

Title: On Dostoevsky, Hegel, and the Impasse of Underground Freedom
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Despite Dostoevsky's well-known antagonism towards "reason" and the "West," and despite his often satirical attitude towards the ideas that preoccupied Russian intellectuals during the "1840s" – *Notes from the Underground* in many ways resembles a Hegelian project, a kind of appended chapter to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: one more despairing, self-alienated "shape of consciousness" to be added to Hegel's phenomenological "picture gallery." In particular, the importance of Diderot's novel *Rameau's Nephew* (often compared to *Notes*) in Hegel's analysis of "Culture" as self-alienated spirit allows us to formulate the question of what the ranting and the misadventures of the Underground Man would reveal in an analogous analytical framework. Thus, in this paper I propose to outline some of the rich, unexplored thematic parallels between *Notes from the Underground* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (reconciliation and self-actualization, Christianity and the critique of Utilitarianism, suffering and the tragedy of consciousness...), in an attempt to deepen our understanding of the Underground Man's entrapped condition. Ultimately, in light of a flawed understanding of freedom (which cannot be defined as unlimited individual caprice), as well as an inability to conceive of the self-reflective community, *Notes from the Underground* ends up subverting not only the utopian aspirations of utilitarian-minded Socialism, but also the quasi-Slavophile ideal of a prelapsarian, spontaneously Christian Russia. This is the true logical impasse to which Dostoevsky's novel leads, but Hegel's *Phenomenology* asks us to think how every such impasse is essential to the further development of "spirit."