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THE THEISTIC SUGGESTION OF PERSONALISM IN THE POST-SECULAR SPACE OF THE PERSONAL SELF- KNOWLEDGE: FROM THE PERSONALIZED ONTOLOGY TO THE META-ONTOLOGY OF PERSONHOOD

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Abstract

The article reveals the vectors of manifesting the personalistic inspiration of the post-modernist reflection predetermining its turn from deconstruction to communication and developing into the divergent lines of the communicative philosophy; verifying the method of the historical-philosophical reconstruction by the criteria of the historical-theological analysis, the author proves that E. Levinas' highway of the post-non-classical ethically oriented reestablishment of the personalized ontological foundations for the subjectivity has achieved the threshold of the meta-ontological dimension of the personality marking it by the assertion of the spirituality preforming the non-reciprocal intersubjective relation of responsibility as the precognitive core of rationality; the study explains the limitation of both comprehension and embodiment of the theistic suggestion of philosophizing constructive for the post-secular thought by the rational and ethical mediation of the immediate experience of communion of the human person with God.

Keywords: the Personality of God, unconditionally personal truth of God's Word, interpersonal relationship of the created person with Creator, human cognition of God, self-existence, self-reflection, communicative-dialogic interaction of the Self and the Other.

The personalistic inspiration (J. Lacroix) of the post-non-classical thought was revealed on its turn from deconstruction to communication immediately predetermined by “grasping the separation of the human mind from its spiritual origins” [1] and marking the total outcome of the twentieth century in the search for the indicator of “the subject’s authenticity” (M. A. Mozsheyko) radically differing from the criterion of the objective truth established by ratiocentrism. Having realized the impossibility of obtaining the cognitive personal-subjective self-identity based upon the rational comprehension in the course of the deconstructivist exposition of its limits (J. Derrida [2], G. Deleuze [3], M. Foucault [4], J.-F Lyotard.[5]) concealed by both metaphysical and phenomenological constructions, the secularized rationality of the post-traditionalist epoch appealed to the intersubjective communicative-dialogic interaction perceived as the only way of manifesting the identical Self provided by his/her relationship with the Other (E. Levinas [6], J. Habermas [7], K.-O. Apel [8]).

Reconstructing in such a way the concept of the basal factuality introduced in the philosophical discourse by the founder of the personal metaphysics B. P. Bowne in the late nineteenth – the early twentieth century to denote the unconditional character of the reality of the interpersonal relations where “we and the neighbors” are defined as “facts which cannot be questioned” [9, p. 20], the communicative philosophy has grasped the irreducibility of personhood without overcoming the rationalistic delimitation of the horizontal of communication and its vertical on the lines of defining the basic dialog structure separated by the initially established guideposts of defining its core. Aimed at the anthropocentric structurization of the communicative-dialogic interaction of the Self and the Other, the vectors of substantiating the discourse ethic actualized by J. Habermas and K.-O. Apel have reduced the domain of manifesting the dialogicity to the sphere of the horizontally oriented development of the interpersonal relations regulated by “the intersubjective consensus” achievable on the base of accepting “the agnostic position” formed by the post-metaphysical departure from “the questions of being” as common for all the interlocutors. Intended to reveal the theocentricity of the dialog arch-form the highway of founding the ethical transcendentalism paved by E. Levinas has marked the vertical direction of forming the dialogic arguing for the prohibition of the immediate appeal of the

human person to God as the action inspiring the intentions of immanentizing His Absolute Transcendence.

Opposing to the modes of the self-limitations of post-metaphysics introduced by the “sociologized” theories of the communicative action and correlating with the definition of the anti-form of the ontological argument for God's existence proposed by deconstructivism, the idea of “otherwise-than-knowing” articulated by the ethical-transcendental dialogism has denoted the ultimate of approaching “the theistic suggestion” (B. P. Bowne) of personalism in the interdiscursive space of postmodernism. But the impact of the outstanding thinker recognized by the prominent French philosopher-personalist J. Lacroix as “the great ... metaphysician of the personalistic inspiration” [10] in awakening the initiative of transcending “the immanent frame” of the secular worldview [11] has been clarified neither by the post-secular philosophy striving to comprehend the personal principle of being uncovered by the Supernatural Revelation and explained by the patristic theology [12] in the course of continuing the communicative-dialogic interaction of philosophical and theological discourses initiated a hundred years ago by personalism [13], nor by the contemporary historical-philosophical reflection focusing on the emergent self-renewal of the post-traditionalist mind returning to the unconditionally-personal truth of God's Word (“I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6)) realized in the ultimate communicative experience [14; 15; 16].

In these fields of comprehending “the inseparability of the intelligence from its spiritual origins, opened by Christianity, but lost in the course of the secularization of knowledge”(here and hereinafter the translation is mine – V. P.) [17, p. 237] Levinasian way of defining the personal-subjective self-identity remains reduced to the substantiation of the deontic logic affirming the priority of ethics over ontology [18; 19; 20] and uncertainized in the configuration of achieving the threshold of the meta-ontology of personhood indicated at the background of the critical review of the rationalist foundations of the subjectivity dialogically connected with the deconstructivist denial of the cognitive structure of the self-identical subject stated by metaphysics and recoded by phenomenology. The denoted fragment exposition of the premises of post-secularism formed by the late-modern thought argues for revealing the trajectory of its movement from the ethically oriented reestablishment of the personalized ontological foundations for the subjective self-manifestation to the reception of the Bible topology of the personal being and the trinitarian meta-logic discovering the meta-ontological dimension of the personality. Determining **the aim of the investigation** in this article, the indicated vector of studying the process of forming the post-secular space of the person's self-knowledge predicts its achievement on the line of using **the method** of the

historical-philosophical reconstruction verified by the criteria of the historical-theological analysis.

The rationally oriented person manifesting himself/herself in the heterogeneous and multicultural post-modern reality defining itself by means of “post-metaphysical thinking” (J. Habermas) has been faced with problematizing the personal-subject self-identity in the alternative ways of excluding the absolute indicator of verity from the field of the personal self-reflection.

On the one hand he/she could accept the matrix of the “split subjectivity” based upon realizing “the god of philosophers and scholars” (B. Pascal) as the absent “transcendental signified” (J. Derrida) predicting by his discursive transposition the non-finality of signification intended to fix the ultimate truth but producing only the majority of its interpretations. Thus the affirmed absence of the Absolute referent in the discourse equated to the existential reality predetermines the irreducibility of semantic difference factually making impossible the cognitive unity of the subject doomed to fail in becoming self-identical by this epistemological disposition.

On the other hand in the domain of post-metaphysics the created personality could realize the theocentric transcendental-dialog model of self-definition presuming the ethical perception of the other grasping him/her as a neighbour elevated to the Image of God (“It is as if God spoke through the face” [21, p.169]) but forbidding the intention to communicate directly with Creator defined as the unrealizable “metaphysical desire”(E. Levinas). Introduced as the main imperative of postmodernist dialogic such restriction of interpersonal relationship was rationally argued by denying the presence of living God in the human existence on the base of non-verbalizing His Absolute Personhood indefinable “in the categories of being and structure” [21]. Supported by concealing the godlikeness of the Self at the background of its attribution to the other the reduction of human cognition of God to the rational action separates the created person from his/her theistic basis making him/her unable to identify himself/herself in intersubjective dimension which does not provide the priority of the ethics as the meta-discourse of ontology eliminating the ultimate communicative situation ensured by the supernatural Revelation and the personally realized access to it.

Coinciding in the kernel vector of the problematization of personal identity deconstructivism and philosophy of communication indicated different lines of disclosing the ontological undecidability of the problem of the personality predetermining the initiatives of “post-metaphysical” thinking.

Derridian practices of deconstruction along with the other projects of post-structuralism such as M. Foucault's “genealogy” and J. - F. Lyotard's theory of “the decline of meta-narrative” formed the platform for realizing the discourse as the semiotic reality where “we are transformed into subjects and ... we transform ourselves into subjects” [22, p. 208] at the background of

accepting both interior and exterior planes of the difference between the self and the other as irreducible. In such scope of comprehension the subjectivity was reduced to the transdiscursive position revealing the intention to seek for the ultimate truth associated with the personal-subjective self-identity. Deprived of any stability by expelling “the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature” from the history in its deconstructivist-genealogical revision, the post-structuralist “speaking subject” indicates the infinity of this search by the changes of his/her self-manifestation influenced by interdiscursive relations and forming the diversity of the types of rationality with immanent “discourses of legitimation” (J. - F. Lyotard). Inspired by the anti-ontological pathos of the definition of the being as “the exteriority of accidents” [4, p.146], “the ontologies of non-linear thinking” [23] laid the relativist epistemological foundations for the radical reinterpretation of Christian concept of the person's self-overcoming aimed at gaining access to the truth. Proclaimed by M. Foucault, the appeal of post-structuralism to the self-transformation of the personal subject substituted the ascetic practice of Christianity providing the communion with the Absolute truth of God's Word by the rational apperception of the infinite production of knowledge uncovering that any system of rules “in itself has no essential meaning” [4, p.165]. In the space of postmodern culture characterized by worldview and axiological pluralism such mode of self-mastery contributed to “the multiple personality disorder” [24] exposing the exhaustion of ratiocentrism in the heterogenic cultural environment of the rationally oriented person's self-definition formed by post-modernity.

On the contrary, Levinasian ethical transcendentalism disavowed the ratiocentric primacy of the *universal identity* on the base of reflecting the self-identical personal subjectivity as “the other-in-the same”. Initially marked by reconstructing the interrogative start of intersubjective interaction (“How, in the alterity of a you, can I remain I, without being absorbed or losing myself in that you?” [21, p.127]), this understanding of the personal-subjective self-identity revealed its meta-discursive character as for ontological constructs being conceptualized in the definition of the subject's transitive activity corresponding to both Christ's commandments to love.

Reactualizing the intention of the Self primarily manifesting his/her subjectivity as the response to the Other perceived as the Image of God E. Levinas considered the subjective responsibility to be “a more severe name” [21, p.43] for loving the neighbour interpreted as the only way for the created person to communicate with Creator “beyond the being” [21, p. 31]. Evidently correlated with the Bible topology of the personhood as its restrictive interpretation (in spite of the philosopher's declarative departure from the foundations of religious consciousness [21]) Levinasian transcendental communicative ethics focusing on the responsible interpersonal relationship emphasized the superiority of the personal being taken as the neighbourhood of

the other and the Absolute Transcendence of God over all the modes of its rationalization realized in classical and non-classical forms of ontology. Moreover the founder of the ethical-phenomenological version of dialogism achieved the threshold of the meta-ontological dimension of the Self pre-intentionally marking it by the assertion of the spirituality preforming the non-reciprocal intersubjective relation of responsibility as the precognitive core of rationality.

But trying to avoid the absorption of the Transcendent by the Immanent in transcending the margins of knowledge E. Levinas restricted the personal-subjective self-definition by mediating the relationship of the created Self with Creator by his/her encounter with the Other. Prescribed by Levinasian imperative of the person's self-overcoming removed from Christian ascetics such reconstruction of the transcendental form of dialogue initiated the renewal of the rationalistic separation of both human cognition of God and subjective self-knowledge from the live communication with Him. Accordingly, E. Levinas's thought did not grasp the meta-ontology of the personhood uncovered by the Revelation, expounded by patristic trinitology at the turn of Antiquity and the Middle Ages and disclosed for the rational consciousness of the modern era by the branch of the personalist philosophy appealing to Orthodox theology.

By the rationalistic argumentation of the introduced ethical prohibition the initiator of the postmodernist apology of subjectivity formed the premises for his own revision of *hypostasis* (υπόστασις) deviating from trinitarian correlation of this category actualized by the antique philosophical reflection with its companion *ousia* (ουσία) established in the same field of the philosophy detached from the Absolute truth of God's Word. E. Levinas defined *hypostasis* as the event whereby the self became an existing person by limiting the impersonal generality of existence in the responsible relation to the other personal existent perceived as an image of the Absolute Personality of God. Expelling the immediate appeal of the created person to Creator, Levinasian deontic logic of the subject's positing diverges from the personal principle of being formulated by Trinitology as the dogma about God existing as “*one ousia in three hypostases*” (“one essence in three persons”).

Generated to overcome the person's estrangement from his/her existence taking its roots (due to the thinker's Biblical allusions) in the fall and realized in the course of destructing the traditional worldview, the idea of the subject-forming “inversion at the heart of anonymous being” generalized the experience of perceiving the broken ratio-centered mirror of the world but did not indicate the realizable pattern of becoming the personal subjectivity through the transcendent receptive grasp of the irreducibility of the personhood. Christ's two Commandments to love on which “hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt. 22:40) laid the foundations for the complete fulfillment of the created self aimed at the reconstruction of the sinfully distorted human nature and provided

by his/her communion with Creator being the source of loving. Appealing to God the human personality paves the way of overcoming his/her sinfulness in the integration of Creator's aid and his/her own efforts. Such transformation of the created person ensures his/her comprehension of the Scripture testimony of human godlikeness and the trinitarian meta-logical explanation of the hypostatic mode of existence. On this base the human personality can accept the alterity as the neighbourhood realizing the common origin of the Self and the Other: he/she "is created by God like me" [25, p.356]; he/she "is not created in my image, but in the image of God" [25, p.356]. Inspired by unconditional God's love for humanity the human ability to love the neighbour can not reveal itself without the communication of the created self with Creator. Thus E. Levinas's substitution of the vertical of interpersonal relationship by its horizontal deprived the philosopher's transcendental ethics of responsibility of its spiritual source reducing the self-definition of the subject establishing the responsible relation to the personhood of the other to the recognition of the unrealizability of the personal principle of being in the human existence. Nevertheless at the background of the deconstructive matrix of the person's multiple identity leading the subjectivity to the deadlock of interiorizing the outer semiotic differentiation between the Self and the Other recognized as the non-final indication of the absent "god of philosophers and scholars", the ethical-communicative model of the subjective self-identity surpassed the frames of inverting the rationalistic logic having introduced the ethical imperative of the intersubjective mediation of the ultimate communicative intention in arguing for the absence of living God in the actual reality.

Forming the negative argumentation for the inseparability of the cognitive activity of the created person aimed at realizing the sense of being from his/her live communication with Creator, Levinasian thought predicts the further development of its personalistic inspiration through renewing the interaction of philosophical and theological discourses initial for personalism and intended to reunite rationality and spirituality in explaining in the immanent concepts of philosophizing removed from their "depersonalized" meanings the "constitutive transcendence" [26] of the human personality realized on the foundations of theism as his/her communion with Absolutely Personal God.

Manifested in the late twentieth - early twenty-first centuries in the field of philosophizing as the mission of the rising post-secular thought, the intention of overcoming the secularist dissociation of the spiritual and the rational is supported in the ecclesiastical sphere by the call to revise on the theistic basis both the metaphysical devises of depersonalizing the Source of being and the forms of the phenomenological application of these means of metaphysics.

Therefore consolidating the efforts aimed at restoring the comprehension of the unity of the human spirit in the philosophical domain,

“the theology wends its way to the philosophy, and the philosophy is directed towards the theology” [27, p. 10] to provide the departure from the secularized modes of thinking. The designation of this prospect of the self-renewal of the post-traditionalist mind does not demonstrate the exhaustion of resources of rational cognition: “The voluntary communion of the person with God, the involvement of his mind into the conciliar mind of the Church negates neither human mind nor manifestations of personal life, but on the contrary, it is their triumph. Through the incarnation of Christ, “shined upon the world the light of wisdom” [28, p.8].

The emerging dialogical interaction of philosophical and theological discourses lays the foundations for the post-secular space of the personal-subjective self-definition where the rationally oriented person of after-post-modernity, trying to manifest his/her identity in opposition to the radical pluralism characteristic of “the post-modern condition” [5] can realize both the insufficiency of the rationalistic tools of *human cognition of God and subjective self-knowledge and the need to acquire the arsenal of defining the self-experience elaborated by theology*[16]. *Such convergence of both ways of ultimate explanations dissociated by the impersonal forms of thinking presupposes* the realization of the meta-ontological character of the problem of the human personality explicated in the midst of the twentieth century by the prominent Orthodox theologian and philosopher-personalist V. N. Lossky. Having compared philosophical and theological approaches to its decision, one of the greatest apologists of the personhood in the last century came to the conclusion: “And if there is a certain meta-ontology, only God can know it, that God, Whom Genesis show us during the pause in His creativity made to say at the Pre-Eternal Council of Trinity Hypostases: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” [29, p. 411].

This guidepost for the personal self-reflection directs it to the Trinitology formulated in the fourth century by the Great Cappadocians - Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Gregory of Nyssa as the dogmatic substantiation of the Trinitarity of God denoting the meta-ontological dimension of the personality. In the course of Christianization of both the category of *hypostasis* (υπόστασις) actualized by the antique philosophical reflection and its companion *ousia* (ουσία) established in the same field of the philosophy detached from the Absolute truth of God's Word the Great Church Teachers from Cappadocia revealed and explained the Trinitarian meta-logic giving the clue to understanding the personal principle of being. By the characteristics of the hypostatic mode of existence due to which “neither the difference of hypostases breaks the continuity of nature nor the community of essence merges the particular features” [30, p.85], the Cappadocian Fathers exposed the fundamental structure of the meta-ontology of personhood breaking the soil for overcoming the limits of the ontological

definitions of personality formed by the different historical types of rationality before and after the Birth of Christ [31; 32]. Initiating the spiritual perception of the Trinitological dogma, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Gregory of Nyssa emphasize that both human cognition of God and personal self-knowledge imply the experience of communion with Creator in which the created person realizes the soteriological perspective.

The meta-ontological connection of vertical and horizontal lines of interpersonal relationship is expressed in the well-known “geometrical parable” expounded by Venerable Abba Dorotheos in his “Soul-Profiting Teachings and Epistles”. This symbolic picture of personal being represents the world as a circle of communication in which the Self and the Other are moving within its radii to its center that is God. Directed by two Christ's Commandments of love the logic of such movement is revealed in the maxim: “The more one is united to his neighbour the more he is united to God” [33, p. 98].

To incarnate the theistic suggestion of philosophizing inspired the movement of non-classical philosophical reflection to the foundations of theism and reactualized in the philosophical-humanitarian space of the contemporaneity by the personalistic inspiration of the post-non-classical philosophy the post-secular thought should transcend rational and ethic mediation of the ultimate communicative experience taking into consideration the inseparability of both human cognition of God and personal self-knowledge from the communion of the created person with Creator.

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