

# The Philosophical Legacy of Dostoevsky's Implicit Rejection of Logic and Science in Part I of *Notes from Underground*

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*Notes from Underground* is widely admired as a cornerstone of literature, culture, and philosophy<sup>1</sup>. Dostoevsky masterfully combines the narrative of the now-iconic Underground Man with implicit philosophical undercurrents. The result is a piece which is simultaneously a masterwork of fiction and a deeply influential philosophical treatise. Intriguingly, Dostoevsky never explicitly defines what the philosophical positions that he is advocating for or against are in his work, instead exclusively expressing them implicitly through storytelling. This paper will develop the argument that the primary philosophical undercurrent in *Notes from Underground* is a rejection of logic and science as end-alls in modern life through comparison of Dostoevsky's implicit revelation to the more explicitly articulated philosophical works of his contemporaries.

*Notes from Underground* opens with a contemplation on suffering, while also hinting at the notion of futility. In sections III and IV of part 1, the motif of the stone wall is introduced, one which will recur throughout the remainder of the part. The stone wall is emblematic of a barrier; it is the "only" object which "perhaps will stop" one from their goals<sup>2</sup>. But the stone wall introduces an immediate double entendre. Dostoevsky initially refers to it as a "calming influence." The calming influence to which he refers is the supposed illusion of stability that the stone wall provides. The stability follows from scientific laws that are uniformly true - Underground Man provides the example of the equation  $2 + 2 = 4$ , elaborating: "...I shall never be able to break through such a stone wall... but I shall not reconcile myself to it... As though such a stone wall were really the same thing as peace of mind."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Frank, "Nihilism and "Notes from Underground"", *The Sewanee Review* 69, no. 1 (1961): 1–33, ISSN: 00373052, 1934421X, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27540632>.

<sup>2</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The Underground Man has thus, in the opening four sections of the work, established a contradiction. The apparent resultant stability that logic and science provide through laws of arithmetic and reason is one that, in the eyes of the Underground Man, incurs an unacceptable price in the reduction of creativity, of freedom of expression. Indeed, the primary grievance that the Underground Man indicates is the forced acceptance of advocates of such laws and, “consequently, all [their] results.” This forced acceptance disregards, even outright dismisses his opinion on the laws.<sup>4</sup> There is apparently nothing which the stone wall is *actually* useful for.

Dostoevsky, through his introduction and subsequent discussion of the stone wall in relation to scientific laws, has commenced his implicit philosophical treatise. Throughout the remainder of the work, as will be discussed further, the Underground Man’s actions and anecdotes serve as illustrative evidence that the stability provided by the stone wall of science as a framework of thinking (and one which greatly captivates the Underground Man) is nothing more than illusion, for the Underground Man’s actions are indicative of anything but stability, morality, etc. He further demonstrates, through the explicit discontent and boredom that Underground Man expresses in section V, that the stone wall of reason is insufficient even as mere entertainment.

Nietzsche is a contemporary of Dostoevsky who was influenced not only by this philosophical argument, but additionally by the character of the Underground Man himself. In his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he develops an explicit comparison of science to the “ascetic ideal,” proclaiming that “science rests on the same, basis as does the ascetic ideal: a certain impoverishment of life is the presupposition of the latter as of the former.”<sup>5</sup> One might describe the Underground Man’s situation as something of a cursed asceticism. He is certainly a hermit to the same extent that a religious ascetic would be. Yet he is not an ascetic due to religious ideals, nor is he one due to lack of social compulsion - would such an ascetic not only be compelled to write about himself to such an extent, but describe it as the “greatest possible pleasure?” He is almost narcissistic in his self-indulgence through writing, a quality not advocated for by any major religion of which he could be an ascetic. Therefore, what Nietzsche really means is that science promotes a lifestyle that is akin to the sacrifice and abnegation that asceticism entails, while providing no real stability - the stone wall *is* an illusion, as Dostoevsky claims - and, thus, rejects science as an end-all. It seems that Dostoevsky’s example deeply resonated with Nietzsche. He describes the lifestyle of sacrifice

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<sup>4</sup>This is arguably a mischaracterization of scientific ideals, one repeated by many scientific credential lacking philosophers. We withhold development of such an argument here; it would need to be a distinct paper.

<sup>5</sup>F. Nietzsche, R.C. Holub, and M.A. Scarpitti, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Penguin Books Limited, 2013), ISBN: 9780141195384.

and abnegation as “periods of exhaustion, often of sunset, of decay—the effervescing strength, the confidence in life, the confidence in the future are no more.”<sup>6</sup> Over ten years before this writing, he had already begun to form his opinion on science in *The Birth of Tragedy*, writing “What I then laid hands on, something terrible and dangerous, a problem with horns... it was the problem of science.”<sup>7</sup>

Martin Heidegger is another of Dostoevsky’s contemporaries who outlines, perhaps even formalizes <sup>8</sup> a similar, aggressive perspective. In “Letter on Humanism”, Heidegger argues that “such names as ‘logic,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘physics’ begin to flourish only when original thinking comes to an end”<sup>9</sup>. Heidegger goes further within “Building Dwelling Thinking”, indicating therein that “...building is closer to the essence of spaces and the essential origins of ‘space’ than any geometry and mathematics.”<sup>10 11</sup> Heidegger’s insistence that the consideration of science and logic as end-all is a reductive position appears to have been influenced by Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground*. Heidegger, once again in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” presents an ingenious discourse on the necessity of some higher ulterior motivation than mere fulfillment of rational inquiry without exterior purpose, asserting that “The essence of building is letting dwell” <sup>12</sup>, or, to paraphrase, an interior motivation and fascination with one’s pursuits is a prerequisite for the derivation of any sense of fulfillment <sup>13</sup> from said pursuits. This is in stark contrast to the image of asceticism developed by Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, wherein science is a pursuit which reduces the extent of one’s livelihood, thereby diminishing the qualities Heidegger presents as necessities.

In section 5 the Underground Man expands his digression on science, therein beginning the expansion in scope of Dostoevsky’s philosophical argument. Yet, before doing this, Dostoevsky feels it necessary to explicitly characterize the “laws of nature,” doing so through the Underground Man’s description of them as “a disgusting business” due to the “infinite worry and trouble” they have caused him.<sup>14</sup>. Here, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky begin to diverge. Nietzsche concedes that “...as for

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>F. Nietzsche, M. Tanner, and S. Whiteside, *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*, Penguin classics (Penguin Books Limited, 2003), ISBN: 9780141935072.

<sup>8</sup>Though Heidegger, demonstrated by his argument in “Letter on Humanism,” would *hate* reduction to mere “formalization” of his predecessor, and is probably rolling in his grave at the thought.

<sup>9</sup>M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought (HarperCollins, 2008), 219, ISBN: 9780061627019.

<sup>10</sup>M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought (HarperCollins, 2008), 361, ISBN: 9780061627019.

<sup>11</sup>It may be debated the extent to which Heidegger intends for “building” in this work to come across in a metaphorical sense. He does remark, 8 pages before the chosen quote, that “We limit ourselves to building in the sense of...” which implies that further, implicit meanings are present (an argument with which I strongly concur). He never explicitly mentions any such metaphorical intention.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>My proposed interpretation of “dwelling” in this more metaphorical sense.

<sup>14</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

these celebrated victories of science; there is no doubt that they are victories...”<sup>15</sup>, acknowledging that there is some merit to this “disgusting business.” But Nietzsche is hardly the only philosopher to have felt the influence of *Notes from Underground*, and other philosophers have continued to agree more strongly with the Underground Man’s classification to our current day and age.<sup>16</sup>

One such example of a philosopher in deep agreement with Dostoevsky is Lev Shestov. Shestov holds, contrary to Nietzsche, that the victories of science are better classified as stagnations, writing “In the ‘ultimate questions of life’ we are not a bit nearer the truth than our ancestors were... reason is a laggard, without much foresight...”<sup>17</sup> Shestov, in his work, develops an argument much closer in sentiment to Underground Man, and this is no coincidence; Dostoevsky is mentioned by name countless times in his work. Yet, for all of Shestov’s agreement with Dostoevsky, in comparing *All Things Are Possible* and *Notes from Underground* an interesting contradiction arises. Shestov develops his claim that we have made no progress in answering the questions of life in a way that suggests he believes that ancient people had few answers and we have not added any. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, would almost certainly argue that his ancestors, say those who were around at the same time as Christ, had *all* of the answers, and over the next nearly 2,000 years no further answers were contributed because none were necessary; the questions were already satisfactorily answered. In section 7 of part I, amidst a lengthy development of his implicit philosophical treatise, Dostoevsky interjects with an intriguing reference to religion. The Underground Man asks “who was it who first said... the only reason man behaves dishonorably is because he does not know his own interests...”<sup>18</sup> The discussion evolves into a wide-ranging one, touching upon enlightenment, innocence, and human nature in the subsequent lines. It is no accident that, to begin the section of part one directly at the center of a sequence of sections (5-9) entirely focused on development of his philosophical position against science and reason, he refers to religion in the abstract, never opting for the imagery of any one specific religion, but instead using religion to center and ground his argument. Dostoevsky’s subtle yet crucial grounding of his argument in ancient ideas demonstrates an agreement with Shestov, if only one that is viewed from a different perspective.

The Underground Man goes on, still in section 7, the center of his philosophical argument, to

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<sup>15</sup>F. Nietzsche, R.C. Holub, and M.A. Scarpitti, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Penguin Books Limited, 2013), ISBN: 9780141195384.

<sup>16</sup>This is, once again, arguably another broad and disappointing mischaracterization of science. We withhold arguments here and refer you to Richard Feynman’s 1988 book *What Do You Care What Other People Think?*

<sup>17</sup>L. Shestov, *All Things are Possible and Penultimate Words and Other Essays* (Ohio University Press, 1977), ISBN: 9780821402375.

<sup>18</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

presciently discuss the dangers of unrestricted science and reason. In one of his most brilliant quotes, the Underground Man argues that “man is so obsessed by systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth deliberately...”, going further to emphasize the necessity of reliance on the senses.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the Underground Man uses the example of war, illustrating through the imagery of bloodshed the pitfalls of reason’s application and interaction with human nature. We may once again turn to Heidegger as an example of a philosopher who expanded upon this position.<sup>20</sup> In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger constructs an interpretation of technology as a mechanicism of “revealing,” and, after much development, presents the incredible claim that “The destining of revealing is in itself not just any danger, but *the* danger.”<sup>21</sup> Underground Man, throughout section 5, gradually transitions his discussion from the individual (which was the focus of the immediately preceding sections 3 and 4) to the collective, discussing the consideration of warfare and violence by civilization at large as an “abomination” only after his previous meditation on the individualistic impact of reason; Heidegger seems more interested in society from the start, neglecting to explicitly speak to the impact of technological progress through scientific innovation on the individual.

Ellul was a philosopher who was, more similarly to Dostoevsky, equally concerned with the individual and the collective. Dostoevsky begins to discuss the collective impact through his brilliant “conversation” between the Underground Man and the reader, actively addressing and involving the latter in the second person. The reader (“you”) postulates that science will have “completely re-educated human nature and directed it along the road of normal behavior,” before the Underground Man deconstructs any notion of normality in such “normal” behavior.<sup>22</sup> We may compare this to Ellul, who, not too unlike Heidegger, describes how “Science brings to the light of day everything man had believed sacred... Technique takes possession of it and enslaves it.”<sup>23</sup> The Underground Man himself will develop a stunningly similar argument in which he concludes that “there will be no more independent actions or adventures in the world.” Where Dostoevsky and Ellul differ is that Dostoevsky, once again implicitly through the Underground Man, argues that it is the laws of nature themselves (or, science in the abstract) that opens the possibility of such slavery to determinism,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>With the obvious irony that, of course, Heidegger had at least *some* (and likely *plenty* of) affiliation with the Nazi party.

<sup>21</sup>M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought (HarperCollins, 2008), 361, ISBN: 9780061627019.

<sup>22</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>23</sup>J. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, A Vintage book ; V-390 (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1964), ISBN: 9780394703909.

whereas Ellul (and, to a lesser extent, Heidegger) argues that it is technology (or, science in tangible application) that does so. Both come to strikingly similar conclusions, regardless of the means by which they reached them.

The Underground Man subsequently presents a depiction of resistance, creating a character who advocates for sending “all these logarithms to the devil so that we can again live according to our foolish will”.<sup>24</sup> He goes on to argue that such a character “would certainly find followers.” Interestingly, while Ellul himself never made such explicit predictions nor advocated for an anti-Technique revolution, it is well known and documented that Ted Kaczynski was profoundly influenced by Ellul’s work, particularly *The Technological Society*, and these influences were part of his motivation to commit atrocities in the name of eco-terrorist ideology. Indeed, in Kaczynski’s own *Industrial Society and Its Future* <sup>25</sup>, the phrase “technological society” occurs 10 times<sup>26</sup>. Whether the revolution called for in this document has found any followers, as a more extreme case of “sending all these logarithms to the devil,” is not clear.

The Underground Man continues into section 8 with a discussion of the absolute necessity of free will, describing in the process the shortcomings of reason. He argues that “Reason is only reason... whereas volition is a manifestation of the whole of life.”<sup>27</sup> This argument, once again is not much unlike Heidegger’s argument in *Building Dwelling Thinking*. The strength of Dostoevsky’s conviction on behalf of volition and free will also deeply influenced Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre develops an argument that he is “condemned to be free,” elaborating that “no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself... that we are not free to cease being free.”<sup>28</sup> The Underground Man is also an advocate of such unrestricted freedom, describing this absolute freedom as “the right to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible.” Sartre goes on to describe how “man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world.” <sup>29</sup> This explicitly solidifies a recurring implicit theme across Dostoevsky’s work: that all is interconnected, and that everyone is to blame for everything. In *Notes from Underground*, this is continually reiterated through the depiction of the Underground Man’s *underground* condition in incredible detail. The Underground

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<sup>24</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>25</sup>More commonly referred to as the “Unabomber Manifesto.”

<sup>26</sup>T.J. Kaczynski, *Industrial Society and Its Future* (The Washington Post, 1995), ISBN: 9781365394294.

<sup>27</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>28</sup>J.P. Sartre and H.E. Barnes, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology* (Citadel Press, 2001), ISBN: 9780806522760.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Man has a seemingly contradictory self-awareness of his state, an awareness that in some ways he himself has created the conditions and the environment that proliferated such a state, and yet, at the same time, the meditations of the laws of nature and the interactions depicted in part II are used to implicitly build an argument of interconnection. The influence of this construction on Sartre is, once again, not one that I merely postulate; Sartre mentions Dostoevsky by name twice in *Being and Nothingness*.

If Sartre was an advocate of unrestricted freedom as an absolute necessity in the same way that Dostoevsky was (implicitly through the Underground Man, of course), then Camus was much like our earlier example of Shestov, coming to near identical conclusions from a different perspective. Camus, much like the Underground Man, found suffering to be absolutely essential to happiness, writing in perhaps the most famous words of 20th century philosophy “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”<sup>30</sup> Nearly 80 years earlier, the Underground Man had demonstrated a similar, if less strong, conclusion through his illustration of the “pleasure even in toothache.” In fact, while the majority of sections 3 and 4 of part I are devoted to this meditation on suffering, the Underground Man elaborates on it again in section 9, stating “Does reason not make mistakes...? Is it not possible that man loves something besides prosperity? Perhaps he is just as fond of suffering?” Where Camus and Dostoevsky differ is in their view of the source of suffering. Where Dostoevsky relates the example of the toothache as an inevitable, almost mundane instance of suffering, one which the Utopian future that science promises cannot ever truly aspire to negate, Camus develops suffering as the result of existential inquiry - and he argues that such inquiry is vital. Camus never takes a stance so explicitly against science and reason as, say, Nietzsche, rather elaborating, once again in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, that “I realize that if through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Camus’ stance on science is somewhere between Nietzsche’s and Dostoevsky’s. He acknowledges that science alone is insufficient for answering questions of stature similar to the “ultimate” ones raised by Shestov. This shortcoming of science, Camus argues, is a source of suffering, as it proliferates the existential dread that such questions impose. Yet Camus advocates for suffering elegantly in *Return to Tipasa*, beautifully proclaiming “In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.”<sup>3233</sup> Dostoevsky, rather than appreciating (or, at least,

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<sup>30</sup>A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus And Other Essays*, Vintage International (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), ISBN: 9780307827821.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>This prose is even more beautiful in French, so we refer you to the original *Retour à Tipasa* from *L’Été*.

feeling truly neutral) science as an emanation of suffering, argues that suffering is the ideological inverse of science. The Underground Man, again in section 9, discusses the Crystal Palace - an unmistakable emblem of science and reason. In doing so, he refers to how “suffering is not permitted... In the Crystal Palace it is unthinkable: suffering is doubt, it is negation.”<sup>34</sup> Thus the Underground Man and, implicitly, Dostoevsky, take issue with what they perceive as the end goal of science: the cessation of suffering, the construction of a Utopian world, and the inevitable reduction, perhaps even cessation, of freedom as a consequence.<sup>35</sup>

The Underground Man goes on, in section 10 now, to argue (in an unusually explicit way) that the primary conflict that arises between this notion of freedom and free will and science and reason is the objectivity of science. The Underground Man acknowledges and disregards this objectivity when he states “What do I care whether it is against the laws of nature? What does it matter so long as it exists in my desires?”<sup>36</sup> He elaborates on his rejection of the rigidity and seriousness in objectivity of science and reason a few lines later: “I rejected the Crystal Palace myself for the sole reason that one would not be allowed to stick one’s tongue out at it.” These examples reinforce the previous development of the argument that Dostoevsky perceives freedom as inevitable, much like Sartre. The Underground Man goes further to characterize why science and reason in particular are the target of his scrutiny by saying “Perhaps what I resented was that among all our buildings there has never been one at which one could not stick out one’s tongue.”

This scrutiny of the harshly perceived immutability of science and reason likely influenced the philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl, originally trained as a mathematician<sup>37</sup>, was in some ways a stark contrast to Dostoevsky. He believed in the necessity of the philosopher “withdrawing into himself and attempting, within himself, to overthrow and build anew all the sciences that, up until then, he has been accepting.”<sup>38</sup> The belief in such a necessity implies a belief in the validity and worthiness of science that is contrary to Dostoevsky’s implicit arguments. Yet this perspective on science, the perspective that one must develop their own scientific views for themselves, is emblematic of the broader skepticism that Dostoevsky advocates through the Underground Man. For Husserl does not advocate blind acceptance of science, but rather the replication and verification of any

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<sup>34</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>35</sup>Once again, I would argue that this is a mischaracterization - perhaps to some this is an end goal of *technology*, but not of *science*. I refer you, in lieu of an extended argument, to chapter IV of Carl Sagan’s 1994 *Pale Blue Dot*.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>J.K. Cooper-Wiele, *The Totalizing Act: Key to Husserl’s Early Philosophy*, Phaenomenologica (Springer Netherlands, 2012), ISBN: 9789400922594.

<sup>38</sup>E. Husserl and D. Cairns, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (Springer Netherlands, 2012), ISBN: 9789400999978.



ends which are to be considered objectively true, like “laws of nature.” Of course, Husserl does not pay any attention to the fact that building anew “all the sciences” is likely an impossible task, and one that is directly in opposition to the collaborative nature of science as an enterprise.<sup>39</sup> Yet, although Husserl does not appear to explicitly indicate this necessity as one that is necessary only as an intellectual exercise or means of philosophical development otherwise, he does express in his later work a broader skepticism and disdain for the objectivity of science and reason, much like the Underground Man. Where the Underground Man expresses his disdain for science’s perceived immutability compared to other institutions of society, Husserl expresses his disdain in a more explicit and straightforward way, borrowing from Kant (with acknowledgment) when he states that “the objective sciences (no matter how much they... may consider themselves... to be in possession of the only true method) are not seriously sciences at all... not cognitions of what exists in ultimate truth.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, like Nietzsche, Husserl concedes the “virtue of their obvious theoretical and practical accomplishments.”<sup>41</sup> Husserl’s notion of skepticism and rejection of objectivity, regardless of his perceived virtues of the *objective* sciences, creates an interesting juxtaposition of Dostoevsky’s ideas with other ideas which Dostoevsky would’ve disapproved of. The Underground Man’s rejection is perhaps more emotionally charged when, at the end of a paragraph of rhetorical questions, he asks “Can this be the sole purpose? I don’t believe it.”<sup>42</sup> Although the Underground Man’s (and thus, Dostoevsky’s) ideas are distinctly differentiable from Husserl’s, in another intriguing, deliberate contradiction that Dostoevsky introduces to his text through another dialogue between reader and Underground Man, he acknowledges that the Underground Man “longs for life, yet [he tries] to solve the problems of life by a logical tangle!”<sup>43</sup> This (as he describes it, “insolent”) logical tangle is not much unlike Husserl’s advocated individualized building of the sciences anew from scratch.

Finally, at the close of part I, Dostoevsky provides one further reason to be critical of science and reason, particularly in their perceived role as the progenitors of technology and automation. Similarly to his view on suffering, the Underground Man is, like Heidegger, an advocate of work, justifying his composition of part II with “Writing down things is, in fact, a sort of work. People say

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<sup>39</sup>As a mathematician more so than a scientist in training myself, I would argue this is very much the thinking and position of a mathematician and *not* a scientist. There is a difference, if subtle!

<sup>40</sup>E. Husserl and D. Carr, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, Northwestern University studies in phenomenology & existential philosophy (Northwestern University Press, 1970), ISBN: 9780810104587.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>F. Dostoevsky, R. Pevear, and L. Volokhonsky, *Notes from Underground*, Vintage Classics (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), ISBN: 9780679734529.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

work makes man better and more honest. Well, here's a chance for me..."<sup>44</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that Hannah Arendt, a philosopher heavily influenced by (and personally involved with) Heidegger is another party who shares similar views. Arendt captures her vision of the failed Utopia that technological progress catalyzed by science would provide with strong language, stating "What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse."<sup>45</sup> Thus, at the end of the first part of *Notes from Underground* which we have confined our analysis to, all of the implicit philosophical undercurrents have been developed and connected full circle. We have now returned to the futility and boredom that both Dostoevsky and Arendt argue (the former implicitly and the latter explicitly) would arise from uninhibited forward progress in the realms of science and reason. Where in the later sections of part I the Underground Man returns to being primarily concerned with himself on the individual level, his self-centered contemplation of the Crystal Palace and philosophical discussions make an implicit argument concerning the collective. Arendt, likely influenced by this argument, whether directly or transitively through Heidegger, saves the strongest of words in her work for the perceived discrepancy, one she shares with Dostoevsky, between what science and reason promise and what they *actually* provide.

*Notes from Underground* is a work that has retained its emotional and philosophical power, and, as a consequence, one that has stood the test of time. It is a work that is timelessly prescient, drawing unbelievably accurate conclusions about the discrepancies between the perceived end-goals of the end-alls of science and reason, end-goals that seemingly come from a place of daydreaming and fantasy, and the reality of the century following its composition: two world wars, intense geopolitical climate in the years where the wars were not active, immense economic turmoil and suffering, etc. If science *was* truly promising Utopia during Dostoevsky's time, it certainly failed to deliver in the subsequent century, and Dostoevsky presciently observed the inevitable shortcomings before they had even had a chance to occur. Regardless of the degree to which one agrees or disagrees with Dostoevsky's implicit conclusions and the more explicit conclusions of his contemporaries, one must acknowledge the incredible stature of his work, and its lasting legacy that continues to endure to the present day.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>H. Arendt, D. Allen, and M. Canovan, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), ISBN: 9780226586748.

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