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Proposed study aims to clarify the nature of the rationality crisis in the European culture of Modernity. This crisis manifested itself in many ways already in the 17th-19th centuries, i.e. at the peak of rationalism. The study considers certain aspects of Cartesianism, which prevented it from dissolving entirely in the epistemology and methodology of Modernity and which, moreover, presuppose certain steps to be taken toward reconsidering the new European rationalism within the framework of overlapping philosophical ideas and literary images. The study focuses on three subjects implied by ‘cogito’: self-consciousness, will, and law.

Key words: rationality, Descartes, Dostoyevski, ‘cogito,’ self-consciousness, will, law.

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1. The antecedents of the European rationality crisis

The current study attempts to reconstruct the historical logic of connection and conflict between rationality and moral self-consciousness as the two key concepts of Modernity. The attempt is undertaken on the basis of two examples from the history of culture of the 17th-19th centuries: the ideas of Descartes and Dostoyevski. It appears useful to begin with a short historical and cultural introduction in order for the optimistic ring of the words “European rationalism” to invoke no unnecessary associations with the “vapid,” “cerebral,” “Enlightenment-like” types of rationalism which have long since been discredited by fair (although by and large just as vapid) criticism.

The era of Descartes may be considered as the third stage in the spiritual development of New Europe. The first stage (15th century) was that of firm belief that man himself may become the source of values, the subject of history, God’s interlocutor. The two great paradigms of that time, the Renaissance and the Reformation, possessed a common psychological aura of hope of getting rid of unnecessary intermediates and authorities which alienated men from that great whole they were destined to belong to, whatever name that whole might be called by, Nature for humanists or God for Protestants. It was the time when medieval axiology was supplanted by the three great values of Modernity: Nature, Reason, and Man. In this triad, reason was viewed as a connecting and mediating force since it was embodied by nature and personified by men. The second stage, the 16th century, was, on the contrary, the time of profound disappointment in all three values. That disappointment stemmed not only from countless wars and disasters of that horrible time, but from a spiritual crisis as such, summarized in the works of Cervantes and Shakespeare. The 17th century returns to the optimism of the 15th century, but this optimism is based on a new formula which may be very approximately formulated as follows: a man can be the measure of all things, yet not by himself, but as the bearer of a higher ideal. The 17th century gives us a whole spectrum of interpretations of man’s mission, and all those interpretations converge on some glimmering meaning of this thesis. (The 18th century will have hard time understanding this intense query: the coming Enlightenment will narrow down and simplify the problem).

Reflections and results of the struggle to arrive at this salutary formula may be found in the models of absolute monarchy, in the confrontation between classicism and baroque, in the polemics between rationalism and empiricism. We may notice that great solutions went beyond simple oppositions. Strictly speaking, our customary opposition of the two founding fathers of empiricism and rationalism is not entirely true, since their works already contain a sort

of synthesis. Thus, Descartes created his method, while existing between the extremes of the cultural consciousness of his time. It does not matter what names we choose to denote these extremes: for instance, we could call them Montaigne's skepticism and Mersenne's naïve rationalism. It is another thing that is of crucial importance: the 17th century overcame the crisis and laid the spiritual foundations of Modernity due to some newly-found intuition which allowed to find a balance between the polarized extremes and somehow, to re-imagine the three leading themes of the new consciousness: nature, reason, and man. Descartes was one of the key figures of the process which remains, it appears to me, a mystery even today. The 'cogito' is of special importance in this respect, because of its significance to modern philosophy, and because the moral content it has, is least obvious. Let us therefore consider some sustaining elements of Descartes' argument, as they are expounded in the *'Meditations On the First Philosophy'*.

2. Ethical Moments of the 'Cogito'

The first step consists of opposing questionable phenomena to mathematical concepts as certain knowledge. The second step makes the problem almost insolvable: nothing hinders a malicious demon to provide us with a feeling of reliability that accompanies false knowledge. The fact that man is defenseless against manipulation by powers that are superior to his consciousness probably led Descartes into a state of existential anxiety. The next step is the famous 'cogito': doubt itself is indubitable, and demonstrates the existence of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is completely without content, but its emptiness was nevertheless articulated by Descartes in a very complicated way: 'Ego sum res cogitans'. The next step consists of the proof of the existence of God, in which two different arguments are normally distinguished: a psychological one and an ontological one. In fact they have a common ground: the detection of such a moment in the 'cogito', that cannot be deduced from it, and can only be attained from outside. That is the idea of absolute perfection. Furthermore, the impossibility of an 'evil God' is deduced, and also the origin of evil is found: the free will, which - unlike the other human faculties - is formally the same as it is for God, and which is ultimate in this respect. The discrepancy between knowing and willing could tempt man to make something absolute out of the particular, i.e., to err. Finally, the impossibility of a deceiving God allows for a rehabilitation of the phenomenal world and for a proof of the possibility of science as a reliable form of knowledge.

Let us now focus on the elements that constitute the ethical dimension of the 'cogito'. The malicious demon whose metaphysical 'hypnosis' frightened Descartes so much, was of course not merely a heuristic model. Descartes stood at the beginning of a process that (as one may

hope) has ended in the twentieth century. At the beginning of the transformation of the world into a calculable objectivity, of which subjective judgment is in full control. By means of the 'cogito' Descartes discovers a limit of the suggestibility, which neither the demon (because he cannot) nor God (because he does not want to) can pass. The lack of suggestibility of the 'cogito' relies in the fact that it has no objective content, and for that reason cannot be put into the consciousness like a program can be put into a computer. And even if we assume such a situation, the act of self-consciousness either appropriates the suggestive content while taking the responsibility upon itself (and then the demon loses his power over it), or rejects it. Especially this 'impenetrability' and self-reproductive nature of the 'cogito' permit - to a greater extent than its immediate clarity and distinctness do - the victory over the blind alley of doubt.

From this another consequence follows, equally charged with ethical implications: the impenetrability of the other 'ego' to the extent to which it is generated by the act of 'cogito'. Moreover, thought cannot be the object of another thinking, because, oriented towards an alien 'ego', it only grasps the ideal object without the meaningful reality of cogito. That means that a particular type of communication between the 'egos' is inevitable, one that does not need subject-object-relations. Descartes shows such a type by explaining the interaction between finite and infinite consciousness.³

The intuitive clarity and simplicity of the 'cogito' still admit the perception in it of a certain structure. The 'cogito' entails a moment of subjectivity, more precisely, of singularity, since the act of self-consciousness cannot be alienated, and can only be executed by and for myself (*ego*). There also is a moment of objectivity (*res cogitans*) in it, which can be distinguished into ideal universality (*cogitans*) and real substantiality (*res*). Finally, it includes a moment of absoluteness (*sum*), which permits Descartes to move on to the ontological proof of the existence of God. It is important to emphasize that all these moments form a kind of system of unfilled sections, that is only generated through a single act of 'cogito'. Their real filling depends on a responding act that has to be performed by the perfect Being, i.e. God. At the same

³ It may appear that the unthinkability of thought and 'ego' contradicts the generally epistemological direction of the philosophy of Modernity, but we should pay particular attention to the fact that this paradox was in various ways considered in the 17th century (for instance, in this context one could turn to the problem of mutual impenetrability of the spatial and the thinking) and in the 18th century by the transcendental idealism with its dialectics which forbids such an objectivization of thought which is direct, dogmatic, and lacking any negativity. Transcendental dialectics (apparently in all its versions) refused to place in the homogeneous dimension of the theoretical both the thought about an object and the self-creating consciousness, i.e. the thought about the 'ego.' That was the first serious blow (compared with the prohibition of 'intellectual intuition') dealt to the edifice of the classical rationalism. Yet, as we can see, already Descartes formulates this problems and draws far-reaching conclusions. Both Leibniz and Malebranche are equally cautious in this regard. It is appropriate to pose the question of who, then, could be considered the bearer of the classical stance; whom Vico criticized when he criticized Descartes. What is apparently necessary here is a cultural studies approach which should delineate two separate intellectual cultures: the culture of 'the greats' who in some respects always go beyond their time, and the culture of 'the lesser geniuses,' who explicate the unequivocal intuitions of their time.

time, however the act of the divine will, which confers experience to finite consciousness, presupposes the free self-consciousness of the 'cogito'. The malicious demon is only capable of determination (which can just as well be a determination intending noble aims). God gives man free will. Thus the very act of 'cogito' contains the principle of interrelation between two free wills. In this connection the fourth *Meditation* is interesting esp. IV, 23-34.⁴ Not only the question of erring is brought up here, but also the relationships between God and the comprehending soul, which is described in an expressive way as a relation between two free subjects. With the latter, Heidegger's thesis that 'thinking is thanking' ['Denken ist danken'] is, so to speak, textually confirmed. In the concluding *Meditation* we find a moral motif too, since the world of experience, which was restored to the thinker thanks to the 'cogito', is a world in which two new dimensions have appeared: the subject has achieved confidence in the world and a sense of responsibility with regard to the world. It is remarkable that the motif of interaction between finite subjects of free will is completely absent in the *Meditations*. And that may seem strange, considering the part this theme plays in the works of two contemporary and congenial spirits, namely Pascal and Spinoza. One should, however, bear in mind that the relationships between the 'ego' of the thinking subject and the 'You' of God, described by Descartes, also implicate a universal system of relations within the scope of a plurality of 'egos'. To this topic Descartes' proof of the impossibility of objectifying thoughts as object of another thought can be added. With this, the Kantian demand of a completion of the relation to a human being as 'means to an end' by one that relates to him as 'end in itself, is in fact already given. Kant adds - apparently superfluously - that this kind of attitude is required not towards man only, but towards 'any rational being'. We see however, that, in Descartes, the relationship between free wills is described beyond the 'human' context, and that it can be, as in the case of Kant, a model for 'whatever kind of rational beings'.

Hence, we are able to regard the 'cogito' not merely as a foundation of rationalist method, but as a foundation of moral law as well. For this conception of the 'cogito' all necessary conditions are fulfilled. In the first place, the foundation of the singularity of the subject of free will and, at the same time, of the universality of the act of self-consciousness, executed by the same subject. Secondly, the sublation of the opposition between freedom and necessity, willing and knowing, the practical and the theoretical, in the act of 'cogito'. Finally, the principles of

⁴ "To begin with, I see that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. Only someone who has something wrong with him will engage in trickery or deception. That someone is able to deceive others may be a sign of his skill or power, but his wanting to deceive them is a sign of his malice or weakness; and those are not to be found in God. Next, I know from experience that I have a faculty of judgment; and this, like everything else I have, was given to me by God. Since God doesn't want to deceive me, I am sure that he didn't give me a faculty of judgment that would lead me into error while I was using it correctly." (Trans. by John Cottingham.)

intersubjective relations and of the interpretation of self-consciousness as a creative act. It is also important that the implicit ethics of the 'cogito' contains no prescriptions with regard to content at all, and is a purely formal construction, that can be briefly formulated as '*Cogito ergo tu es*'.

3. A Distortion of the 'Cogito': Dostoyevski's 'Demons'

The fate of the Cartesian argument in the history of European culture is a complicated and instructive topic. In my opinion, it is possible to speak of a kind of 'topology of the cogito'. Within the context of this topology, we see a transformation of the 'cogito' into different forms: not only within specifically philosophical systems, but also in the figures of Rousseau, De Sade, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. To clarify the moral aspects of the 'cogito', it is useful to compare it with particular ideas of Dostoyevski, personified by Kirillov, one of the principle characters in his novel 'The Demons'. To refresh our memories: in this novel, the activities of a group of conspirators, who want to provoke revolutionary unrest, are described. The composition of the group of revolutionary 'demons' was thought over very carefully by Dostoyevski. In its entirety, it constitutes a miniature shadow-state in relation to tsarist Russia. At the centre of the group stands Stavrogin, who plays the part of the 'ill tsar'. Stavrogin is a highly gifted man, a born leader, but the loss of religious faith has turned him, finally, into a source of destructive power. Kirillov, an engineer, is his closest companion. He plays the part of the 'priest'. Like all other 'demons', he represents a particular 'idea', which can be seen as a modification of the 'cogito'. The first step of his logic is not proven. It rather is an axiom: there is no God. God was invented by men in order not to kill themselves. The second step: if there is no God, I myself am God. Consequently, I am the one and only source of will, and 'obliged to proclaim my own will'. Usually, even unreligious people fear to proclaim their self-will as something absolute, but Kirillov takes upon himself the mission of a saviour, intending to execute this project in its purest form in order to furnish a universal proof of the autonomy of self-will.⁵ The highest degree to which the will can express its autonomy is suicide. It does not matter to Kirillov that no one will actually know about his suicide. All that matters is that this act will be onto-logically feasible. Afterwards, people will perceive this way of salvation, one way or another, and will

⁵ T. Buzina (Kovalevskaya) offers the following description of the dialectics of freedom (*svoboda*) and liberty (*volya*): '...it should be particularly noted that Kirillov does not use the word "freedom" except in the phrase "to show the new and terrible freedom of mine." Liberty is his word of choice, and it is fully compatible with will usurped from God. ... It is the absence of reason from "self-will" that explains the faulty logic typical of Kirillov and of all of Dostoyevski's ideological characters. In the beginning of their ideological career, they possess freedom endowed with reason, and they try to make the fullest possible use of their reason. Yet their thinking is nothing more than a tool to be used on the way toward the highest personal freedom, freedom of Divinity, and they are spurred on this way by the feeling of the full development of their own self. Their desire to preserve their self at any cost induces them to split from God. Yet the moment they yield to that impulse, they tear themselves away from God, and their freedom is transformed into unlawfully appropriated liberty, and this transformation entails the loss of all the powers of reason.' See: Buzina T.V. *Samoobozhenie v evropeyskoy kul'ture*. SPb., 2011. P. 304-305.

physically regenerate already in the next generation, since in one's previous physical shape it is impossible to bear the magnitude of this truth.

It is possible to establish a particular similarity between the logic of 'cogito' and the arguments of Kirillov. Kirillov's point of departure is the autonomy of pure will, which is absolutely obvious to him. This self-evidence goes together with a feeling of 'clarity and irrefutability' (compare to 'clarity and distinctness'), which Kirillov describes as ecstasy (or, according to Stavrogin, as a symptom of an epileptic fit). The theme of the malicious demon is also brought up by Kirillov. He speaks about deceit, which is surmounted by an act of proud self-affirmation, and he characterizes this deceit as 'lie', 'senseless ridicule' and 'diabolic vaudeville'. Rather unexpectedly, the theme of 'God' comes up, too. It is explicated in a short parable of Christ, who has found neither Paradise nor Resurrection. So, Kirillov needs still the ideal of the proud man: the miracle of Perfection without the miracle of Resurrection. Further, Kirillov realizes an act of self-will, which consists in a renunciation of life. (Through that act, it is indirectly confirmed that life is a gift). According to Kirillov, freedom is attained in a sphere in which it makes no difference whether one lives or not. Life, he asserts, is pain and fear (cf. Descartes' two substances, nature and spirit). God is the pain that goes with the fear of death. He who conquers pain and fear (i.e. life), will become God. From this the inevitability of suicide follows. Kirillov in his way further goes out into the dimension of intersubjectivity. In his opinion, the unique act of his own death will become a universal way of salvation. This, however, does not exclude the physical death of mankind (Kirillov asserts that time will come to a standstill, that the process of giving birth will come to an end). Finally, the Cartesian motif of restored nature finds its analogy in Kirillov's dream of the 'new man'. In conformity to his poetics and to the symbols he uses, Dostoyevski points out that the "demons" are a distorted reflection of the heavenly hierarchy. In this distorted heavenly hierarchy, the part of the diabolic parody of the 'priestly worship' of Christ is allotted to Kirillov. He is a man of ideas and thoughts, he is an engineer (logos), and a bridge-builder (pontifex). The semantics of his name (which is as usually employed by Dostoyevski) possibly includes the meanings of 'defendant', 'darkness' and 'ancient orient'. By creating the suggestive image of the pagan priest who makes a 'black', sacrifice, Dostoyevski might have anticipated a thought, that follows from the logic of Kirillov, too. His reasoning comes down to a reversed 'cogito'. The demolition of the Cartesian argument takes place at the moment that the single 'cogito' is split up into 'ego' and 'cogito', which is conditioned by Kirillov's axiom of god-lessness. Further, this demolition entails a whole chain of distorted meanings. Things occur in such a way as if privation, 'non est res' according to Descartes (4th Meditation, 15), turns into reality instead of 'negatio'. The 'ego', as conceived by Kirillov,

extends itself to universality, although it no longer has a right to it. In essence, the fullness of being proves to be alien to its 'cogito', which is not part of being, but negativity, and from this absolute alienation and death logically follow.⁶

In the cases of both Descartes and Kirillov, there is a single essential point where their intuitions coincide, which entitles us to say that in both cases we are dealing with the 'cogito'. Both are not speaking about the actually given, nor about emotion, nor even about thought as an act of abstraction. What is at stake is a birthgiving act of consciousness, which creates the conditions for thought. This act immediately lays bare a field in which the places for the 'incomplete' being of 'ego', for the 'complete' being of God, and for an indefinite multitude of autonomous consciousnesses are primordially given. Within the confines of this field, necessity operates, expressed through the freedom of 'ego', and the rule of recreation of the act of 'cogito', in which action and contemplation are particular cases, because 'cogito' is not given, but can only be created. To the extent to which 'cogito' must be reproduced in the activity of consciousness, it cannot last, but only be generated. Hence the theme of the specific time of 'cogito', which is expressed by Descartes in different ways, and in particular is accentuated also by the distinctive genre of the 'Meditations On the First Philosophy', in which Descartes not so much develops a timeless deduction, but rather follows a path, in which he every time makes note of what has been learned right then, after a distinctive experience of consciousness, and then allows to move on. (It is not without interest, in this respect, to compare some peculiarities of genre of this text by Descartes with the 'Spiritual Experiences' of Ignatius of Loyola. The idea of a traversed path is, in both texts, combined with an understanding of consciousness as spiritual self-reproduction).

Kirillov, evidently, reproduces the possibilities of a field of 'cogito' in a distorted manner. The place of God turns out to be empty, and an encounter with God (the ontological argument) turns out to be impossible from the very beginning, because we are not facing the pure 'ego' of self-awareness, but the 'ego' of self-will, which already is charged with an accidental-empirical content. Hence the intuition of total emptiness, of the transparency of the world, from which one can only seek shelter in suicide, the sole act of the self properly. Hence also the perception of other 'ego's' as passive objects of the blessing of their protector, Kirillov. Like the Great Inquisitor, Kirillov experiences the burden of duty, the burden of freedom, of responsibility for humanity. And this aureole of sacrificiality somewhat singles him out from the throng of demons. But his yoke is not a blessing: self-will is, by the shortest possible way, transformed

⁶ In order to complete the picture, I want to add that in Russian literature (at least one) representation of the 'correct' cogito can be found as well: a work by the symbolist poet V.I. Ivanov, the poem 'Man' [*"Chelovek"*].

into a slave-like following of necessity. From this deformation of the 'cogito' in the end ensues Kirillov's strife to stop time, to put an end to birth. The 'right cogito' discloses and justifies the world, whereas the 'broken', centripetal 'cogito' twists it. Like Dante, Dostoyevski depicts a hell that is separated from the world of consciousness as a universal blind alley.

The pathos of rationalism at the dawn of Modernity consisted, most of all, in the fact that 'ratio' was thought to be a force that gives rise to all other human capacities. The ideal result, i.e. a logical reconstruction, was even more important than the material-historical genesis, since it could found a phenomenon or capacity. By the same token, this outcome yields a law in the widest sense of the term. The clash of Law and Life can be recognized as the key collision of Modernity. The controversy between duty and inclination, so deeply sensed by French classicist theatre, the controversy of baroque and classicism, of empiricism and rationalism, of mechanicism and organicism, - all these are mere examples, randomly taken, of the unaccommodating nature of two grand principles: that of ideal order and that of vital upsurge. For rationalism, the 'philosophical stone' was the task to merge these two principles, or at least to find a common ground for them, where the self-foundation of life takes place, the reanimation and individualization of the law. Descartes' 'cogito' is a solution to this problem, too.

The comparison of 'cogito' and 'anti-cogito' that was carried out above, must show, it seems to me, that Descartes' argument offers a particular model that admits a foundation of morality. It is useful to examine more closely the type of foundation this model belongs to. For that purpose it is necessary to introduce a certain heuristic classification of foundations, and I will attempt to base myself on passages of Plato's 'Republic' (Rep. 509b - 5). Plato argues that there is a foundation that proceeds from a sensual middle to a logical end, and a foundation that proceeds from a perceptible middle to a beginning that itself has no beginning. In differentiating these two types, we may say that, within the scope of the first type, there is an aesthetic foundation, which moves from what is manifest to the senses to the universality of works of art, and a scientific foundation, which departs from the evidence of facts or axioms and ends with logical universality. Within the scope of the second type, there is a religious foundation, which departs from faith and leads to theology, and a philosophical (metaphysical) foundation, which departs from the 'cogito' and ends with a philosophical system. Apparently, the foundation of moral law can only be rooted in the last mentioned, metaphysical foundation, since only this guarantees the freedom of choice, detached from determination, and from prescriptions concerning content.

4. Law and Logos

Therefore, some final remarks about laws. Law is not necessary, if it is identical to inevitability, nor if it can be violated without punishment. Consequently, the word 'law' is only meaningful if the moment of possible transgression of the law, and the moment of punishment in case of its violation are both maintained. From this point of view, we are able to distinguish four types of law. 1. Laws that allow any other law whatsoever, as long as they do not intervene in their immediate scope of operating. These laws are conditioned only by themselves. The laws of art are an example of such laws. 2. Laws that allow such laws that do not contradict them. These laws are conditioned by 'another'. The laws of 'science' belong to this category. 3. Laws that allow for everything that does not contradict itself. These laws are fully unconditional. The laws of a religion of revelation are of this kind. 4. Laws that allow no other laws but themselves. These laws are not in any respect conditioned as to their form, yet as to their content they are in every respect. That means, they must be applicable to the entire universe and to each part of it. Such are the laws of morality. Accordingly, we have four modes of realization of these laws. 1. arbitrariness 2. necessity 3. freedom 4. duty.

All four types can be understood as realizations of law. That is to say, as a particular way of restricting the continuum of possibilities by one or the other form of reality that we regard as primary. The type of law in the realm of arbitrariness and necessity is quite obvious. (1) The 'ego' that realizes itself and only itself, creates its own world, which is not in need of coordination with other worlds. Even if we imagine the possibility of an 'agreement' between the subjects of arbitrariness, the laws that are postulated by this agreement remain, in point of fact, a matter of despotic self-affirmation (it is immaterial whether we are dealing with the self-sufficiency of the artist or with the arbitrariness of the politician). (2) The law of nature creates a world of necessary connections, which must, if only potentially, conform with other possible and actual worlds. Less evident is the activity of the law in the realms of freedom and duty, realms which - each in its own way - are unconditional. (3) If we assume the existence of a free will of the Absolute, then its law can only be a ban on self-negation, and a related gift of freedom to any positive being. (4) The last possible activity of the law is the assumption of an absolutely free will, which is inherent in a being that is far from absolute, but, on the contrary, finite and conditioned by nature. For (3), the problem was that the infinite should include the finite in itself; for (4), it was that the finite situated the infinite within itself. In such a case, the law will be an unconditional, but 'empty', form, not capable of generating content, but capable of giving it a moral sense. It is clear, that only in the last case (4), it is possible to speak about the foundations of the moral law. It is only here, that the universality of form which is compulsory for the law is indissolubly connected to the act of individual consciousness that it generates.

Only here, personal freedom escapes one and the other type of determination 'from outside' and proceeds to self-determination 'from within'. Paradoxically, it is precisely the bifurcation of the subject of the moral law into the personal and the obligatory that entitles him to act in the name of a single Absolute.

These types can hardly be reduced to one single principle, since this single principle would then automatically be an arbitrary one, not a principle of law. The sphere of the law, however, is always a limited system of rules and a game according to these rules. But then one may well ask oneself how expedient a term is, that unifies these different kinds of conditioning.

Descartes' rationalism indeed opens the possibility of retaining an orientation towards universality and necessity, without sacrificing the autonomy and uniqueness of 'ego.' In this sense, law is given to morality. But here, in this reconciliation of the law with the individual, it is possible to perceive the foundation of yet another value of Modernity, viz. liberalism, since liberalism also is founded upon a formal and universal principle of autonomy of 'ego', and defends the empirical content of 'ego' from formalization. Neither the rational, nor the moral, nor the liberal imperative, thus conceived, contains within itself the allowance of violence, whatever contemporary unmaskers of liberalism may say about it. For what is subject to scrutiny is not the personal form, but the empirical content, which as such is a 'non-ego', and only has the potentiality of being appropriated through free identification by some 'ego'. All the same, the word 'law' does contain unobling, but firm associations with a system of external control. And, of course, not mere associations: the evolution of rationalism has demonstrated - already in the era of late Enlightenment -how easily inner self-determination turns into the guillotine of abstraction. (And it is not incidental that Kirillov is not simply a lone person and a paranoiac, but a member of a collective of 'demons' in which there is, for him, a natural and essential niche.) Moral laws are possible, as long as they are not like the prescriptions of some authority (religion), of the deduction of logic or the determination by nature (science), or of immediate intuition (art, emotion). The only possible mode of existence of moral law is that in which unconditioned personal choice coincides with the universality of possible communication with whichever subjects of such a choice, as can be clearly seen in the idea of the 'cogito'. But then the word 'law' with its concealed ambiguities begins to confuse matters. It may be considered as a relict of the anthropomorphism of the European humanistic tradition, in particular if we take into account that it was, through this tradition, closely connected with the historically transitory form of rationalism. The word 'ratio', as well as the word 'logos', have, among other meanings, the meaning of 'proportion'. Proportion -this means a sufficiently complex game of relations, in which there is no dominating element. The rationalism of European culture (if one considers its

standard form, not its heights) has changed into calculationism, into a procedure of applying rigidly defined laws to passive-indifferent stones (calculus). Therefore, the term 'moral law' is meaningful within the context of rationalism, but meaningless within the context of calculationism.

However, the word 'law' preserves the equivocality. On one hand this concept required an awareness of some necessity, on the other hand becoming aware of this necessity through a subjective act of will. It is impossible to violate the laws of nature, one cannot overthrow the will of God, but the laws of the human world show neither the former nor the latter quality. Moreover, they do not act by themselves, and require permanent reproduction in moral or juridical practice. The Greeks had to solve this problem, by opposing the 'laws of nature' to 'human laws' or by opposing 'fate' and 'reason' or by trying to establish their synthetical identity in the theory of the 'logos'. Mediaeval Christianity made this task even more complicated, since the problematic character of human legislation extended itself to the legislation of God: it created the antinomies of the theodicy. St. Thomas Aquinas was already forced to introduce a distinction of four types of laws instead of two. Modern philosophy takes a different course and tries to realize a conception of a homogeneous universe in which the law of nature serves as the general paradigm of laws. Although Kant adduces elementary proofs of the fundamental heterogeneity of the world, his direct successors already create a conception of the world in which it preserves its homogeneity, but only at the cost of compromise: According to this conception universal dialectical laws are operating in the world. And finally, the idea of homogeneous operation-field of laws, which can at least potentially be brought into conformity with one another, even though they cannot be reduced to a single principle, is still predominant in modern theoretical consciousness. The necessity of justifying moral law that arose out of this situation more than once led European culture into a state of deep disappointment with regard to the 'justification' of both 'morality' and 'legislation'. If we assume that moral law as such is born out of a situation in which reason demands from man that he opposes a value to nature for the sake of well-being, then it is obvious that the understanding of moral law is directly connected with an interpretation of the elements of that situation. Modernity has interpreted these elements, leaning on its own radical values: anthropologism, naturalism, utilitarianism, relativism, etc. The farther the epoch of Modernity lies behind us, the easier it seems to conclude that there are no possibilities left for a rational justification of morality. Much less obvious is it, which way to found morality is still valid. Contrary to this conclusion, I attempted to demonstrate that the possibilities of a metaphysical, or, more narrowly understood, an ontological justification are not exhausted yet.

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