“Everyone Gets Everything He Wants”: Desire, Fulfillment, and the Tragic Logic of Will in *Apocalypse Now*

(Your Name)

October 14, 2025

I. Introduction: The Paradox of Fulfilled Desire

When Captain Willard opens *Apocalypse Now* (1979) with the line, “Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission, and for my sins they gave me one,” he states a moral law. Beneath the soldier’s irony lies a metaphysical claim: that desire fulfilled is inseparable from punishment. The first clause universalizes fulfillment as an inevitable structure; the second localizes it as judgment. This essay traces that paradox across traditions: biblical justice and Buddhist causality; Western philosophy’s metaphysics of will; Conrad’s colonial modernity refracted through Coppola; and modern psychology’s confrontation with mortality. Willard’s line, stripped of theology but charged with fatalism, speaks for the modern self: one who always gets what he wants—and must live with what it means.

II. The Fulfillment of Desire as Punishment: Biblical and Buddhist Echoes (Revised, Integrated)

Captain Willard's aphorism—"Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission, and for my sins they gave me one"—condenses a structure shared across religious philosophies: *fulfillment discloses the truth of desire.* In the Biblical tradition, that disclosure is moral and teleological: a will shows itself to be rightly or wrongly ordered to God and neighbor. In early Buddhist analysis, the disclosure is causal and phenomenological: craving (*taṇhā*) reproduces the conditions of suffering (*dukkha*). Biblical thought reads fulfillment as a test of love's orientation; Buddhist thought reads it as a link in a causal chain. In both, the "gift" of what one wants becomes judgment—not because an external agent inflicts pain, but because the will's orientation or the mind's grasping makes the pain intrinsic to fulfillment itself.

1. Biblical Moral Causality: Grant as Judgment, Desire as Orientation

Biblical writers often frame judgment as *grant* rather than *denial.* Psalm 106:15 is paradigmatic: "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" ((King James Version, 2017)). The dual movement is diagnostic—outward success and inward thinning—and Ecclesiastes amplifies the paradox: a person may receive "riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul," yet it is "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 6:2, (King James Version, 2017)). Paul then renders this grammar in psychological terms: divine "wrath" appears not as a thunderbolt but as permissive justice—"God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts" (Rom. 1:24), meaning the will is handed over to its own object ((Fitzmyer, 1993)). The punishment is not the absence of what was sought; it is the presence of what was sought—where what was sought cannot bless.

Augustine interiorizes this structure: "Every inordinate affection is its own punishment" (*Confessions* 2.2.2; (Augustine, 1998), p. 47). His distinction between rightly ordered love (*caritas/voluntas*) and possessive desire (*cupiditas*) judges not the matter of the object but the orientation of love ((Augustine, 2003)). Aquinas makes the ontology explicit: any act of will "turned away from the immutable good" (*aversio*) entails privation (ST I–II, q. 19 a. 9), which is why evil is not a

substance but a lack generated by mis-aimed love ((Aquinas, 1947)). Teleology is decisive: the same outward "success" may be damnation or sanctification depending on whether it tends toward God and neighbor (ST II–II). Grace, crucially, can re-order desire; "grant" becomes judgment only when love remains possessive.

Coppola's imagery repeatedly matches this moral psychology without serving as its ground. Kilgore's beachhead—"I love the smell of napalm in the morning"—dramatizes *cupiditas*: finite victory possessed as ultimate, liturgized by spectacle. The sampan search yields a tactical "success," but the crew's affect goes hollow as a wounded civilian is executed; what is granted exposes leanness of soul. In Biblical terms, such fulfillment is revelation: the mission, granted, judges the will that desired it.

2. Buddhist Causal Analysis: Craving Fulfilled, Suffering Renewed

Buddhist doctrine names the origin of suffering as craving. "From craving arises grief, from craving arises fear; for one who is free of craving there is no grief or fear" (*Dhammapada* 216; (Buddharakkhita, 1993)). No personal judge is required; suffering is endogenous to grasping. The *Saṃyutta Nikāya* formalizes this through dependent origination (SN 12.2): conditioned by craving is clinging; by clinging, becoming; by becoming, birth; by birth, aging-and-death ((Bodhi, 2000), p. 536). Fulfillment is never terminal; it propagates the chain. Hence in *Majjhima Nikāya* 75 the Buddha warns that even "conquer[ing] the earth and sea" cannot satisfy the lust for gain ((Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995), p. 608). Desire's completion is not extinction but re-seeding.

The Fire Sermon (SN 35.28) names the phenomenology: "The eye is burning, forms are burning, consciousness is burning … with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion" ((Bodhi, 2000), p. 1143). Fulfillment cannot cool what is intrinsically combustible; the heat is the wanting. Buddhaghosa's image—craving clinging to its object "like meat to a hot iron pan"—makes vivid why gratification injures even as it grasps ((Buddhaghosa, 1956)). The "cure" therefore differs fundamentally from Biblical re-ordering: rather than redirecting desire to a highest good, the path aims at cessation (*nirodha*) via disenchantment and practice ((Rahula, 1959); (Gethin, 1998)). From a Madhyamaka angle, Nāgārjuna clarifies why possession fails: the reified aim presupposes essences that analysis dissolves; when the grasped goal collapses as empty, the

shock of its misconceived solidity hurts ((Nāgārjuna, 2013)).

Coppola's river is a phenomenological stage, again descriptive rather than probative. Do Lung Bridge repeats as an almost samsaric loop—built by day, destroyed by night; every "achieved" crossing demands another. The Playboy show promises gratification, amplifies agitation, and leaves the crew more restless: *taṇhā* fulfilled, *dukkha* renewed. In Buddhist terms, such fulfillment is causal: success feeds the next link.

3. Comparative Synthesis: Binding, Punishment, Healing

Placed side by side, the traditions converge on fulfillment-as-exposure while diverging in ontology and remedy.

What binds? Biblical thought names the bondage as sin: love disordered toward finite goods as if ultimate ((Augustine, 1998); (Aquinas, 1947)). Buddhist thought names it as the *kleshas*: craving, aversion, delusion that reconstitute the subject as grasping ((Bodhi, 2000)).

What punishes? In Scripture's idiom, the will is "handed over" to its object ((Fitzmyer, 1993)); grant is judgment. In the Nikāyas' idiom, gratification feeds the next link; cause is consequence. Both understand the sampan episode's "success" as privation: either as leanness of soul (Ps. 106:15) or as another turn of becoming (SN 12.2).

What heals? Biblical teleology proposes grace re-ordering love into charity, so that desire becomes participation rather than possession ((Augustine, 2003); (Aquinas, 1947)). Early Buddhism proposes cessation: disenchantment that cools the fires and breaks the chain ((Bodhi, 2000); (Rahula, 1959)). Gregory of Nyssa's *epektasis* complicates the contrast by imagining an infinite desire transformed into ascent ((of Nyssa, 1978); (of Nyssa, 1954)); Śāntideva's ethical therapy reframes desire as reactivity to be trained ((Śāntideva, 1995); (Gethin, 1998)). Maimonides adds a rationalist variant: fulfillment that multiplies passions obscures the intellect ((Maimonides, 1963)).

Within this synthesis, Willard's line is neither bravado nor cynicism. "Everyone gets everything he wants" states a universal structure: every finite "everything" cannot satisfy a will seeking ultimacy (Biblical teleology), and every conditioned "everything" renews the chain (Buddhist

causality). "For my sins I got one" is the moral-psychological index of that structure: the administrative mission-form returns desire as assignment, and the return unveils the desiring as mis-aimed. The film's images merely instantiate these logics: victories possessed as ultimates thin the soul; gratifications achieved re-seed grasping. Fulfillment thus punishes because it reveals the will or reproduces the chain—and, in either case, points beyond itself to reordered love or cessation as the only ways out.

III. Western Philosophy: Per-Philosopher Analyses

III—Schopenhauer: Fulfillment as Disclosure of Lack (Deepened, Film-Integrated)

Schopenhauer's analysis of will offers a rigorous grammar for Willard's confession: "Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission, and for my sins they gave me one." For Schopenhauer, desire is not a teleology that culminates in peace but a mechanism whose very satisfaction resets itself. Hence the mission granted is not a gift that stills the heart; it is the next oscillation of a structure that cannot be stilled.

1) The structure of willing: lack → striving → relief → renewed lack

"All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and therefore from suffering" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 196). The object that seems to promise rest is already implicated in the will's unease; when attained, it "at once makes room for a new one" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 319). Schopenhauer's famed image is diagnostic rather than rhetorical: life "swings like a pendulum, to and fro between pain and boredom" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 312).

Read against the film's first movements, the pattern holds precisely. In Saigon, Willard's lack is staged as agitation and intoxication; the dossier scene supplies an object (the mission) and a narrative. Relief appears as orientation—a reason to move upriver—but immediately becomes renewed lack: each checkpoint demands the next, each "win" opens a further deficit. Willard's voiceover keeps the pendulum audible: completion never completes; it only re-initiates striving.

2) Why fulfillment punishes: the object is a delusion of rest

Schopenhauer emphasizes that satisfaction exposes, rather than heals, the structure of desire. Enjoyment "we have longed for" soon leaves us "bored," and the will "returns to its old course" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 319). In that sense, getting what one wanted hurts because it removes the fantasy that the object could silence the will. The hurt is cognitive: fulfillment disenchants.

The film thematizes this in miniature. The Playboy show promises heightened pleasure; the immediate after-image is agitation and bargaining. Kilgore's beachhead produces tactical success, but the spectacle ("I love the smell of napalm in the morning") converts victory into appetite.

The sampan search yields compliance, then horror; the "completed" procedure reveals leanness of soul. In Schopenhauer's terms, each fulfilled want punctures its own promissory aura and re-installs the need to want.

3) Representation, will, and the aesthetic & ethical brakes that fail in war

Schopenhauer distinguishes the world as representation (ordered by the principle of sufficient reason) from the world as will (blind striving) (Schopenhauer, 1969, pp. 3–5). Two brakes can mitigate the will's tyranny. First, aesthetic contemplation suspends willing by fixing consciousness on the Idea—to "lose oneself in the object" (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 178). Second, compassion reframes the other not as instrument but as a fellow bearer of suffering (Schopenhauer, 1969, pp. 372–374). Both brakes fail in the film's wartime economy. Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" is mobilized as a stimulant for domination, not as will-suspending contemplation; the sampan protocol subordinates pity to procedure. The very mechanisms that could have cooled willing are conscripted by it.

4) Boredom, repetition, and the river as pendulum

If pain signals unfulfilled desire, boredom signals desire's deflation after satisfaction. Schopenhauer's claim that joy fades into ennui is not a counsel of mood but an analysis of the will's metabolism (Schopenhauer, 1969, pp. 312–320). The river sequences enact this metabolism: periods of frantic danger (pain) alternate with slack stretches of waiting (incipient boredom), and Willard's narration re-ignites the need for the next trial. The Do Lung Bridge sequence literalizes the pendulum: building by day, destruction by night; every "achievement" immediately generates its contrary.

5) "For my sins I got one": the inner necessity of punishment

Schopenhauer does not require an external punisher. The punishment is inner: to "get what one wants" is to have the will's insatiability revealed to oneself. Hence the tone of Willard's clause; the "sin" is not only moral guilt but attachment to the fantasy that a mission could deliver more than recurrence. The gift is therefore a judgment.

At Kurtz's compound, this inner necessity is complete. Kurtz has arranged the conditions for maximal satisfaction (command, removal of obstacles) and finds that mastery produces only a clarified view of the will's void: possession does not pacify. Willard's approach—labor, danger, deprivation—does not redeem the will, but it strips away the last illusions about what fulfillment can do. In Schopenhauer's lexicon, the world is disclosed as will precisely when desire succeeds.

6) Objection & counterpoint: is there any release?

One might object that Schopenhauer allows two releases. First, aesthetic states offer "deliverance" from the will's press (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 178). Second, compassion grounds ethics beyond egoistic striving (Schopenhauer, 1969, pp. 372–374). The film acknowledges both in negative: music becomes a tool for domination rather than contemplation; pity is subordinated to protocol. The point is not that release is metaphysically impossible, but that this narrative world is structured to block it; thus, fulfillment returns as exposure.

7) Payoff for the thesis

Schopenhauer thus illuminates the first half of Willard's sentence: *everyone* (because willing is universal) *gets* (because objects are available) *everything* (because the will projects "the all" onto finite objects) he *wants* (because wanting, not the wanted, is fundamental). The second half—"for my sins I got one"—expresses the cognate of this metaphysics: punishment is not denial but grant that unmasks the will's structure. The mission is not a deviation from desire's grammar; it is the very form in which that grammar is made visible.

III—Nietzsche: Fulfillment as Style of Will—Affirmation, Domination, Transvaluation

Nietzsche does not dispute Schopenhauer's observation that willing does not rest; he revalues it. The problem is not desire's recurrence but our craving for a terminal perch that would end the need to will. In this light, "Everyone gets everything he wants" becomes a diagnostic: fulfillment reveals whether the will has the style to affirm its own recurrence, or whether it smuggles domination in under the names of truth and duty. "For my sins I got one" is the moment the mask of those names slips.

Nietzsche's stark claim—"man would rather will nothingness than not will at all"—positions the refusal of willing as more intolerable to life than suffering (Nietzsche, 1994, III.28, p. 162). The danger, then, is not the intensity of volition but its self-deception: the will valorizes itself as "truth" so it can command without admitting it. "The desire for 'truth' has hitherto been the most dangerous of all possessions" because it disguises a need to impose (Nietzsche, 1990, §34). The Saigon briefing's cool rationality—dossiers, maps, a narrative of "removing an aberration"—is exemplary of this danger: a project of command is presented as neutral cognition. When Willard "wants a mission," the wanting is not epistemic; it is a pledge of will stamped with the authority of "truth." The sentence's first clause ("Everyone gets everything he wants") thus records not luck but the world's capacity to deliver the objects that our valuations already framed as necessary; the second clause ("for my sins…") signals the after-knowledge that those valuations were life-denying.

Against such self-deception, Nietzsche sets style—the capacity to shape one's evaluations when reality exposes them as evasions. He urges a "revaluation of all values" (Nietzsche, 1990, §§203–211), and the call to "live dangerously!" (Nietzsche, 1990, §283) names a refusal of anesthetized security rather than a cult of risk. In this register, fulfillment is not possession of the object but self-formation: the will confirms itself by changing its own measure. The upriver progression continuously offers occasions for such revaluation—each checkpoint turning success into a new claim on the self. When compliance with procedure at the sampan yields horror, a Nietzschean response would be to transvalue the maxim that licensed it. Instead, the will prefers continuity of command; it "gets what it wants" (control, clarity) and is punished by the disclosure that its

wanting is reactive—obedience to inherited values that present themselves as necessity.

Nietzsche's psychology of ressentiment further clarifies the moralizing energies that travel with domination. The weak, unable to act, invert impotence into virtue by calling the strong "evil" and themselves "good" for not doing what they cannot do (Nietzsche, 1994, pp. I.10–14). Yet he also describes a noble pathos that wants to expand and test itself (Nietzsche, 1990, §§260–265). In the film's middle movements, these vectors cross: theatrical sovereignty stages itself as exuberance ("I love the smell of napalm in the morning"), while the bureaucratic "we" that dispatches the assassin wraps elimination in the moral language of purification. Both are forms of wanting that the sentence anatomizes: one wants spectacle of command, the other wants justification for command—but neither shows the transvaluative courage to alter its measure when outcomes strip the rhetoric bare.

Kurtz, often read as the one who has gone "beyond good and evil," in fact illustrates Nietzsche's worry about the will's last refuge: after unseating inherited norms, it longs for a final verdict that would secure mastery once more. Nietzsche's "beyond good and evil" is not a license for cruelty; it is lucidity about the genealogy of one's values and the refusal to enthrone a new absolute (Nietzsche, 1990, §§259–260). Kurtz's pronouncement of "the horror" behaves like that new absolute—a metaphysical seal on judgment that would still the will's vulnerability. If he has "got what he wants" (freedom to rule, pronounce, and be obeyed), fulfillment punishes by revealing the emptiness of mastery that will not relinquish its last metaphysical crutch.

The health-criterion, for Nietzsche, is severe and simple: does this willing increase one's capacity to affirm life—including ambiguity and pain—or does it shrink that capacity under a rhetoric of truth and duty? A project may be perfectly "true" by institutional measures and yet sick by this criterion. When the assignment is executed to the letter, and nothing redemptive follows—no enlargement of perspective, no transvaluation of maxims—the confession ("…for my sins I got one") reads as recognition that fulfillment has exposed the willing as life-denying. In Nietzsche's terms, the punishment is not the mission's cost but its clarity: getting what one wanted shows which kind of will one is.

III—Kant: Duty, Autonomy, and Why "Success" Proves Nothing

Kant gives the sharpest rebuke to reading fulfillment as vindication. In his moral philosophy, the worth of an action lies not in what it achieves but in the maxim from which it is done—the principle the agent could will as universal law. The line "Everyone gets everything he wants" therefore cannot count as evidence that wanting was justified; "for my sins I got one" sounds like the dawning recognition that having one's ends granted can lay bare a prior failure of duty.

Kant's baseline claim is that the good will is "good … in itself," not by the advantages it produces (Kant, 1996, p. 27). This relocates ethical assessment away from effects (which are subject to luck, power, and circumstance) to the will's legislation of its own maxim. When Willard accepts the assignment in the cool, procedural light of Saigon, the scene supplies everything success-friendly ethics likes—clarity of ends, chain of command, legal sanction. For Kant, none of that matters morally. The question is simple and brutal: What maxim am I adopting, and can I will it as a law for all rational agents? If the maxim is "Eliminate as a means any person my institution designates an obstacle," universalization collapses into contradiction: it destroys the very conditions of mutual recognition that a law for all would require. The mission can be "successful" and still be morally void.

This is the force of Kant's second test—the humanity constraint, expressed (across his corpus) as treating humanity, in oneself and others, always as an end and never merely as a means. *Critique of Practical Reason* articulates the same structure when it insists that the moral law addresses us as free and self-legislating, never as mere instruments of inclination or authority (Kant, 1996, pp. 30–33). Transpose this into the film's grammar: a mission-form that disables reciprocity and reduces persons to objects of procedure cannot be rescued by neat outcomes. "Everyone gets everything he wants" becomes, under Kant, an indictment of heteronomy: the will is letting something other—institutional command, affect, career, fear—legislate the maxim.

Kant's distinction between legality and morality intensifies this. An act can conform to the law outwardly (legality) while lacking the right incentive (morality). What makes an action moral is that its determining ground is respect for the moral law, not fear, habit, or advantage (Kant, 1996, pp. 72–76). The dossier scene is a study in outward conformity: orders, signatures, the rhetoric

of necessity. But the incentive that animates "I wanted a mission" is not respect for law; it is a desire for orientation, relief from aimlessness, and ultimately institutional recognition. When the mission is granted, fulfillment exposes the incentive: instead of being moved by duty, the will was moved by a need to still its own drift. "For my sins I got one" now reads as Kantian confession: I acted from heteronomy, and success only made that visible.

Kant's moral psychology helps clarify why fulfillment can feel like punishment. Respect for the law is an incentive that humbles self-love; it is experienced as a constraint on inclination (Kant, 1996, pp. 70–73). To the extent that the film's assignments cloak inclination under moral language—security, order, "surgical" necessity—the later "success" functions as a de-masker: the will discovers it was not obeying a law it could legislate for all, but rather serving a maxim it would never publicly endorse as universal. The tight, affectless tone of Willard's narration after each "win" matches this discovery: the more procedure works, the clearer it becomes that working isn't the same as willing rightly.

Kant's emphasis on autonomy sharpens the point. To be free is not to get what one wants, but to give oneself a law that any rational agent could adopt (Kant, 1996, pp. 30–33). Measured this way, the mission-form is structurally tempting to heteronomy: it outsources lawgiving to the institution and treats persons encountered en route as mere bearers of protocol. Even when the mission targets someone like Kurtz—himself a violator of reciprocity—the maxim "neutralize by assassination when the institution decrees" cannot be a law for all, because it erodes the very standing of rational agents as co-legislators. The fact that "everyone gets everything he wants" in such a system is precisely the problem: it signals the reliable availability of means for heteronomous ends.

Kant also insists that morality is not a ledger of effects but an orientation of maxims sustained through adversity. This explains why the film's most chilling moments are not its brutalities but its efficiencies: when the sampan search is executed by the book, the clean line from maxim to act to outcome throws the wrong maxim into relief. Even if the damage were minimized, the principle—instrumentalization under orders—would still fail the humanity constraint. Fulfillment punishes because it removes the excuse of friction: the will must own what it willed when everything "worked."

Does Kant leave any room for the line's first half—"Everyone gets everything he wants"—to carry moral weight? Only in a highly restricted sense. If the "want" is already shaped by the moral law—if the agent wants to act from a universalizable maxim out of respect for persons—then "getting what one wants" is just the possibility to do one's duty. Otherwise, success is morally insignificant at best and accusatory at worst. In context, the confession "for my sins I got one" catches this: the grant itself is the mirror that shows the will's prior choice against autonomy.

Finally, Kant's idea of the highest good (happiness proportioned to virtue) underscores the tragedy: the world does not guarantee any convergence between success and moral worth (Kant, 1996, pp. 125–131). The mission can be fully accomplished and still fail the test of law; conversely, refusal might align with duty but bring ruin. This is why a Kantian reading refuses consolation at the end: what matters is not that the project ended, but whether the maxim survives scrutiny. By that light, "Everyone gets everything he wants" names a morally irrelevant fact about means and outcomes; "…and for my sins I got one" names the relevant fact about the will that chose the maxim it did.

III—Kierkegaard: Despair as Absolutized Project—Why Success Thickens the Misrelation

Kierkegaard treats despair not as a mood but as a structural error in how the self relates to itself. "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself," and it can be "sick unto death" when that relation is grounded in the wrong power (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 49–52). Two principal forms of despair matter here: (1) the despair of weakness—"not to will to be oneself," and (2) the despair of defiance—to will to be oneself "in one's own strength" (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 52–61, 69–73). Read against Willard's confession, the line "Everyone gets everything he wants" sketches the field on which both forms operate; "…and for my sins I got one" is the moment the misrelation becomes clear through success.

Kierkegaard's analysis bites hardest when a contingent project is taken as absolute. The self, needing to be grounded "in the power that established it," substitutes a finite end as its measure and thereby misrelates itself (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 79–83). To will to be the one who has a mission is precisely such absolutization. Before the assignment, the self appears as lack (restless aimlessness); once the assignment is granted, the self congeals around the project—orientation replaces drift. But in Kierkegaard's grammar this is not healing; it is the despair of defiance: the self wills to be itself by itself through the project. The more coherent the mission becomes, the more intense the misrelation grows, because the self is secured by something that cannot finally ground it.

This is why, for Kierkegaard, success does not rescue but thickens despair. Success confirms the illusion that one can be oneself by one's own project; yet every success is also a mirror, showing that the self remains unfounded. Kierkegaard emphasizes that despair often hides beneath "the most colossal energy" and apparent resolve; it is "misrelationship in a self" that can be "perfectly transparent to itself" about its project while being wrong about its ground (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 72–76). In this light, the cool execution of procedures and the narrowing of affect after each "win" signal not mastery but the tightening of defiant despair. The line's second clause—"for my sins I got one"—reads as the moment when the grant of the mission throws the absence of a true ground into relief.

Kierkegaard also distinguishes immediacy (living immersed in finite goods) from reflection that can discover the self's task (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 84–90). War intensifies immediacy by turning every face into a function and every act into a means; it encourages the self to hide in roles. In such a milieu, the very practices that appear to deliver meaning—orders, dossiers, operational clarity—supply the self with a surrogate infinity: a finite project that pretends to be sufficient. But the self, for Kierkegaard, is tasked with becoming itself before God (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 79–83). This is not a pietistic add-on; it is his way of marking that the self's measure must transcend its own chosen ends. Whenever the measure is reduced to the project's success, despair results—"the greater the natural capacities, the more dangerous the despair" (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 76–78).

Note how this frame explains the distinctive tonality of fulfillment-as-punishment. To "get what one wants" is to lose the alibi that failure provides. As long as the project is ungranted, the self can imagine that possession will establish it. Once granted, the self's emptiness becomes undeniable. The confession "for my sins I got one" thus does not (primarily) express guilt over discrete acts; it expresses recognition of a wrong willing—to be oneself by one's own finite project. That is Kierkegaard's "sin" in the strict sense: not a single deed, but a posture of self-grounding (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 79–83).

Kierkegaard's analysis also clarifies why horror does not teach the defiant self what it most needs to learn. The self in defiance is willing to suffer anything rather than relinquish its chosen measure; it would rather "be itself with all the torments of hell than not be itself" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 69). Hence the spectacle of a self that persists—relentlessly, competently—through increasingly unredeeming outcomes. The punishment of fulfillment is that competence becomes the instrument of despair: every efficient act confirms the sovereignty of the project, and every confirmation deepens the misrelation.

Is there a Kierkegaardian way out? Only if the maxim of the project is converted—a re-grounding of the self in that "power which established it," which, in his lexicon, entails repentance and a change in the measure of willing (Kierkegaard, 1980, pp. 79–83, 111–116). Short of such a conversion, neither failure nor success can heal; success merely strips away the illusion that success could heal. Thus the two halves of the sentence lock together: "everyone gets everything he wants" = finite ends can indeed be obtained; "for my sins I got one" = obtaining them revealed

the despair that absolutized them.

III—Dostoevsky: Independent Desire, Anti-Mechanism, and Agency That Eats Itself

Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* is the classic anatomy of a will that prefers independence to well-being—"man only wants independent desire, whatever that independence may cost" (Dostoevsky, 1994, p. 131). The underground man's most scandalous claim—"To hell with two times two makes four!" (Dostoevsky, 1994, p. 129)—is not anti-arithmetic; it is anti-mechanism in human affairs. He rejects any calculus in which rational prediction, utility, or institutional procedure would close the space of spontaneous willing. Read in this key, the line "Everyone gets everything he wants" marks not prosperity but a world well-stocked with mechanisms that deliver objects on demand; "for my sins I got one" acknowledges the price of willing agency itself within such machinery.

The underground man's revolt targets the dream that human conduct can be rendered scientific—that motives can be predicted and optimized so that "good" outcomes follow from the right levers (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 120–132). His point is not that people are irrational, but that personhood includes a residual freedom that will "assert itself" against the system, even destructively, simply to prove it exists (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 129–132). This is why a "crystal palace" of perfect provisions would provoke sabotage; the human being, he insists, will sometimes choose what is harmful to demonstrate authorship. The dossier room's hygienic proceduralism—clarity of ends, chain of command, calibrated means—inhabits precisely the rational order the underground man distrusts. Willard's wanting a mission is not a longing for certainty alone; it is the chance to act, to break the inertia of Saigon's aimlessness, even if the action risks moral injury. The "sin" is that the system can supply just such occasions and call the result necessary.

Dostoevsky's dialectic also explains the peculiar pleasure the underground man takes in acting against his own interest: "the most advantageous advantage" is sometimes the freedom to choose what is not advantageous (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 129–131). Agency is not measured by outcomes but by the felt authorship of choice. That is why, on his account, a rational program that secures only beneficial outcomes is degrading: it would reduce a man to a "piano key" on which nature (or the institution) plays (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 115–120). In an environment of orders and protocols, the upriver insistence on continuing, whatever the evidence or cost, becomes intelligible

as a defense of non-instrumentality: continuing proves that one is not merely a key. Fulfillment punishes because the moment the system grants the mission, the space of "independent desire" shrinks into the execution of a mechanism that now owns the storyline.

Yet Dostoevsky's insight is double-edged. The underground man's independence is real, but it corrodes itself when it refuses any measure beyond negation. He confesses to relishing humiliation and spite, to savoring "the sweetly painful pleasure" of acting against himself (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 108–115). This is agency that proves itself by injury. When procedure yields horror (the sampan), the rational mechanism has plainly failed; but if the next choice is animated only by the need to keep asserting agency—"I go on because I go on"—the will ratifies the same emptiness the underground man inhabits. "Everyone gets everything he wants" then describes a trap: the institution gets its obedient executor; the agent gets the feeling of authorship; neither gets a norm by which the act could be vindicated.

Dostoevsky also anticipates what we might call moral theater: the staging of motives after the fact to render destructive agency palatable. The underground man is merciless about his own self-narration—confessing how quickly the ego invents edifying reasons for what was, in truth, caprice or spite (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 103–107). This maps onto the rhetoric that frames the assignment as sanitary necessity. The mask of moral purification ("remove an aberration") converts the hunger to act into an edifying plot; fulfillment then functions as exposure when, at the end, the narrative yields no enlargement of soul. The confession "for my sins I got one" reads, in Dostoevskian terms, as the recognition that the story was a postscript to the will to act, not its ground.

A further Dostoevskian thread concerns responsibility under conditions of determinism. The underground man refuses to let causal explanation excuse him: even if he can trace motives, he will not permit the explanation to replace ownership (Dostoevsky, 1994, pp. 109–113). This refusal illuminates the post-fulfillment chill: once the mission is complete, the agent cannot hide in causal chains ("orders," "procedure," "necessity") without committing the very self-abdication he despises. Fulfillment punishes by removing alibis: the deed is done; the authorship is mine.

Finally, Dostoevsky's anti-mechanism clarifies why the film's most efficient scenes are its most disturbing. The underground man's nightmare is not chaos but perfect order—an order so seam-

less it leaves no room for non-instrumental choice. Where everything "works," the human residue can only show itself by breaking the system or by converting obedience into a performance of will. In either case, getting what one wanted discloses a deficit: agency defended merely as independence becomes self-consuming. The sentence's halves therefore lock: the world can indeed deliver the occasion to act ("everyone gets…"), but the one who wanted agency itself discovers, upon receiving it, that agency without a measure is indistinguishable from compulsion in disguise—hence "…for my sins I got one."

III—Sartre: Freedom, Bad Faith, and the Impossible Completion

For Sartre, human reality is "what it is not and not what it is" ((Sartre, 2003, pp. 100–110)); projects tacitly aim at an impossible synthesis—the "project to be God" ((Sartre, 2003, pp. 586–604)). Completion cannot grant ontological closure; it exposes bad faith, whether as pure function ("I am my orders") or as sovereign exception ("I am exempt"). The mission's end therefore punishes by lucidity: the sequence "worked," yet the lack constitutive of the *pour-soi* remains.

III—Beauvoir: Reciprocity as Freedom's Form

Beauvoir internalizes ethics to the structure of freedom: "To will oneself free is also to will others free" ((de Beauvoir, 1976, p. 73)). Authentic projects *open* situations in which others can transcend; efficient means that *close* horizons convict themselves by their very success ((de Beauvoir, 1976, pp. 134–147, 157–161, 164–173)). The first clause reports reliable means; the second is the ethical verdict that reciprocity was excluded from the end.

III—Camus: Absurd Lucidity and Action without Appeal

The absurd is "born of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" ((Camus, 1991, p. 28)). To live "without appeal" ((Camus, 1991, p. 54)) is to abandon the hope that completion provides a final court of justification. The Do Lung Bridge cycle—building and erasure—reads like a Sisyphean figure; completion yields knowledge, not meaning ((Camus, 1991, pp. 121–123)). Thus the sentence's first clause can be true; the second names fulfillment as the world's silence.

III—Heidegger: Finitude and the Category Error of Wholeness

Heidegger's claim is ontological: Dasein's "wholeness" is disclosed only in being-toward-death; narrative consummation is a category mistake for finite existence ((Heidegger, 1962, pp. 294–307)). Average everydayness (*das Man*) supplies the rhetoric of necessity that authorizes such fantasies ((Heidegger, 1962, pp. 149–168)). When the sequence "works," the alibi disappears. The first clause names a world of operable equipment; the second registers, in the key of finitude, that such operability cannot yield existential completion.

III—Levinas: The Face, Asymmetry, and the First Relation

The face confronts me with an asymmetrical injunction—"Thou shalt not kill"—that resists absorption into my plans ((Levinas, 1969, pp. 33, 199)). The dossier/protocol grammar belongs to *totality*, which reduces alterity to the Same ((Levinas, 1969, pp. 21–24, 33–36)). Within such a grammar, even successful action confirms refusal of the first relation ((Levinas, 1969, pp. 215–219)). "Everyone gets …" states totality's power to furnish effects; "…for my sins I got one" is the accusation that such power presupposes the Other's reduction.

III—Hegel: Recognition Against Possession

Desire is not finally of things but of recognition: "self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" ((Hegel, 1977, §175)). Lordship "gets" obedience and finds it void—submission is not free acknowledgment ((Hegel, 1977, §§187–189)); the "truth" lies with formative work that builds a common world ((Hegel, 1977, §196)). The first clause describes accumulation in the wrong currency; the second is the recognitive bill coming due.

III—Kojève: Desire of Desire and Historical Stakes

Human desire is the desire of another's desire; satisfaction requires being recognized as free by a free other, not merely possessing objects ((Kojève, 1980, pp. 6, 27–34)). Hence the master's "victory" is empty: coerced recognition is not recognition ((Kojève, 1980, pp. 158–164)). "Everyone gets everything he wants" marks an apparatus expert at distributing missions; "…and for my sins I got one" is the discovery that such distribution cannot secure the recognitive relation the human wants.

IV. Conrad, Colonialism, and Modernity

If Sections II and III traced the moral and metaphysical structure by which fulfillment becomes judgment, Conrad and the critical tradition of the twentieth century show how this logic is historically situated in imperial modernity. *Apocalypse Now* refracts Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through Cold War geopolitics and the American war in Vietnam, translating the desire for a "mission" into the bureaucratized pursuit of domination. In both narratives, the will gets what it wants—empire, recognition, power—and what it wants unmasks the will. The horror is not merely the violence of conquest but the disclosure that conquest was the will's secret object all along.

1. Conrad's Modernity: Illumination and Horror

Conrad's novella organizes colonial conquest as an epistemological allegory: the voyage upriver promises knowledge, but the attainment of knowledge reveals only the vacuum at its core. In Marlow's opening demystification of imperial rhetoric, conquest is "robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale" (Conrad, 1990, ConradHOD1990). Kurtz's dying judgment—"The horror! The horror!"—is the paradoxical consummation of his civilizing project: he gets everything he wants (ivory, absolute command, the image of European virtue) and discovers that desire fulfilled negates the desiring self (Conrad, 1990). The novella's formal strategy—a frame narrative in which the tale loops back on itself—mirrors this structure of return: fulfillment is not progress but recursion.

2. From Conrad to Coppola: Bureaucracy as a Technology of Will

Coppola's adaptation transposes Conrad's private empire into a military bureaucracy that routinizes transgression. Willard's orders are typed, briefed, and accompanied by dossiers; Kurtz's poetry is replaced by radio logs and classified memoranda. The mission is thus an artifact of files, not of metaphysical vocation. In Willard's terms, "for my sins they gave me one": the administrative system internalizes the will's desire for a task and returns it as obligation (Coppola, 1979). The film's mise-en-scène—the air cavalry's Wagnerian assault, the Playboy USO show, the bridge to nowhere—presents modern fulfillment as spectacle: an economy of images where

desire circulates as command and entertainment at once.

Adorno and Horkheimer called this dialectic in advance: the Enlightenment's will to demystify nature turns into domination of humans by technical reason (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). The same rationality that frees us from myth installs the world as object of control. In *Apocalypse Now*, the mission is in this sense an *Enlightenment object*: planned, staged, justified. Its fulfillment exposes the subject as functionary. Arendt's analysis of modern totalitarianism clarifies the disjunction between action and responsibility here: systems generate outcomes that no single agent intends, but which implicate every actor caught within them (Arendt, 1973). Willard's errand-boy status embodies this structure of dispersed agency.

3. The Spirit of Domination: Work, Discipline, and Representation

Weber's thesis on the Protestant ethic connects transcendent assurance to immanent compulsion: the anxiety of salvation is displaced into the worldly signs of vocation, productivity, and discipline (Weber, 2002). In Willard's world, vocation has lost its soteriological frame; the residue is compulsion alone. The river journey is a pilgrimage without grace: a labor of proof that can never culminate. Foucault's analysis of modern power makes the continuity plain: discipline produces subjects by normalizing their bodies and perceptions (Foucault, 1995). Willard's training, files, and surveillance are not contingent backdrops; they *are* the conditions under which a "mission" can be willed, received, and fulfilled. The will internalizes the gaze.

If domination requires a world to dominate, representation supplies it. Said shows how the Orient is constructed as an object of knowledge that authenticates Western authority (Said, 1978). *Apocalypse Now* multiplies such representations: the radio's "psyops" patter, military briefings, newspaper clippings, and narration. The hilltop massacre under flares is not only an event but an image of an event; it exists to be seen. Benjamin's "Angel of History" looks back not upon progress but upon "a single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage" (Benjamin, 1969). The film literalizes this gaze: moving forward upriver is moving back into debris. Fulfillment of the mission produces a tableau of ruins through which the angel is blown.

4. Recognition, Violence, and the Will to Purity

Fanon reinterprets Hegelian recognition within colonial relation: the colonized subject meets the colonizer's will to purity as violence; the only available agency appears as counter-violence (Fanon, 2004). Kurtz absolutizes this logic. His "methods" are "pure" because they purge ambivalence. He wants an end to contradiction; he wants an act that would finally coincide with intent. To get this is to erase the human. Willard confronts not only a man but the fantasy of unmediated will. Here the line between Section III's existentialism and Section IV's historicity thins: the metaphysics of will finds its historical instrument in colonial modernity. What the will wants (sovereignty) appears in the world as the right to decide life and death.

5. Fulfillment as Exposure: Modernity's Mirror

Read in this frame, Willard's opening line is not merely mordant wit but a summary of the century's critique. "Everyone gets everything he wants"—because modern institutions exist to circulate wants as functions, and because representation manufactures the worlds those wants require. "For my sins I got one"—because the system returns desire as assignment, and the assignment reveals desire's complicity with domination. Conrad supplies the form (a journey into the center where fulfillment collapses into horror). Critical theory supplies the terms (reason as domination, vocation as compulsion, representation as power). Coppola supplies the image: the fulfilled mission as an illuminated ruin.

What Willard learns upriver is what Conrad, Benjamin, and Fanon teach in theory: fulfillment is not closure but exposure. The prize of the modern will is to see itself in the world it has made.

V. Modern Psychology and Death: Desire, Symbolism, and the Shadow

If Section III located fulfillment's burden in the ontology of freedom, modern depth psychology shows why fulfillment so often feels like punishment: the psyche seeks symbolic mastery of death. From Freud's death drive to Lacan's endless deferral of satisfaction, from Jung's shadow to Becker's hero-systems, modern theory repeatedly argues that desire is a defensive formation against mortality. Willard's admission—"I wanted a mission, and for my sins they gave me one"—thus reads as a clinical precis...

1. Freud: Repetition, Drive, and Discontent

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud confronts the anomaly of compulsive repetition. Rather than seeking pleasure, the neurotic repeats the very experience that wounds him; a "daemonic" character of repetition "overrides the pleasure principle" (Freud, 1955, p. 22). Freud hypothesizes a "death drive" that "endeavours to lead organic life back into the inanimate state" (Freud, 1955, p. 38). Fulfillment here cannot satisfy because the drive is not oriented to pl... Three decades later, *Civilization and Its Discontents* reframes the contradiction socially: culture requires renunciation, and the price of justice is repression (Freud, 1961). The subject must sublimate instinct into work and love, but the leftover aggression returns as guilt, which "represents the most important problem in the development of civilization" (Freud, 1961, p. 97). In Willard's case, the "mission" becomes both a vehicle of sublimation and a ...

2. Rank and Fromm: Will, Escape, and Character

Rank's late work recovers will as a positive, creative power rather than merely a symptom of repression. "The will to create is the will to become" (Rank, 1978, p. xx); yet creativity is haunted by separation anxiety. The artist and the hero attempt to "birth" themselves symbolically, staging separations that turn passivity into authorship. This clarifies why missions appeal: they promise individuation through action. Fromm, by contrast, reads modern authoritarianism as a characterologica...

3. Becker: Immortality Projects and the Terror of Death

Becker synthesizes psychoanalysis, anthropology, and existentialism into a single claim: culture is a "hero-system" that denies death (Becker, 1973). "The irony of man's condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation; but it is life itself which awakens it" (Becker, 1973, p. 66). We seek symbolic immortality through achievement, love, or nation; we want missions capable of insulating us from finitude. Hence fulfillment feels like pu...

4. Jung: Shadow, Persona, and the Coniunctio

Jung reframes the problem as one of psychic integration. The persona secures social recognition; the shadow contains repressed traits; the Self symbolizes wholeness (Jung, 1969). Fulfillment constellates the shadow: when we gain what we consciously want, we also summon disowned potentials. Individuation therefore requires confrontation. In *Aion* Jung argues that the ego's inflation—its identification with the Self—generates moral catastrophe; the only cure is dialectical recon...

5. Lacan: Desire Beyond Demand

For Lacan, desire is not biological appetite but a structural effect of language: it is "the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 2006). Demand can be satisfied; desire cannot. The object-cause of desire—*objet petit a*—functions as a remainder that "is never the object of need or demand" (Lacan, 1991, p. 103). Fulfillment is punishment because the subject receives the demanded object only to rediscover that desire persists as lack. The mirror stage shows how ego-ide...

6. Frankl: Meaning as Antidote—and Limit

As a corrective to psychopathology, Frankl's logotherapy proposes meaning as the human being's primary motivation: "Those who have a 'why' to live can bear with almost any 'how' " (Frankl, 2006, p. 104). Yet even Frankl cautions that meaning cannot be *willed* directly; it must be found as a by-product of commitment and love. In Willard's case, the mission furnishes a "how" without a "why"—a structure of action without a transcendent end—and thus cannot supply redemption. Me...

7. Synthesis: The Mission as Psychological Symptom

Across these approaches, fulfillment functions as a diagnostic device. Psychoanalysis reads the "mission" as repetition and displacement; Rank and Becker interpret it as a defense against death; Jung and Lacan see in it the activation of shadow and the return of lack; Frankl reframes it as a failure of teleology. Willard receives exactly what he wants and thereby learns what he is. The diagnosis is severe but not hopeless: the only exit these traditions allow is not more fulfillment but a different rela...

VI. Conclusion: The Mission and the Mirror

Across theology, Buddhist doctrine, modern philosophy, postcolonial critique, and depth psychology, a single structure recurs: fulfillment is disclosure. To "get what one wants" is to discover what one's wanting already was. In biblical terms, the sinner is given over to his desire; in Buddhist terms, craving reproduces the causes of suffering; in existential terms, freedom shows itself as obligation without guarantor; in colonial modernity, the will returns as an administrative function; in the psyc...

1. Hermeneutics of Guilt and the Work of Understanding

Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" does not end in exposure alone; it moves toward a "second naiveté" in which symbols are received again through interpretation (Ricoeur, 1970). The point of reading Willard's line through Augustine, the Nikāyas, Schopenhauer, Conrad, or Freud is not merely to diagnose complicity; it is to refashion understanding so that desire can be taken up differently. Symbols "give rise to thought," Ricoeur insists (p. 347); they also give rise to will ...

2. Desire and Ideology

Žižek's Lacanian account of ideology clarifies how "everyone gets everything he wants" can be true at the level of fantasy while remaining false in life. Ideology, he argues, is not what we consciously believe but what structures our desiring (Žižek, 1999). The subject "knows very well" that fulfillment is impossible, "but still" he acts as if the mission would complete him (p. 32). In Willard's world, the mission-form functions as this fantasy-support: a script that dema...

3. Toward a Discipline of Wanting

The traditions surveyed here do not counsel quietism but discipline. The biblical path names it charity and obedience; the Buddhist path, the Noble Eightfold Path; Kant, duty; Beauvoir, reciprocity; Levinas, responsibility for the face of the Other; Fanon, the struggle for recognition without annihilation. Each proposes that the solution to fulfilled desire is not more desire, nor its annihilation, but the *re-formation* of willing: detachment from possession, attachment to re-

sponsibility. The altern...

4. Last Words

Poetry often says last things best. Eliot's reflection that "the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" (Eliot, 1969, Eliot, 1969, "Little Gidding") names the arc of this essay: the mission returns us to the origin of will. Rilke's admonition—"You must change your life"—arrives in another register (Rilke, 2009, Snow trans., 2009). If Willard's sentence is the mission's epitaph, this is its coda. The...

References

Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments* (E. Jephcott, Trans.) [Original work published 1944]. Stanford University Press.

Aquinas, T. (1947). *Summa theologiae* (F. of the English Dominican Province, Trans.) [Original work published 1265–1274]. Benziger Brothers.

Arendt, H. (1973). *The origins of totalitarianism* [Original work published 1951]. Harcourt.

Augustine. (1998). *Confessions* (R. S. Pine-Coffin, Trans.) [Original work published 397 CE]. Penguin Classics.

Augustine. (2003). *The city of god* (H. Bettenson, Trans.) [Original work published 426 CE]. Penguin Classics.

Becker, E. (1973). *The denial of death*. Free Press.

Benjamin, W. (1969). Theses on the philosophy of history [Original work written 1940] (H. Zohn, Trans.). In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations* (pp. 253–264). Schocken Books.

Bodhi, B. (Ed.). (2000). *The connected discourses of the buddha: A translation of the saṃyutta nikāya* (B. Bodhi, Trans.). Wisdom Publications.

Buddhaghosa. (1956). *The path of purification (visuddhimagga)* (B. Ñāṇamoli, Trans.) [Original work published 5th century CE]. Buddhist Publication Society.

Buddharakkhita, A. (1993). *The dhammapada* (Revised). Buddhist Publication Society.

Camus, A. (1991). *The myth of sisyphus and other essays* [Trans. Justin O'Brien. Original 1942]. Vintage.

Conrad, J. (1990). *Heart of darkness* (R. Kimbrough, Ed.) [Original work published 1899]. W. W. Norton & Company.

Coppola, F. F. (1979). Apocalypse now [United Artists; film].

de Beauvoir, S. (1976). *The ethics of ambiguity* (B. Frechtman, Trans.) [Original work published 1947]. Citadel Press.

Dostoevsky, F. (1994). *Notes from underground* (R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, Trans.) [Original work published 1864]. Vintage Classics.

Eliot, T. S. (1969). *Four quartets* [Original poems published 1936–1942]. Harcourt, Brace & World.

Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.) [Original work published 1961]. Grove Press.

Fitzmyer, J. A. (1993). *Romans: A new translation with introduction and commentary* (Vol. 33). Yale University Press.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.) [Original work published 1975]. Vintage.

Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning* [Original work published 1946]. Beacon Press.

Freud, S. (1955). *Beyond the pleasure principle* (J. Strachey, Trans.) [Original work published 1920]. Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1961). *Civilization and its discontents* (J. Strachey, Trans.) [Original work published 1930]. W. W. Norton.

Gethin, R. (1998). *The foundations of buddhism*. Oxford University Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1977). *Phenomenology of spirit* (A. V. Miller, Trans.) [Original work published 1807]. Oxford University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.) [Original work published 1927]. Harper & Row.

Jung, C. G. (1969). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* (G. Adler & R. F. C. Hull, Eds.; R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) [Original Collected Works vol. 9, part 1 (1959)]. Princeton University Press.

Kant, I. (1996). *Critique of practical reason* (M. Gregor, Trans.) [Original work published 1788]. Cambridge University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1980). *The sickness unto death* (H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong, Trans.) [Original work published 1849]. Princeton University Press.

King James Version. (2017). *Holy bible: King james version (1769 text)* [Original work published 1769]. Thomas Nelson.

Kojève, A. (1980). *Introduction to the reading of hegel* (A. Bloom, Ed.; J. James H. Nichols, Trans.) [Lectures 1933–1939; English trans. 1969/1980]. Cornell University Press.

Lacan, J. (1991). *The seminar of jacques lacan, book xi: The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* (A. Sheridan, Trans.) [Original French 1973; English edition 1977/1991]. W. W. Norton.

Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits: The first complete edition in english* (B. Fink, Trans.) [Original collection published 1966]. W. W. Norton.

Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority* (A. Lingis, Trans.) [Original work published 1961]. Duquesne University Press.

Maimonides, M. (1963). *The guide for the perplexed* (S. Pines, Trans.) [Original work published ca. 1186 CE]. University of Chicago Press.

Nāgārjuna. (2013). *Nāgārjuna's middle way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (M. Siderits & S. Katsura, Eds. & Trans.). Wisdom Publications.

Ñāṇamoli, B., & Bodhi, B. (Eds.). (1995). *The middle length discourses of the buddha: A translation of the majjhima nikāya* (B. Ñāṇamoli & B. Bodhi, Trans.). Wisdom Publications.

Nietzsche, F. (1990). *Beyond good and evil* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.) [Original work published 1886]. Vintage.

Nietzsche, F. (1994). *On the genealogy of morals* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.) [Original work published 1887]. Vintage.

of Nyssa, G. (1954). *The lord's prayer and the beatitudes* (H. C. Graef & H. Callahan, Trans.). Newman Press.

of Nyssa, G. (1978). *The life of moses* (A. J. Malherbe & E. Ferguson, Trans.). Paulist Press.

Rahula, W. (1959). *What the buddha taught*. Grove Press.

Rank, O. (1978). *Will therapy and truth and reality* (E. J. Lieberman, Ed.) [Original essays from 1929–1931]. Knopf.

Ricoeur, P. (1970). *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation* (D. Savage, Trans.). Yale University Press.

Rilke, R. M. (2009). *Duino elegies & the sonnets to orpheus* (E. Snow, Trans.) [Original poems published 1923]. North Point Press.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon.

Śāntideva. (1995). *The bodhicaryāvatāra* (K. Crosby & A. Skilton, Trans.). Oxford University Press.

Sartre, J.-P. (2003). *Being and nothingness* (H. E. Barnes, Trans.) [Original work published 1943]. Routledge.

Schopenhauer, A. (1969). *The world as will and representation, volume i* (E. F. J. Payne, Trans.) [Original work published 1818]. Dover.

Weber, M. (2002). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (S. Kalberg, Trans.) [Original work published 1905]. Roxbury.

Žižek, S. (1999). *The sublime object of ideology* [Original work published 1989]. Verso.