

Dialogue and the New Cosmopolitanism

Conversations with Edward Demenchonok

Edited by Fred Dallmayr

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Rationality, Harmony, and Responsibility.

Grigorii L. Tulchinskii

Ideas of dialogue and harmony, and harmony through dialogical relationships, are key to identifying opportunities and building a basis for cooperation between representatives of different cultures in solving both social problems that are directly related to them and more general problems that affect all people living on our planet. And, indeed, there are more and more such problems: from nuclear proliferation to climate change, from the elimination of poverty to the struggle against pandemics and the prevention and resolution of multi-level conflicts.

Themes of intercultural dialogue, intercultural harmony, and cultural identity in the globalized world are at the forefront of contemporary discussions and are actively being explored in our time. Edward Demenchonok has made a substantial contribution to this development—not only through his own research but also through his activity in uniting the efforts of researchers from other countries in intercultural philosophical dialogue.¹ This activity is a continuation of a quarter-century (1970–1995) of his work at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where he fruitfully studied and published on contemporary trends and issues in world philosophy, devoting special attention to such a culturally diverse and complex region as Latin America.

It is remarkable that Edward Demenchonok, in his interpretation of dialogue as dialogical relations, highlights its personological basis (in intra-personal and inter-subjective as well as intercultural dialogue) and its moral underpinning in light of Bakhtin's dialogism and *filosofii postupka* (philosophy of act).² The term "*postupok*" is an original culturally embedded Russian notion and philosopheme that has no complete equivalent in European languages, and its translation cannot convey the richness of this original Russian term. It has a much broader meaning than "act," "action," "deed," or "*Wirkung*," which basically mean an immediate practical (physical) action and its social significance, while *postupok* implies motivation from the inside of the person and responsibility for the action in its relation to the person's worldview. For the Russian spiritual experience, *postupok* is a responsible, conscious, rationally motivated, and thus free act. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, *postupok* is a manifestation of "participative thinking" and of primordial man's "non-alibi in Being" as the condition and prerequisite of freedom. *Postupok* is a heuristically rich philosopheme, the philosophical elaboration of which opens new horizons for the understanding of conscious and responsible being in our challenging world.

It should be noted that the search for harmony, the cohesion of society and integrity with the wholeness of the world, is common for the peoples of Russia, Latin America, and other nations, and it is expressed in their philosophical traditions. This is traditionally a very Russian theme: from communality to "*sobornost*" (communal spirit, conciliarity) and to the philosophies of organicism and cosmism. As Edward Demenchonok writes, "The main motifs and topics of Russian philosophy are bound together by a striving for wholeness as a desirable state of humankind, both as a social body and individually. It is expressed in the concept of *sobornost*' (spiritual community of jointly living people), meaning a free spiritual unity of people both in religious life and in the secular community, and the relations of brotherhood and love." This concept was developed by Alexey Khomyakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Pavel Florensky, Sergei Bulgakov, and Nikolai Lossky. Moreover, "Vladimir Solovyov developed the ideas of 'positive wholeness' (*vse-edinstvo*, or unity-of-all), and 'Godmanhood,' and he philosophically grounded universal moral principles in his concept of the 'justification of the Good.'"³

As the children’s adage goes, “whoever hurts, he speaks about that.” For Russia, which suffered the violence of civil war and foreign invasions, such as during World War Two in which 27 million perished, peace and harmony have an especial, existential meaning, and the themes of accord and harmony and dialogue both within a huge country and with other countries have been traditional throughout history, just as they are today. These ideas have become increasingly pertinent for the whole world, which is facing global problems that threaten the future of humanity and which can be mitigated only through the joint efforts of collaborative nations. In this regard, Leo Semashko initiated and has worked for several years within the framework of the large-scale international organization called the Global Harmony Association—over the last ten years, this team has published eight books in Russia and abroad.⁴ An exceptionally broad survey of approaches, concepts, and ideas (including not only European authors) about the wholeness of the polycultural world was proposed by Eugene Zelenev.⁵

All authors engaged in the development of the theme of harmony and dialogue, despite all their originality, are united by the desire to better understand the complex relationships of cultures and to highlight a common basis for the dialogue of people. Building such a dialogue and understanding the path toward harmony in relationships touch on the topic of rationality one way or another. Usually, the contribution of rationalism and its main brainchild—science—to the development of civilization is associated with scientific and technological development. Indeed, the face of contemporary civilization—production, service, communications, living conditions, health care, etc.—is determined, first of all, by the means provided by science and technology. Equally important, though perhaps less obvious, is the influence of the idea of rationality and science on moral culture and even political culture. In this essay, an attempt is made to identify the main aspects of this influence and to briefly outline their content and prospects.

RATIONALITY AS MERELY AN EFFECTIVE “TECHNICALITY”?

Usually, rationality is understood as normativity, as adherence to a certain system of rules and patterns that allow one to achieve some significant goals. The general characteristic of rationality so understood is the orientation toward models of successful (cognitive, constructive, economic, etc.) activity.⁶ Moreover, success is understood precisely as the achievement of specific goals. Actually, normativity, in fact, is nothing more than a successful effective experience enshrined in the rules.

In this regard, the paradox of rationality arises. Indeed, if rationality is associated with certain patterns, that is, normativity, then the very choice of these patterns, norms, and criteria cannot be justified rationally. The situation of a “logical circle” arises when rationality is determined by the characteristics of scientificity, and scientificity has to be substantiated through rationality. It is with the attempts to solve this problem that the search for various types and forms of rationality are associated: scientific, practical, social, etc., up to the self-sufficient rationality of forms of social life and specific types of activity. The introduction of the “multidimensionality” of rationality looks somewhat more elegant and highlights its various “dimensions”: methodological, sociological, psychological, socio-psychological, linguistic, psychosemantic, political, economic, etc. At the same time, nothing prevents the expansion of this open list.

Rationality is always specific and linked to the solution of a specific problem, functioning as a way to solve it successfully.⁷

Therefore, it seems that the ever-greater fragmentation of rationality is not due to postmodernism⁸ but scientific rationality itself, with its focus on the self-sufficiency of various value-normative systems. However, such a pluralistic attitude does not relieve the tension associated with the question of what is common to all possible models of rationality and allows us to speak of it as a kind of integral concept.⁹ If we start from such a formulation of the question, then the way out can be sought in the very root of the idea of rationality.

The civilizational breakthrough, which determined the image of the contemporary world, all its achievements, prospects, and problems, is largely due to the “meeting of Athens and Jerusalem” and the synthesis of two great ideas: Judeo-Christian monotheism and Greek logic. The awareness that the world was created by a single will according to a single intelligent design and that a person is given intellectual means and abilities

to comprehend this design—the *logos* as a rational idea, thought, the law of the world order—is a key moment for understanding why it was in the bosom of this tradition that scientific methods and scientific and technical progress are found. First, as a sophisticated questioning of the sacred texts. Then, the questioning of nature itself (experimental knowledge).¹⁰ There was only one step left from this until the rejection of the “hypothesis of God” and the transition to activities that were not only cognitive but also transformative. The world as a whole and its fragments appear to be manufactured. The path of cognition is the path of realizing the schematism of this manufacturing. The infinite is reduced to the finite. This provided the conditions for the rapid rise of the scientific and technological progress of Western civilization as a scientific and techno-genetic civilization, allowing the development of science, education, scientific and technological progress, business activity, and management.

Traditionally understood rationality expresses precisely the idea of the manufacturing of a thing, a phenomenon, its “hidden schematism,” as Francis Bacon said. We can say that such an understanding of rationality goes back to the ancient idea of “*techne*”—a skillful artificial transformation.

In this regard, rationality coincides with the idea of efficiency as expediency, efficiency, and economy. In the first case, we are talking about the correspondence between the chosen goals and the needs or value norms (G / N). In the second—between the result and the goals (R / G). In the third—between the result and the cost of resources (R / C).¹¹ In other words, rationality = efficiency = (G / N × R / G × R / C). The overlap of the concepts of rationality and efficiency is not accidental. It testifies to a deep fundamental commonality of managerial and cognitive processes, expressed in their conditionality by practical activity. Just as the integral expression of efficiency is the relation of needs to the available opportunities and resources, so the integral expression of the idea of rationality, the rational arrangement of things, is the idea of the realizable and effective action of its “hidden schematism.” Rationality as the effectiveness and constructiveness of purposeful activity means that it is reasonable and rational to achieve the goal, and by optimal means.

This approach allows one to find a general principle of rationality, to streamline sometimes unreasonably divorced concepts. So, in the work of Chester Barnard, devoted to the management of organizations, the

effectiveness of the organization and its rationality (efficiency) are distinguished. In the first case, we are talking about achieving goals; in the second—about focusing on meeting needs and solving real problems.¹² It is easy to see that it is less fruitful to separate these concepts first and then talk about the task of their harmonization than to proceed from their initial connection.

The proposed approach opens the horizon to grasping the limitations of the traditional understanding of rationality. The twentieth century did not only bring about welfare and prosperity. Environmental problems, nuclear weapons, technical disasters, dangerous technologies, and political violence are by no means incidental costs but direct and inalienable consequences of the “technical” idea of rationality, which justifies bringing the surrounding reality into conformity with its cognized essence. Moreover, a person—as a being who is finite (in space and time)—cannot obtain the fullness of the knowledge of reality. A person always comprehends reality from some position, from some point of view, and with some sense that is set, first of all, by the context of their purpose. This knowledge, by its very nature, is not complete.

Traditional rationality actually sows the mortification of the living with abstract schemes that require forced implementation, giving rise to the problems of the metaphysics of morality that humanity faced in the twentieth century. “Technical” rationality either rejects it as an irrational category of responsibility (and related ideas of conscience, guilt, repentance, shame, etc.) or interprets it as responsibility for the implementation of a rational (= effective) idea. This kind of rationality leads to the self-sufficiency of certain spheres of application of reason: in science—to the extremes of scientism, in art—to formalistic aesthetics, in technology—to the absurdity of self-directed technicalism, in politics—to manifestations of Machiavellianism. The consequence of the absolutization of such rationality is immoralism, negative aspects of scientific and technological progress that feed misology, anti-scientism, and totalitarianism. The absolutization of the tradition of “technical” or “technological” rationality leads to the extremes of abstract rationalism, fraught with imposture, the tyranny of reason, and violence.

Our time recognizes itself as an era of practice and experimentation, when the fruits of enlightenment, great ideas in science and morality, politics, and economics, have become reality. And this reality is

increasingly expressed and realized as a crisis, not only in ecology but also in democracy, morality, science, art, etc. This crisis of the world, which is disintegrating into self-integral spheres of being that do not coincide with each other, is largely a consequence of the unrestrained expansion of “technical” or instrumental rationality. The current civilization is fraught with environmental problems, technologies that threaten the lives of mankind, and the rise of ugly and repressive political regimes. It is no coincidence that modern philosophy is characterized by the interpretation of rationality as a source of violence.

THE PARADOX OF RATIONALISTIC ACTIVISM

In one of my books, it was systematically shown how this type of rationality manifests itself in arbitrary violence against nature, society, and man.¹³ Rationalistic morality, brought to the limit of logical consequences, even leads to the “devastating paradox.”

The appeal to knowledge and objectivity can turn into depersonalization and inhumanity. Such a mind is capable of explaining anything for any purpose. “The mind is a scoundrel,” wrote Fyodor Dostoevsky, because it “prevaricates” and is ready to justify anything. This is reinforced by its desire to learn regularities. Nature and society are subjected to violence for the sake of the implementation of the allegedly known regularities of their own development. And at the same time, responsibility is removed—in the end, nature and people are brought into line with their own essence. In other words, freedom is understood as arbitrariness imposed from the outside on nature, society, and man. A person is obliged to accept a certain scheme, “to realize the need”; therefore, he/she, one way or another, turns out to be absolutely not free in justifying his/her actions. But on the other hand, the person is completely free from responsibility for their consequences and results. After all, it is said that he/she acted rationally, was just a means and a tool, a performer—and nothing more. Thus, “technical” rationalism deprives the philosophy of morality of the act itself as a conscious and responsible action.

Attempts to implement rationalistic programs and projects and moral norms that organize social life are often imposed under the pretext of making others happy—regardless of or even against their own will. Society

turns out to be fundamentally inhuman, outside of humanity, denying human dignity. The mind turns out to be given to a person solely in order, in contemporary terms, to integrate himself/herself as a means, as a “screw,” in a certain target program of a higher subject. A person’s striving for freedom turns out to be obedience, and freedom of will turns out to be a will to bondage.

The Great French Revolution—the triumph and apotheosis of the Enlightenment and rationalism—revealed quite a lot in its time. The history of building a “rational society” on the basis of “laws of social development” was repeated in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution. Irresponsible violence is the main consequence of abstract rationalism. Such rationalism was reproached by all its critics: from the German romantics to Albert Schweitzer and from the existentialists to contemporary postmodernists.

The complete general civilizational victory of rationality struck science itself in an unexpected and paradoxical way. In a postmodern multicultural society, science has appeared as one of the equally possible normative-value systems, having lost the aura of exclusivity in public opinion, the right to authority in objective judgment. Moreover, *logos* was identified with coercion and masculine violence. Almost like in the well-known proverb: “What we fought for, we were hurt by.”

Ultimately, rationality, which goes back to “*techne*” (the idea of being manufactured), is unable to justify responsible consciousness and behavior, and reason turns out to be a questionable and highly problematic thing. So, even Immanuel Kant, despite his defense of the idea of the rationality of good (free) will, emphasized that reason does not provide a path to happiness; on the contrary: “there arises in many, and indeed in those who have experimented most with this use of reason, if only they are candid enough to admit it, a certain degree of *misology*, that is, hatred of reason” and “they find that they have in fact only brought more trouble upon themselves instead of gaining in happiness; and because of this they finally envy rather than despise the more common run of people, who are closer to the guidance of mere natural instinct and do not allow their reason much influence on their behavior.” This reminds us of the integrity and natural simplicity of Platon Karataev’s personality (a character in Leo Tolstoy’s novel *War and Peace*), not broken by the reflections of the enlightened mind. As Kant continued, “Now in a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its *preservation*, its *welfare*, in a word, its

happiness, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose.”¹⁴ This goal, according to Kant, would be much easier to achieve and more accurately achieved by instinct.

Although happiness is a consequence of prudence, reason itself does not lead to happiness. If a truly rational (prudent, reasonable, and logical) “act” turns out to be a reckless, instinctive one, devoid of a rational principle, is this not evidence of the paradoxical result of rationalism?

The abandonment of reason is a consistent “logical” consequence of “technical” rationalism. Blaise Pascal made the suggestion to “go stupid,” Leo Tolstoy’s was “to be simpler,” and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s was “to get rid of logic.”

The contemporary Russian situation is symptomatic in this regard. It seems that all the pluses have changed into minuses and vice versa; there has been a radical change in values and guidelines. “Spirituality” has taken the place of materialism. On the shelves of bookstores, the place of literature on dialectical and historical materialism has been taken by “spiritual,” mental, and supramental literature. Irrationalism has taken the place of rationalism. The words “science” and “scientific” are perceived skeptically and almost discredited. Interests in astrology, horoscopes, palmistry, parapsychology, telekinesis, UFOs, aliens, etc. have become fashionable. And the place of utopianism has been taken by cynical and down-to-earth pragmatism. At first glance, everything has changed in the spiritual experience. Paradoxically, so-called “spirituality” has turned into a desire to change the material with the help of the spiritual-ideal, e.g., to heal at a distance, to move objects by an effort of will, etc. Irrationality is normative and catechetical, like any practice of Gnosticism, witchcraft, etc. Pragmatism seeks to get a result, to achieve immediate success, in the here and now, through an effort of will alone. It is this kind of spirituality that is indistinguishable from materialism, rationalistic irrationality, and pragmatism that is utopian. And, most importantly, the outcome is the same. In both cases, it is insanity, an escape from freedom, when a person (as Gustav Shpet used to say) dissolves like a piece of butter in a frying pan. And no one is responsible for anything.

As usual, the idea of freedom as responsibility and the rule of law in relation to any authority are rejected. Obviously, the problem is not in the lack or excess of rational knowledge but in the *quality* of this rationality,

which is not capable of unifying society based on a constructive balance of interests.

But, one way or another, as in the case of any paradox, the limitations of “technical” rationality and the need to search for a broader conceptual apparatus are exposed. And this opens up a new perspective of rationality.

“COSMIC” RATIONALITY

Rationality, cognition, and comprehension are associated not only with purposefulness but, ultimately, with the limitation and finiteness of expression, description, and representation. They are the manifestations of the attempts of a finite system (a human being), limited in space and time, to understand and express by finite means the infinite variety of the world, including the infinite variety of characteristics and properties of an individual thing, phenomenon. This limitation inevitably manifests itself in its abstraction from some properties and selective focus on others, which are essential in some sense (according to a certain goal) and perceived as forming a certain integral distinction of the whole thing.

Among other things, this also means the desire for a finite number of steps to build, construct, and recreate a given thing as a whole. In relation to this orientation toward wholeness, one can speak of another tradition of rationality. It can be associated with the ancient Greek idea of “*cosmos*”—the natural harmonious wholeness of the world, when the individual and the unique acquires special significance as not an abstract element of a set, but as a necessary part of the whole, without which the whole would be quite different. In principle, such an attitude toward wholeness has always been present in science (at least in the form of a requirement for the logical non-contradiction of knowledge), and in modern science, the tendency to concretize such an approach is increasingly growing. David Bohm’s “holographic universe,” Karl Pribram’s “holographic brain,” and Israel M. Gelfand’s “given coordinates” are examples of systems in which the dynamics of each component affect all others, and hence the system as a whole. We can also recall Ernst Mach’s principle of the “universal interconnection of the whole world.” A synergetic approach also fits into this trend, especially the ideas of Ilya Prigogine regarding indeterminism in the study of unstable systems and the eventual integrity of the universe of

an infinite physical vacuum. The eastern analog of this type of rationality is the idea of “Dao”: Dao-truth as a Dao-path—the one and only in the harmonious wholeness of the world.

The conceptualization of harmony and dialogue by Edward Demenchonok is precisely in line with this tradition.¹⁵ This type of rationality is associated with the now almost forgotten categories of harmony and measure. Understanding human existence in this tradition is the realization not of an abstract generality but of a part of a concrete unity, which makes it possible to quite rationally raise the question of the nature of initial responsibility and non-alibi-in-being. This is not a responsibility to a higher authority in any of its guises, nor to a common idea and its bearers, but rather to the initial harmony of the whole, a part (not an element!) of which is an individually unique personality, to one’s own path—precisely one’s own, not the reproduction of someone else’s—and to one’s own “theme” or “voice” in this polyphonic harmony of the world,

In our time, the dependence of “technical” rationality on a more fundamental “cosmic” rationality is becoming more and more obvious. However, this does not negate the “technical” one but includes it as a means of reflection, an awareness of measure, and the content of responsibility. When the reduction of the infinite and the absolute to the relative and the finally manufactured leads to the inhuman, then the orientation toward the infinite and the absolute leads to the spiritual work of the soul and to its humanity. Responsibility is primary, while mind and intelligence are secondary.

The latter are the means for realizing the measure and depth of responsibility, the measure and depth of our involvement in connections and relationships, and the measure and depth of embeddedness and freedom in the world.

“Cosmic” rationality does not discard the “technical” one, its apparatus, because a person can only comprehend the measure and depth of responsibility by traditional methods (theoretical knowledge, modeling, etc.). But the vector is changing. Now it is not responsibility for the sake of rational arbitrariness but rationality as a way of understanding the measure and depth of responsibility. At the same time, the emphasis is also shifting: from partial efficiency to holistic harmonization; from the goal to the means used for achieving it; from the search for the root cause to the identification of the consequences; and hence from will to responsibility. The traditional

path is the path of arbitrariness and imposture, the path of the destruction of nature, of human ties and souls. The alternative way is the way of freedom and responsibility, the way of establishing existence and harmony—in the soul and with the world. Either Dostoevsky was right when he said that “the mind is a scoundrel because it prevaricates,” or one must learn how to be able to use it properly.

Our time is the time of realizing the limits of traditional technological reason and instrumental rationality and their consequences. The imposture of rationalistic activism, which humanity allows in technology, politics, and even in science, is increasingly narrowing. Cognition of the essence and the essentiality of knowledge turn out to be manifestations of a specifically human dimension of being—freedom and responsibility in the harmonious integrity of being. Lack of knowledge, “technical” incomprehensibility, and “irrationality” do not excuse us from “cosmic” responsibility. “Technical” responsibility is not discarded but viewed as a technical means of knowing one’s place and path in the “cosmos.” Moreover, responsibility itself acquires a fundamentally rational character. It is irrational or “more than rational” in the traditional technical sense. But in the cosmic sense, it is simply rational. It is only “differently-rational,” if not proto-rational.

THE PROTO-RATIONALITY OF FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

The comprehension of reality is not reducible to the awareness of the “manufacturedness” of things and phenomena. And the idea is not reducible to a program of effective (successful) activity. All this, of course, constitutes the fabric of comprehension, but it is secondary. The idea is the knowledge of the measure and depth of freedom, and hence the measure and depth of responsibility. Reason and rationality are secondary. Responsibility is primary as a correlation with others and with the world and conscience as a recognition of their rights and a dialogue with them. Human being is co-being, and consciousness is nothing more than conscience. In consciousness (conscience), the personal existence of a person is realized and it requires personal efforts to understand what is happening, while the mind only needs a clear expression of knowledge and the observance of objective rules to operate them.

The dutifulness (the “ought”) of human action is not determined simply by the truth of the available knowledge and theoretical reasoning. It is not consciousness and thinking that are primary but the very practical life activities of which they are an aspect. Theoreticity and rationality are not goals but means, albeit means of justifying human actions. The human world is a personal world, not accidental, entirely filled with responsible choices.

And the center, the “assemblage point,” of this responsibility is the personality, which occupies a unique and therefore responsible place in the fabric of being.

This power and significance of the individualized personality is implicitly recognized by abstract rationalism, which appeals to personal responsibility and asks the personality for its self-denial and submission. However, the principle of personal responsibility in any form presupposes the unconditional recognition of absolutely free will. The refusal to recognize freedom of choice would mean the collapse of any ethical system, morality, and law. The uniqueness and primacy of the responsibility of the individual for any manifestation of his/her activity is the cornerstone of any law and any morality.

According to the profound remark of Mikhail Bakhtin, will and duty are extra-ethical, primary in relation to any ethics or other system of values and norms (aesthetic, scientific, religious, etc.). For him, specific ethical, aesthetic, scientific, etc. norms are “technical” in relation to the original dutifulness of human activity.¹⁶

Mikhail Bakhtin concurs with his older brother Nikolay in the clear separation of the concepts of ethical norms and obligations. Taking into account the spiritual closeness of the brothers and the depth of spiritual searches inherent in their circle, the deep thoughtfulness of this idea is confirmed. Indeed, the absolutization of ethics leads, as the experience of Nietzsche or Dostoevsky’s “underground man” showed, to nihilism. The endless need to substantiate the “ought” by some kind of norm is a consequence of the very nature of theoretical substantiation, which points to an endless succession of meta-meta-meta- . . . meta-levels.

The search for a “universal,” “primary” ethics (either content-ethics or formal ethics) applicable to everyone is in principle abstract and empty to begin with. Ethics is just one, albeit the most important, manifestation of the primary dutifulness in human behavior. According to Mikhail and

Nikolay Bakhtin, there is no “content” in dutifulness at all, while dutifulness can be applied to anything which has a meaningful significance. This is not about the derivation of responsibility as a consequence of something but about the ontological primordially of responsibility. The depth of this concept lies precisely in emphasizing the primacy and the fundamental inescapability of the “non-alibi in Being”¹⁷ of a person, the primacy of his responsibility in relation to any form of activity.

It is interesting to compare the idea of dutifulness (the “ought”) outside ethics with the diametrically opposite (at first glance) concept of Albert Schweitzer about the primacy of the ethical in relation to the worldview and action. The very ethical content Schweitzer saw in responsible self-consciousness found its final expression in “reverence for life.”¹⁸ But, in fact, in this case, it is actually the same view: the original human non-alibi-in-being and primacy, the fundamental nature of the life principle in the face of reason.

Thus, it is not “I think, therefore I exist” but “I exist, therefore I think.” It is not the ontological assumptions of reason that are primary but rather the connection with being in the world and with others and the initial responsibility. Reason and rationality as such are unproductive in and of themselves. They become productive only in the case of the “responsible participation” of the person, not from abstraction into the “general” but, on the contrary, in relation to the person’s “unique place in being.” The action can be explained not from its result or rationality, which justifies the achievement of this particular result by these means, but only from within the “act of my participation” in life.

A sane act, that is, a responsible and rationally meaningful act, is the action of the dutiful uniqueness of human life. In Bakhtin’s words, “That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else.”¹⁹ This conclusion is fundamentally important. First, Bakhtin asserts the nonlinearity of an act that is always performed here and now and is irreversible, since it creates new realities. Second, only from this position can one explain how the “leap” from the realm of consciousness and thinking to the realm of reality occurs when an act is performed: “the uniqueness or singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellingly obligatory.”²⁰ Responsibility is irremovable from human life. The actually performed act in its individual wholeness is not responsible because it is rational, but it is rational because it is responsible. An act is not irrational; it

is simply “more than rational—it is responsible.” Rationality is only a moment, a side of responsibility, a measure of its scale and depth. It is nothing more than an explanation and justification of an act both before and after its completion.

Doesn't the primacy of responsibility in relation to traditional rationality mean its not-rationality, or at least, its irrationality? After all, there is a rationalistic tradition of evaluating responsibility, sin, repentance, guilt as categories of the irrational. Doesn't responsibility become hung up in groundlessness? In the end, to whom is responsibility due?

A person cannot live in a meaningless world. His life in the world and the world itself must be comprehensible, understood, explained, and thus justified. In the relationship between dutifulness (the “ought”) and objectivity, reason plays a fundamental but mediating role. The crux of the difference between them, their opposition, is in the ratio of reason and responsibility. If responsibility is a consequence of reason, secondary to rational schemes and derived from them, then the result will be rationalistic utopianism, which turns into the practice of bureaucratic totalitarianism. If reason is a consequence of the proto-rationality of responsibility and a way of knowing its measure and depth, then the result is the consciousness of the duty of a free person.

But the responsibility, duty, and guilt of the individual are absolute and primordial, while merits and successes are relative. The internal guarantors of self-esteem are the duty, dedication, self-restraint, and self-determination (setting oneself a limit, a “boundary”) of the personality. But this is a duty, “the will to bondage,” not imposed from the outside and “required” by the individual person. This is the person's “I cannot do otherwise,” his/her own consciously understood vocation and moral choice. Only the “internal” duty, taken upon by the person themselves, is moral, and the ethics of duty is possible only “internally,” subjectively, applicable to yourself, when you are obligated to everyone but nobody is obligated to you.

This altruistic relation to the “other” is highlighted by Edward Demenchonok when he refers to Bakhtin's view of “the inequality of the I and the other with respect to value in Christianity (we should relieve the other of any burdens and take them upon ourselves).”²¹ As Bakhtin writes, “In Christ we find a synthesis of unique depth, the synthesis of *ethical solipsism* . . . with *ethical-aesthetic kindness* toward the other, . . . for

myself—absolute sacrifice, for the other—loving mercy. But *I-for-myself* is the *other* for God. . . . What I must be for the other, God is for me.”²²

THE PERSONOLOGICAL NATURE OF RATIONALITY

The cosmic rationality of wholeness is initially focused on building balance and harmonizing interactions, which in itself does not imply violence. We can say that the idea of tolerance is a manifestation of this aspect of rationality and is by no means relative. In these conditions, technical rationality acquires the character of an instrument for identifying the possible outcome of an action and its consequences and the responsibility for them. Of particular relevance is the definition of the socio-psychological prerequisites for building optimal and effective relations in society and the consolidation and optimization of the interests of all participants in social life. The economy, as well as politics and education, are not self-sufficient, but have a person as their ultimate goal.

The main tendency of processes in various areas of life is indicative, that is, there is an increasingly obvious dependence on the personal factor.²³ This means there is an increasing dependence in political life on the personality of leaders and on taking the personal expectations of citizens into account. There is also an increasingly humanitarian dependence in modern business activity: the increasingly individualized nature of marketing, advertising, personnel-oriented management technologies, public relations, the formation of corporate cultures, reputation management, etc. Only uniqueness is global. The source of all the diversity of the contemporary unified world (united in its diversity and diverse in its unity) is rooted in the soul of each unique person.

This general tendency is also expressed in the evolution of philosophizing of the last two centuries: from ontology to epistemology and further through axiology and culturology to personology. The human personality is the goal, means, and result of any social processes and transformations. Therefore, taking into account the possible consequences for prospects for personal development is fundamentally important.

There has been a shift in the global legal system, perhaps the most significant in history. The essence of this shift is that inalienable human rights have acquired supranational legal significance. This is precisely

about seemingly irreversible dynamics. On a global scale, law, along with economics and politics, has now stepped toward ensuring guarantees of national-ethnic culture.

Human rights movements have become more active everywhere, and legislation and the penitentiary system are becoming more humane. A remarkable example of this is the prohibition or moratorium on the use of the death penalty. This means that the right has already become enshrined at the level of guarantees for the existence of an individual. It looks like the next step toward the core of humanitarianism is brewing. This is not only about guarantees of freedom of religion and other cultural identities. It is also about the guarantees of the previous levels. It is about freedom on the pre-personal level. A notable example of this is the discussion about the problem of abortion and the use of genetic engineering, cloning, etc. All of them are associated with the legal protection of a person who has not yet been formed, a certain possibility of a person.

Since this shift on human rights, the law is a formalized part of the normative value content of culture, morality, fixing the established norms of social life in the “bottom line.” This shows the general dynamics of humanitarian culture over the past hundred years, which is becoming all the more obvious. In the context of the intensive transformation of contemporary society and acute intercultural and social tensions, it is important to take into account the so-called “human factor,” spiritual experience and motivation, the development of “human capital,” and the effectiveness of social investments. In contemporary society, we can no longer talk simply about the conditions of physical survival or even the provision of social justice. In the foreground are ideas about the quality of life—a fulfilling life and personal well-being, which are formed not only by money and health but also by psychological well-being and the possibility of self-determination based on ethnicity, religion, and age.

Therefore, the possibility of evaluating projects and solutions is of particular importance, the procedure of which would use the potential of technical rationality to achieve the principles of cosmic rationality. In this situation, there is a need to introduce into social practice the concept of humanitarian expertise, which makes it possible to assess the possible consequences (positive and negative) of decisions made by a person for society as a whole and for them as an individual.²⁴ Its main features are normative value content; personological character; a focus on ensuring a

balance of interests and the consolidation of society; orientation toward ensuring the possibility of socially responsible personal choice (self-determination); and complexity and interdisciplinarity.

TOWARD A NEW METAPHYSICS OF MORALITY?

A radical transition to a new understanding of man is needed. What is man's nature, and how is man positioning himself in this contemporary world? In an attempt to answer these questions, one can find arguments for two different images of man. Is man an impostor seeking expansion, aggression, violence, and murder as extreme forms of self-affirmation? In this case, man can be restrained only by counter-violence on the part of others uniting for protection—both external and internal. But violence gives rise to new rounds of violence, evil generates evil, and the more active the counter impulses are. Such imposture can be associated with an empty self-centered “cogito” dissolving not only other people in itself but also the world in general. The act of thought becomes the basis of the world, its ontological assumption. Others are only projections of my “I” (self). Existence is deduced from thought itself—that is what the imposture of abstract rationalism is.

In another, positive view of man, I am connected to others and the world, and therefore I think that I am one with them, and not because I think. The essence of a person from this point of view is not “technical” but “cosmic”—in their unity and involvement in the integral harmony of the world, in their dependence on others for their own self-affirmation, in the impossibility of self-affirmation without others, though not at the expense of others but due to others in their necessity and inevitability. It is not simplistic elementary relationships such as “subject-object,” “cause-effect,” “element-set,” or “end-means” that come to the fore, but rather a systemic reciprocity of relationships—“*sobor*” (*sobornost'*—communal spirit, conciliarity)—with everyone in the human soul.

Man is not a slave to ideas, but ideas are one of the forms of man's being in the world. Reason, knowledge, logic are universal and inhuman. The novelty lies in that this fact was fully revealed only at the turn of the century, when their inhumanity not only became clear in everyday life but their value also depreciated for humanity. Reason and knowledge were

removed from the person and put into computer information systems, becoming public property, a technical means, passed from the plane of culture to the plane of civilization, becoming “*techne*”—without man and outside of man. This has now become completely clear. Contemporary man, if he still wants to be a real man and not a technical means of civilization, must cognize himself “cosmically”—not as a mere sum of knowledge and skills. Likewise, contemporary culture must not be just a set of technologies, programs of activity, and group interests. Contemporary culture, if it wants to exist, must be a possible path to the elevation of a person, as a culture of spiritual experience that frees one from imposture.

This is the way to a new understanding of the human. Responsibility—which a person who has become internally free from the world has comprehended and is trying to realize in life—is ethics. Freedom from the world is nothing more than responsibility for it. The wider the zone of my autonomous behavior, the wider the zone of responsibility. And vice versa: the sphere that I take upon myself, for which I am responsible, is the sphere of my freedom, and a person is as ethical (free and responsible) as this sphere is wide. Traditional societies limited this sphere by its ethnicity, and later it was limited by race, nation, and class. Albert Schweitzer then extended ethical behavior to all living beings. Today, ethical self-determination in the sense of delineating the limitations of freedom and responsibility extends to almost the entire world. For society and for the individual in the current conditions of scientific and technological progress, the limits of freedom and responsibility coincide and include the habitat not only of mankind but also of nature as a whole.

The adherents of dialogue, without trivializing the gravity of the problems faced today by individuals and humanity as a whole, nevertheless reject the mood of despair and assert the possibility of a hopeful alternative and the transformation of the minds and hearts of individuals and societies. This, as Edward Demenchonok maintains, “must generate hopeful dispositions which, in turn, translate into practical conduct designed to promote peace and justice and thus to honor the ‘better angels’ of humanity. Such conduct demands the cultivation of a courage which, without turning away from present calamities, marshals as remedies the resources of civic virtue and public responsibility crucially demanded in our time.”²⁵

The concept of “harmony in difference” needs clarification. “Harmony” should not be understood as a static metaphor. It is a process, and if it is in

equilibrium, then it becomes a dynamic one, a balance of wills, realized in a continuous dialogue, as deliberation—a process of joint public discourse regarding common problems. As Edward Demenchonok rightly notes, building an effective dialogue is not so much a search for a compromise as a search for a broader context of common problems, a vision of a common future, which allows the dialogue to be transformed into a practical mode of collaboration and partnership.

Multiculturalism and tolerance in action are constantly discussed within the framework of civic identity (manifestation of personal self-determination), without which trust is impossible—not one that rallies along the ethnic-clan principle but rather “builds bridges” between representatives of different communities of a specific civil society. Moreover, since each culture, expressing a certain social experience, gives a certain life competence, the assimilation of cultural experience does not lead to a clash of cultures but instead to the acquisition of additional life competences, increases in human qualities, and social capital.

In this process, mediators or facilitators play a special role—persons who are embracing and assimilating different cultures and serving as role models for promoting intercultural dialogue. Edward Demenchonok is a prominent representative of this dialogue-facilitating role.

The “Möbius strip [tape]” of duty, honor, and responsibility connects the external and the internal, society and the individual, in the heart of the soul—the locus of freedom and responsibility. It is precisely with ideas of the harmonious wholeness of the world and the responsibility of the individual for their unique path in this single whole that the prospects of mankind’s betterment can be envisioned.

Nietzsche once said that God is dead, but actually the one who died was his “superman.” There is no human authority who can show everyone the true path of virtue. This path, the path to others, begins in the heart of everyone, and to traverse it, becoming conscious of one’s own responsibility and unity, is the task for the self-transformative work of the mind and soul of each person.

NOTES

1. This work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation, grant No. 22-18-00591 “Pragmasemantics as an interface and operational system of meaning formation.” See Edward Demenchonok’s publications: Edward Demenchonok, ed., *Between Global Violence and the Ethics of Peace: Philosophical Perspectives* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Edward Demenchonok, ed., *Philosophy After Hiroshima* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Edward Demenchonok, ed., *Intercultural Dialogue: In Search of Harmony in Diversity*, 2nd ed. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); Fred Dallmayr and Edward Demenchonok, eds., *A World Beyond Global Disorder: The Courage to Hope* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

2. Edward Demenchonok, “Bakhtin’s Dialogism and Current Discussions on the Double-Voiced Word and Transculture,” in *Intercultural Dialogue: In Search of Harmony in Diversity*, ed. Edward Demenchonok, 2nd ed., 81–138 (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

3. Demenchonok, “Bakhtin’s Dialogism and Current Discussions,” 134n. 14.

4. See: www.peacefromharmony.org.

5. Eugene Zelenev, *Postizheniye obraza mira* [Comprehension of the image of the world] (St. Petersburg: KARO, 2012).

6. Vladimir Porus, “Mnogomernost’ ratsional’nosti” [Multidimensionality of rationality], *Epistemology and Philosophy of Science XXIII*, no. 1 (2010): 6.

7. Ian Shapiro, *The Flight from Reality in the Human Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

8. Anatoly Stepanishchev, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye issledovaniy yedinstva ratsional’nosti: Neizbezhnost’ nelineynogo mira* [The current state of research on the unity of rationality: Inevitability of the nonlinear world] (Moscow: Humanitarian, 2012), 130.

9. Boris Pruzhinin and Vladimir Shvyrev, *Ratsional’nost’ kak predmet filosofskogo issledovaniya* [Rationality as a subject of philosophical research] (Moscow: Institute of Philosophy RAS, 1995), 74–76.

10. It is not accidental that the emergence of science, *scientia*, as experimental knowledge and the witch hunts and the fires of the Inquisition were simultaneous processes.

11. See: Grigorii Tulchinskii, “Dva tipa ratsional’nosti,” [Two types of rationality] in *Kosmizm i novoye myshleniye na Zapade i Vostoke* [Cosmism and new thinking in the West and East] (St. Petersburg, 1999), 57–67.

12. Chester Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive*, 30th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). It is notable how the English language indicates the proximity of efficiency and rationality.

13. See: Grigorii Tulchinskii, *Fenomenologiya zla i metafizika svobody* [The phenomenology of evil and the metaphysics of freedom] (St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2019).

14. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). In Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 4:396, 50–51.

15. Edward Demenchonok, *The Quest for Change: From Domination to Dialogue* (Berlin: Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, 2016); Edward Demenchonok, “Bakhtin’s Dialogism and Current Discussions on the Double-Voiced Word and Transculture,” in *Intercultural Dialogue: In Search of Harmony in Diversity*, ed. Edward Demenchonok, 2nd ed., 81–138 (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); Edward Demenchonok, “Karl-Otto Apel’s Ethics of Dialogue and of Planetary Co-Responsibility,” in *Karl-Otto Apel: Vita e Pensiero / Leben und Denken*, eds. Michele Borrelli, Francesca Caputo, and Reinhard Hesse, 319–350 (Cosenza, Italy: Pellegrini Editore, 2020); Edward Demenchonok, “Philosophy of Hope,” in *Cosmopolitan Civility: Global-Local Reflections with Fred Dallmayr*, ed. Ruth Abbey, 11–27 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020).

16. See: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).
17. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 40.
18. See: Albert Schweitzer, *Kultura i etika* [Culture and Ethics] (Moscow: Progress, 1973).
19. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 40.
20. Ibid., 40.
21. Demenchonok, "Bakhtin's Dialogism and Current Discussions," 92.
22. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Works by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 56.
23. Grigorii Tulchinskii, *Filosofiya postupka: samoopredeleniye lichnosti v sovremennoy obshchestve* [Philosophy of act: self-determination of personality in contemporary society] (St. Petersburg: Aleteya, 2020).
24. See Sergey Goncharov et al., eds., *Filosofiya i kul'turologiya v sovremennoy ekspertnoy deyatel'nosti* [Philosophy and Culturology in Contemporary Expert Activity] (St. Petersburg: Publishing House of the Russian State Pedagogical University of Herzen, 2011), 57–74.
25. Edward Demenchonok, "Preface," in *A World Beyond Global Disorder: The Courage to Hope*, eds. Fred Dallmayr and Edward Demenchonok (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), xiv.