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ON MORAL FREEDOM AND NECESSITY

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Abstract

The article covers the problem of moral freedom, as well as its connections with the concepts of logical and natural necessity. The research is based on the ideas of German classical philosophers: I. Kant's teaching about free causality, I. Fichte's teaching about the supreme goal of all intelligent beings, A. Schopenhauer's teaching about will as a non-reasoned thing and G. Hegel's teaching about freedom as a cognized necessity. The research covers voluntarism basics, as well as analyzes two types of causality (natural and free ones) and two corresponding forms of the law of the sufficient reason. The research arrives at the following conclusions:

1) Moral evil is not about real actions, but about the inconsistency of its appraisal and goals set behind it. This applies both to those who do evil and those third parties who appraise it.

2) The logical law of contradiction and identity is a general principle of any goal-setting, and hence the general principle of free causality and moral necessity.

3) Natural necessity differs from moral necessity only in the formal distinction of cause and consequence. The content of the cause and effect is identical, which determine all kinds of necessity.

Keywords: moral, freedom, necessity, causality, voluntarism, law of contradiction and identity, law of sufficient reason.

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1. Introduction

The explores the problem of moral freedom, as well as its connection with the concepts of logical and natural necessity. The most profound philosophical research in this sphere so far were carried out by German classical philosophers (G. Leibniz, I. Kant, I. Fichte, G. Hegel, A. Schopenhauer, etc.). Their teaching of moral liberty and necessity, on the one hand, is very different from those prevailing in 20th century philosophy. “Morality is a science based on logical evidence”, Leibniz (1982, p. 90) considered. These days, it's hard to hear it anywhere (Sokolova, Pylkin, Safanova, & Stroganova, 2017; Serkova, Pylkin, Safonova, & Savitskaya, 2017; Shipunova, Berezovskaya, Gashkova, & Ivanova, 2017; Pozdeeva, Trostinskaya, Evseeva, & Ivanova, 2017; Bylieva, Lobatyuk, & Rubtsova, 2018). On the other hand, it was the German classical philosophy that gave birth to *voluntarism*, the false interpretation of which later formed the basis for modern moral irrationalism.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the problem is due to the deep moral crisis of modern society caused by popular postmodern irrationalism in moral issues, i.e. a complete loss of faith in provable and universally valid moral values, which indicates the clear concept about the relations between *moral freedom* and *necessity* inherent in scientific knowledge objects is lost: “The corruption of the Modern Age philosophy was that <...> it brought knowledge beyond moral boundaries” (Ivanov, 2015, p. 288).

3. Research Questions

The research covers voluntarism basics, as well as analyzes two types of causality (natural and free ones) and two corresponding forms of the law of the sufficient reason.

4. Purpose of the Study

To reveal the connection between the concepts of moral freedom and logical as well as natural necessity.

5. Research Methods

Arisotle's formal logic and Kant's transcendental method.

6. Findings

Voluntarism as a doctrine that takes the *will* as the original basis of all truths manifests itself as early as in the works of Nicolas Malebranche, according to whom “<...> the mind never judges as it only represents; <...> in fact, it is the will that judges, arguing and rejecting those represented by its mind” (Malebranche, 1999, p. 53). However, the emergence of the concept of ‘voluntarism’ is associated with the name of Schopenhauer, who believed, “According to my theory, <...> will as a thing in itself cannot be subject to the law of reason” (Schopenhauer, 1992, p. 70). This resulted from the two considerations.

Consideration 1. If we review the term ‘will’ in its most common sense, it means ability to “<...> start or not start <...> various actions <...> by the choice of our spirit <...>. This power is called will (volonté)” (Leibniz, 1982, p. 172). To this extent, will is essentially *freedom* from both internal (in terms

of content) and external (in terms of causality) definitions: “On precise examination, freedom of will means existence (existentia) without essence (essentia), i.e. *something* exists, but it is *nothing*, which means it *does not exist*” (Schopenhauer, 1896, p. 88).

However, in this regard, Kant (1998) also believed that *freedom* is not a real object, rather “<...> a pure transcendental idea; <...> its subject cannot be defined in any possible experience, as the general law for the very possibility of any experience is that everything happens for a reason <...>.” But since it is impossible, as Kant (1998, p. 294) noted further, to obtain in this way absolutely integral conditions for the causal relationship, the mind creates an idea of spontaneity, “capable <...> to act without any prior reason”. The reason is “<...> if everything occurs only based on the laws of nature, there is always a subordinate only, not the foundation, and therefore there is no complete series <...> of reasons happening from each other. Meanwhile, the law of nature is that nothing happens without enough of a quite defined a priori reason” (Kant, 1998, p. 254).

Thus, it proves that *the whole range of subordinate causes* has to be *rooted in anything else*. However, something *non-subordinate*, i.e. not dependent on any other reason, may act as ‘other’ to all subordinate reasons. Hence, “<...> the allegation that any causation is possible only under the laws of nature <...> contradicts itself, and therefore <...> it is necessary to assume *absolute spontaneity of reasons* – [the ability] to start *itself* one or another range of events, <...> i.e. transcendental freedom” (Kant, 1998, p. 254).

Consideration 2. We can assume that “<...> all actions of intelligent beings <...> are subject to natural necessity; however, these actions are free as related to a reasonable subject and its ability to act based on its reason alone” (Kant, 1996, p. 226). I. Kant presumed that practical grounding of an action act is always based on a willed decision.

Therefore, *the willed decision itself*, in terms of practical reason, needs no grounding at all, despite it was theoretically determined by some external reasons.

“The groundlessness of will <...> was recognized where it is most evident, as the will of man, and the latter was called free <...>. However, <...> due to the groundlessness of will, the necessity, on which will manifestations are always dependent, was overlooked, and actions were declared free, which they cannot be,” A. Schopenhauer wrote, “as every single action follows from the motive influence with the strictest necessity. <...> From this comes the amazing fact that everyone a priori considers themselves quite free <...>. But a posteriori, based on their experience, they find to their surprise that they are not free, but are dependent on the need” (Schopenhauer, 1992, p. 42).

Schopenhauer (1992, p. 41) arrives at the following conclusion: “*Will* as thing in itself is quite different from its appearance and is quite free from all its forms it takes during its manifestation in which she includes only the manifestation”. Here come the two problems.

Problem 1. If there is at least one thing (will), free from the form of the law of causation, we should admit the latter *is not a universal law*. On the contrary, if the law of causation is a universal law, science can recognize nothing as a *foundation*.

The optimal solution to the problem was given by Kant (1998, p. 294) who specified “<...> two kinds of causality in relation to what is happening: *natural* and *free* necessity”. The basis for both is formed by one law of reason, according to which “<...> no phenomenon can be <...> effective <...>

without a sufficient ground” (Leibniz, 1982, p. 418). However, this principle assumes two opposite actions:

1) The approving (natural) effect of this principle is that the real content of the subject must be also caused by something else. Therefore, *the natural causality* denotes “<...> the connection of one state <...> with another preceding state, which the former follows by the rule” (Kant, 1998, p. 294).

2) The denying (reverse) effect of the same principle is that every object with no external cause has no real content. This relates to *free causation*, i.e. to will, as will as a thing-in-itself has no predetermined real content, according to its concept.

In the latter case, it can have no external reason as well, due to *the negative form of the law of reason*. And if it is said that “<...> will as thing-in-itself cannot be subject to the law of reason” (Schopenhauer, 1992, p. 70), it applies only to its asserting (natural) form.

On the other hand, Heidegger (1999, p. 25-26) is also right, considering “<...> the provision of reason <...> as the one that can have no exceptions <...>”. “We have distinguished between the denying and approving forms <...> of the provision of reason,” M. Heidegger teaches, making it clear that everything free from the approving form of this principle is subject to *its denying form*. And in this case, will as a free foundation by no means violates the principle of reason, but is an exception that confirms this rule by contradiction.

Problem 2. Based on the principle of identity, any *foundation of nature and knowledge*, from which it can be drawn “<...> have the same content, and the difference between them is merely a difference of forms” (Hegel, 1975, p. 281). If *will*, i.e. transcendental freedom, serves as the *foundation of science*, it can be concluded that “<...> knowledge in its inner form and essence is the *existence of freedom*” (Fichte, 1993, p. 629).

However, we have already found out that freedom is nothing more than a lack of definedness, i.e. nothing, while any *knowledge*, on the contrary, is a defined something; so how is the latter drawn from the former, i.e. knowledge from freedom?

“Any defined knowledge,” Fichte (1993, p. 630) writes, “embraces this double nature: freedom in general, which thereby is the *knowledge*, and some restriction and destruction of the freedom existence, through which knowledge becomes a *defined knowledge*”. However, “<...> that is freedom that can capture and bind itself. It is the foundation of all its possible definitions. It would not be freedom if it were possible to take such a foundation outside of it” (Fichte, 1993, p. 631).

But if, in this way, all foundations of science are arbitrary, then what is the distinction between science and art and what is there any point, for example, in logic with its search for necessary and generally valid rules. The optimal solution to this problem was proposed by I. Fichte who managed to derive the definition of a necessary universal higher goal from the very concept of freedom.

Freedom was originally defined by Kant (1998, p. 254) as “<...> *spontaneity of reasons*, i.e. an [ability] to start a particular range of phenomena *by itself*”. But if we are talking about freedom as a characteristic of the choice we made and having a certain content *A*, then the expression “by itself” can no longer be understood as *absence of an external reason*, specifically because it equals to the absence of any real content.

Hence, *the spontaneity* of an action does not mean that it has no external reason, rather its reason is *not taken into account by us as indifferent to the practical mind*, i.e. it turns out “<...> all the actions of intelligent beings <...> comply with natural necessity; but in relation to a reasonable subject <...> the same actions are free” (Kant, 1996, p. 226).

Indeed, *A* may necessarily result from reason *B*, but only if *A* is contained in *B*, i.e. if *A* and *B* «<...> have the same content, and the difference between them is only the difference in their forms” (Hegel, 1975, vol. I, p. 281). If, in fact, $A = B$, the law of reason only *formally* draws *A* from *B* as from something *other*. Practically, *A* is always drawn *from its own content*, i.e. *from itself*, according to the law of contradiction and identity.

Therefore, the latter is *the principle of free causality*, as it draws the content of *A* from itself, i.e. *by itself*: “ $A=A$ is surely a logically correct provision, and <...> its meaning is as follows: *if A is necessary, then A is necessary*” (Fichte, 1993, p. 47).

Hence it is clear that freedom and necessity cannot contradict each other. Indeed, their essence is based on the same logical principle of the object identity to itself, i.e. to its definition: *any $A = A$; if $A = B$ and A is necessary, then B is necessary*. But we can rely on any definedness of *A* based on the following meanings.

A as a *subject*: that is a semantic meaning of the concept considered as a purely ideal, i.e. conceivable, definedness.

A as an *object*: that is the presentive meaning of the concept considered as a reality in itself. Although, an object is not always real, the principle of identity is always true, which states, according to Kant (1998, p. 122), that “<...> the concept is necessarily asserted with respect to the object, because the opposite would contradict it”.

Therefore, even in the case when object *A* is absent in reality, its reality is assumed in its concept as a logical oughtness, so both meanings (both the deniable subject and supposed semantic ones) are meant together under the same concept.

The latter, according to I. Fichte, leads to the fact that whenever *an object is denied*, i.e. when no presentive meaning corresponds to the semantic one, the meaning of the concept as a whole contradicts itself, and this contradiction is the very essence of the *denial of its reality*.

Fichte (1993) arrived at the following conclusion: “Everything, to which the provision $A=A$ is applicable has <...> reality”, and “<...> to the extent that this provision is applicable to it” (Fichte, 1993, p. 82). We cannot state that the *non-existing* object *A* exists. Therefore, the provision “*A is A* (same as $A=A$, since this is the meaning of the logical connective)” does not apply to it.

But if the provision $A=A$ as the principle of free causality is true not for all ideal definitions, rather only for those that correspond to something *real*, we get: “Freedom <...> is the point of connection of ideality and reality” (Fichte, 1993, p. 388).

That means that the very concept of freedom defines *the necessity to limit it*, which is as follows: whatever our will desires, not any ideal definition may become its object, but only one that *complies with the principle of contradiction and identity*, if anything *real* can correspond to it in principle. However, there are cases where “<...> the object of desire is deprived of any reality; but it must have it due to the power of desire as it aims at reality” (Fichte, 1993, p. 312).

Thus, it is emphasized that the *necessity* contained in the concept of freedom is merely *moral*, rather *natural*, as the object reality is affirmed there as a pure oughtness, which in fact may not be realized.

Moral necessity is defined as a necessity of a special kind which coincides with the idea of free will, as only it means that “<...> *will is a law for itself in all actions*” (Kant, 1995, p. 105). However, this is nothing more than the law of contradictions and identity: $A=A$.

Thus, if this principle was earlier understood only as a manifestation of the purpose of learning and logical proof, now it appears to us as a principle of *any goal-setting and any will*.

This means that “the ultimate human aspiration <...> is the aspiration for identity, for full harmony with themselves,” Fichte (1993) concludes, “and that they could always be in harmony with themselves, to agree everything that is outside them with their <...> notions thereabout. Their notions *should not contradicted by anything* <...>, but also should have anything corresponding to them” (Fichte, 1993, p. 22). On the one hand, this means that the law of contradiction and identity can be recognized as a universal rule not only in science, but also in religion and morality: in all of them, “<...> the ultimate human goal is full agreement <...> with themselves <...>. This agreement is what Kant calls the *good* (das höchste Gut)” (Fichte, 1993, p. 17).

Accordingly, if someone’s moral contains *a contradiction*, i.e. if one part of it denies the other, such moral itself will turn out as an absolute moral evil, even from its own point of view.

“Moral evil,” Kant (1999, p. 232) claimed, “has a characteristics inseparable from its nature, that it is <...> self-destructive and self-contradictory according to its purpose”. The question is: how then are illogical and contradictory goals possible, if the logical law of contradiction *is the foundation of any goal-setting*? The reason is rooted in unclear relations between different types of necessity.

In fact, if *freedom* is understood as an opposite to necessity, then the latter is considered in its narrow, rather general sense, i.e. as a *natural necessity* or as “< ... > a connection between one state <...> and another preceding the state followed by the former by the rule” (Kant, 1998, p. 294). But this approach approaches the causal relationship between states *A* and *B* based on their *formal differences*, where *B* is thought *as something else* when related to *A*. Due to this, we may not only *be unaware* of their identity, but even, for example, to desire one, hating the other.

That is what defines contradictory goal. However, this contradiction is clearly inherent *not to the will itself, but to the mind which is unaware that $A=B$* ; when the desired *A* is followed by the hated *B*, its necessity is perceived as *an external enforcement*.

“This is a standpoint of non-freedom and at the same time is a source of discontent,” Hegel (1975) notes, “On the contrary, when a person admits that what is happening to them is only the evolution of themselves and that he bears only their own guilt, they treats everything as a free human and retains the belief that they does not experience injustice in all circumstances of their life” (p. 326). This means that freedom is a *cognized necessity*, not only in terms of humility with the inevitable, but also to the effect that the cognized inevitable connection of events $A=B$ helps making a consistent, i.e. free choice: *if A, then B, and if not-B, then not-A*.

7. Conclusion

So, if cognized logical necessity of choice makes it *free and morally justified*, it is possible to boil down both logical and natural necessity to moral one, and recognize everything real, according to Hegel (1975), reasonable and morally perfect in the sense that “<...> since there is something, it is exactly what it should be” (p. 324). As a result, our study leads to the following results:

1) Moral evil is not about real actions, but about the inconsistency of its appraisal and goals set behind it. This applies both to those who do evil and those third parties who appraise it.

2) The logical law of contradiction and identity is a general principle of any goal-setting, and hence the general principle of free causality and moral necessity.

3) Natural necessity differs from moral necessity only in the formal distinction of cause and consequence. The content of the cause and effect is identical, which determine all kinds of necessity.

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