seeing through people - fyodor
Fyodor “connects” with others mentally, emotionally and / or spiritually in such an accurate way, that this skill of his is portrayed as bone-chillingly sinister, in scenarios holding starkly contrasting ideas. It is not just about analytically deducing what a person would do next or what would objectively motivate that person, Fyodor knows the depths of people’s hearts, as can be seen in his discussions with Karma, Shibusawa, Nikolai, and the way Fyodor talks about Sigma. I shall present each case in detail in what follows, made into a list of people whose problems Fyodor saw through and responded to adequately.

Karma’s problem was of intellectual nature: to die a slave or a free man, and how those are mutually-exclusive conditions, in regard to which Karma recognized himself trapped in the first condition (slave), but was later “transported” into the second condition (free man) by the circumtances and type of death Fyodor “granted” him. Frequently rationalizing each situation in his inner monologues, pondering each factor and possible outcome analytically and in admirable control of his emotions (as seen throughout the entire ch42), Karma explored, so to say, the “syllogisms” behind what was happening to him too: I want to be saved + I am a bad person + saviours do not save bad persons => I will never be saved; OR I am a bad person + I am not a free person + a saviour can free me by saving me + saviours do not save bad persons => I will never be a free person. Even if the concepts belong to morality discourse, Karma’s approach is straightforward and logical, therefore there is no scene of him begging Fyodor for help, freedom or vengeance, as well as no scene of him even running away from Fyodor: despite being frightened, he was able to withstand his irrational reaction and sought knowledge and clarifications through conversation even in the face of the Demon. Karma was a person who rationalized and accepted his personal condition, and he was all the more shocked that this “slave” condition was dissolved by the events caused by Fyodor. Although Karma had to be killed so that no trace was left by Fyodor, what deserves attention is, on one hand, the fulfillment on Karma’s dying face (dying as a free man), and, on the other hand, how Fyodor gave him privacy when he gave his last breath, as Fyodor is portrayed looking directly at Karma only after he passed away. The fact that Fyodor is portrayed as looking at Karma’s lifeless body afterwards at all can be interpreted as Fyodor contemplating Karma’s end, especially given how in ch42 all background elements vanish in this particular panel, deepening the solemnity of the moment (as @linkspooky noted too, together with Fyodor’s understanding and acknowledgement of Karma as a person, worthy of sharing knowledge with, here). And yet the anime (S3ep4) did not insist on this manga panel at all, skipping it entirely. The prayer that Fyodor offered for Karma at the end (“May your soul find salvation… released from the yoke of sin”), while facing him (unlike in the anime, where Fyodor does not look at Karma at all) was the conclusion of Fyodor’s solemn meditation, and I find it a shame that the anime did not linger on this aspect. This scene blends a merciful death with a necessary crime, such contrasts being typical to Fyodor’s character. This prayer for Karma may in fact not be the only one Fyodor offered to those he led to their death by necessity: indeed, Fyodor’s cello recital in front of a captured Katsura in ch47 may have served the same purpose. Given that Fyodor informed fake Pushkin about Atsushi and Kunikida’s arrival, via the telephone, in real-time, we can assume Fyodor knew exactly when the two Agency members clashed with the armed children and when the little girl triggered the detonation of her grenades. After replying to Katsura’s remark, meeting Katsura with the impenetrable grin typical to both him and Dazai, Fyodor recommenced playing with closed eyes and no smile (thus fully immersed), unlike in the anime (S3ep9), where Fyodor never stopped playing in order to talk

with Katsura, yet him stopping to play the cello just for that is, in my opinion, very important, as I will try to show here. Fyodor's cello recital ended with him offering a prayer, which at its end addressed specifically all children of the world (ch47, "Joy to the world… and blessings to all its children"). Therefore, the cello scene carries solemnity, thoughtfulness and emotion, contrasting with the violent sight of the dead children breaking Kunikida's spirit, and in this light Fyodor's recital (which Katsura himself did not understand the purpose of, as he was clueless about what was happening outside) becomes a musical prayer for the sacrificed souls. Once again, despite being terribly beautiful in animation and sound indeed, it is a pity the anime depicted this scene in a weirdly ecstatic and stereotypically evil way, giving Fyodor a demonic gaze and grin, as well as making Fyodor face Katsura while playing, despite Fyodor not being turned towards Katsura at all in the manga (ch47), given how he looked at Katsura over his right shoulder (Fyodor's body position further supports the idea that the recital was not meant for Katsura). As a closing note here, the anime added a specific detail at the scene's end, one I personally would consider mischaracterization: in the anime, Fyodor broke his cello after the recital, and yet this never happened in the manga, and now we can guess why (Fyodor prays for his innocent victims). See section H for more on Fyodor's overall gentleness, as well as my previous post about the cello scene here.

Sigma's problem is of emotional nature: for a man without a past, lacking life itself before he found himself "existing" directly as a young adult (I assume he is a young adult), he was most desperate to fulfill his most basic and primary emotional needs, i.e. having a safe place to call his "home" and belonging to people whom he can call "family". These are exactly the things Fyodor offered to Sigma right from the start, as if anticipating his arrival in that state, but Fyodor also praised and described Sigma for Dazai (ch75) in a very positive, heartfelt way that also implies Fyodor's admiration for Sigma, as well as acknowledges a certain superiority Sigma has, even compared to Fyodor and Dazai themselves. Depending on the true nature of Fyodor's relation to Sigma, as well as Sigma's true nature in itself, I assume this point here will change in nuance in the future, but in the present the canon tells Fyodor has read Sigma's heart like an open book. I refrain from adding more to this paragraph until new chapters give me new ground for it.

Nikolai's problem is of philosophical and spiritual nature: the very fact that Fyodor could understand Nikolai's core problem, his central existential dilemma, not to mention how quickly Fyodor grasped it, is something that both elevated and destabilized Nikolai. Fyodor rightfully explained that Nikolai fights God "in order to lose sight of himself" (ch78), which, theologically-speaking, is very much accurate from a Christian perspective: a human's highest and final goal is to "see God", to return to where man was exiled from (heaven, the Fatherland or patria in Latin, the future heavenly Jerusalem etc.) and, once there, to contemplate God eternally, finally reunited with their Creator and seeing "face to face" (see 1 Corinthians 13:12). That is, because there is where man's real nature lies, where it came from and belongs to, but also man being created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26), together with a Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophical legacy, led to a tradition of interpretations (part of our overall cultural heritage) where man's divine part (or God himself) resides deep within the human soul: therefore, introspection or contemplating one's own self holds incredible importance. Nikolai fighting God "in order to lose sight of himself" is a very well-chosen line for Fyodor and a great way of presenting (a glimpse of) the depth of Nikolai's soul to the readers, one that opens many possible interpretations, not just the one offered above. Nonetheless, Fyodor's response is particularly disturbing,

because he calmly stated what frightens and enrages Nikolai the most: the fact that the sight of God is, in the end, the sight of himself, his true self, and “fighting against God” inevitably becomes “fighting against himself” too. So what is left when Nikolai fights against this truth? What is left must be what is unique to Nikolai as a being, if there is anything like that at all. So far in the manga, it seems Nikolai struggles desperately with the concept of the “omniscient God”, who possesses knowledge of past, present and future as well, which opens the particular Pandora’s box of “predetermination vs human free will”, a monstruous philosophical problem as old as time (or at least heavily discussed ever since Ancient Greek philosophy and Early Christianity too). One must note that, by answering like this, Fyodor essentially denied Nikolai the success of his mission, but granted him the rare gift or rare curse of being fully understood by someone else. One truth too much, the resulting emotional impact on Nikolai was disastruous, as Nikolai appears to be a person of high sensitivity, very susceptible to the power of words and how they plant ideas in his mind. Even if Fyodor’s response is not malicious in words (see, however, section H, about the meaning of the tilt of his head and how this scene is an example of intentional emotional manipulation), this interaction was profoundly unhealthy and destabilizing for Nikolai, which I would argue is well in the spirit of N.V. Gogol’s characters, having their spirits frequently broken by the most mundane things which nonetheless go beyond what they are capable to live with (read The Overcoat, Nevsky Prospekt first half, even Diary of a Madman).

Shibusawa’s problem was of personal nature, linked to his past: not only the Mayoi cards, but also the entirety of the Dead Apple movie make it clear that Shibusawa and Fyodor were long-time acquaintances before the fog incident in Yokohama happened. The most objective proof on this are Shibusawa’s words themselves, when telling Fyodor (in the Draconia room, in Dazai’s presence) that it was thanks to Fyodor selling information to Shibusawa that the fog incidents could happen, and in Yokohama too at such an impresive scale. Since Shibusawa told Dazai he did not find “having friends” necessary (since everyone was like a open book to him), I will refrain from calling the personal relationship between Fyodor and Shibusawa “friendship”. Now then, later on, despite being surprised by the ability-gathering Dragon event triggering after he approached Dazai’s “ability gem”, Shibusawa was not angry nor shocked when Fyodor cut his throat: Shibusawa immediately realized he found his most important personal memory as a consequence of Fyodor killing him or, rather, Fyodor “granting” him death once again. Here, too, two contrasting images combine: 1) Fyodor offering “death” as a “gift” or “blessing” that gives Shibusawa exactly what he needed most, and 2) Fyodor essentially killing his old acquaintance, but with the twist that Fyodor was aware Shibusawa would not die yet, quite the contrary – as a result of Fyodor putting a fragment of the crystal that gathers all abilities on the skull’s forehead (as a “small gift”, as Fyodor called it), Shibusawa was revived and enjoyed one last “epic battle” and then died a truly fulfilled person. In fact, Dazai predicted this outcome in the very first scene with the three of them at the table in Dead Apple, telling Shibusawa he is the one in need of “salvation”: Shibusawa then asked Dazai “And exactly who do you propose could save me?”, to which Dazai answered “Who knows? An angel, perhaps? Or, maybe, a demon” (then Fyodor enters the scene; note that I cite the dub version and that, at the end of Shibusawa’s and Atsushi’s battle, Shibusawa’s last words to Atsushi were “(…) The meaning of that man’s <Fyodor’s> words. I understand all of it now. It’s you! You must be the angel who has come to save me”). Anyway, the movie leaves several interesting questions unaswered: could Fyodor have granted death to Shibusawa, and therefore give him his most important memory back, at any time, or was the whole Yokohama setting necessary? If the latter, was

it necessary for Shibusawa or necessary for Fyodor, and Fyodor acted only when their distinct goals aligned? In any case, allow me to expose something very intriguing in the next lines. After Fyodor granted Shibusawa death by cutting his throat in a single swift knife attack, the moment Shibusawa's memory of his first death returned overlapped with the moment Atsushi's memory of the same event returned to him as well. In the flashback, Shibusawa stated that he conducted those ability extraction experiments on Atsushi – specifically, Shibusawa pressed the switch – because "a Russian man" told him Atsushi's "power was coveted by every gifted in the world". Later, Shibusawa added "the Russian's name was Fyodor". This makes all events align in such a way that one could speculate Fyodor was leading Shibusawa and everyone involved with him (Ango and the government) down that precise path we see reach its end in the Dead Apple movie. This makes Fyodor's words from ch42 all the more relevant: "People can be so simple… They truly believe they are thinking for themselves. (…) They don't want to think they're being led by the nose"; or, in S3ep4's dub: "People are eager to believe that they are acting with free will, that they know best. (…) We all loathe to believe we can be controlled". One last thing to note and analyse here: as Fyodor walked away alone on the hallway and the Dragon got unleashed, he had a "conversation" with Shibusawa's skull:

Fyodor (sub): "I'll tell you an interesting fact, in celebration of you finding a friend in me."
Fyodor (dub): "In thanks of our newfound friendship, I'll offer you a bite from the apple of knowledge."

Fyodor and his ability then delivered their famous "I am crime. I am punishment" dialogue. While there are significant wording differences between the versions cited above, how Fyodor referred to "friendship" here is mocking and ironic, so the nature of the bond between him and Shibusawa (beyond that of "informant and information buyer") remains debatable. It is beautiful how the dub version of the line offers a splendid example of godly and demonic imagery blending in the character of Fyodor. In a Christian cultural context, two precise ideas come to mind simultaneously when hearing Fyodor's line: 1) it was God who created everything, including the first humans (Adam, then Eve) in Eden, amongst all the fruit-bearing trees, giving them rules as to what they could consume or not (the power and authority "to offer" something rightfully was God's, being the one to give and take away, to reference Job, 1, 21), but also 2) it was the Devil who "offered" Eve such a bite, tempting her through suggesting she should eat from the forbidden fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (the infamous "suggestion" was the Devil's, making a forbidden "offer" that was actually a transgression). It is unclear to which of these two ideas Fyodor is closer, and it may as well be possible he is equally close to both, further encompasing contradicting traits. Nonetheless, given that Karma himself introduced the yet unresolved theme of "transcending human nature" and "transcending good and evil" in relation to Fyodor's character (ch42, Karma: "Ace was evil, but this guy isn't even that. He's some kind of nirvana. Something that transcends mankind itself…"), this particular line from Dead Apple supports Karma's observations and how Fyodor's character combines the ideas of creator and destroyer, like @looking-for-stray-dogs put into beautiful words here. This only becomes more interesting when we consider the archetype or role of the "servant of God", which Fyodor consciously claims to fulfill (see section F below).

Kunikida: Yes, you read that correctly. While Ivan and Nathaniel are, as of now, total wildcards and I do not have enough information as to objectively describe their situation or

how Fyodor won them over or “read their souls”, Kunikida’s case is the perfect example of Fyodor’s understanding of a person being so deep and accurate that he knew exactly what actions would cause them to break and render them useless for a significant period of time. Moreover, Kunikida’s case becomes even more intriguing if we remember that Fyodor successfully read his nature without even meeting him. Well, that would be the introduction to this minisection about Kunikida, but frankly I did not have enough time nor energy to dig deeper into this as of now. Perhaps in the future I will update this part with information and links to several great analysis posts I am sure Kunikida fans wrote out already, with their whole heart in them.

These examples share the fact that Fyodor accurately reads the intellectual (Karma), emotional (Sigma), philosophical and spiritual (Nikolai) layers of the human heart, as well as is capable of perfectly adapting to one’s personal baggage on the long term (Shibusawa). This means he posseses an extraordinary capacity for empathy, but, as he never loses his composure (except for small instances of surprise or adrenaline rush, like in ch46 and ch53), his willpower controls every single gesture and reaction he makes, which makes him a terrifying foe who has complete control over himself, never overreacts and thus seems soulless (ch42). His understanding of human nature fiels his skill to deduce future actions and thoughts of other people, which in turn may deepen Fyodor’s individualism