

THE UNDERGROUND MAN: A QUESTION OF MEANING

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“I am a sick man . . . I am a spiteful (*zloi*) man.”¹ So begins Dostoevsky’s brilliant novel, *Notes From Underground*. In the course of the work we come to realize the significance of those first words—the nature of the underground man’s sickness and spite. Although there are elements of humor and parody, tragedy, existential themes of freedom, psychology, and, of course, religion in the book,² I would like to explore yet another way of appreciating the richness of Dostoevsky’s text—that the underground man examines the question of meaning.

What is the question of meaning? Philosophically this question might be understood as the exploration into whether human beings have inherent meaning and value, which we can then try to discover and articulate, or whether our existences are meaningless, which then allows us to bestow whatever meaning we want upon them. In the former view, the meaning of our lives is already determined, and a human being’s interpretation of that meaning can be right or wrong in relation to the pre-established meaning. With the latter view, meaning is not fixed but fluid; human beings create their own meanings *ex nihilo*. If the meaning of our lives is changeable, how does that affect our notions of morality and of ourselves? With the rise of the influence of science in the nineteenth century, people in Western Europe began to believe that human reason provided the foundation for all knowledge. In *Notes From Underground*, Dostoevsky questions whether human beings can be their own source of meaning. It is through an exploration of the underground man’s sickness that provides the key to answering this question. Why is the underground man *zloi*?

When we encounter the underground man, we find a peculiar person. He describes himself as *zloi*, usually translated as “spiteful,” but “*zloi*” also carries the connotation of immorality—that the spite and nasty, mean-spirited wickedness are due to some moral imperfection. In the Russian language, it stems from the same root as “malicious.” “Spiteful” and “malicious” are words that imply conscious intention. One is not *zloi* by nature; it is something

over which a person has control. In the unfolding of the underground man's "confessions," we begin to find the reasons why the underground man is *zloi*. These reasons stem mainly from his refusal to attach the "common man's" meanings to himself and his life due to his exaggerated consciousness and vanity.

While others accept traditional values and meanings, even if unfounded, due to their ordinary consciousnesses, the underground man's hyper-consciousness prevents him from living an ordinary life. In Part 1, the question of a foundation for meaning and action is posed; once a person asks himself this question, it cannot be ignored, and he can go on only by self-deception:

So you throw up your hands because you haven't found a primary cause. Just try to let yourself be carried away blindly by your feelings, without reflection, without a primary cause, suppressing consciousness even for a moment: hate or love, anything, just in order not to sit idly by with your arms folded. The day after tomorrow at the very latest, you'll begin to despise yourself for having deceived yourself knowingly.³

With the rejection in Part 1 of science and rationality as a foundation, as a "primary cause" or reason for action, is there anything else outside of himself to ground his actions and values? Or can he create his own foundation? Can he be the source, the grounding, of his own meanings and values? This is the main question explored and answered in Part 2 of *Notes From Underground*.

Part 2 begins with the underground man's confession that his obsession with himself, his "unlimited vanity," is the root of his troubles, his fatal character flaw, but it takes the rest of the novel to demonstrate how this flaw makes him *zloi*. The underground man steadfastly maintains that he wants to act (p. 13), yet he perversely demands reasons impervious to skepticism before he can act. But since his actions are not grounded in "good reasons," because the meanings he attaches to himself and others are foundationless, they are all susceptible to his skepticism. Thus he *does* nothing and, to his eyes, *is* nothing. But he cannot believe that such an intelligent person, well-educated in "book learning," can be nothing.

Each person's life has great importance, meaning, and value to him. In this sense, all of us are vain. With the underground man's hyper-consciousness, this importance is taken to the extreme. That is why he considers his vanity "unlimited" (p. 29). His life is of supreme importance and value, yet others take no notice of him or of his superior value. The actions that the underground man does take are those which he hopes will remedy this situation. He endeavors to make his life as meaningful to others as it is to him. This, of course, is bound to fail.

His first attempt to make his sheer existence meaningful to someone else is to start a fight in a tavern with the hope that someone will throw him out of

the tavern window. Is it possible that the underground man can elicit such emotion from someone else that the person would throw him through a window? The person would have to pay for the window and perhaps medical bills. Only if sufficiently irritated by the presence of the underground man would someone risk all that money and bother. The underground man has not even begun to hatch his plan when a young officer interferes.

I was standing next to the billiard table inadvertently blocking his way as he wanted to get by; he took hold of me by the shoulders and without a word of warning or explanation, moved me from where I was standing to another place, and he went past as if he hadn't even noticed me. I could have forgiven even a beating, but I could never forgive him moving me out of the way and entirely failing to notice me. (pp. 33-34)

Of course, the underground man could have started a quarrel about that, but he withdraws resentfully, rationalizing his apparent cowardice as his unwillingness to engage in a "literary" quarrel with an illiterate who in his ignorance might laugh at him. Instead, the underground man's revenge against the officer's horrible "offense"—his neglect of the underground man's being—constitutes one of the novel's most broadly comedic parts.

But it is a comedy laced with bitter truths about the human condition. On the surface of this section of the book, we have an absurd obsession. The underground man plots and plots his revenge on a totally unwitting prey. This revenge takes the form of merely wanting the officer to step aside in deference to the underground man on the crowded sidewalks of Nevsky Prospekt—a bizarre game of "chicken"—except the underground man exaggerates the meaning of this game to the point where it takes on a life-defining role for him. Whether he can make the officer side-step becomes the measure, the meaning and value, of the underground man as a person.

To the casual reader this revenge appears a silly waste of the underground man's time and effort, and it can be enjoyed simply as a comedic gambit into Part 2. On another level, it can be interpreted as another satire of Chernyshevsky, who, in a dramatic metaphor for human equality, has a nobleman pushed into the mud by an underling.⁴ But on a deeper level, Dostoyevsky is inviting us to contemplate our own struggle with a cosmos unaware of us as individual beings with expectations, hopes, dreams, and plans. In the larger picture, our attempts to place our individual marks on the world are no more meaningful than the underground man's attempt to make the officer step aside and make room for him. Perhaps it is only our vain egoism that believes our plans and decisions have more meaning and value than the underground man's "silly" plan to wreak revenge on the officer.

Dostoyevsky brilliantly ends this scenario in ambiguity. The underground man quite accidentally bumps into the officer, who takes no notice, but since the underground man did not step aside for the officer, he perceives it as a

victory. He is ecstatic for the entire evening, yet he withdraws to his underground only three days later. For all the importance that he endowed the incident, the underground man is ultimately dissatisfied; his pleasure is only temporary. The underground man still lacks the permanent foundation that he seeks for real meaning and happiness.

His search for this leads him to the next scenario—the pursuit of his friends, who ought to recognize and appreciate him. This attempt, too, is ill-fated. The meanings that he attaches to his friends' words and actions prevent him from any normal communication with them. Before the underground man even reaches his friend's apartment, he has already decided that the friend, Simonov, will find him burdensome. Simonov and his guests, Ferfichkin and Trudolyubov, are in the midst of a discussion and fail to recognize the underground man's presence. Since we are experiencing the story from the underground man's point of view, his feelings of inadequacy and vanity color the events, as well as the fact that nearly sixteen years have gone by since the events actually happened.

It is impossible to believe that the underground man is recording what happened in an "objective" style. His own writings in Part 1 argue against the possibility of a wholly objective viewpoint. The underground man's friends' speeches to him are marked by excessive ellipses. Did they really not finish their sentences or is it that the underground man can't remember all of what they said? Even if we take the words and the ellipses as what was actually said (and unsaid), the underground man does interpret the way in which they were said. He characterizes Ferfichkin's speech as arrogant and rude, Trudolyubov's as ironic, and Simonov appears displeased and uncomfortable around him, or is his discomfort and paranoia projected onto them? After all, he has walked, unannounced, into the middle of their conversation and plans concerning a friend, Zverkov, who all of them know was never liked by the underground man. In his discomfort and embarrassment at barging in and inviting himself, the underground man usually assumes, as we discovered in the beginning of Part 2, that everyone perceives situations as he does.

[B]ecause of my unlimited vanity and the great demands I accordingly made on myself . . . I frequently regarded myself with a furious dissatisfaction verging on loathing; as a result, I unintentionally ascribed my own view to everyone else. (pp. 29-30)

Actually, we all have a tendency to think that others perceive the world as we do. However, if we read the dialogue without the underground man's admittedly biased characterization, we find only Ferfichkin's words impolite, the rest of the dialogue is simply surprise at the underground man's desire to attend Zverkov's party. The underground man is the one who colors this dialogue with malevolent undertones and motives.

At the party the next night, Zverkov begins questioning the underground man in a way that the underground man interprets as interrogation, although we might interpret it as polite conversation. Zverkov merely asks about the underground man's line of work. But the underground man has already decided that these men despise him, so naturally anything they say or do is going to be interpreted as more evidence of their hatred of him. Zverkov's inquiry about his job is seen by the underground man as a not-so-veiled attempt to humiliate him into revealing his civil servant status—so, of course, the underground man is humiliated by it.

Despite the underground man's slant on the party, the reader can still understand and identify with Simonov and his friends. This is one of the most remarkable things about the novel—that we can simultaneously be sympathetic to both the underground man and all the other characters in Part 2. We can relate both to feeling like an unwanted guest at a party and to feeling put upon by tolerating an unwanted guest at a party. To Zverkov, confronted by the presence of the underground man at his farewell party, his bow is meant to be courteous, his conversation a way of being polite and trying to draw the underground man into the more intimate circle of friends. We can imagine Zverkov explaining afterwards that he merely wanted to put his guest at ease after the underground man's unpleasant wait of forty minutes for his dinner companions to arrive.

To the underground man, everything is one humiliation piled on top of another. His wait is excruciatingly humiliating, due to his vain interpretation that everyone is looking at and wondering about him. His friends' explanations are considered inadequate, and he is humiliated that they do not think him worthy of better ones. Zverkov's bow is too solicitous and is deemed as an attempt to mock him. Zverkov's inquiry into his career is interpreted as an interrogation. When the conversation turns away from the underground man, however, he sulks and the narration changes from "actual" dialogue to a summation of his friends' conversation.

Eventually he challenges Ferfichkin to a duel. The underground man is further humiliated when this challenge is not taken seriously by the non-Russian. In his spite, he refuses to leave the party even though he knows he's unwanted. He prevents the others from humiliating him by humiliating himself. For three hours he paces up and down behind the sofa that his friends are gathered around unable to bring himself to any action. If he leaves, he is humiliated because the others have "won"—they have not been impressed by his intelligence and no longer have to put up with him. If he stays, he is humiliated by their refusal to recognize his inherent superiority and make him the center of attention which his vanity craves. He concludes that he has a right to stay based on the fact that he paid his seven rubles and so, on principle, he stays. But acting according to principle does not alleviate his humiliation. His

friends still ignore him. His life still has no meaning if his being isn't taken seriously, no matter how many rights and principles he has.

His attempt at an apology at the end of the evening is interpreted by Ferfichkin as an admission of cowardice, which only provokes the underground man to more spiteful behavior. Then there is a very interesting line from Zverkov. The underground man asks for Zverkov's friendship and admits that he's insulted Zverkov, to which Zverkov replies: "Insulted me? You? In-sul-ted me? My dear sir, I want you to know that never, under any circumstances, could you possibly insult *me!*" (p. 55). The underground man interprets this, according to his emphasis, as an affront.⁵ Zverkov has implied that the underground man is so lowly and meaningless that he could not possibly affect Zverkov one way or another. But if we read the words without the underground man's bias—without the italics—and in a bemused, perhaps even slightly patronizing, tone, the words can signify a kindness. Zverkov might be saying something along the lines of "Friends can never insult friends." Of course in speech, tone and inflection are extremely important, but by the end of this dinner, it is questionable whether the underground man can interpret anything except in a *zloi* way. Were Zverkov, Simonov, and the others really trying to humiliate the underground man, or are all his perceptions already so colored by his spite and vanity that everyday conversation is twisted into vitriol? As the others leave, the underground man stands there "as if spat upon" (p. 55). When one expects humiliation, it is easy to be humiliated; when one wants to be offended, it is easy to take offense. The next day, the underground man recasts the entire evening's events as "last night's unpleasantness" and blames his behavior on being drunk from wine (p. 73). By making the wine responsible for his actions instead of his own spiteful personality, the meaning of the evening's events changes. Now the underground man's behavior is "simply" the result of too much alcohol—a forgivable offense. Otherwise, he sees his behavior as unforgivable. Thus, by changing the interpretation of his behavior from deliberate to alcohol-induced, his reputation and vain ego are salvaged and any insults and duels are forgotten. Now he is not offended, because he has refused to take offense. When the individual is the sole foundation for meanings and values, he may twist them any way he likes.

The rest of the previous evening was spent in pursuit of his friends to a brothel where the underground man imagines they will either beg for his forgiveness and friendship or he will slap Zverkov. By the time he arrives, however, they are nowhere to be seen. Immensely relieved, the underground man is paired with Liza, who is regarding him seriously. "I liked that immediately; I would have hated her if she'd been smiling" (p. 59). Indeed, the underground man has been trying to get someone to take him seriously since the beginning of Part 2. When he catches his reflection in the mirror, he is pleased he looks repulsive. As in the tavern incident, the underground man

fervently hopes his being, his sheer existence, will engender some serious, and thus legitimate, response.

Liza eventually does confirm his existence, but it is a rather lengthy process that begins non-verbally—she looks him straight in the eyes. Throughout the book the underground man has avoided eye contact, while others have looked away or through him. Now the simple act of eye contact begins a string of events which will ultimately explain the underground man's descent to the underground. The initial contact is not a very pleasant one. He considers her gaze "sullen" and finds it "oppressive":

Now I'd suddenly realized starkly how absurd, how revolting as a spider, was the idea of debauchery, which, without love, crudely and shamelessly begins precisely at the point where genuine love is consummated. We looked at each other in this way for some time, but she didn't lower her gaze before mine, nor did she alter her stare, so that finally, for some reason, I felt very uneasy. (p. 60)

This prompts the underground man to speak—the last two hours of "debauchery" were spent in total silence. Liza's sullen stare has forced him to stop treating her like only an object for his enjoyment and start dealing with her as a person. Similarly, as the conversation progresses, the underground man strives to lose his objectivity for Liza. He wants to become a unique human being and not "just another customer," eventually seeing himself as her liberator from a life of prostitution.⁶ At first he recites all the lofty ideals of human existence—honest love between two people, honest labor, a home, happy children. After the recitation, the underground man waits in dread that Liza will laugh at him and wound his pride, that she will not take him seriously when he was at least half-serious. Instead she tells him he sounds like a book, which, of course, is exactly right, since the underground man has just performed an excellent paraphrase of all the lofty ideals of Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* Her remark wounds him: not only does it imply that the underground man is insincere, but that he is unoriginal as well. In nineteenth-century Russia, to be unoriginal was tantamount to a sin. The underground man begins his oration again, determined to prove his sincerity and originality.

At the end of his second speech, the underground man notices a change in his speech: he was speaking from a *pathos*; he has been caught up in what was supposed to have been only a game. In his attempt to play at sincerity, he has become sincere, and this sincerity has affected Liza profoundly. She is crying, shuddering; she bites her hand in order to muffle her sobs. The underground man's existence has finally been verified, affirmed just as surely as had he been thrown through a tavern window. His response is to leave as quickly as possible, but not before issuing the impulsive, "look me up sometime" good-bye.

Liza, however, induces him to stay for a few moments longer to read a love letter she had received three days earlier. The underground man interprets the letter as Liza's attempt to show him that "she too was the object of sincere, honest love, and that someone exists who had spoken to her respectfully" (p. 72). In order to be the object of sincere, honest love, the author of Liza's letter must place Liza's existence at least on a par with or above his own. But the underground man is skeptical of the letter. He doubts whether the writer has any underlying passion for Liza; after all, the underground man's excessive vanity cannot conceive of making another's existence as, or more important than, his own. Since the underground man believes everyone else's meanings and motives are similar to his own, the author of Liza's letter must also be insincere. Nevertheless, the underground man feels increasingly uncomfortable and leaves hastily. Perhaps even the possibility of genuine love was too much for him, or perhaps he was disappointed that he was not the first one to recognize Liza's personhood. The underground man returns home perplexed, and Dostoevsky forewarns us that an "ugly truth" is about to be revealed (p. 72).

As with the Zverkov party, the underground man recasts the meaning of his encounter with Liza. The one genuine, spontaneous moment in the underground man's life, as far as he discloses to us, is rewarded with the one thing the underground man has been searching for throughout Part 2—recognition of his personhood. This profound event occurs as the underground man is naked and in the dark; Liza cannot see how he looks. In the light of a new day, the episode with Liza is shrugged off as sentimentality:

Instantly recalling the events of the previous day, even I was astonished at my *sentimentality* with Liza last night, at all of yesterday's "horror and pity." "Why it's an attack of old woman's nervous hysteria, phew!" (p. 72)

By consciously changing the significance of his encounter with Liza, he can more easily recapture the sarcasm of his vain ego. He has acted sincerely, and thus *acted*, rather than remain in his state of extended inertia. His sincerity suspended the other side of the argument that his skepticism in Part 2 would demand in order to maintain his inaction (pp. 12-13). But who has affirmed him? Unfortunately, it was the only person more wretched than himself. He still hasn't proven his superior intellect to his friends or the upper class. Now with his hyperconsciousness working overtime, the only thing which will salvage his vanity is to refuse to acknowledge that he was sincere with Liza. Instead, his speech was an attack of nervous hysteria.

Although the underground man has written off the whole escapade as sentimental, he worries that Liza will not attach the same meaning to it. He worries that she will actually consider him seriously and come to his squalid

apartment. Then he worries more that she will not come, that he is too insignificant for even a prostitute to care about, and again his being will be reduced to total meaninglessness.

When Liza finally does arrive at the underground man's apartment, he is at first overly concerned with appearances—of his shabby apartment and clothes. This concern for outward appearances exhibited itself initially with his preparations for revenge upon the officer (he had to look good in order to make the man step aside) and was continued in his preparations for Zverkov's party (shining his boots twice and anguishing over a spot on his trousers). The underground man's vanity attaches great significance to how he looks, which is insignificant to Liza. After all, the underground man had his greatest effect on her when he was naked and in the dark. Because he attaches such great value on outward appearances, the underground man is ashamed when Liza finds him in a physical state that does not do justice to his imagined exalted intelligence. How can someone who lives so shabbily be in a position to be a savior to another? His daydreams are shattered, and he is angry at Liza for forcing him to realize both his economic and mental poverty.

But Liza does not attach any significance or value to the underground man's outward appearances; she is attracted to his inner, spiritual self. So the only thing left for him to do is exhibit his spiritual poverty as well. The underground man attempts to ridicule her by suggesting that she is too stupid to have realized that his speech to her in the brothel was insincere. He confesses that he wanted simply to use her, and finally, that he is too unlovable to be loved. She responds to his verbal attack by hugging him. But rather than comforting him, Liza's compassion infuriates the underground man:

It also occurred to my overwrought brain that now our roles were completely reversed; now she was the heroine, and I was the same sort of humiliated and oppressed creature she'd been in front of me that evening—only four days ago. (p. 85)

He engages in a final, desperate attempt to regain power over Liza. In the midst of his paradoxical feelings of love and hate toward himself and toward Liza, the underground man is suddenly aroused sexually. He looks at Liza with passion and then squeezes her hand as if to question whether he can have sex with her. She hesitates only slightly and then says "yes" through embracing him "rapturously".

In the following scene, however, there is no "happily ever after" conclusion. Instead, only fifteen minutes later the underground man is impatiently waiting for Liza to leave. His "love making" has been according to his meaning of love—domination and possession as if she were an object. He has, in most respects, raped her.

Now the underground man cannot avoid the confrontation of his sickness.

He has acted in the most despicable manner possible—he has violated in body and soul someone who loved and trusted him. In a feeble attempt to rationalize his sick, *zloi* act away, he hands her money. Her spontaneous show of genuine love is now reduced to the mere perfunctory actions of a prostitute who is paid to pretend to care. The meaning of her generous and loving embraces is immediately devalued, and the gross immorality of his violent assault is transformed to the lesser vice of solicitation.

But Liza refuses to accept the note and all its implications. In leaving the money, she disallows the underground man from recasting his *zloi* act into something explainable or justifiable—it can't be justified. Now the underground man cannot twist the meaning of his act any way he likes. Liza leaves him only after realizing that he is incapable of loving her back. This is the "ugly truth" about the underground man. Ashamed of himself for his outrageous act, the underground man makes a half-hearted attempt to console himself by rationalizing that Liza may in the future be a better person through the suffering he has imposed on her.⁷ But even this supposedly "good" consequence cannot alter the meaning of the actual act: it was a "rape," and no rationalization about the later consequences will change the horrible meaning of his act.

The underground man defines what love means as:

tyrannizing and demonstrating my moral superiority. All my life I could never conceive of any other kind of love, and I've now reached the point that I sometimes think that love consists precisely in a voluntary gift by the beloved person of the right to tyrannize over him. (pp. 85-86)

But Liza has introduced him to a different meaning of love; his meaning is not the only one. Even after the underground man's confession that he was unlovable, Liza was willing to love him. If she had placed her own ego, her own vanity, first, the rational thing to do would have been to walk out then and there. But as Dostoevsky has been trying to establish all along in Part 1, there is more to life than rational egoism. Through Liza, Dostoevsky has offered an alternative both to rational egoism and to the underground. This alternative requires only one thing: that you think of other people's needs before your own. This, however, seems to be the one requirement the underground man cannot meet; his extreme vanity always places himself first. Thus he realizes he is incapable of loving Liza in the way that she loves him.

Neither can he love her according to his own meaning. His vanity will not allow her to tyrannize him, and if she allows herself to be tyrannized by him, he will no longer consider her worthy of his "love," only as an object to be raped. Now we are vividly aware as to why his unlimited vain ego is the underground man's fatal flaw. It has led him to commit a horrible act, one which, in the nineteenth century, was considered more terrible than murder. It is now clear that the underground man cannot be his own foundation for

meaning. By always giving "I" the most value, the most meaning, one winds up being *zloi*. For Dostoevsky the foundation of meaning does not lie in science or in Chernyshevsky's rational egoism but in placing others' interests before your own—in genuinely loving others.

But this love must be a very personal and individual one. Dostoevsky had criticized the more generalized, impersonal "love of mankind" which Chernyshevsky had advanced in support of his Crystal Palace society. Theoretical love is much easier than truly loving another person in practice. Because everyone has a vain ego, though not as exaggerated as the underground man's, practical love is quite difficult, but also quite amazing. For Dostoevsky this feat is possible only through the grace and love of God. In a letter to his older brother, Mikhail, dated March 26, 1864, Dostoevsky complains about the censorship of Chapter 10 in Part 1:

I'll complain about my article; the misprints are terrible and it would have been better not to print the penultimate chapter (the most important one in which the main idea is expressed), than to print it as it is, namely with sentences mixed up and contradicting itself. But what's to be done! The censors are swine—those places where I mocked everything and sometimes blasphemed *for appearance's sake*—they let pass; but where I deduced from all this the necessity of faith and Christ—they deleted it. (pp. 93-94)⁸

We can only speculate that Dostoevsky believed Christianity as practiced by the Russian Orthodox Church was the foundation for meaning and values for which the underground man was searching. In later books Dostoevsky emphasizes the salvational role of Christianity, but the censorship of this transitional work⁹ makes it impossible to say with certainty what part Christianity plays in *Notes From Underground*. But even if we downplay this problem, there is still a non-religious, existential cure for the underground man's affliction within the story. Liza's love is a possible escape from the underground, but ultimately the underground man's fatal moral flaw of always valuing himself more than others drives him into it. However, this fatal flaw is not genetically or metaphysically determined. It is rational egoism taken to its logical extreme. But life is not rational. The underground man considers placing another's interest before his own as a loss, a sacrifice of himself, but the illogical paradox of life is that by "sacrificing" one's own ego, one doesn't lose anything but gains everything. The escape continues to be there for him—he needs only to place another's ego above his own¹⁰—but his excessive vanity will not allow it, and so he remains a sick man, a *zloi* man.

NOTES

- 1 Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Notes From Underground*, trans. by Michael Katz (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 3.
- 2 For discussions of humor and tragedy, see Joseph Frank's *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation 1860-1865* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 310-47. For discussions of existential and religious themes, see Nicholas Berdyaev's *Dostoevsky*, trans. by Donald Attwater (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 50-88. For discussions of psychological and religious themes, see Ernest Simmons' *Dostoevski* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 120-38.
- 3 *Notes from Underground*, p. 13.
- 4 Cf. Joseph Frank, *Dostoyevsky: The Stir of Liberation 1860-1865* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 336-37. Nicholai Chernyshevsky, *What is to be Done?*, trans. by Michael Katz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), p. 209.
- 5 Ralph Matlaw interprets it as one of Dostoevsky's statements concerning class divisions in Russia—that they may be a state of mind as well as socio-economic. See "Structure and Integration in *Notes From Underground*" in *Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association* 73 (1958): 101-09.
- 6 Again, this is probably another stab at Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?*, where the well-worn tale of a prostitute delivered from prostitution is retold. Chernyshevsky has his male protagonist, Kirsanov, rescue a girl from prostitution and set her up in a dress-making shop. See also Offord's "Dostoyevsky and Chernyshevsky," *Slavonic and East European Review* 57 (1979).
- 7 Redemption through suffering and sacrifice is a major theme that recurs in Dostoevsky's later works; however, Dostoevsky is always clear that while self-suffering and self-sacrifice are laudable, sacrificing of others or causing others to suffer is not permissible.
- 8 Some speculation is needed in order to comprehend why the Russian censors might censor a section which deals sympathetically with the Russian Orthodox Church. It must have been evident to the censors that much of *Notes From Underground* was a derisive satire on Chernyshevsky's book. I speculate that they might have thought that by putting the Church in this section, Dostoevsky was somehow trying to sneak in an attack against it. However, the fact that Dostoevsky never restored this section to its original form when he had the opportunity to do so later remains a mystery.
- 9 *Notes From Underground* is considered to be the work that either ends Dostoevsky's middle period or begins his later period. In his later period, Dostoevsky would have Liza's love founded upon Christian love to be a genuine love. But although Dostoevsky makes it plain that Chapter 10 of Part 1 concerned Christianity, it is not the case that Chapters 9 and 10 of Part 2 were severely censored, so we can safely conclude that those sections are as Dostoevsky intended them.
- 10 Again, this is Dostoevsky's notion of sacrifice and suffering—sacrificing one's own vanity and ego—as the path to redemption for human beings. As this theme has been discussed in other places (cf. Berdyaev and Frank), I will not expand upon it further in this article.

