many scholars (Freud and Joseph Frank, his biographer, among them) have asserted that Dostoevsky must have suffered from frequent vacillation between belief in God and doubt. However, evidence is not very strong to substantiate this claim. Whilst it is true that some of his characters are tormented by doubt, they are either in transition towards belief in God (for example, Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment and Dmitri Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov), or are incapable of faith at all (Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov). The believers in Dostoevsky’s books (Prince Myshkin in The Idiot, Alexei Karamazov and Father Zossima in The Brothers Karamazov) are firmly established in their faith in God and remain believers, never seriously questioning their faith. This is not to say that they are unchallenged by such questions as the problem of being, the problem of pain, or divine justice.

27 FDDEV p. 127.
28 SFDOS p. 177.
Dostoevsky understood very well the complexity of faith and the intellectual difficulties accompanying a belief in an omnipotent and loving God who, nevertheless, permits suffering into his creation. At the same time, Dostoevsky could not subscribe to a concept of life that excludes God. “I can’t understand how an atheist could know that there is no God and not kill himself on the spot,” wonders the same Kirillov.\(^{30}\) Dostoevsky himself once declared that “if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth and that in reality the truth is outside of Christ, then I should prefer to remain with Christ rather than with the truth.”\(^{31}\)

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Father Zossima admits that much on earth is hidden from human comprehension, but he also adds that, in order to compensate for that, God has given human beings “a precious mystic sense of a living bond with the higher heavenly world.”\(^{32}\) According to Zossima, the origin of our thoughts and feelings are not here, but in other worlds, for “God took seeds from different worlds and sowed them on this earth, and his garden grew up and everything came up that could come up, but what grows lives and is alive only through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you, the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it.”\(^{33}\)

This statement is not a casual reflection or one of the many wisdoms of a dying monk. It essentially summarises what Dostoevsky strove to convey all his life with his novels. It is such characters as Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, Nicholas Stavrogin in *The Devils*, the faceless man of *Notes from Underground*,

\(^{30}\) FDDEV p. 614.  
\(^{31}\) JF p. 408 (see also the reference therein.)  
\(^{32}\) FDBRO p. 293.  
\(^{33}\) Ibid. p. 293.  

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and Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* in whom this feeling vanishes altogether leading them to a belief that they can kick up their heels against. 

Certainly, Dostoevsky’s faith was the sum total of many influences: spiritual, mental, emotional, and social. His parents and grandparents were devout Christians and he was instructed in the Christian religion from childhood. Nevertheless to Dostoevsky the writer and the literary critic, his faith appeared to have been influenced by the Bible in different ways. 

First of all, Dostoevsky was deeply fascinated by the stories of the Bible and the unique beauty and profound truth he discovered in them. As a writer and respected literary critic, Dostoevsky was acutely aware of the difficulty of writing good stories and creating authentic characters. He was highly critical of and sometimes dissatisfied with his own characters even though some of them (such as Foma Fomich) had already been household names in his own time.  

In contrast, Dostoevsky had repeatedly expressed his childhood and lifelong fascination with the quality and authenticity of the stories and characters in the Bible. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov’s Grand Inquisitor confesses the unlikelihood of the human mind to have conceived the three temptations of the devil in the wilderness and Christ’s corresponding responses: 

> And yet if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle. If it were possible to imagine simply for the sake of argument that those three questions of the dread spirit had perished utterly from the books, and that we had to restore them and to invent them anew, and to do so had

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34 JF p. 265.
gathered together all the wise men of the earth—rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, poets—and had set them the task to invent three questions, such as would not only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases, the whole future history of the world and of humanity—dost Thou believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were actually put to Thee then by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we have here to do not with the fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal. For in those three questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown; but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.35

When he was writing The Idiot, Dostoevsky was tormented by a fear of failure and admitted his misgivings in a letter to his sister-in-law:

The main idea of the novel is to portray a positively beautiful man. There is nothing more difficult in the world, and this is especially true today. All writers, not only ours but Europeans as well, who have ever attempted to portray the positively beautiful have always given up. Because the task is

35 FDBRO p. 228.
an infinite one. The beautiful is an ideal, and this ideal, whether it is ours or that of civilised Europe, is still far from having been worked out. There is only one positively beautiful figure in the world…

The figure he refers to here is Christ. Dostoevsky recognised Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* and Dickens’ *Pickwick* as beautiful characters, but also pointed out that this is particularly because they are capable of inducing human sympathy, for they are “depicted” as ridiculous characters. His effort, on the other hand, if one can judge from *The Idiot*, was to create a character that can be taken as an ideal who fulfils “the most important law of nature”, which is to freely love one’s neighbour as oneself. Dostoevsky regarded love and human freedom as unique existential gifts and hell as a state of being in which the mind has irrevocably lost these gifts. One of his reasons for having been an obstinate objector of socialism was his conviction that it encroaches upon individual freedom and, therefore, would rescind the capacity to love in human beings. This was despite his acute realisation that almost all forms of existing social ideologies of his time had invariably failed to enable all members of the society to live with dignity and without the crippling worry of everyday life. During his visits to the United Kingdom and continental Europe, Dostoevsky had personally witnessed the extreme wealth imbalance and vicious social divide that had been created as a consequence of the absence of social consciousness and social justice amongst the rich and the privileged minority which guarded its advantages from the working class majority in the name of freedom of ownership. The church, too, which had in its inception

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36 JF p. 563.
37 Ibid. pp. 407-408.
demonstrated the practical implementation of “love your neighbour as yourself”, had come short of its vision in nineteenth-century Europe and been frequently criticised by the intelligentsia for being an instrument of oppression. Still, Dostoevsky believed that socialism admits confinement and conformity in exchange for safe and secure existence and refused to endorse it:

Naturally there is something very tempting about living, if not fraternally, then at least on a purely rational basis, i.e., it is fine when all protect you and require of you only work and agreement. But here a mystery arises: it seems that man is completely protected, promised food, drink, and work, and for all this he is asked only a small drop of his personal freedom for the good of all, the tiniest, tiniest drop. But, no, man does not like to live by such conditions; even this tiny drop is burdensome. It seems to him, stupidly, that this is prison and that he is better off by himself because—he is completely free. And you know, even though he is flayed alive for this freedom, obtain no work, starves to death, and his freewill is equal to nothing—all the same, it seems to this eccentric fellow that his free will is better.38

Dostoevsky differentiated between the illusion of freedom and true freedom and maintained that one may pursue either of them driven by one of the two innate and inherently opposing forces. The first force is a result of what Dostoevsky calls the law of personality and the second, the law of nature. The tendency of the force obeying the law of personality is to create every possible opportunity for the ego to enlarge and to assert itself whilst the tendency of the force obeying the law of nature is to strive for inner perfection by radiating love outward and by availing oneself

38 Ibid. p. 382.
to the service of others. The first pursuit, according to Dostoevsky, eventually leads to isolation, envy, slavery, and self-destruction even though it may initially give the illusion of enrichment and fulfilment. The second pursuit, on the other hand, may seem to lead to the renunciation of freedom at the outset, but eventually brings one to true freedom and joy. Dostoevsky believed that it is impossible to pursue true freedom with human endeavour alone, for the ego always stands on the way:

And thus man strives on earth towards an ideal opposed to his nature. When a man has not fulfilled the law of striving towards the ideal, that is, has not through love sacrificed his ego to people or to another person... he suffers and calls this condition a sin. And so, man must unceasingly feel suffering, which is compensated for by the heavenly joy of fulfilling the law, that is, by sacrifice. Here is the earthly equilibrium. Otherwise, the earth would be senseless.39

According to Dostoevsky, only Jesus Christ could vanquish the ego and love human beings as himself, and in doing so, Christ, “the ideal of man in the flesh”40, confirmed that the “the highest use a man can make of his personality, of the full development of his ego—is, as it were, to annihilate that ego, to give it totally and to everyone, undivided and unselfishly. In this way, the law of the ego fuses with the law of humanism, and in this fusion both the ego and the all (apparently two extreme opposites), mutually annihilate themselves one for the other, and at the same time each attains separately, and to the highest degree, their own individual development.”41 It is also this notion of development which persuaded Dostoevsky about the continuation of life after death

39 Ibid. p. 410.
40 Ibid. p. 407.
41 Ibid. p. 407.
and beyond the earth: “It is completely senseless to attain such a great goal if, up on attaining it, everything is extinguished and disappears, that is, if man will no longer have life when he attains the goal. Consequently, there is a future paradisiac life.”

The second way in which the Bible influenced Dostoevsky’s faith in God is his discovery in it of suffering yet morally upright personalities with whom he strongly identified, such as Jacob, Job, Jeremiah, and Jesus. Brought up by a harsh and exacting father, troubled by a fragile psyche most of his life (in the words of the *Underground Man*, by an acute consciousness), condemned to death and having had to undergo a mock execution at the age of 28, exiled to Siberia to serve an eight years prison term with hard labour, afflicted by a humiliating and stupefying epilepsy, and having been a lone voice in defending Christianity and human freedom amidst disillusioned Russian and European humanists, atheists, communists, nihilists, and socialists, Dostoevsky’s own life was full of suffering and tragedy, not least his multiple personal losses, including that of a brother and a beloved daughter, and his own chronic illness.

In the Bible, the physically unimpressive Jacob receives a divine covenant and assurance of protection (Genesis 29:13-15), but does not distinguish himself in any earthly affair. In spite of a promise given by God, he undergoes one danger after another and experiences one tragedy after another. At a young age he flees from his home to avoid the revenge of a brother whom he has deceived and serves a crafty father-in-law for twenty years. When, after twenty years he finally returns to his homeland, he loses his beloved wife in childbirth along the way. Then his daughter is raped. In his old age Jacob loses the son he loves more than life

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42 Ibid. p. 409.
itself and refuses to be comforted saying “I shall go down to the grave…mourning (Genesis 37:35)”. “My years have been few and difficult,” he tells Pharaoh shortly before he dies (Genesis 49:9).

Job, prosperous and respected in his community, is another biblical character who made a lasting impression on Dostoevsky. The book is an experiment with human freedom and faithfulness to God amidst trials and tribulations. Can a human being love God disinterestedly, without expecting anything in return? The book of Job seems to answer in the affirmative. In the story of Job, God himself testifies before the heavenly hosts to Job’s blameless existence. Yet the devil reproaches Job alleging that Job chooses to be virtuous for his own advantage and God grants leave to the Devil to test Job. Within a short period of time Job loses his entire possession, his ten children, and his health. Unaware of the heavenly drama, Job is left alone to make sense of his suffering. His friends allude that Job is being punished because of a sin he has committed and not confessed, but Job rejects this accusation. He is not aware of any wrongdoing on his part and points to people in his surrounding who lead an ungodly life and yet go on living unmolested. Indeed, he emphasises, the ungodly are the most powerful, the richest, and, perhaps, the most carefree. Besides, if God were to punish human beings for the sin they commit, Job wonders, who then can stand confident and blameless before God, for human beings are inherently imperfect. But speaking of uprightness in human terms only, Job contends, he considers himself blameless and believes that God unjustly inflicts him with pain. Even though Job regards himself inadequate to challenge divine justice and is terrified by the divine majesty, he never ceases to question and complain about the fairness of his treatment. In the end, despite unrelenting pain and a persistent feeling of forlornness, Job refuses to disown or blaspheme God.
In the story of Job, Dostoevsky sees human beings’ dignity elevated to the highest place and their capacity to love God disinterestedly as having been convincingly demonstrated. He also sees human beings as free and responsible beings that are capable of making good choices. For Dostoevsky, the Book of Job confirms also human beings’ divine privilege to approach God as equals and defend themselves before him (a pattern repeated in the lives of Jeremiah and Jonah).

Another suffering biblical figure with whom Dostoevsky strongly identifies is Jesus himself. He labels him as “beautiful” and as the “ultimate ideal”, a person whose steadfast character had been tested by intense and enduring misunderstanding, rejection, and persecution. Dostoevsky was fascinated by the fact that Jesus often foresaw his suffering and death on the cross but chose to confront death rather than escape from it (the epilogue Dostoevsky chose for his final and most consequential book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, is taken from the *Gospel of John* and reflects this very fact). Referring to a painting by Holbein depicting the dead body of Christ right after it was taken from the cross, the consumptive Ippolit (in *The Idiot*) writes the following:

I believe artists usually paint Christ, both on the cross and after He has been taken from the cross, still with extraordinary beauty of face. They strive to preserve that beauty even in His most terrible agonies. In [Holbein’s] picture there’s no trace of beauty. It is in every detail the corpse of a man who has endured infinite agony before the crucifixion; who has been wounded, tortured, beaten by the guards and the people when He carried the cross on His back and fell beneath its weight, and after that has undergone the agony of crucifixion, lasting for six hours at least.... It’s true it’s the face of man only just taken from the
cross—that is to say, still bearing traces of warmth and life. Nothing is ridged in it yet, so that there’s still a look of suffering in the face of the dead man, as though He were still feeling it... Yet the face has not been spared in the least. It is simply nature, and the corpse of a man, whoever he might be, must really look like that after such suffering... In the picture the face is fearfully crushed by blows, swollen, covered with fearful, swollen and blood-stained bruises, the eyes are open and squinting; the great wide-open whites of the eyes glitter with a sort of deathly, glassy light … Looking at such a picture, one conceives of nature in the shape of an immense, merciless, dumb beast, or more correctly, much more correctly, … in the form of a huge machine of the most modern construction which, dull and insensible, has aimlessly clutched, crushed, and swallowed up a great priceless being, a being worth all nature and its laws, worth the whole earth, which was created perhaps solely for the sake of the advent of that being.43

Elsewhere Dostoevsky indirectly relates his own suffering to that of Christ’s when he describes the ordeal of a convicted criminal who is dealt out capital punishment. A footman idly comments to Prince Myshkin (in The Idiot) that it is a good thing at least that there is not much pain in death by a guillotine. Prince Myshkin instantly disagrees with this observation and gives a passionate and lengthy explanation about the immeasurable cruelty of the procedure and the absence of any correction or rehabilitation element in it. He then adds:

You may lead a soldier out and set him facing the cannon in battle and fire at him and he’ll still hope; but read a sentence

43 FDIDI pp. 374-375.
of certain death over that same soldier, and he will go out of his mind or burst into tears. Who can tell whether human nature is able to bear this without madness? Why this hideous, useless, unnecessary outrage? Perhaps there is some man who has been sentenced to death, been exposed to this torture and has been told ‘you can go, you are pardoned.’ Perhaps such a man could tell us. It was of this torture and of this agony that Christ spoke, too. No, you can’t treat a man like that!44

That person, who had been sentenced to death and was pardoned, is, of course, Dostoevsky himself. On April 23, 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested along with 34 members of a literary circle known as the Petrashevsky Circle for conspiring against the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church. Dostoevsky’s papers, manuscripts, and books were confiscated on the spot and within months, he, along with his friends, was sentenced to death by firing squad. On December 22, 1849, Dostoevsky was brought out blindfolded to Semyonov Square in St. Petersburg to be executed. There the sentence of death was read to the convicts and they were told to kiss the cross. Relating the incident to his brother in a letter, Dostoevsky later relates “our swords were broken over our heads, and our last toilet was made; then three were tied to the pillar for execution. I was the sixth. Three at a time were called out; consequently, I was in the second batch and no more than a minute was left me to live.”45 When the ‘prepare to fire!’ was announced and the executioners aimed their rifles to fire, at that instance a messenger from the Tsar rode into the square waving a white flag and declared that he had brought an official pardon

44 Ibid. p. 22.
45 Pisma p.128 (December 22, 1849).
from the Tsar Nicholas I. It had later been discovered that the pardon was already agreed upon the previous day, but with an order that it was to be announced only at the last possible second. The influence of the Bible aside, Dostoevsky could find no adequate reason for a life excluding God. Even the most elementary impulses (the fear of death and the natural inertia to exist) are indefensible to Dostoevsky and all human moral and social values become not only baseless but also meaningless without God. “Not to believe in God and immortality,” writes Joseph Frank, a Dostoevsky scholar and biographer, “… is to be condemned to live in an ultimately senseless universe, and the charterers in his great novels who reach this level of self-awareness inevitably destroy themselves because, refusing to endure the torment of living without hope, they have become monsters in their misery.”

Whilst Dostoevsky accepts God as a loving father (“all the essence of Christianity … that is, the whole conception of God as our Father and of God’s gladness in man, like a father’s in his own child—the fundamental idea of Christ!”), he also recognises the intellectual difficulties the belief necessarily entails. He articulates these difficulties with extraordinary intellectual candour and aloofness. How is it possible to reconcile the idea of love with the cosmic reality that fervidly contradicts it; the undeserved and perpetual suffering of the entire creation; man’s inability to comprehend the divine mind; and his acute awareness of his inevitable, irreversible, painful, and humiliating end? “This little word 'why' has covered the whole universe like a flood ever since the first day of creation … and every minute all nature cries to its

46 JF pp. 219-220.
47 FDIDO p. 203.
Creator: 'why?' And for seven thousand years it has received no answer,” resignedly observes Captain Lebyadkin in The Devils.48 The words of the dying Ippolit in The Idiot reverberate with a familiar sense of forlornness: “But this I do know for certain. If I have once been allowed to be conscious that ‘I am,’ it doesn’t matter to me that there are mistakes in the construction of the world, and that without them it can’t go on. Who will condemn me after that, and on what charge? Say what you like, it is all impossible and unjust.”49 In the Brothers Karamazov, Ivan takes a similar position: “I accept God and … his wisdom, his purpose—which are utterly beyond my ken; I believe in the underlying order and the meaning of life; I believe in the eternal harmony in which they say we shall one day be blended. I believe in the Word to which the universe is striving, and which itself was ‘with God’, and which itself is God and so on, and so on, to infinity. … Yet … in the final result, I don’t accept this world of God’s … I don’t accept it at all.”50 Likewise, The Underground Man regards consciousness as a great existential burden and laments that acute consciousness leads to the realisation of the futility of human activity, any activity. What one normally takes as a primary cause or a fundamental reason for living (such as the pursuit of justice) immediately drags after itself another, still more primary cause, and so on, to infinity, nullifying the significance of all secondary activities. But human beings, according to The Underground Man, cannot afford to be inactive, for otherwise the alternative is sheer madness. So, they elevate secondary causes to primary causes in self-deception and pursue

48 FDDEV p. 184.
49 FDIDI p. 380.
50 FDBRO p. 213.
them wholeheartedly. The price they pay is self-mockery, self-spite, and, in the end, self-destruction.

All things considered, to Dostoevsky intellectual difficulties mainly lead, not so much to the rejection of God, but to the rejection of suffering. And he could not imagine a world in which love and freewill are possible without admitting suffering. Consequently, he regarded suffering as insufficient reason to reject God. Dostoevsky populated his books with characters in whom suffering produces different effects. In such characters as Father Zossima, Prince Myshkin, and Alexei Karamazov who bear their portion of the weight of care, to borrow an expression from Longfellow, “that crushes into dumb despair one half the human race”vi, suffering produces compassion towards fellow sufferers and readiness to share the burden and grief of others. In such characters as Ivan Karamazov, Raskolnikov, and Nicholas Stavrogin, suffering induces rebelliousness and a desire to shatter established moral laws. And in such characters as Ippolit, The Underground Man, and Smerdyakov, suffering produces withdrawal, callousness, distrust, spite, and envy. Once having rejected God and everything that logically follows (morality and eternal life), Raskolnikov and Smerdyakov take their ideas to the extreme and dispassionately murder and rob people whose existence they find offensive. Ivan Karamazov, too, consents to the idea that it is acceptable for one reptile to devour another (and in essence, human beings are no different from a reptile. Moreover, Ivan maintains that every other person on earth nurses a death wish towards his neighbour, an assertion later well developed by Freud). The consumptive Ippolit dreads the last, lonely, and cheerless days of his life and entertains the possibility of murdering a few people on the street before he dies, if for no other reason then so that he
may be taken care of in a prison hospital and die there with “dignity”.
Alexei and Ivan Karamazov feel strongly towards suffering children (Indeed, one of the reasons for Ivan to reject “this world of God” was on account of suffering children). However, Ivan’s compassion for children is an idea, an abstract concept. In real life, Ivan, true to his confession (“I could never understand how one can love one’s neighbours. It’s just one’s neighbours, to my mind, that one can’t love, though one might love those at a distance. … For anyone to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone.”51), stays aloof. In contrast, Alexei finds himself in the midst of children, not only sharing in their grief and suffering but also bringing with him much yearned hope and courage. Dostoevsky, too, besides carrying his portion of the weight of care to the end of his life, made his readers partake in the suffering of others. From the first book he wrote at the age of 23 (Poor Folks) to the last book he wrote at the age of fifty-nine, shortly before he died (The Brothers Karamazov), Dostoevsky never once omitted from his books a moving story about suffering people. Readers of Dostoevsky remember the vividness with which the suffering of such characters as Katerina Ivanovna Marmeladova and her children in Crime and Punishment, Marya Timofeevna Lebyadkina in The Devils, and Ilyusha and his family in The Brothers Karamazov are related. And, perhaps, with the final words of Alexei Karamazov, after the burial of Ilyusha, Dostoevsky was sharing his own final and most cherished sentiments about children and childhood:

You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life in the future than

51 FDBRO p. 214.
some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days, and if one has only one good memory left in one’s heart, even that may sometime be the means of saving us. Perhaps we may even grow wicked later on, may be unable to refrain from a bad action, may laugh at men’s tears and at those people who say ... ‘I want to suffer for all men,’ and may even jeer spitefully at such people. But however bad we may become—which God forbid—yet, when we recall how we buried Ilyusha, how we loved him in his last days, and how we have been talking like friends all together, at this stone, the cruellest and most mocking of us— if we do become so will not dare to laugh inwardly at having been kind and good at this moment! What’s more, perhaps, that one memory may keep him from great evil and he will reflect and say, ‘Yes, I was good and brave and honest then!’

52 Ibid. pp. 716-717.
Tolstoy

Tolstoy believed in a God who created everything that exists with an express purpose, but rejected the claim that God interferes with his creation in extraordinary ways. As far as human beings are concerned, Tolstoy believed that God has endowed them with the desire, as well as the capacity, to seek, understand, and do his will (and thereby discover true happiness). Therefore, his belief excludes the possibility of miracles and prophecies and the existence of celestial agents who convey divine revelations and messages to human beings. Tolstoy also rejected the divinity of Christ and the Biblical claims concerning his miraculous conception, ministry, resurrection, and ascension. At the same time, however, Tolstoy rejected claims such as the idea that God is disinterested in human choices and actions; and that existence is an accidental and purposeless phenomenon. Instead, he maintained that God can reveal the meaning and purpose of life to people in the same way that scientific truths can be revealed to exceptionally gifted people; in this respect, he regarded the teaching of Jesus (particularly, the Sermon on the Mount) as unique in its insights, truthfulness, relevance, and scope, and maintained that the only way through which the true meaning and significance of human existence can be understood is by accepting and applying this teaching. Furthermore, Tolstoy firmly believed in prayer and an afterlife. Tolstoy is perhaps the most committed of the four persons, whose ideas are examined in this book, with regard to the belief he professed, living out his life, as far as was humanly possible, according to his understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. But how did Tolstoy reconcile some apparent contradictions in his theology? For example, if God does not interfere with his creation, what is the purpose of prayer? If there is no such thing as divine
revelation, whence does the teaching of Jesus get its exclusive moral authority?

It had taken Tolstoy more than half a century to develop, refine, and synthesize his beliefs, and all of the books he wrote after the age of thirty-five, fiction and non-fiction alike, vividly portray this process. Historically, this process can be divided into four time periods, all of which can be recognised in Tolstoy’s literary works. Moreover, in 1880, Tolstoy published an autobiographical book entitled *Confession* wherein he relates his rediscovery of Christianity as his religion. In it, too, an unmistakable parallel can be drawn between the episodes of his personal life and the stories of the characters he relates in three of his mature novels, which he published prior to his conversion to Christianity, namely, *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*. Indeed, one is struck by the stark resemblance between the Tolstoy we discover in *Confession* and the major characters in these books (Dmitri Andreich Olenin in *The Cossacks*, Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace*, and Konstantin Dmitrievich Levin in *Anna Karenina*). They resemble Tolstoy in, among other things, their privileged social standing, their disenchantment with the idyllic aristocratic lifestyle, their internal restlessness and intense search for the meaning of their life, their deep and unsatisfied desire to be good and to attain perfection in all aspects of their lives, and the reclusive nature of their ultimately preferred lifestyle and the peace of mind they eventually attain by believing in God.

The first period of Tolstoy’s life covers his adolescent and early adulthood life. It was a period largely devoid of spirituality and a desire for it, but it was also a period marked by intense internal conflict and contradiction. Even though Tolstoy was baptised into a Russian Orthodox family and as a boy received instruction about the beliefs and practices of the Church, he never truly believed in
them. Rather he merely “accepted with confidence” what he was instructed. By the time he was fifteen, however, Tolstoy consciously stopped believing in the doctrine of the Orthodox Church and abandoned going to church and observing the rituals such as prayer and fasting. In his own words, he did not really reject God or Christ; he simply could not define his belief with any certainty. Instead, he paid unusual attention to the study of philosophical works and to literature. At the age of twenty-six, Tolstoy was already a proficient, famous, respected, and rich writer.

Externally, the young Tolstoy was leading a reckless life, gambling, partying, carousing, frequenting brothels, and wasting money on a grand scale. At the time he was writing The Cossacks, Tolstoy was deeply in debt after losing a large sum of money on cards. Dissatisfied with himself as well as with life in general, he decided to leave St. Petersburg for good and go to Caucasus. The similarity between Tolstoy’s mental condition and that of Olenin’s (in The Cossacks) and Pierre’s (in War and Peace) during this period is striking. In The Cossacks, Olenin wastes his fortune on cards and becomes disenchanted with life. Then he rejects city life (Moscow) and decides to move to Caucasus where he wishes to lead a simple, hardworking life. On his way to Caucasus, he painfully admits to himself that his past life has been a deception and a parasitic, aimless, and joyless life. In contrast, the vast majority of people outside of his social circle lead a hard and burdensome life, producing what the gentry greedily and thanklessly consumed and persevering only through a simple faith they have in God. Olenin promises himself a new life, one dedicated to the service of others. Once in Caucasus, however, he realises the feebleness of his new

53 LTCON p. 9.
philosophy of life when he falls in love with a Cossack girl who is betrothed to another man. This love, in its beauty, dignity, and equanimity, is something he has never experienced before.

I love this woman; I feel real love for the first and only time in my life. I know what has befallen me. I do not fear to be degraded by this feeling, I am not ashamed of my love, I am proud of it. It is not my fault that I love. It has come about against my will. I tried to escape from my love by self-renunciation ... but thereby only stirred up my own love and jealousy. This is not the ideal, the so-called exalted love which I have known before; not that sort of attachment in which you admire your own love and feel that the source of your emotion is within yourself and do everything yourself. I have felt that too. It is still less a desire for enjoyment: it is something different. Perhaps in her I love nature: the personification of all that is beautiful in nature; but yet I am not acting by my own will, but some elemental force loves through me; the whole of God's world, all nature, presses this love into my soul and says, "Love her." I love her not with my mind or my imagination, but with my whole being. Loving her I feel myself to be an integral part of all God's joyous world. I wrote before about the new convictions to which my solitary life had brought me, but no one knows with what labour they shaped themselves within me and with what joy I realised them and saw a new way of life opening out before me; nothing was dearer to me than those convictions... Well! ... love has come and neither they nor any regrets for them remain! It is even difficult for me to believe that I could prize such a one-sided, cold, and abstract state of mind. Beauty came and scattered to the winds all that laborious inward toil, and no regret remains for what
has vanished! Self-renunciation is all nonsense and absurdity!\textsuperscript{54}

The “new convictions” to which Olenin refers here and now deems as false and superficial embody his central philosophy that the meaning of life consists of living for the service of others. “That is pride, a refuge from well-merited unhappiness, and salvation from the envy of others’ happiness: ‘Live for others, and do good!’—Why? when in my soul there is only love for myself and the desire to love her and to live her life with her? Not for others… I now desire happiness.”\textsuperscript{55}

Similarly, Pierre’s life in \textit{War and Peace} begins with recklessness, disorder, and a tendency towards self-destruction. He at the same time deeply wishes to overcome his destructive impulses and to transform his life and make it useful to others. Mirroring his state of mind, he establishes two types of friendships, one of which strongly draws him into heavy drinking, orgy, and sexual debauchery, whilst the other prompts him to undertake a calm, reflective, and thoughtful analysis of the meaning of life. The first relationship culminates in an unhappy marriage with a wife who embodies the philosophy of life upon which the friendship is established. Beautiful, worldly, shallow, and unfaithful, his wife, and the life he leads with her, drives Pierre to limitless frustration, uncontrollable rage, and all-consuming sadness. The second friendship, and its philosophy, equally frustrates Pierre in its impotence to change the misery of the world and to bring an immediate consolation to himself as well as the people who are dear to him.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{54} LTCOS pp. 312-313  
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. p. 313.}
The philosophy upon which Pierre’s second friendship is established faithfully reflects the philosophy to which Tolstoy himself subscribed at the time. Its essential concept is the pursuit of perfection, perfection in all domains of human activity: physical, mental, moral, and professional. This type of aspiration was not borne of Tolstoy’s eccentricity; rather it reflected the prevailing outlook of the intelligentsia in contemporary Russia and across Western Europe. At least ideologically, this was also the belief subscribed to by members of the “upright” aristocratic, literary, and intellectual circles to which Tolstoy belonged. This belief asserts that everything is subject to growth and development; everything strives towards a perfection the characteristic of which is governed by natural laws. One is but a part of the whole and if one knows as much as possible about the whole and the laws pertaining to its development, then one will discover his true place in the whole and his true worth.

But Tolstoy, like Pierre in War and Peace, was a person who would not settle for a vague and abstract philosophy. The more he pursued perfection, the more precisely he wanted to know of its nature. As far as physical and mental developments are concerned, Tolstoy observes in his Confession, the nature of perfection may easily be determined. Thus, physical perfection means health, physical strength, and fitness; likewise, mental perfection, though boundless, entails acquiring as much knowledge as possible and understanding the essence and significance of the things being studied. This type of knowledge can be determined by natural inclination, human curiosity, and experimentation. But when it comes to moral and professional perfection, determining their exact nature was not straightforward for Tolstoy. What does it mean to be good, and why should one be good? And as a writer,
why should he write and what should he write about? These questions require tangible and measurable answers.

One may write in order to educate one’s readers (‘‘What do I know and what can I teach?’’\textsuperscript{56}), in order to express oneself, out of necessity so that one may earn a living and lead an independent life; all of which are reasonable answers, but none of them proved sufficient for Tolstoy. He diligently sought answers in books and through personal discussions with the most brilliant minds his country produced at the time, but none of them was able to satisfy him. He also travelled around Europe searching for an answer, but there, too, he was unsuccessful in his quest. Thus, the first period of his life, a semi-tranquil life, comes to an end, giving rise to a period of intense, relentless, and desperate searching for the meaning and purpose of life.

The second period of Tolstoy’s spiritual odyssey lasted about a decade. Outwardly he carried out everyday activities as usual (out of habit, as he puts it) and even became highly successful as a writer (he completed \textit{War and Peace} and \textit{Anna Karenina}), but internally he abandoned all interest in life except the singular wish to discover the purpose of his existence. Readers familiar with \textit{Anna Karenina} can comprehend Tolstoy’s condition by relating it to the life and struggle of Konstantin Levin.

By this time Tolstoy had abandoned city life altogether and moved to Yasnaya Polyana, to his ancestral estate located 200 kilometres away from Moscow—his “inaccessible literary stronghold”\textsuperscript{57}, as he puts it, leading a more or less reclusive life, in the same way Konstantin Levin abandons Moscow and lives on his country estate and leads a solitary and hard-working life. Interestingly, this period coincided with the culmination of the development of

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. p. 16.
\textsuperscript{57} SMLAN p. 308
Tolstoy’s physical body, which he knew also mirrored the development process of his intellectual faculties. Instead of growth, he now perceived that his body began to shrink, his muscles to loosen, and his teeth to fall out, contradicting the assertion that everything develops in infinite space and time. The life philosophy, which once seemed rational and adequate, now appeared to him not only shallow and useless but also painfully deceptive.

“Can it be that I have overlooked something, that there is something which I have failed to understand? Is it not possible that this state of despair is common to everyone?” 58 Tolstoy ponders for a long time and desperately sought for an explanation in all categories of knowledge. “I did not search casually, out of mere curiosity, but painfully, persistently, day and night, like a dying man seeking salvation.” 59 After ten years of tireless search, Tolstoy classically summarised the kind of knowledge that was offered to him. The natural sciences, he explains, provide plausible theories as long as they address questions surrounding the origin of the material phenomena and the laws that determine and govern the relationships between these phenomena, but when it comes to the purpose and meaning of life, as to why one should be living and to which end one should be aspiring, they have nothing to offer. vii Speculative philosophy, on the other hand, pretends to address the transcendental aspect of life, whereas in reality the answer it can give can be summarised as follows: The entire humanity lives and develops itself on the ground of spiritual principles from which also it derives its ideals. These ideals manifest themselves in religion, art, and the formation of states.

58 LTCON p. 33.
59 Ibid. p. 33.
These ideals always rise higher and higher; humanity strides to the highest steps of goodness. Man is a part of humanity and, therefore, his occupation should be in acquiring knowledge and in helping fellow mankind to actualise their ideals.

Indeed, not only did Tolstoy realise the insufficiency of science and philosophy to offer him any definite and conclusive answer, but he did also realise that none of his predecessors, who had set out before him in search of a rational answer to the meaning and purpose of life, had ever returned with one. On the contrary, their conclusion was that life has no purpose, summarising their findings with such statements as: ‘We move closer to the truth only to the extent that we move further from life’; ‘all is vanity’; ‘life is suffering’; and ‘everything is an illusion’. Socrates. Solomon. Buddha. Schopenhauer. As if involuntarily agreeing to these statements, Tolstoy, too, was nursing the same sentiment: “Life is an evil and a cruel practical joke someone permitted himself to play on me,” he writes in his autobiography. Yet, he was deeply disappointed in science and philosophy as well as with himself that he repeatedly struggled with the idea of ending his own life. His pursuit of perfection, which started seemingly innocuously, eventually led him to a confrontation with death itself. “The same happens to me what happens with anyone who is suffering from some terminal disease,” confesses Tolstoy. At first there occur insignificant signs of indispositions which the patient does not give much attention to. Then they occur more frequently, intensely, and with them a ceaseless agony. The pain grows, and then hardly has the patient time to look around himself, he realises that the indispositions he took for mere trifles have become the

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60 LTCON p. 43.
61 Ibid. p. 29.
most significant realities for him. The full significance of this confession and the spectrum of agony it abstracts can be appreciated by referring to *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, a book Tolstoy wrote at about this time.

As science and philosophy were unable to give him an adequate explanation, Tolstoy turned his attention to real people, first to the people of his own calibre, the aristocracy, the intellectuals, the liberal thinkers, and the artists. To his great consternation, however, Tolstoy was unable to learn anything from them except the “tactics” they adopted over time in order to survive. The first tactic, he observes, is blissful ignorance. People who adopt this tactic waste their time by pursuing inconsequential goals, not thinking about their ultimate end. The second tactic is Epicureanism, the philosophy of employing one’s whole existential potential for the pursuit of pleasure, for, they say, life is short and unpredictable. The third tactic is suicide. Tolstoy points out that so many intellectuals in Russia and Europe who had realised the futility of life subsequently put an end to their misery by taking their own lives, because they could not abide living without a meaning for their existence. And there were people like himself who thoroughly “understood” the futility of life, but went on living out of cowardice. The fate of these people was, Tolstoy observes, suffering, shame, and lack of self-respect.

Interestingly, throughout his search for an explanation to the question of life, Tolstoy had also been examining the soundness of his reasoning and whether it consisted of any faulty components. For example, he asked himself whether what he hitherto considered to be the realisation of the futility of life could merely be the realisation of the futility of his own life and not life as an

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abstract totality. Secondly, he was wondering whether this realisation could simply be the first stage of consciousness that life is the most significant existential affair which he should pay his whole attention to. Eventually, he accepted the possibility that finding no meaning for life should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that life has no meaning at all. Secondly, he also realised that whereas in reality he was searching for a purpose that goes beyond the present, the timely, the causal, and the perishable life, his investigation was merely limited to the life that is inherently causal and bound by time and space. The attempt to fit the eternal into the temporal and the infinite into the finite was, to Tolstoy, like “a deaf man judging the meaning and worth of music by the appearance and the movements of the musicians”.\textsuperscript{63} Thirdly, the conclusion he arrived at concerning the practical side of life, based on the observation of the lives of few people in his own social and professional milieu, could not be representative of the lives of millions of people who had lived in the past and those who were now living around the world. According to Tolstoy, the majority of people on earth find sufficient reasons to exist and to make sure that life continues. These people cannot be collectively ignorant, unreasonable, cowardly, or selfish, or cannot be merely driven by an accidental impulse which propels them to exist. In fact, the multitudes of peasants to whom he was drawn and for whom he had developed natural affection were hard working, sacrificial, and uncomplaining. Not only did they find a reason for living, but also considered the reason to be good. As a result, they could get up each morning and face the day with renewed strength. The aristocracy and the intelligentsia, by contrast, Tolstoy observes, led a perpetually idle, parasitic, greedy, and miserable

\textsuperscript{63} LTKNI2 p. 80.
existence. This realisation further strengthened Tolstoy’s conviction that the senselessness of his own life and the lives of the people in his immediate circle did not necessarily provide an authentic representation of life per se.

Furthermore, Tolstoy was compelled to critically question and scrutinise the quintessential characteristics of what he had so far regarded as being rational and irrational for accepting or rejecting various explanations about life. For example, his main reason for disregarding the religious explanations when he was young was that they did not sound reasonable to him. Now the middle-aged writer observed that there were many conditions in life which do not lend themselves to logical reasoning. If, for example, a man finds a bean next to a sack containing beans, he will deduce that the bean must have fallen from the sack. Other than regarding his explanation as the simplest and the most likely explanation, no logical inference (inductive or deductive) will justify the rationality of his explanation. Still, many a time human beings find this type of explanation not only reasonable and satisfactory but also indispensable in the course of everyday life. So, what if what he so far considered unreasonable and irrational were indeed reasonable after all? Specifically, what if some of the Biblical claims about the purpose of human life were true in the literal sense of the word, and how would they change his views of life or give meaning to his own life if he were to earnestly accept and apply them? Tolstoy was ready to re-examine them with an unbiased attitude, thus bringing to a close the second period of his odyssey, as he puts it, with a change of attitude towards religion.

The third period of Tolstoy’s life lasted about three years during which time he applied his intellectual strength to the study of the Scriptures. Parallel to his study, he also consulted and had interminable discussions with a large number of priests, bishops,
pastors, monks, and theologians of different churches, denominations, and movements. But the Biblical explanations of the origin of man, the fall, sin, hell, judgement, redemption, death, and the resurrection, were indigestible to Tolstoy because they were, as he understood them, in direct contradiction with scientific evidence and common sense. Likewise, he found the explanations and expositions he received from Christian scholars on these matters equally incomprehensible and troublesome. They all believed in “a wicked and senseless God who has cursed the human race and devoted his own Son to sacrifice, and a part of mankind to eternal torment,” Tolstoy laments in The Kingdom of God is within You. Such people, Tolstoy maintains, cannot believe in the God of love. “The man who believes in a God, in a Christ coming again in glory to judge and to punish the living and the dead, cannot believe in the Christ who bade us turn the left cheek, judge not, forgive these that wrong us, and love our enemies.”

Similar statements of faith, such as the Trinity, the creation of the world in seven days, and the existence of angels and demons, deeply confused and troubled Tolstoy. No person in his right mind would accept these types of statements, Tolstoy maintains. At the same time, however, Tolstoy discovered in the teaching of Jesus priceless truths in the light of which human life obtains a profound meaning and relevance:

Look at the private life of separate individuals; listen to those valuations of acts, which men make in judging one another; listen, not only to the public sermons and lectures, but also to those instructions which parents and educators give to their charges, and you will see that, no matter how far the

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64 LTKIN p. 79.
65 Ibid.
political, social life of men … is from the realisation of Christian truths in private life, it is only the Christian virtues that are by all and for all, without exception and indubitably, considered to be good, and that the anti-Christian vices are by all and for all, without exception and indubitably, considered to be bad. Those are considered to be the best of men who renounce and sacrifice their lives in the service of humanity and who sacrifice themselves for others; those are considered to be the worst who are selfish, who exploit the misery of their neighbour for their personal advantage.66

So how could Tolstoy accept the teaching of Jesus, which makes numerous references to the Old Testament and contains numerous claims pertaining to direct divine intervention in the form of miracles and prophesies, without accepting the rest of the Bible? He explains that the Bible, including the teaching of Jesus, makes sense only if one considers it as a work of man and not as a book directly revealed to human beings by extraordinary means. If one were to accept this assertion, Tolstoy maintains, it is possible to separate the authentic claims of the Bible from the spurious and speculative ones, and to find explanations as to why and how the spurious and speculative claims found their way into the Bible.

If one takes the Bible as a work of man, it is then natural for it to be imperfect, Tolstoy explains, because the people who produced it could but have limited insight about life, God, and history. Besides, exceptionally gifted leaders such as Moses, Jesus, the prophets, and the early apostles could not have convinced their followers to accept the demands of their teaching without ascribing supernatural origin to them, for the level of obedience,

sacrifice, commitment, and discipline they demanded of their subjects were contrary to innate human tendencies:

If Christianity had been offered to men in its real, and not [in] its corrupted, form, it would not have been accepted by the majority of men, and the majority of men would have remained alien to it… But, having received it in its corrupted form, the nations who received it were subjected to its certain, though slow, action, and by a long experimental road of errors and of sufferings resulting therefrom are now brought to the necessity of acquiring it in its true sense.67

Tolstoy goes on to state that the timeless truths which can be found in the Bible were not results of extraordinary divine revelations, as the biblical authors alleged, instead, they were revealed to exceptionally insightful people, who had committed their lifelong devotion to the pursuit of truth, justice, and divine love, in the same way scientific facts were revealed to exceptionally insightful and committed people:

This property of foreseeing the path on which humanity must travel is in a greater or lesser degree common to all men, but there have always, at all times, been men, in whom this quality has been manifested with particular force, and these men expressed clearly and precisely what was dimly felt by all men, and established a new comprehension of life, from which resulted an entirely new activity, for hundreds and thousands of years.68

Unlike scientific revelations, moral revelations, Tolstoy asserts, have the tendency to forcefully induce particular devotions on the common persons to those who have been the channels of

67 Ibid. p. 192.
68 Ibid. p. 90.
revelations. Depending on the scope and relevance of the revelations, they may even induce devotions akin to religion, for now a new path of life or a new perspective to life or even a new purpose for life is laid out for them. This, according to Tolstoy, explains why his followers considered Jesus as the Son of God:

To this demand responds the peculiar ability of humanity to segregate certain people who give a new meaning to the whole of human life—a meaning from which results the whole new activity which is different from the preceding one. The establishment of the new life-conception, which is proper for humanity under the new conditions into which it is entering, and of the activity resulting from it, is what is called religion.69

Tolstoy maintains that even though God wishes to have a relationship with human beings and that human actions and decisions matter to him, he, nevertheless, does not employ extraordinary ways to interact with them. A belief in extraordinary divine revelation, divine intervention, and divine grace undermines the price that has to be paid to pursue perfection and goodness, and relieves human beings from being accountable to their actions. The faculties with which God has endowed human beings are sufficient in themselves for human beings to discover God’s will for their life, to find happiness in their discovery, and to earn God’s approval.

Tolstoy identifies parallels between the development of his own comprehension of the essence and meaning of life and its fulfilment in the acceptance of Christianity, on the one hand, and the development of the consciousness of religion in human beings (society) as a whole, on the other.

69 Ibid. p. 89.
We know three … conceptions of life: two of them humanity has already outlived, and the third is the one through which we are now passing in Christianity. There are three, and only three, such conceptions, not because we have arbitrarily united all kinds of life-conceptions into these three, but because the acts of men always have for their base one of these three life-conceptions, because we cannot understand life in any other way than by one of these three means. The three life-conceptions are these: the first—the personal, or animal; the second—the social, or the pagan; and the third—the universal, or the divine. 70

The first conception pertaining to the purpose of life, according to Tolstoy, reflects the values of an individual at the infancy of his moral development and humanity as a historical and cultural entity at the infancy of its moral development. At the centre of this conception are human lust and its gratification. So what is considered as good and the purpose of life according to this conception is the gratification of lust. “The savage recognizes life only in himself, in his personal desires. The good of his life is centred in himself alone. The highest good for him is the greatest gratification of his lust. The prime mover of his life is his personal enjoyment. His religion consists in appeasing the divinity in his favour, and in the worship of imaginary personalities of gods, who live only for personal ends” 71.

As the moral consciousness of human beings, both as individuals and as a collective entity, developed, the second conception of life emerges giving greater value to the social organisation than to the individual. In other words, the life and fulfilment of the individual

70 Ibid. p. 90.
71 Ibid. P. 91.
consists primarily of the preservation of the social organisation. “A pagan, a social man, no longer recognizes life in himself alone, but in the aggregate of personalities—in the tribe, the family, the race, the state—and sacrifices his personal good for these aggregates. The prime mover of his life is glory. His religion consists in the glorification of the heads of unions—of eponyms, ancestors, kings, and in the worship of gods, the exclusive protectors of his family, his race, his nation, his state”72.

The third conception of life is a result of the further development and maturation of human moral consciousness, according to Tolstoy. At this stage, human beings no longer recognise life in terms of their individual or collective personalities, but in the source of the everlasting, immortal life, in God. Their primary aim is to discover God’s will in their life. They are not only willing, but also ready, to sacrifice their personal and domestic and social well-being to do God’s will. The prime mover of their religion is love and their religion is the worship in deed and in truth of the beginning of everything, of God. “The whole historical life of humanity is nothing but a gradual transition from the personal, the animal life-conception, to the social, and from the social to the divine”73.

With this conviction Tolstoy closed the third period of his life and began the fourth, during which time he publicly rejected, and was excommunicated from, the Russian Orthodox Church. His sole preoccupation was to wholeheartedly live out his life according to the truth of the Sermon on the Mount. He became an outspoken pacifist, disowned his property, including the copyright of all his books, and led a simple life.

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
When Freud states that under certain conditions the boundary between the ego and the external world becomes blurred and a person may disown his or her own feeling or thought as something foreign or alien to him or her, perhaps he had Daniel Schreber in his mind. Schreber, a familiar name for many psychiatry students, was a 42 year old, highly successful and respected judge when one morning he woke up with a strange feeling that it would be pleasurable to succumb to the idea of taking the role of a woman in a sexual intercourse. Schreber was disturbed and distraught by the thought and was convinced that it must have originated from outside, and not within his mind. One plausible explanation he found was that someone (his doctor) must have been employing telepathy on him to invade and insert the idea into his mind. Schreber’s condition was subsequently diagnosed as dementia praecox and as his condition recurred and worsened, Schreber presumed that his illness was the act of divine punishment, as God was using divine rays to transform him into a woman. Freud, who at the time did not have a personal interview with Schreber, had nevertheless read his Memoirs, and drew his own conclusion about Schreber’s illness. Thus, according to Freud, Schreber was suffering from repressed homosexual tendencies, which were first directed towards his father and then towards his brother. Freud maintains that both God and the doctor were objects of displacement for the psychic externalisations of the secret sexual wishes the judge felt at infancy.

Joseph Frank contests Freud’s analysis of Dostoevsky and attributes the pathological shyness and nervousness from which Dostoevsky suffered all his life rather to “the paternal insistence on scholastic achievement as a moral obligation, and as the only defence against grinding poverty and loss of status.” Moreover, he refers to the absence of any source material which shows the existence of an early evidence of epilepsy from which Dostoevsky suffered in later life. “The ‘facts’ that Freud adduces can be shown to be extremely dubious at best, and at
worst simply mistaken; the case history Freud constructed in the effort to “explain” him in psychoanalytic terms is purely fictitious (JF p. 21, pp. 45-49”.

iii It was Max Planck who first offered Einstein a professorial position in Berlin. The two had a fruitful cooperation and a cordial collegial relationship for nearly three decades. Einstein would later write the following for Planck’s memorial service: “A man to whom it has been given to bless the world with a great creative idea has no need for the praise of posterity. His very achievement has already conferred a higher boon upon him. Yet it is good — indeed, it is indispensable — that representatives of all who strive for truth and knowledge should be gathered here today from the four corners of the globe. They are here to bear witness that even in these times of ours, when political passion and brute force hang like swords over the anguished and fearful heads of men, the standard of our ideal search for truth is being held aloft undimmed. This ideal, a bond forever uniting scientists of all times and in all places, was embodied with rare completeness in Max Planck. Even the Greeks had already conceived the atomistic nature of matter and the concept was raised to a high degree of probability by the scientists of the nineteenth century. But it was Planck's law of radiation that yielded the first exact determination — in of other assumptions — of the absolute magnitudes of atoms. More than that, he showed convincingly that in addition to the atomistic structure of matter there is a kind of atomistic structure to energy, governed by the universal constant $\hbar$, which was introduced by Planck. This discovery became the basis of all twentieth century research in physics and has almost entirely conditioned its development ever since. Without this discovery it would not have been possible to establish a workable theory of molecules and atoms and the energy processes that govern their transformations. Moreover, it has shattered the whole framework of classical mechanics and electrodynamics and set science a fresh task: that of finding a new conceptual basis for all physics. Despite remarkable partial gains, the problem is still far from a satisfactory solution (AEIDE pp.78-79).
Dostoevsky, who suffered shortage of money, lived with excruciating insecurity all his life, and endured the bitter and humiliating persecution of creditors, must have strongly identified with Jacob when he accuses his father-in-law: “I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household (Genesis 31:38-41).”

Job doesn’t seem to believe in an afterlife, which makes his suffering more painful and his uprightness more honourable. His repeated remarks about death suggest that life ends there: “Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while thy eyes are upon me, I shall be gone. As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to [the grave] does not come up; he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.” (Job 7: 7-10). “Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort before I go whence I shall not return, to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness!” (Job 10:20-22). “But man dies, and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?” (Job 14:12). In another place Job seems to contradict these verses by suggesting the continuation of life after death: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” (Job 19:25-27). Bible translators, however, warn that the last verses are difficult to accurately translate (refer to the comments to this verses in the NIV Bible).


Perhaps Einstein had Tolstoy in mind when, half a century later, in a speech he delivered to Princeton students, he said the following: “For
the scientific method can teach us nothing else beyond how facts are related to, and conditioned by, each other. The aspiration toward such objective knowledge belongs to the highest of which man is capable, and you will certainly not suspect me of wishing to belittle the achievements and the heroic efforts of man in this sphere. Yet it is equally clear that knowledge of what is does not open the door directly to what should be. One can have the clearest and most complete knowledge of what is, and yet not be able to deduct from that what should be the goal of our human aspirations. Objective knowledge provides us with powerful instruments for the achievements of certain ends, but the ultimate goal itself and the longing to reach it must come from another source. And it is hardly necessary to argue for the view that our existence and our activity acquire meaning only by the setting up of such a goal and of corresponding values. The knowledge of truth as such is wonderful, but it is so little capable of acting as a guide that it cannot prove even the justification and the value of the aspiration toward that very knowledge of truth. Here we face, therefore, the limits of the purely rational conception of our existence. (AESCI pp. 41-42).”
Biographical Reference


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Dostoevsky


Tolstoy


## Freud

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