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Nietzsche and Dostoevsky

Philosophy, Morality, Tragedy

Edited by Jeff Love and Jeffrey Metzger



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28. Dostoevsky, *Notes*, 11–12.

29. This theme, of course, appears in Dostoevsky's other major novels as well, but it is not clear to me if Nietzsche read either *Crime and Punishment* or *The Brothers Karamazov*.

30. *Ibid.*, 37.

31. Nietzsche, *Selected Letters*, 327.

32. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 1.

Edith W. Clowes

Mapping the Unconscious in *Notes from Underground* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*:
A Reconsideration of Modern Moral Consciousness

There in its nasty, stinking underground our offended, beaten, taunted mouse plunges right away into a state of cold, poisonous and, this is the main thing, everlasting spite. For forty years on end it will remember the offense down to the most shameful details, each time inventing new details, even more shameful, maliciously teasing and irritating itself.
—Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

There in its vile, filthy underground our rat, offended and mocked, hides right away in its cold, poisoned, eternal spite . . . it will remember down to the most shameful details of the offense, each time adding still more shameful details, *irritated by its own depraved fantasy, inventing aggravating circumstances on the pretext that they could have happened, pardoning itself in nothing.*
—Dostoevsky, *L'esprit souterrain*

These cellar creatures full of vengeance and hatred—what do they do with that vengeance and hatred? Have you ever heard these words? Would you suspect, if you trusted their words, that you are in the company of people of resentment [*ressentiment*]?
—Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

FOR WELL OVER A CENTURY major critics and thinkers have recognized Dostoevsky and Nietzsche as great moral psychologists. Lev Shestov, the existentialist philosopher, thought of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche as intellectual "twins," both of them psychological thinkers, made so through their similar inner experience.¹ Sensitive to the hidden impulses of the psyche, as Shestov argued, these writers were the first to address the impact of psychological life on our moral values.² A parallel in their thinking, relatively ignored in recent critical commentary, is the peculiarly *spatial* quality of Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's psychological modeling, the metaphors of the underground, which strongly affect how we imagine the psyche.³ Although Nietzsche sometimes described the unconscious psyche as a natural space "under the earth" (*das Unterirdische*), both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche typically thought of it as a human-made, "un-natural" space "under the floor" (*podpol'e*) and in "the cellar" (*Keller*). These metaphors help to make palpable what has always been and will always be invisible. To both thinkers, these underground spaces are inhabited by subliminal drives, aggressive and malicious in the extreme. Dostoevsky's underground in *Notes from Underground* (1864) is the site of uncontrolled ill-will, desire, and arbitrary willfulness (*zloba, khoten'e, zhelanie, volia*). Nietzsche's underground space in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) is the breeding ground of feelings of "ressentiment" and "remorse." They often imagine these drives as rodents—a mouse, a mole, or even a rat, as in the 1886 French adaptation of *Notes from Underground* that Nietzsche read.⁴ For both thinkers, the key point is that unconscious psychological phenomena become the motivation for moral feeling, consciousness, and action. This essay undertakes to show that, though Dostoevsky was among the first thinkers to conceive of moral consciousness as something human-made and based on subliminal psychological drives, he *is* the first that I have found to imagine the psyche itself as a human-made *space*. And although Hobbes, Locke, and later Kant were the first thinkers to claim the autonomy of moral value from religious belief, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche were among the first, if not the very first, thinkers to situate moral psychology in a nondivine space, to "map" it, as it were.⁵ And, finally, while Freud famously created a visual model of the conscious and unconscious psyche in "The Ego and the Id" (1923), Dostoevsky and Nietzsche did so metaphorically decades earlier.⁶ Dostoevsky's impact on Nietzsche, and through Nietzsche on Freud, could be greater than we have generally thought.

As intellectual-historical background for this discussion it will be helpful to describe the "spaces" of moral consciousness in European writing before Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Moral values and consciousness have traditionally been located in the high, bright places of the human body—the heart, the soul, the mind—and linked to the most elevated value,

the divine. In contrast, the "roots" of moral consciousness, for both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, are paradoxically located in the lower places of human nature and the human body traditionally labeled "bad" or even "evil," in the lightless realm "under ground." The lowest realm under the ground or in the basement of a building traditionally designates variously "hell," "death," or "imprisonment." Now, in the modern imagination, underground space becomes an allegory for the psyche and specifically the unconscious, that part of the mind that is inaccessible to verbal description. In Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's work we deal with the paradox of the unconscious become conscious in words, the "speaking unconscious."

Dostoevsky appears to have invented the image of the human-made, moral-psychological underground. Before Dostoevsky, literature is full of underground prisons, hells, pits, and caves. In Plato's *Republic*, the space of blind, unthinking belief and behavior is an "underground den," the famous cave.⁷ In contrast, Dostoevsky's underground is unnatural; it is part of a human-made building—a dark site from which to watch and react to the real effects of our idealized systems of reasoned thought and belief on the "surface" of human psychological life. This insight, leading at first to seemingly immoral behavior (asserting one's power through revenge), and later to a form of moral behavior (a feeling of owing and repaying a debt, and a need to confess the "truth") is the opposite of Plato's bright, sunlit images of enlightenment.⁸

Arthur Schopenhauer, among the first psychologically oriented philosophers, still juxtaposes the physical and the metaphysical—he characterizes "will" not as primarily psychological, but rather metaphysical. It is a post-Kantian "thing in itself" that exists outside of human perception.⁹ Schopenhauer's concept of will makes it possible, however, for philosophy to build a bridge to psychology and to criticize human psychology, particularly the concept of the "I," the ego, and its motivations. Importantly for us, Schopenhauer describes existence nonspatially, certainly since, for him, space itself is a "mask." The mind and consciousness are still viewed in terms, if not of "enlightenment," then of "light" and flashes of lightning descending from above: "consciousness is, as it were, a lightning-flash momentarily illuminating the night."¹⁰ Among post-idealist philosophers, Ludwig Feuerbach's thinking anticipates modern religious psychology. Feuerbach is known for founding the anthropology of religion. He argues in *The Essence of Religion* (1841) that God is a projection of human inner nature. His discourse on human nature occasionally uses spatial metaphors, though he uses horizontal rather than vertical spatial relationships, for example, contrasting "inner" and "outer" spaces.¹¹

It is important to note that the typical, independently thinking, isolated, and often alienated protagonist of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-

century European literature inhabits a high place, often a garret, a cheap rental space high under the roof. The higher space points to the dominance in the protagonist of reason and ideas, rather than subliminal drive. For example, in *Rameau's Nephew* (1762) Diderot was among the first of many writers to create an outsider, who lives in a garret. This protagonist descends to the streets and cafes to launch a critique of social mores.¹² "Underground" spaces do appear later, for example, in the urban landscapes of Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43), where Sue writes of "underground life" and uses underground spaces, for example, kitchens, cafes, and taverns. Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables* (1862), uses underground imagery to refer to political and economic realia of "the underground of the world" and "underground pioneers" (vol. 3), and "underground education" (vol. 5).

Russian literature has relatively few underground spaces before Dostoevsky. The late-seventeenth-century Old Believer Archpriest Avvakum writes in his autobiography of being imprisoned in a "pit," a kind of earthly hell, in which he undergoes a severe test of his faith. Aleksandr Pushkin's post-1825 poems to his Decembrist brothers in the Siberian mines certainly speak of the underground space of the mines as a punishment, in which their faith in an Enlightenment polity would be hardened. One of the Underground Man's well-known precursors, Ivan Turgenev's "Hamlet from Shchigrovsky District" (1848), features a nameless character defined mainly through the tone of his voice, speaking in the partial darkness. Still, the space of the monologue is above ground, in the bedroom of a manor house. And here surface aspects of civility and good manners still apply. In Chernyshevsky's utopian novel, *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), against which *Notes from Underground* was written, there is one basement space, imagined by the protagonist, Vera Pavlovna. In her first dream Vera Pavlovna is liberated from a "damp, dark cellar," to skip through a field.¹³ This act, in good Platonic tradition, is one of enlightenment and empowerment. At the end of the dream she unlocks other cellars to free other young women.

Although *Notes from Underground* (1864) was published twenty-three years before Nietzsche wrote *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Nietzsche did not know of Dostoevsky or his book until 1886 or '87, when he was working on *Genealogy*. And though Nietzsche had developed his own underground imagery much earlier, it has been persuasively shown that in some respects *Notes from Underground* helped him to shape the underground concept in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche had independently developed his own metaphors, for example, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1885), the human-made space of the cellar. Here he talks about taming the "dogs in the cellar" to characterize the angry disharmony of the adolescent psyche.¹⁴

The question of a creative appropriation by Nietzsche of *Notes from Underground* is complex. The remarkable parallels between the passages in

Notes from Underground and *On the Genealogy of Morals* have long since been noted and connected through the strange French adaptation of two Dostoevsky works, *L'esprit souterrain* (1886). Soon before writing *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche stumbled upon Dostoevsky for the first time in *L'esprit souterrain* late in 1886 or early in 1887, at a bookstore in Nice, France.¹⁵ He enthused about Dostoevsky, finding in him "a psychologist with whom I can get along."¹⁶ This odd French cannibalization of Dostoevsky had two parts, part 1, titled "Katia," and part 2, titled "Liza." "Katia" was, in fact, a retitled but quite complete translation of Dostoevsky's early story "The Landlady" ("Khoziaika," 1847). However, "Liza," or part 2 of *L'esprit souterrain*, was an unreliable, badly mutilated set of excerpts from both parts of *Notes from Underground*. The original titles of Dostoevsky's two parts, "The Underground" ("Podpol'e") and "A Propos of Wet Snow" ("Po povodu mokrogo snega") were missing, and "Liza" was presented as the diary of the protagonist of "The Landlady," Vasily Ordynov. By attaching these writings to a fully developed character in a romantic tale, the nameless voice of *Notes from Underground* loses much of its auditory punch. Fabricated passages adapting "Liza" to the "Katia" section were added, substantially altering the quality of *Notes from Underground*.¹⁷ Completely ignorant of the poor quality of the French adaptation, Nietzsche nonetheless found the second part to be a "stroke of psychological genius."¹⁸

It has been argued that Nietzsche's reading of *L'esprit souterrain* helped him to shape "under-earth" imagery in another work, the 1886 preface to *Daybreak* (1873), where Nietzsche sees his philosophical persona as something like a mole, an "underground person, drilling, digging, undermining."¹⁹ That image emphasizes intellectual, psychological inquisitiveness, rather than the psychology of resentment that links *Notes from Underground* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. It is important to point out that Nietzsche read *L'esprit souterrain* before drafting *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which was written in July 1887, and published four months later, in November. It is impossible, however, to substantiate any linear creative appropriation of *Notes from Underground* in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, since Nietzsche had earlier developed the imagery linking underground "cellar" spaces and what we can call the "moral unconscious," at least since *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1885). It is not a stretch, however, to assert that reading *L'esprit souterrain* offered Nietzsche corroboration of his thinking and may well have turned his concept of the unconscious away from visual imagery and toward auditory imagery.

The critical commentary has more often than not overlooked the link between underground spatial imagery and the interaction of psychological impulses and moral consciousness. The first critic to address the underground setting as a metaphor for the psyche was Nikolai Antsiferov, who in

his 1922 study *The Soul of Petersburg* remarked on the parallels between the “underground of the human soul” and the “underground of the city.”²⁰ To Antsiferov’s parallels between the psychological underground and architectural, urban underground spaces we can add that the underground is an “uncanny” metaphorical space—both familiar and foreign. The Underground Man inhabits it, even though he also reviles it. It is both “home” and a “strange space,” alien to how we would like to view ourselves—as reasonable, noble, enlightened beings—a place where we conceal fantasy and experience unacceptable in ordinary social parlance. As such, the underground is a critical complication that characterizes the self-aware psyche of modern, urban, educated, self-reflective people.

It comes as a surprise that the inventor of the spatial concept of the “chronotope,” Mikhail Bakhtin, never considered the underground as a chronotope. In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929), Bakhtin discusses important aspects of the figure of the Underground Man, but without asking why the underground setting itself might be important. Bakhtin’s crucial point is that the Underground Man is a voice with an attitude, not a fully realized character. He is not an actual protagonist but the “subject of consciousness and dreaming.”²¹ Thinking in terms of the chronotope, however, the underground is certainly a crucial, symbolically significant time-space ensemble that divulges an “image of human nature,” as Bakhtin defines the chronotope, and one that makes the unconscious thinkable and palpable.

Regarding the underground space as the space of the unconscious—now strangely articulated in the figure of the Underground Man—we find that the unconscious becomes the crucial foundation (another spatial metaphor) for what we might call moral “pre-consciousness,” leading to consciousness in a modern world without divine intervention. The “desire” for some overriding, authoritative system of moral value springs not from a superhuman power but from the complex of subliminal human instinct.

Dostoevsky’s and Nietzsche’s underground settings are important because they imply a radically different “image of human nature,” to use Bakhtin’s term. These cellar-type spaces lie under an allegorical “house,” or system, of consciously held ideals, values, and opinions. As Joseph Frank and Russian critics before him have pointed out, Dostoevsky’s underground is both psychological and ideological, situated, as it were, under the utopian construction of Chernyshevsky’s Crystal Palace in *What Is To Be Done?*², which promotes rational egoism and its idealized image of a completely reasoned and educable human nature. Nietzsche’s image is psychological, under the “house” of the conscious psyche, the ego and its valuative constructs. For both, but particularly for Dostoevsky, the underground is a space in which to observe what is commonly accepted as “good” human behavior, both admiring and resenting it: “I have the underground. And as long as I live and desire, let my hand wither, if I should

ever lay even one brick on that fundamental edifice [*kapital’nyi dom*]. Don’t think that I long since rejected the crystal building just because I could not stick my tongue out at it” (*Notes* I:8).²² The underground is rather that shifting space of desiring, from which the Underground Man (himself in many ways a rational egoist) reviles the metaphorical Crystal Palace of the rational, utilitarian social order, so beloved by Chernyshevsky, having once upon a time admired it. The very concept of the Crystal Palace represents the death of personal desire, the very thing that the Underground Man will valorize as the root of human nature.²³

Even in the narrative portion of *Notes from Underground*, part 2, the underground remains a space of instinct and subliminal drive, as Vasily Rozanov noted, an “inner space” in one’s psyche that forms over a lifetime (forty years), which one “carries” inside himself (*Notes* II:1). The Underground Man’s interactions with the prostitute Liza are motivated by the unconscious desire to assert himself, to influence and control. His actions are continually—and most tragically with Liza—motivated by this “gloomy thought,” accompanied by a less well-defined “nasty sensation of going into a damp, moldy basement” (*Notes* II:6). As he reflects on his underground, the Underground Man also links the inner underground to urban houses of ill repute, dives of debauchery that he visits: “I was terribly afraid of being recognized. I frequented the darkest places” (*Notes* II:1). It is important to note that even in his dark excesses, the Underground Man is morally conscious: he is abnormally aware of the moral turpitude of his thoughts, and he judges his attitudes and actions.

In contrast to Dostoevsky’s underground, which is primarily a space of observing, criticizing, and self-criticizing, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche also explicitly sees the underground with all its skepticism as a creative space, a “dark workshop” where “ideals are made on earth” (*GM* I:13).²⁴ It is worth noting, as an aside, that the widely used Kaufmann translation of *On the Genealogy of Morals* omits the spatial aspect of the observer looking “down” and “under” in order to comprehend the psychological roots of moral feeling. A fuller translation of this passage would read: “Does anyone want to look down and under the mystery of how ideals are made on earth?” (*GM* I:13).²⁵ Importantly, Nietzsche focuses on a different set of senses from those emphasized in realist and scientific writing. While scientific empiricism and literary realism rely on sight and seeing, Nietzsche consciously turns to listening since sight works poorly in this dark space, a change in perspective quite possibly motivated by his reading of the French adaptation of Dostoevsky, *L’esprit souterrain*.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche likens the whole psyche to a house with “doors and windows of consciousness” and the unconscious to a lower realm, an “underworld” (*Unterwelt*) of “utility organs working with and

against one another" (GM II:1, 57E). Forgetfulness ("an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression" (*positives Hemmungsvermögen*; GM II:1, 245G) lets us rest from often conflicting workings of the consciousness and the unconscious. Pursuing the architectural metaphor, Nietzsche compares the function of forgetfulness to a "doorkeeper, preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette: so that it will be immediately obvious how there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness" (GM II:1, 58E).

Thinking about the underground as a chronotope, a time-space ensemble, prompts us to investigate the function within this space of concepts of time and change. Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's underground spaces feature quite different concepts of time. Although the very fact of its coming into existence is a major event in the back history of *Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky's underground is personal, seemingly timeless, eventless, and, in his words, "inert." Indeed, the Underground Man calls his perspective "conscious inertia" (Notes I:9). The editor of *Notes from Underground* and the Underground Man disagree about the nature of time in the underground. The editor sees the underground as an *evolutionary development* of this younger generation in the mid-nineteenth century. In the editor's view, the Underground Man "seems to want to explain the reasons for its (the underground's) appearance, and why it had to appear, in our milieu" (Notes I: footnote). In contrast, in the Underground Man's view, the underground is indeed inert. In his historical critique of the cruelty of Cleopatra, among other examples, he suggests that human nature generally does not change, that it is a constant, with which one must work—for the good or the bad. The one major change, implied in this critique, but made explicit in Nietzsche's essay, is that with time the cruel aspects of human nature have gradually been repressed and have turned inward, giving rise to the self-conscious self.

Nietzsche's underground, in contrast, is historical. As he suggests in the title of his book, the psyche has a "genealogy," and it has developed over eons. Nietzsche's goal is to sketch in allegories this long-term evolutionary shift, starting with the "blond beast," moving through various archetypal developments—the warrior-master and the priest-slave psychological formations—and now arriving in his own time at the complacent "last man."

The interaction between the underground psychological space and the faculty of language is another defining issue for understanding the nature of the underground. As Bakhtin points out, the Underground Man is a speaking voice. Dostoevsky's underground closely anticipates the Freudian "id," and particularly the Lacanian "Real," levels of the psyche which are inaccessible to direct verbal expression. In Dostoevsky's rendition, the underground is separate from language. It is a site of silent resentment, in contrast to Nietzsche's underground workshop, which is a space of ill-willed grumbling,

It is only *after* "being released" from the underground that the Underground Man starts speaking—and will not stop. Indeed, he insists that the underground or unconscious should remain wordless: "you know what? I am persuaded that our underground brother should be held in check. He can sit in silence in the underground for forty years, but if he gets out, he'll burst and then he'll just talk and talk and talk" (Notes I:8).

Language does function in Nietzsche's underground, though it is hardly intelligible. In this dark workshop one hears "malignant muttering and whispering" (46): "Weakness is being lied into something *meritorious*" (*Die Schwäche soll zum Verdienste umgelogen werden*) (GM I:13, 47E; 237G). And yet this language is extremely difficult to perceive. The investigator (Nietzsche's speaking persona) has to sharpen his ears to hear the sense of the speaking voices. It is important to note that when both thinkers do speak of underground emanations, they speak in indirect terms, because, even for Nietzsche, the unconscious is inaccessible to direct verbal expression. Through simile (the organ stop) and allegory (mouse), in Dostoevsky's case, and human archetypes (blond beast, master-warrior, slave-priest, ascetic philosopher, and last man), in Nietzsche's case, they apprehend perceptions and behavior as the direct result of underground instinctive drives.

Although the underground-as-unconscious is mainly apart from language, Nietzsche famously develops the vocabulary of "*ressentiment*" to talk about the impact of the unconscious on "moral" consciousness and behavior. For Dostoevsky, however, the workings of the unconscious filter into consciousness through a subtler vocabulary of underground will and desire and the alliterative dispersal of the sounds of the Russian words for will and desire throughout the *Notes*. Though the Russian word for "free will" or "anarchic will," *volia*, has received a great deal of critical attention, the much less common word for willing that also contains the notion of desiring, *khoten'e*, and words with its related roots (*khot'*- and *khoch-*) are used in *Notes from Underground* much more often than *volia*.²⁶ In *Notes from Underground*, *khoten'e* appears twenty times; *khochu* or *khochet* (I want or he wants)—forty-five times; various other forms—*khotet'* (to want), *khotelos'* (I felt like), *zakhotelos'* (I suddenly got the urge), *okhota* (desire; urge)—seventy-four times. There are dozens of appearances of similar-sounding words—*khot'* and *khotia*—which, although having no meaning related to desiring (*khoten'e*), spread the sounds of desiring throughout the work. These sounds also extend paranomastically (through alliteration) to the very discomfiting "*khokhot*" (guffaw) and "*khokhotat'sia*" (burst out laughing), which likewise have no connection in meaning but designate involuntary, jeering responses that make the Underground Man cringe. In contrast, "*volia*" (conscious will) appears eighteen times, and "*svoevolie*" (self-will) appears twice. It is certainly significant, however, that the "*vol'*-" root is ubiquitous, for example, in such words as "*pozvol'te*" and "*izvol'te*" (permit me) and

“*dozvol'te*” (allow me). The repetitions of these roots (*khoch*, *khot'*, and *vol'-*) create a subliminal tapestry of “desiring” and “wanting” that asserts its edgy, unmanageable presence throughout *Notes from Underground* and is the very stuff of the unconscious.

The word *khoten'e* is a key word in Dostoevsky's vocabulary of the psyche. Relatively unusual sounding, it lacks the fields of meaning of *volia*, which is linked to issues of conscious judgment and action, self-will, willfulness, and arbitrariness. *Khoten'e* links more clearly to unconscious and involuntary desire. Although it appears in apposition to *volia* and *svobodnaia volia* (free will), *khoten'e* is also independently contrasted to “reason” or *rassudok*. Much deeper and more pervasive than reason, it becomes the nascent foundation, however shaky and unreliable, of the self. As the Underground Man famously says, “[R]eason, gentlemen, is a fine thing without a doubt, but reason is only reason and satisfies only human faculties of reason, but desiring [*khoten'e*] is the manifestation of all life, that is, all human life . . . and even though our lives in this manifestation often produce rubbish, at least it is still life, and not just the calculation of a square root” (*Notes* I:8). Desiring is the one aspect of human nature that we know will always exist. And even if it works at cross-purposes to the goals of reason, it is still more important than reason. Desiring is what differentiates a person from a tool or a cog in a machine: “What is a person without wishes, without will, and without desires but an organ stop?” (*Notes* I:8). And desiring can be for the good or the bad. If it is ignored, it will almost certainly be for the bad.

Underground desiring affects the practice of ideal values but does not *itself* represent value. The underground is in no way an ideal space or a “more true” space than any imagined, idealized space above ground. Awareness of the underground can lead to seemingly “truer” insights into human nature, though, as we know, the Underground Man does not let us believe in their truth for very long. The Underground Man does “try on” an idealization of the underground and immediately rejects that option:

Better to live in conscious inertia. Therefore, long live the underground! I may have said that I envy a normal person to my last bit of spleen, even though in the conditions I now see him, I wouldn't want to be him (although I still won't stop envying him. No, no, the underground still is more advantageous!) There at least I can . . . Oh, even here I am fibbing! I'm fibbing because, just as I know that two times two is four, I know that it isn't the underground that is better but something entirely different, which I yearn for but can't find! The heck with the underground! (*Notes* I:9)

Although awareness of underground desires and drives (for example, the drive to power, to influence and control other people) can lead to a tren-

chant critique of any system of value, it is also corrosive and ultimately destroys all opportunity for human self-respect. It undermines any idealizing innocence, for example, a belief in true love. Here, following Schopenhauer, true love becomes merely the window dressing for an unconscious urge, in this case, the need to wield power over another person:

“I couldn't even fall in love because . . . to love with me always meant tyrannizing and being morally superior. My whole life I could not even imagine to myself another kind of love . . . In my underground dreams I couldn't imagine love in any other way than as a struggle, I always began with hate and ended with moral conquest and then couldn't imagine what I should do with the subjugated object.” (*Notes* II:10)

Both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche suggest a generalization about the underground: the “underground” is a subliminal space that exists in every person, a space of substantial importance, of authenticity, that is not just cheating or swindling (*naduvanie*) or a fake. The Underground Man concludes first by questioning just himself: “Why am I made with these kinds of desires? It can't really be that I'm made [*ustroen*] this way, just to draw the conclusion that my nature [*ustroistvo*] is really just a swindle?” (*Notes* I:10). He then suggests that everyone—and not he alone—faces the same quandary: “[T]he main point is that all this will produce the most unpleasant impression because *all of us have lost the habit of living* [*otvykli ot zhizni*], *we all are doing poorly* [*khromaem*], to a greater or lesser degree” (*Notes* II:10, emphasis added).

The Underground Man is sure that generalizing his own condition to all people will meet with tremendous resistance from his intended audience of “men of action,” whom he imagines stamping their feet and shouting, “Speak for yourself alone and your miseries in the underground, but don't dare say ‘all of us’”; to which the Underground Man retorts that he has taken to an extreme what other people out of cowardice have “not even dared to take half way” (*Notes* II:10). He argues that virtually everyone will be in deep denial of their own internal undergrounds, which in itself is a disturbing, destructive step: “We even have a hard time being people [*chelovekami*]—people each with our own, real, flesh and blood; we are ashamed of that, we consider it a scandal and try to adhere to some sort of impossible norm [*norovim byt' kakimi-to nebyvalymi obshchechelovekami*]. We are stillborn . . . Soon we'll think of a way to be born of an idea” (*Notes* II:10). If one denies one's inner, though unknowable, core—however horrifying that core might be—one relinquishes the basis on which to develop into more than just someone else's idea—one loses the potential to gain real personhood.

On the Genealogy of Morals concludes with a human archetype that can face his underground, contemplate it, and embrace it—the ascetic phi-

osopher. The crisis of the day, in Nietzsche's view, is the well-trained but unthinking "last man," who like Dostoevsky's imagined audience denies any connection to an unconscious. Nietzsche holds out the hope for the inner, autonomous development of a few strong, thinking, self-reflexive people. With the ascetic philosopher, "the animal being becomes more spiritual and acquires wings; *repose in all cellar regions*; all dogs nicely chained up; no barking of hostility and shaggy-haired rancor; no gnawing worm of injured ambition" (*GM III:8, 108E*, emphasis added). The moral-psychological space here is no longer an underground but the wide-open space of the desert. The desire for power and revenge has become conscious and has been acknowledged and addressed. In both these cases, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche have made the case that moral need—whether perverted or not—is located in the indispensable underground and is crucial to a productive modern moral consciousness.

Among the innovative aspects of Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's concepts of the underground is the psychological function of turning one's aggressive, violent impulses against oneself and blaming oneself for one's earthly condition. For both writers, the sense of one's own weakness and inability to take revenge, hateful and ugly as it is, informs and deepens human reflexivity and ultimately moral consciousness in ways that contradict Enlightenment views of morality, from Locke and Kant to Chernyshevsky. Self-contempt and the inner act of deliberately undermining one's cherished ideal values, reevaluating the world and human behavior—however "sick" or "perverse"—these inner functions are crucial to the deepening of moral consciousness. As the Underground Man puts it, "in this cold, loathsome half-despair, half-belief, in the conscious burying of myself alive from grief, in the underground for forty years, *in all this poison of unrequited desires, turned inward*, in all this fever of indecision, firm decisions then retracted the next minute—was the essence of [a] strange pleasure" (*Notes I:3*, emphasis added). Nietzsche seems to echo the Underground Man's insight that, far from being at the opposite poles of moral value, as the utilitarians held, pain and pleasure are closely intertwined. Whether inwardly or outwardly directed, that "subterranean thing," cruelty and making another or oneself suffer as a form of pleasure, is a frequent motivation for "moral" behavior (*GM II:6, 63E*).

The Underground Man's self-loathing and Nietzsche's concept of "bad conscience" are quite similar. The underground realm for both writers has, in fact, served as the site of a human self-creativity that has made human nature itself more complex and profound, by making it self-reflective. Both argue that psychological constraints, which they express through ideological and social metaphors, have brought about human reflexivity. For the Underground Man it is the symbolic "wall," the inescapable "laws" of rational thought that established an authoritative, broadly accepted set of values based on a limited physiological and rational definition of human nature.

Nietzsche thinks of early, psychologically simpler people as being independent, akin to Rousseau's natural man. He compares the experience of violent urges being hemmed in, repressed, to being forced to live in an urban environment, "enclosed within the walls of society and of peace" (*GM II:16, 84E*). The ultimate result is an awareness of oneself in one's social environment that can eventually lead to moral consciousness.

The Underground Man's deepened moral consciousness and ensuing confession grow out of a life of gathering self-contempt and corrosive, underground skepticism. After railing against the rational egoists, he turns against himself and doubts his own veracity. No claim to "truth," even his own claim, can be allowed to stand: "I swear to you, gentlemen, that I don't believe a word I've just now jotted down! I mean, I believe it, if you like, but at the same time, I don't know why, I suspect that I'm lying like a dog. 'So, why did you write all that?' you ask. Well, what if I could put you into prison [*posadil by*] for about forty years without anything to do, and came back to the underground forty years later, to ask what had become of you? Can one really leave a person alone for forty years?" (*Notes I:9*). While repeating the themes of the underground's inertness, the Underground Man also suggests that his life of observing his own inner motivations has altered him. Unlike the simple "man of action," he can reflect on the quality of his own feeling and thinking. Despite all the love of paradox and the self-contradiction and the pleasure he takes in his own psychological pain, he has arrived at least at the *perception* of a new level of honesty and truth.

Nietzsche compares the conditions for an emerging concept of bad conscience to imagined prehistorical conditions that placed constraints on people through forces of social conformity. In this situation instincts not permitted to be discharged outward will turn inward, be "internalized" and pointed at one's self, which brings about the appearance of the "soul" (84E). Bad conscience is "man's suffering of man, of himself—the result of forcible sundering from his animal past . . . a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his strength, joy, and terribleness had rested hitherto" (*GM II:18, 85E*). Bad conscience is the result of a person turning against "his ancient animal self" ("*sein ganzes tierisches altes Selbst*"; *GM II:18, 274G*). The pleasure in suffering, like the Underground Man's seemingly perverse pleasure in dwelling on his psychological pains, is the beginning of moral consciousness and of the deep alteration of human nature. This change, as Nietzsche famously says, is "new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and *pregnant with a future*" (*GM II:18, 85E*). In his view, this unconscious suffering of oneself is the function that brings out the "flower" of new ideological formations. Here Nietzsche transforms Feuerbach's philosophical anthropological view that humans created gods as a powerful version of themselves into a subliminal psychological function, remarking:

This secret self-ravishment, this artists' cruelty, this delight in imposing a form upon oneself as a hard, recalcitrant, suffering material and in burning a will, a critique, a contradiction, a contempt, a No into it, this uncanny, dreadfully joyous labor of a soul voluntarily at odds with itself that makes itself suffer out of joy in making suffer—eventually this entire *active* 'bad conscience'—you will have guessed it—as the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena, also brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation, and perhaps beauty itself. (GM II:18, 87–88E)

Why do spatial metaphors of the psyche matter? Although it is a cliché to assert that the place of the underground deepens and complicates our understanding of human nature, these "maps" of the psyche divulge a new orientation to the origins and nature of moral consciousness and draw attention to crucial problems in moral behavior. They make the psyche imaginable as a *human* space, replacing an age-old notion of the soul as the site of intervention of the superhuman in human life (through visions, dreams, voices, feeling, intuition). A "map" will show not just traditional vertical spaces of the psyche—"high" and "low," "above" and "below," "over" and "under"—but also the symbolic values embedded in these spaces as Dostoevsky and Nietzsche articulate them. They are both familiar and uncanny—both self and other. *That* the two see the unconscious as the motivator for moral consciousness—for the sense of moral need—has long since been viewed as their defining feature as modern thinkers. By comparing and contrasting *how* each thinker undertakes the project of mapping the underground, we have seen how both thinkers link moral consciousness and moral behavior to their unconscious ground in instinct and drive. Importantly, while these instincts may appear as "bad" and "destructive," they no longer are "evil" or "diabolical." They represent our only ground for moral behavior in the modern world, in which the divine no longer is viewed as creative agent but is, in contrast, created by people out of a psychological need for higher moral order.

The impact of Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's verbal maps of the unconscious anticipate later spatial constructions of the psyche, particularly Freud's.²⁷ Freud in *The Ego and the Id* models the psyche as a generally circular, brainlike space with the very top designated as perceptible and knowable to the conscious brain.²⁸ An important parallel to Dostoevsky's and Nietzsche's verbal maps is Freud's emphasis in this model on auditory signals for access to the preconscious level of the brain. Whatever the linkage with Freud, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche both made the human unconscious with all its ancient animal baggage not only thinkable and imaginable, but connected to the highest aspirations of human moral consciousness.

NOTES

Translations in this chapter are the author's unless otherwise indicated. The chapter epigraphs are as follows:

F. M. Dostoevsky, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoevskij_fm/text_0290.shtml (accessed May 2011), I:3. "Там, в своем мерзком, вонючем подполье, наша обиженная, прибитая и осмеянная мышь немедленно погружается в холодную, ядовитую и, главное, вековечную злость. Сорок лет сряду будет припоминать до последних, самых постыдных подробностей свою обиду и при этом каждый раз прибавлять от себя подробности еще постыднейшие, злобно поддразнивая и раздражая себя собственной фантазией." My translation, emphasis added.

Th. Dostoievsky, *L'esprit souterrain*, trans. E. Halpérine and Ch. Morice (Paris: Plon, 1886), 169 (II:3). "Là, dans son souterrain infect et sale, notre rat offensé et raillé se cache aussitôt dans sa méchanceté froide, empoisonnée, éternelle. Quarante années de suite il va se rappeler jusqu'aux plus honteux détails de son offense et, chaque fois il ajoutera des détails plus honteux encore, en s'irritant de sa perverse fantaisie, inventant des circonstances aggravantes sous prétexte qu'elles auraient pu avoir lieu, et ne se pardonnant rien." My translation, emphasis added to show additions by French adapters.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, in *Werke*, 5 vols. (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1981), I:13. "Diese Kellertiere voll Rache und Hass—was machen sie doch gerade aus Rache und Hass? Hörten Sie je diese Worte? Würden Sie ahnen, wenn Sie nur ihren Worten trauten, dass Sie unter lauter Menschen des Ressentiment sind?" My translation, emphasis added.

1. Lev Shestov, *Dostoevskii i Nitshe: Filosofija tragedii* (<http://www.vehi.net/shestov/nitshe.html>, accessed May 17, 2011): "If people are not brought closer together through shared birth, life lived in shared quarters, or similarity of character—but through identical inward experience—then Nietzsche and Dostoevsky can without exaggeration be called brothers, and even twins."

2. The theme of the moral aspects of the Underground Man's monologue and their distortion through feeling is among the oldest of critical themes in the commentary. For example, the public intellectual Vasilii Rozanov in his 1894 essay *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, noted the Underground Man's long observation of his own inner motivations as the source of his moral critique: "The Underground Man is a person immersed in the depths of his self [*ushedshii v glubiny sebia*], who has grown to hate life, whose malicious critique of the rational utopian ideal is based on a precise knowledge of human nature, honed by isolated, prolonged observation of history and himself" (Vasilii Rozanov, *Legenda o velikom inkvizitore*, <http://www.vehi.net/rozanov/legenda.html>, accessed June 7, 2011). Lev Shestov in *Dostoevskii and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy* (1902) equated the "underground" and "psychology." Shestov

considered Dostoevsky's underground to be one of his world-class creations, the "first gift that Europe gratefully received from Russia was Dostoevsky's 'psychology,' that is, the Underground Man." *Dostoevskii i Nitsshe: Filosofii tragedii* (<http://www.vehi.net/shestov/nitsshe.html>, accessed May 17, 2011). Although, in Shestov's view, Dostoevsky is horrified at the experience of the underground, as something within himself, familiar yet disturbing, he finds the underground to be the "path to the truth." Much later, Joseph Frank in his treatment of *Notes from Underground* sees both sides, both the psychological and the ideological. The Underground Man, in his view, is both a "moral-psychological type whose egoism Dostoevsky wishes to expose" and a "social-ideological one, whose psychology must be seen as intimately interconnected with the idea he accepts and by which he tries to live," which, indeed, is the very philosophy he also hates, Chernyshevsky's rational egoism. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–65* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 314.

3. Robert L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1958), 29–31. Jackson sees the underground as a "fantastic, withdrawn, lonely, and troubled inner world of consciousness" (p. 29). He draws attention to the allegorical aspects of the underground and views *Notes from Underground* as an "internal drama" with characters being "fragments of personality" (p. 31).

4. Eric von der Luft and Douglas G. Stenberg, "Dostoevskii's Specific Influence on Nietzsche's Preface to *Daybreak*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52:3 (1991): 441–61. See especially the treatment of Nietzsche's mole, pp. 455–56.

5. In contrast, Voltaire in his *Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, claimed that "morality proceeds from God, like light; our superstitions are only darkness. Reflect, reader; pursue the truth, and draw the consequences"; <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35628/35628-0.txt>, accessed June 6, 2011.

6. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923), trans. J. Riviere (New York: Norton, 1962). See the model presented on p. 14.

7. Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7, in *The Republic and Other Works*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), 205.

8. Note, also, that for the sixth-century philosopher Boethius, who languished long in prison, philosophy and higher consciousness come down from heaven.

9. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 56.

10. *Ibid.*, 57.

11. Ludwig Feuerbach, "The Being of Man in General," in *The Essence of Religion*, trans. G. Eliot, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/essence/ec01_1.htm, accessed June 6, 2011. It is worth noting, in contrast, that Feuerbach does note the vertical quality of seeing for human cognition: "The eye that looks into the starry heavens, that contemplates the light that bears neither use nor harm, that has nothing in common with the earth and its

needs, this eye contemplates its own nature, its own origin in that light. The eye is heavenly in its nature. Hence, it is only through the eye that man rises above the earth; hence theory begins only when man directs his gaze towards the heavens. The first philosophers were astronomers."

12. Discussed in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–65* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 311.

13. Nikolay Chernyshevsky, *What Is To Be Done?*, trans. M. Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 129–30.

14. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra uses "dogs in the cellar" as an image of the unconscious: "In the end all your passions became virtues and all your devils became angels. Once upon a time you had *dogs in your cellar*, but in the end they were transformed into birds and sweet singers." "Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften" *Also Sprach Zarathustra in Werke*, vol. 2, ed. K. Schlechta (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1976), 302, emphasis added.

15. C. A. Miller, "Nietzsche's 'Discovery' of Dostoevsky," *Nietzsche-Studien* 2 (1973): 202–57.

16. Letter from Nietzsche to Overbeck, quoted in Miller, 205.

17. Miller, 207. This mistake of linking the speaker in *Notes from Underground* to Ordynov in "The Landlady" has its own history, launched by F. M. Borras in his introduction to the Bradda Books edition of *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (Letchworth: Bradda, 1965). In his translation of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Walter Kaufmann mistakes *L'esprit souterrain* for "a French translation of that work [*Notes from Underground*]" (p. 128, fn. 1). Recently Yi-Ping Ong makes the same mistake as Kaufmann but compounds it by claiming that Nietzsche had also already finished his final draft of *On the Genealogy of Morals* when he found *L'esprit souterrain*. See "A View of Life: Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and the Novel," *Philosophy and Literature* 33:1 (April 2009): 167–83.

18. Quoted in Miller, 208.

19. For an argument for Dostoevsky's impact on this 1886 preface to *Daybreak*, see von der Luft and Stenberg, "Dostoevskii's Specific Influence."

20. Nikolai Antsiferov, *Dusha Peterburga* (Petrograd, 1922), 36, http://www.wmos.ru/book/detail.php?PAGEN_1=36&ID=4255, accessed June 3, 2011.

21. As Bakhtin puts it, the Underground Man "figures not as a person in real life but as a conscious, dreaming subject"; M. M. Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*, http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoevskij_f_m/text_0410.shtml, accessed May 15, 2011.

22. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoevskij_f_m/text_0290.shtml (accessed May 20, 2011). Citations from *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, hereafter abbreviated as *Notes*, will be given in the text, showing part and chapter. Translations are my own.

23. James P. Scanlan, "The Case against Rational Egoism" in *Dostoevsky the Thinker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 57–80.

24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969), 46. Further citations from the English translation will appear in the text, with *Genealogy* abbreviated as *GM*, and showing part, chapter, and page number followed by "E." Page numbers followed by "G" are from volume 3 of the German original: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, in *Werke*, 5 vols. (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1981).

25. Nietzsche, "Will jemand ein wenig in das Geheimnis hinab- und hinuntersehn, wie man auf Erden Ideale fabriziert . . . Hier ist der Blick offen in diese dunkle Werkstätte" (*GM* I:13, 237G; emphasis added).

26. A recent consideration of *volia* is: Evgenia Cherkasova, "Kant on Free Will and Arbitrariness: A View from Dostoevsky's Underground," *Philosophy and Literature* 28:2 (October 2004): 367–78.

27. Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 277. This view is disputed by Daniel Chapelle, *Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 12–13. Alternatively, as recently as 1974, a broadly used German psychology textbook compares Freud's model of the psyche to the natural image of an iceberg, with six unconscious parts underwater and the seventh, conscious part visible and above water. For other work on Dostoevsky's moral psychology see Edith W. Clowes, "'Self-Laceration' and 'Resentment': The Terms of Moral Psychology in Dostoevsky and Nietzsche," in *Freedom and Responsibility: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, ed. E. C. Allen and G. S. Morson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 119–33. "*Nadryv*" has traditionally been called "self-laceration," or more recently "stress" (in the Volokhonskaia and Pevear translation of *Brothers Karamazov*), neither of which is satisfactory, in my view.

28. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 14.

Tragic Nationalism in Nietzsche and Dostoevsky

THIS CHAPTER STAGES a confrontation between Dostoevsky and Nietzsche on the terrain of what might be called the "historical imaginary." By "historical imaginary" I mean here a vision of the contemporary moment's place within a larger historical narrative, a vision that contains the moment's diagnosis and, in the same gesture, projects its cure. In the account that follows, each author brings something to the encounter: Nietzsche, his elaborate understanding of the tragic, with its historico-philosophical resonances; Dostoevsky, his tangled nationalism and its complex novelistic refractions. Put another way, an encounter with Dostoevsky will render more pronounced in Nietzsche's early thought the role of a certain nationalist imaginary in locating the place of the tragic in modernity. Nietzsche's work on tragedy, in turn, will illuminate crucial aspects of Dostoevsky's novelistic poetics.¹ Ultimately, then, this chapter seeks to make visible the outlines of tragic nationalism as a species of modern historical imaginary, capable of both representing and—imaginatively—overcoming the dire condition of modern life.²

NONSYNCHRONOUS HISTORIOGRAPHIES

In the 1870s, Nietzsche repeatedly describes the modern age as hasty, mindless, broken up into isolated, self-seeking individuals; in short, as "the age of atomic chaos."³ These are familiar topoi of what Georg Lukács has called "romantic anticapitalism," a position that condemns "a society based on money and competition" for separating "individuals into egotistical monads that are essentially hostile or indifferent to each other."⁴ As Robert Sayre and Michael Löwy point out, Lukács uses the phrase for the first time in connection with Dostoevsky, whose writings indeed provide countless examples of such condemnation. Perhaps the best-known and the most vivid of these is formulated by the Elder Zosima's mysterious visitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): "For all men in our age [of aloneness (*uedinenie*)] are separated into units, each seeks seclusion in his own hole, each withdraws from the