

Acting Contrary to Rationality and Instincts: the Inherent Similarity of Dostoevsky's “Self-will” and Max Scheler's “Spirit”

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Acting rationally and consistently with the demands of biological instincts seems to be the overall norm for humans. Still, there are thinkers who have shown that in a deeper sense, this is not an absolute norm at all and there are exclusions that should be taken into account if we wish to understand the true nature of a human. These thinkers, in particular, are Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and Max Scheler (1874 - 1928). In this article, I depict the peculiarities of each of the authors' views on freedom of will and action, and, at the same time, I will show that their ideas are implicitly similar. Dostoevsky did not know Scheler, of course; it is likely that Scheler read some of Dostoevsky's work, although Scheler does not cite him.

I start with Dostoevsky. In the first part of the article, I consider three cases; two presented in *Devils* (1871-1872) and one presented in *A Writer's Diary*. I will call the cases 1) the bizarre marriage, 2) Kirillov's suicide, and 3) revolt against nature. Then, I discuss the idea of self-will as presented in Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864). The second part of the article addresses Max Scheler's concept of spirit and its ability and disposition to control and direct human instincts.

Dostoevsky was not a philosopher; he was a philosophically and religiously oriented fiction writer. Being a writer, he, even more than many other writers, has not always been logically consistent in delivering and proving his ideas, as philosophers, as a rule, have to be. It is always hard to separate what he thought himself as a person from what his heroes “thought”. Moreover, Dostoevsky is especially well known for being split, in himself as a person and not only within a set of his heroes, and that is why his novels are sometimes called “symphonic”.

As to our study, it is important to mention one specific trait from the very beginning. The method with the help of which Dostoevsky presents many of his ideas may be called a method “from the opposite”. This means that he starts with a very bright and convincing depiction of his idea, so that the reader becomes fully of the opinion that Dostoevsky stands for this idea and that he likes it. The idea that is presented first is often “bad”, insofar as it shows a malign or weird feature of a human. Only afterward, and often not even in this very novel or work of art but rather in a letter to someone, Dostoevsky clarifies that he only meant to show the wrongfulness of that

idea and that he stands completely against it. It may also be the case that having presented the “bad” idea or a hero's trait as a central point, he surrounds and completes it, often in other parts of the novel and not in the section where the very idea is presented, by some hints and vague details, which, in their thorough consideration, partly or entirely change the idea's or trait's original meaning. It is widely recognized that in depicting the “bad”, weird or atheistic personages, Dostoevsky had more success than when trying to draw a picture of a saint or a deep believer. For example, Alyosha in *The Karamazov Brothers* is clearly a pale and lifeless figure in comparison with his fool-blooded brothers Ivan and Dmitriy.

In Dostoevsky's understanding, self-will is an arbitrary freedom of will and action. Going a little bit ahead of myself and including Max Scheler's notion of spirit into our discussion, we may state that what Scheler calls spirit is very close to self-will; their chief common trait is arbitrariness. Given this similarity in the views of these thinkers, we can pose a question: are self-will and spirit predominantly a) evil, b) good, or c) ambiguous? As far as Dostoevsky is concerned, self-will is deeply ambiguous or, more accurately, has two levels. On its lower level, self-will is close to caprice, i.e., it is bad, but on its higher level, self-will turns into the freedom of self-sacrifice and serving others and, as such, becomes good.

Having said that, I invite the reader to consider the first of the three cases: the bizarre marriage of Nikolai Stavrogin, one of the chief personages in *Devils*. He confesses to Tihon that

It was then, too (but not for any particular reason), that I had the idea of finding something to blight and cripple my life, something thoroughly revolting. For a year or more now I had been thinking of shooting myself, but now something rather better hove into view. Lebyadkin's lame sister, Marya Timofeyevna, was still doing occasional domestic work for various lodgers, since at this stage she was not so much insane as retarded and prone to fits of rapturous emotion — not to mention being secretly head-over-heels in love with me (as those in my circle had managed to discover). Once when I was looking at her, I suddenly made up my mind to marry her. The thought of a marriage between Stavrogin and such an abject creature gave me quite a *frisson*. Who could imagine anything more grotesque! (Dostoevsky 2005, p. 434).

Both biological instinct and social demands prompt you to marry the best partner you can out of your milieu. Stavrogin acts directly to the contrary of this instinct. He chooses the worst variant of partner available to him. How can we explain that? On the surface, it looks like a caprice of a blasé man, being, in addition, somewhat weird. As a matter of fact, however, this seemingly bizarre act is, for Dostoevsky, a demonstration of what he calls “self-will” and, going further in his logic, a deliberate demonstration of one's freedom.

Let us turn now to another, much better known episode from *Devils*. This is the suicide of Alexey Kirillov. The following dialogue of Kirillov with a secondary personage, who wishes to gain from Kirillov's death, provides us with context for the suicide:

"I've always been surprised at everyone's going on living," said Kirillov...If there is no God, then I am God."

"There, I could never understand that point of yours: why are you God?"

"If God exists, all is His will and from His will I cannot escape. If not, it's all my will and I am bound to show self-will."

"Self-will? But why are you bound?"

"Because all will has become mine. Can it be that no one in the whole planet, after making an end of God and believing in his own will, will dare to express his self-will on the most vital point?"...

"I am bound to shoot myself because the highest point of my self-will is to kill myself with my own hands."

"But you won't be the only one to kill yourself; there are lots of suicides."

"With good cause. But to do it without any cause at all, simply for self-will, I am the only one."... (Dostoevsky 2005, pp. 635-636).

"For three years I've been seeking for the attribute of my godhead and I've found it; the attribute of my godhead is self-will! That's all I can do to prove in the highest point my independence and my new terrible freedom. For it is very terrible. I am killing myself to prove my independence and my new terrible freedom" (Dostoevsky 2005, pp. 638).

An idea that is rather close to that of Kirillov's was later presented in Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* in October 1876, in the section "Verdict". There, a person decides to kill himself out of a revolt against nature; the ground is that nature has created him against his will and is going to kill him soon afterward without asking him for permission or opinion and not taking into account his own freedom to choose. Suicide as a revolt against nature is also an act of acquiring and manifesting one's freedom, accompanied with throwing away any rationality and despising the instinctive demand of biological survival imposed by this very nature (Dostoevsky (1972-90), 1981, Vol. 23, p. 146-148).

Let us now discuss some hidden implications of these three fiction situations depicted by Dostoevsky.

1. Bizarre marriage. At first glance, the situation may be treated as weird on the behalf of Stavrogin; that is, doing harm to oneself without any grounds on which to justify the harm. There are circumstances that bring some sense to Stavrogin's decision, though. Out of the censored and originally excluded chapter "At Tihon's", we know that Stavrogin once raped a little girl. Although he speaks of that episode in a snobbish way, as if nothing special has happened, some details reveal that he is actually conscience-stricken. He explains that after the rape: "For a year or more now I had been thinking of shooting myself". (Dostoevsky 2005, p. 434). He finally does commit suicide and, as we can surmise, not because of the motives that moved Kirillov but because of so heavy a burden of evil that he carried and multiplied for all his life. He says that the raped girl came to him in his dreams, as if to take revenge on him for the

committed crime. Stavrogin really did much out of his evil "self-will" and contrary to common-sense rationality, but he forgot nothing, as he claims, and the very fact that he came to Tihon to give his confession tells us much. Moreover, it is exactly such people who may go further in their repentance and become spiritual teachers for younger sinners because they intimately know the mechanisms of sin. In summary, Stavrogin really does act a great deal out of his capricious and arbitrary self-will; however, at least a part of those acts are directed by motives. Having motives means having at least a small amount of rationality. Thus, he acted (at least some of the time) out of rationality and not only out of the arbitrariness of evil. However, he never does rise up to a higher stage of self-will.

2. Kirillov's suicide. Kirillov does not see the final stage in his own suicide, nor does he want to become a new God; that is, gain some advantages from his act. He purely and altruistically wishes his own act to contribute to furthering a better state of mankind.

If you recognize it, you are sovereign, and then you won't kill yourself but will live in the greatest glory. But one, the first, must kill himself, for else who will begin and prove it? So I must certainly kill myself, to begin and prove it... I will begin and will make an end of it and open the door, and will save. That's the only thing that will save mankind and will recreate the next generation physically, for with his present physical nature man can't get on without his former God, I believe. (Dostoevsky 2005, pp. 637).

Kirillov's motives are the motives of the salvation of mankind through the price of his own death. There are elements of oddity, as with many of Dostoevsky's heroes, but in principle, this manifestation of self-will is not of a capricious and totally arbitrary kind, according to our distinction between the two types of self-will; rather, it is of the higher, self-sacrificial type of self-will.

3. Revolt against nature. In *A Writer's Diary* in December 1876, Dostoevsky answered his critics who understood him to be completely opposite to who he was, according to his complaints. He tells his readers that a personage who is blaming nature is the one whom Dostoevsky criticizes as a flat materialist and non-believer; that is, a man possessing an incorrect worldview (Dostoevsky (1972-90), 1982, Vol. 24, pp. 46-49).

In the talk with the author of the memoirs on Dostoevsky, L. Kh. Khokhrjakova, Dostoevsky gave the following comment: "I wished to show there that one cannot live without Christianity" (Dostoevsky (1972-90), 1981, Vol. 23, a note to p. 147, contained on p. 408 [The translation from Russian into English is made by the author of this article - A.A]).

In *A Writer's Diary* in February 1877, he clearly explains what real freedom is in his view. This explanation is relevant to a holistic understanding of Dostoevsky's conception of freedom and is applicable to all the cases in Dostoevsky's writings of the distinction between the ostentatious and capricious self-will and its conscious and purposeful application.

...The real freedom consists only in overcoming oneself and one's will, so to finally reach the moral state when you are always and at every moment the real master of yourself. ... The highest freedom is not to save and supply yourself with money, but "share all you have and go serve everyone". If man is able to do that, if he is able to take such a control over himself, is he not free after that? This is the highest manifestation of will! (Dostoevsky (1972-90), 1983, Vol. 25, p. 62 [The translation from Russian into English is made by the author of this article – A.A]).

There is also a fragment in a letter to N.L. Ozmidov, dated February 1878, where Dostoevsky gets very near to Max Scheler's understanding of spirit. The core of the idea is that spirit stands higher than biology and nature in general.

If my "I" has comprehended this all [laws of nature – A.A.], my "I" is higher to this all, at least, it goes beyond the bounds of this all, takes as if a side position to this all, judging it and cognizing it. But, in this case "I" is not only subject to the axioms of Earth and the laws of Earth but transcends them, has a law of a higher order ... It does not confine itself to the Earth order but strives for something more than only Earth, something to which it belongs itself (Dostoevsky (1972-90), 1988, Vol. 30 (1), p. 10 [The translation from Russian into English is made by the author of this article – A.A]).

I now discuss the idea of self-will as it is expressed in *Notes from the Underground*. At first glance, it is chapters seven and eight that interest us at most as the others contain nothing more than the endless grumbling of a sick man. The more attentive and sophisticated explorer, however, can single out as many as four layers in the text, which interweave and manifest the different sides and meanings of self-will. Let us try to separate those meanings:

The first layer is the lowest type of self-will, meaning mostly one's caprice, which is often an evil or unsocial one.

I am not advocating suffering, nor prosper-ity either. I'm advocating ... caprice, and that it be guaran-teeed to me when I need it (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 34).

[B]ecause man has always and every-where, whoever he was, loved to act as he wants and not in the least as his reason and personal advantage dictates; it is possible to desire against one's own best interest, and sometimes one *positively should* (this is my idea). One's own, independent, and free desire, one's own, albeit wild, caprice, one's fantasy, sometimes provoked to the point of madness—it is indeed all of this that comprises that omitted, that most advantageous advantage, which does not fall into any category, and which continually results in all systems and theories being sent to the devil (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 26-27).

There is only one instance, just one, when man may deliberately, consciously desire something injurious, foolish, even extremely foolish, namely: in order to have the right to desire even something very foolish,

and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is intelligent (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 29).

The plots of some of Dostoevsky's novels contain scenes where people throw out millions of rubles just because of their capricious pride.

The second layer of the idea of free-will manifests in a discussion with Russian materialists of the 1860s, such as Pisarev, who claimed to know beforehand what human rationality is, namely, material well-being. Those flat materialists were ready to engage in building the Palace of people's happiness on Earth, and in Russia in particular. On the one side, this is a question of paternalism, which was actually realized under the Bolsheviks, and on the other side, this is a contradiction between collectivism and individualism, where Dostoevsky takes the part of individualism and individual decisions. Studying this aspect of Dostoevsky's criticism of modern, to him, theories of rationality is made central in (Scanlan 1999).

The third layer is expressed in the following passages:

What about all the millions of facts that bear witness to people *knowingly*, that is to say fully understanding their real advant-ages, putting them into the background and flinging them-selves onto another path, at risks, at chances, and not because anyone or anything has forced them to do so, but as if not wishing to follow the appointed path they stubbornly and willfully thrust their way along another, difficult, absurd one, barely able to make it out in the darkness? Well, it means that man really finds this obstinacy and willfulness more pleasant than any kind of advantage to himself (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 22).

And from where did all these sages get the idea that man needs some kind of normal, some kind of virtuous desire? Why have they unflinchingly imagined that man definitely needs sensible, advantageous desire? Man needs one thing only: *independent* desire, whatever that independence costs and wherever it may lead him (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 27).

I would like to point out the words "risks", "chances" and "independence" in the quotations above. These words give a clue to yet another meaning of self-will in Dostoevsky's mind. The writer had nothing to do with economic theory, of course. However, what he is telling us here is propagating risk-taking economical behavior instead of being satisfied with a lesser, though guaranteed and stable, profit. Behavior of such a type can be far more than merely economical. All of the endeavors of scientists, discoverers, conquerors, and all types of adventurers require self-will and individual freedom, and such individual traits are indeed sought after in the explorations. They value individual independence and avoid the benevolence of others and any kind of governance over their acts.

Finally, and most importantly, as the fourth layer, Dostoevsky aims to prove that only following and supporting self-will and independence can mold personality and individuality out of a herd man. According to Max Scheler, spirit is the main trait that distinguishes a human from an animal. Thus, Dostoevsky's self-will in its fourth meaning makes this notion actually similar to Scheler's spirit. It is at this point that the two thinkers collide. Their like-mindedness is expressed in the idea that the main virtue of both "self-

will” and “spirit” consists in letting man transcend the laws of nature to make of himself man, not animal. The last lines in both quotations below manifest the idea that man preserves his being a man proper exactly and only by his self-will or spirit:

You see, this very foolish thing is your caprice, and in actual fact, gentlemen, it can be more advantageous to us all than anything else on earth, especially on certain occasions. But in particular it can be more advantageous than any other advantage in a situation where it leads us to obvious harm and contradicts the soundest conclusions of our reason on the subject of advantages—because in any case it preserves the thing that is most important and precious to us, which is our personality and our individuality (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 29).

He will even jeopardize his gingerbread and deliberately wish for the most ruinous rubbish, the most uneconomical nonsense, simply in order to print his own disastrous, fantastic element onto all this positive good sense. It is just his fantastic dreams, his abject foolishness that he wants to cling on to, solely in order that he can convince himself (as if it were absolutely necessary) that people are still people and not piano-keys, on which the laws of nature themselves are playing with their own hands, but are threatening to go on playing to the point when they would no longer be able to want anything beyond the directory. And besides: even in that case, even if he did turn out to be a piano-key, if that were proven to him by even the natural sciences and mathematically, he would still not come to his senses, and would deliberately do something to contradict it, simply out of ingratitude; just in order to assert himself. And in a situation where he did not have the means to do it, he would invent chaos and destruction, he would think up various forms of suffering, and—my goodness!—he’d assert himself. He would unleash his curse on the world, and since it is only man that can swear (this is a privilege that to a large extent differentiates him from the other animals) he might achieve his aim through his curse alone, that is he would really convince himself that he is a man and not a piano-key. If you say that even all this can be calculated on tables, the chaos, the gloom, and the curses, so that the possibility alone of a preliminary calculation would put a stop to everything and reason would hold sway—well, in that case man would deliberately go mad in order to escape his reason and assert himself. I believe this, I will vouch for it because this whole human business seems really only to consist of the fact that man has been continually proving to himself that he’s a man and not an organ-stop (Dostoevsky 1991, p. 31).

Max Scheler

The work in which Scheler has presented his concept of spirit most fully is *The Human Place in the Cosmos* (herein, ‘*Cosmos...*’) (Scheler 2009). Originally, ‘*Cosmos...*’ was read as a report at a scientific meeting in 1927 and then printed as a brochure in 1928, only a few months before Scheler’s sudden death. Many ideas dealing with

spirit, directly or indirectly, had been expressed by Scheler previously, particularly in *The Nature of Sympathy* (herein, ‘*Sympathy...*’) (Scheler 2011) and, sporadically, in other works.

Below are key quotations from the ‘*Cosmos...*’, where Scheler’s concept of spirit is expressed in its most explicit form.

What, then, is this ‘spirit,’ this novel and decisive principle? [...] [T]he ultimate determination of a being with spirit – no matter what its psycho-physical makeup – is its *existential detachment from organic being*, its freedom and detachability and the detachment of its center of existence from the bondage to, the pressure of, and the *organic dependence on ‘life’* and everything which belongs to life, and thus also its detachment from its own drive-related “intelligence”. [...] Hence, a being having spirit is not tied anymore to its drives and environment... (Scheler 2009, pp. 26-27). [...] [T]his being – most remarkably – is also able to *objectify its very own physiological and psychic nature* and to also objectify its every single vital function. It is for this reason that this being can also be free to commit suicide (Scheler 2009, p. 29).

Insofar as he is a ‘person’, only the human being is able to soar far above his status as a living entity and, from a center beyond the spatio-temporal world, make everything the object of his knowledge, including himself. It is in this sense that the human being as spirit is superior to both himself and to the world. Thus he is also open to irony and humor, which always imply the ability to rise above one’s own existence. The center, however, from which the human being acts out his acts and from which he objectifies his lived body, his psyche, and the space and time of the world, cannot itself be a ‘part’ of the world and cannot have any ‘where’ and ‘when’: this center can only lie in the supreme Ground of Being itself (Scheler 2009, p. 33).

Having become human, he could not really say anymore, ‘I am a part of the world and enclosed by it’ – for the act-being of his spirit and person is superior even to the forms of the being of the ‘world’ in space and time... [A]t exactly the same moment when this ‘human being’ placed himself outside nature to make it an object to be dominated and an object of novel principles of arts and signs – at exactly the same moment he had to anchor his very own center of being somehow outside and away from the cosmos. (Scheler 2009, pp. 63-64).

What is decisive in the characteristics of spirit presented above and in what sense is it compatible with Dostoevsky’s characterization of man’s freedom (self-will in the higher sense)? The decisive factors for both thinkers are twofold. First, when conceptualizing the world as if from the outside, man is no more a part of the world; he is torn out of it. It is like this: either you are placed on the Earth and look on yourself as a part of it, or you are viewing it as if from a spacecraft and thus are not a part of it. Second, spirit or self-will, being not a part of the world, should be a part of some more

profound entity, thus giving them a soil for being placed at and attached to (Wyman 2007). For Dostoevsky, this is an Orthodox Christian platform. Let me invite the reader to turn back to the content of Dostoevsky's letter to Ozmidov, where the respective ideas are presented. For Scheler, spirit is a more unusual Deity of a pantheistic kind, which he calls "the supreme Ground of Being" (for a more detailed description of Scheler's religious views, see my article - A.A.).

For Dostoevsky, the key point of negation is flat rationality, which occurs mostly in the form of material well-being, which, according to him, is overcome, thrown away and conquered by self-will. As for Scheler, he is not so much engaged with rationality proper; rather, he elaborates on the topic of biological instincts, namely, spirit's ability to deliberately inhibit or un-inhibit and direct or redirect instincts.

With respect to human beings, Scheler writes that "the express un-inhibition of drives is introduced by spirit in the same sense as rational drive-*asceticism* (animals do not have an uninhibited state of being)" (Scheler 2009, p. 62). The will and the ability to inhibit biological needs, drives, and instincts to such an extent that they deviate far from their 'default state' set by nature are manifested in all types of abstinence, from food dieting up to the severe monastic vow. On the other hand, the voluntary un-inhibition of drives and instincts is expressed in an excessive hedonism not envisaged by nature, be it sexual, food- or goods-consuming, body-building, or any other type of obsession.

In the section on Dostoevsky, it was shown that self-will is ambiguous; it is neither good nor bad *per se*, insofar as everything depends on the stage of the person's development, who can act out of a stupid arbitrary caprice but also out of a deep religious belief and understanding of the nature of the real freedom.

What about Scheler? Is spirit only good, or is it also ambiguous, even bad and nasty (which is harder to imagine but should not be totally excluded)? The answer is nearly the same as for Dostoevsky: spirit is ambiguous (Weiss 1998).

Scheler writes that "man himself will shape that infinitely plastic segment of his nature which can be influenced directly or indirectly by the spirit and will. What comes from the spirit does not come automatically, nor does it come of itself. It must be guided!" A single person, as well as mankind in general, may end up as a saint or as a criminal, Scheler states (Scheler 1958, p. 101).

I devote the following sections of the article to the study of certain issues that are specific to Scheler proper and are not directly interconnected with Dostoevsky's ideas.

In "Sympathy..." Scheler explains that the free activity of spirit is hard to understand, although experimental and other psychologists strive for this understanding. The activity of spirit is "a whole region which lies entirely *beyond the comprehension* of empirical psychology (experimental or otherwise), and this by virtue of its *ontological* status. [...] The (spiritual) person, as such, is intrinsically incapable of being *treated as an object*..." (Scheler 2011, p. 224).

[P]ersonality and spirit represent something which is quite unlike the inorganic and organic fields in being intrinsically *beyond the bounds*

of spontaneous scrutiny, since it is free to decide whether to make itself available and knowable or not. Persons, in fact, can be silent and keep their thoughts to themselves, and that is quite different from simply saying nothing. It is an active attitude, whereby they can themselves conceal their qualities from spontaneous scrutiny to any desired extent, yet without this necessarily involving any automatic expression or physical symptom to that effect. Nothing in Nature can 'hold its peace' in this way; which is why Nature, including happenings at the vital level of mentality, which always have a strictly unambiguous counterpart in physiological bodily processes, is open, in principle at least, to spontaneous scrutiny.

Thus empirical psychology has only a very limited application to our problem (Scheler 2011, p.225).

The inaccessibility of spirit by experimental psychologists (i.e., its evasiveness), which is what the above passage is telling us, is really an interesting point of Scheler's thought. What Scheler is explaining is that spirit is able to make itself invisible if it wishes to and if it is in the favor of a person because of some grounds. This is a very special and practical ability and a special cunning. Simply said, spirit may help you play a fool if you do not wish to show that you are very clever. In this way, one can manipulate other people and hide one's mental abilities or knowledge until the time comes for a strike from your side.

In addition to spirit and the body, Scheler also introduces an entity of vital consciousness. Scheler needs to introduce the 'vital center' to get the multitude of life organs and functions be represented as a whole.

[I]ntermediate region of human nature, which I have sharply distinguished from the spiritual personality and the physical body by calling it *vital consciousness* (as the cognitive counterpart, whether superior or sub-conscious, of the actual process of organic life), and the focus of which I have elsewhere referred to as the 'vital center'. It is that climatic region of the soul to which belong the energies of life and death, the passions, emotions, drives and instincts; (these are of three types: the instinctive appetites of hunger and thirst, the erotic life-instincts and their derivatives, and the instinctive desire for power, dominance, increase and reputation). It is impulses such as these which may lead, in their conscious manifestations, to the sense of unity and to identification proper. (Scheler 2011, p. 34 -35).

If life on Earth is united, having, supposedly, one single cell as an ancient predecessor, why should the spirits of any individual men not also be connected in a unit in this manner? It would be symmetric in this respect. However, Scheler stands for the independence of every single spirit. This is a contradiction for Scheler, and one with which he tries to cope (Crosby 1998):

[I]t is precisely the realm of spiritual actuality that is articulated as strictly personal, substantive, and intrinsically individual, right up to God, the Person of persons. We therefore count it the gravest of metaphysical

errors in any theory, from that of Averroes onwards, that it should seek to construe persons, i.e. concrete centers of spiritual activity, as ‘modes’ or ‘functions’ of a universal spirit; whether this be an absolute unconscious spirit (von Hartmann), a transcendental absolute consciousness (Husserl), or a transcendental reason (Fichte, Hegel’s pantheism of Reason) (Scheler 2011, p. 75).

Scheler proposes to make a distinction: life is centered in any organism and united, whereas spirit is centered in any personality but is not united; spirits remain individual.

Only by taking this view does it become possible, and necessary, to postulate an essential difference in the one-many relationships of personal centers and vital agencies respectively. For if they were identical in substance (as is held by Thomist scholasticism), we should simply have a dilemma: either we may postulate that all vital entelechies are ultimately one, in which case the spirit in each person is also, in reality, one and the same; or else there are just as many independent vital-centers as there undoubtedly are independently existing spirits. If, on the other hand, the connection between spirit and life is merely dynamic, it might also be the case that, although individual spirits were personal substances, life (in a sense still to be ascertained) might be metaphysically one and the same in all persons – though exerting itself dynamically in many different ways (Scheler 2011, p. 75-76).

The recently studied and published fragments from Scheler’s heritage present the extremely complicated picture of how Scheler tried to solve the problem of the junction or disjunction of spirits. I cite two of those fragments, showing Scheler’s very personal products of thinking, which were not finished or prepared for official publication. The fragments are presented first in German and then are given in my own translation into English.

“4. Der Geist ist keine Art von ‘Eigenschaft’ oder Faehigkeit des Menschen. Er ‘hat’ ihn nicht; er wird *von ihm* ‘gehabt’. Der Mensch ist der Ort, wo der Geist (Gottes) aufleuchtet: Einbruch des Geistes in das Leben...” (Fragment XXVIII, 1925, p. 194).

4. The spirit is not a type of “quality” or ability of man. Man does not “possess” spirit; it is spirit that “possesses” man. Man is the place where the spirit (God’s) brings itself to light: breaking spirit into life... [Translation from German into English by the author of this article – A.A.]

My comment is that this passage from 1925 is highly perplexing and deviates far from that which Scheler published publicly in “Cosmos...”. First, the passage means that Scheler treated spirit much more closely to God, being actually God’s product or quality, and second, that spirit, in his eyes, is prior to man.”

1. Die Einheit des absoluten Geistes *Des Ens a se* schliet die Annahme des “*Gruppengeistes*” aus...

2. Das Miteinander in differenzierter Kundgabe mit Intelligenz und Wahl ist die Bedingung nicht fuer Ursprung *eines* Geistes in *allem*, sondern des absoluten Geistes in “jedem”... Die Ganzheit ist ehe im Einzelnen... eher der Einzelne im Ganzen ist”. (Fragment LVIII, 1926/1927, p. 326).

1. The unity of the absolute spirit *Ens a se* excludes the acceptance of a *group spirit*...

2. Coherence and cooperation in the differentiated demonstration of intelligence and choice is the condition not for the appearance of one and the same spirit in all but rather of an absolute spirit in “everyone”... The totality is present in a single man... rather than a single man being present in the totality. [Translation from German into English by the author of this article – A.A.]

The second fragment, from 1926/1927, should be followed by an explanation. The matter is that Scheler contended against the understanding of spirit as a group spirit, which supposedly unites some limited political, national or religious group into one “mental body” or one super-individual social or intellectual formation. However, this denial of a group spirit is replaced instead by affirmation of the existence of an absolute spirit. The problem here is that in “Sympathy...”, any mentioning of the absolute spirit (that is, the universal and all-uniting spirit) has been sharply criticized. The question, then, remains: what is Scheler’s real conviction? It remains uncertain.

Conclusions

1. My task was to show that the two thinkers: Dostoevsky and Scheler, demonstrated the existence of a mental entity that is prone and able to overcome and do away with rationality, in the case of Dostoevsky, and biological instincts, in the case of Scheler. In other words, for Dostoevsky and Scheler, plain rationality and instincts do not rule the human world.
2. This mental entity is called self-will by Dostoevsky and spirit by Scheler.
3. Self-will and spirit are inherently ambiguous. They have at least two levels: the lower and the higher. The lower level is freedom of will and action in the form of an arbitrary caprice, whereas the higher level is freedom of self-sacrifice and altruistic, reasonable behavior.
4. The lower level arbitrariness is mostly atheistic or merely “mindless”, whereas the higher level freedom is based on religious belief.
5. The higher level self-will and spirit are not embedded in the world; they transcend the world and are grounded in the Deity.
6. For Dostoevsky, self-will is an individual mental entity, although supported by religious faith in the person of Christ. For Scheler, the situation is more complicated. He never did finally make up his mind with respect to the nature of spirit. On the one hand, he calls it an error to treat spirit in a sense of the absolute or universal spirit, of which parts or representations are individual spirits, like Brahman-atman relations. On the other hand, in some passages, he prefers to speak of the absolute spirit to whom man with his individual spirit belongs.

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