

**Roundtable presented by the Existentialist Society in conjunction with the
Hegel Reading Group of the Australian Dostoevsky Society**

Saturday, 2 March 2:00 pm – 4:00pm AUS EST Virtual

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USYhG7F4z3E>

*“Dostoevsky’s fictional universe as artistic cognate to Hegel: resonance of
Hegel in law, society, and literature, with special emphasis on Dostoevsky’s
fictional universe*

Abstract:

Dostoevsky’s artistic universe manifests as a non-Euclidian world, in which characters move in a temporality of apocalyptic time or time out of time. Dostoevsky’s characters are, as Bakhtin pointed out, embodied thought or consciousnesses. These foundational elements of Dostoevsky’s poetics resonate with Hegel’s philosophical view of Spirit as realisation of Thought as Self-Consciousness. Dostoevsky’s poetics of the unconscious represents in many ways an artistic cognate of Hegel’s conceptualisation of Spirit’s mediation between self-consciousness and the material world. Hegel’s ability to move with the Concept [Begriff] and progress through particular categories of Understanding [Verständnis] that otherwise result in fixities of thought and antinomies, together with his illuminating of transitions in the world-historical process (one reason why he’s so important today), find equivalents in both the form of Dostoevsky’s work, and the “characters” he puts on stage. These equivalents become clearer still, and arguably more relevant for us today, upon recognising the resonance of Hegel in contemporary law and society. Hegel’s intimate understanding of the human person that also animated Dostoevsky’s poetic universe permits us to know how we come to be what we are, why we do things as we do, as well as our ways of living together that are conducive to the freedom only we, the human kind, can express in the world. The need to grasp this knowledge seems as important now as it has ever been, and the literary output of Dostoevsky is but one path to greater self-awareness. On his stage, “characters” are always between things, as it were, the way they move through

space (so often liminal, in doorways, on staircases) and, as Bakhtin has pointed out, among the stage props, which are symbolic rather than mimetic. A brief examination of the poetics of Dostoevsky's novels will lead us to the broader contextual arc of Dostoevsky's movement through and beyond the Westerniser/Slavophile antagonism of his day, which still animates the debates about the Russian Federation and its relation to Europe today, in the middle of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Participants

1. **Richard Stewart** LLB(Hons)(SCU), LLM(Melb) (Lawyer and PhD Law candidate, Southern Cross University)
What is personhood? the resonance of Hegel in *Notes from the House of the Dead* and more generally in contemporary Australian law and society
2. **Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover** (Adjunct Associate Professor, Monash University, President Australian Dostoevsky Society)
What is personhood? The fictional genre of *Notes from the House of the Dead* and the portrayal of prison life and punishment through a Hegelian lens
3. **Nikolai Gladanac** (BA Hon Monash, Vice-President (Research) Australian Dostoevsky Society)
What is personhood? On the Question of Freedom in Hegel and Dostoevsky.

Discussant

Nicholas Ulbrick (PhD candidate, Swinburn U, Centre for Urban Transitions)