

“I” and collective responsibility

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The article discusses the link of collective moral responsibility with “I” as an act of the realization of subjectness. The authors provide and verify the thesis about the primacy of “I” to any forms and cases of collective responsibility. The notion of “I” is reexamined taking into account the critique of the subject undertaken in the so-called “post-metaphysical” (J. Habermas) philosophy. The key point of this critique is the rejection of the understanding of “I” and of the subject as unchanging metaphysical entities. In this situation, it is of paramount importance to distinguish the dynamic core of “I”, which is free from any metaphysical connotation. In addressing this issue, the authors build on the concept of “I” as a responsible act (deed) as presented in works of Mikhail Bakhtin. According to this concept, “I” does not precede the act but is born in the actual responsible act in the face of an Other. This action turns out to be devoid of content here and is interpreted as an act of accepting responsibility in the face of the Absolute instance. Such an interpretation of “I” makes it possible to retain the possibility of a responsible act within the growing anonymity of a contemporary social being and to substantiate manifestations of collective responsibility in collective actions. The final part of the article lists the basic features that characterize the link of “I” as an act and collective responsibility. Of these features, the main one is associated with the impossibility of “external” vesting of responsibility to anyone due to his/her belonging to a certain community. Collective responsibility may be recognized only in the “inner” dimension of a personal act. Hence follows a fundamental asymmetry that characterizes the phenomenon of responsibility in general and collective responsibility in particular.

Keywords: “I”, collective responsibility, act, deed, Immanuel Kant, Mikhail Bakhtin.

Introduction

In recent decades the subject of collective moral responsibility is more and more often discussed as one of the most pressing subjects, especially in light of its paradoxical interrelation with individual responsibility (see, for example, [1–3]). That said, there is no doubt that issues of responsibility belong in the realm of “eternal” philosophical problems. In the contemporary world, however, the issues of responsibility of generations, nations, states, various social groups etc., come to the forefront. Specific cases and kinds of responsibility arising in relation to international conflicts prompt fierce debates among researchers and result in a multitude of contradictions (see, for example, [4–7]). These contradictions are underpinned by the inevitability of social conflicts and also by the fact that the actual phe-

nomenon of collective responsibility remains insufficiently conceptualized. In particular, the following questions remain unanswered: Who (or what) may act as a bearer (subject) of collective responsibility? Who has the right to impose responsibility on others (who is the responsible authority)? How should collective responsibility be distributed? Finally, the issue remains pertinent whether it is *possible in principle* to hold some groups (communities) responsible for others.

In this article, we focus on demonstrating that the uncertainty, typical for the contemporary issues of collective responsibility, can be explained, to a large extent, by the erosion of the very notion of responsibility linked closely to the notion of “I”. Concepts like “the end of man” [8] or “the death of the author” [9, p. 142–148] cast doubt on the possibility of the existence of “I” as an independent cohesive phenomenon that remains constant through time and space. “I” begins to be considered as a product of linguistic and social structures lacking their own *essence*. Surrounding “I” as a subject of law and an ethical subject, the ever-growing uncertainty correlates with the increasing number of attempts to ascribe responsibility not only to certain individuals, but also to various social groups. It is in this connection that we suggest to conceptualize the phenomenon of “I” as a bearer (subject) of moral responsibility in the context of the so-called “post-metaphysical thinking” [10, p. 35–62] that implies the rejection of substantiality.

However, a corresponding change in ontological and epistemological representations is resultant in the emergence of a number of new conceptual and methodological issues, including the issue of “I”. Similar to other metaphysical subject matters, the selfness loses its self-evident character and turns out to be *conditional* in the context of “post-metaphysical thinking”. Meanwhile, the rejection of “I” as a “metaphysical illusion” leads to the “liar paradox” — the exposure and destruction of “I” must be performed by this “I” itself. The question arises how the existence of “I” as a subject of responsibility may be possible in a situation with the rejection of any metaphysical grounds? This study attempts to answer the question based on the concept of a foundation for a human action (“deed” or “act”) suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin [11]. Bakhtin, aiming to explore the Kantian categorical imperative from an existential perspective, substantiates responsibility in the light of the openness to an Other. In order to trace the evolution of the Russian thinker’s ideas, we turn, first and foremost, to the analysis of the connection between the notion of responsibility and the notion of “I” as an “inner” dimension of human existence. We then proceed to identifying the main characteristics of “I” in terms of “post-metaphysical thinking” also shared by Bakhtin. This, in its turn, makes it possible in the third section to analyze the possibilities of applying these characteristics to the phenomena of vicarious and collective responsibility.

“I” as a condition of responsibility

Although by no means exhaustive as far as the history of responsibility in moral philosophy is concerned, in this section we focus on an attempt to demonstrate and, if possible, to substantiate the inextricable connection between the notion of responsibility and the phenomenon of “I”. Responsibility as an ethical concept was investigated most thoroughly within the transcendental philosophy of the Enlightenment. Making ethical responsibility a subject matter only becomes possible in its connection to the idea of a special, “inner” or personal, dimension of being a human. This idea goes back to the

Christian idea of a human person as the “image and likeness” of the Creator. Perceived in this way, the personality (“I”) exists not as an element of the system of social relations, forced to obey external moral norms, but as an autonomous (in relation to society and nature) instance. For example, according to Peter Abelard [12, p. 1–58], this instance is the “intention of the soul”, which ascends directly to the Creator and has the freedom to obey His requirements or to reject them. In particular, this includes the concepts of “effort”, “tension”, “aspiration”, and the very meaning of the word “intention” (*intentio*) indicates the dynamic nature of the instance highlighted by Abelard. This dynamism engenders the phenomenon of responsibility regardless of its direction (acceptance or rejection of the Creator’s requirements). The effort vector always arises as a response to this requirement. It should be emphasized again at this point that the “inner nature” of this intentional attitude does not imply the isolation of “I” from the world. On the contrary, it is this invisible effort that ultimately ensures the existence of “I” in the world, insofar as it provides this existence with an absolute meaning.

The transcendent aspect of responsibility is preserved to a certain extent in secularized ethics such as Kant’s moral philosophy. The priority of practical reason in relation to the speculative (theoretical), decidedly reaffirmed in Kant’s philosophy, is based precisely on the absolute character of the requirements of duty, seen only from the “inside”. This inner sense or, as Kant puts it, “conscience represents the divine tribunal within us” [13, p. 134]. “The divine tribunal” here is not just a metaphor, it is a clear indication that the judiciary in this case is outside the empirically perceived sphere of “human”. That is why no. “extenuating circumstances” justifying an improper action can be taken into account by conscience. In his definition of conscience as “an instinct to direct oneself according to moral laws” [13, p. 130], Kant establishes a direct connection between a human and the transcendent foundation of its existence (as a rational and, thus, a responsible being).

It should be noted, however, that the category of “responsibility” itself is not often found in Kant’s ethical writings. The essential element in Kantian ethics is the category of duty, which paradoxically combines the characteristics of objectivity and freedom — independence from any “external” factors of human existence. Such a combination becomes conceivable only in the context of the Kantian understanding of practical reason. The requirements of practical reason do not have the status of *knowledge*. To be more precise, there is always only one such requirement — to strive for the greater good. Because this is a categorical imperative (“categorical” implies transcending all accidental circumstances), the imperative is, therefore, objective, i. e., independent of any subjective factors. At the same time this imperative cannot be objectified, i. e., transformed into some universal abstract norm. According to Kant, the categorical imperative “determines the will directly” [14, p. 171]. The direct nature of the demand of duty forces Kant to resort to such concepts as “moral feeling” [14, p. 99].

While thinking (faculty of reason) can result in something universal (“external”), feeling is an immediate, “inner” experience. Thus, according to Kant, the ability to comply with the duty, which may be considered equivalent to the category of responsibility with some reservations, is inextricably connected to inner freedom. The latter is defined by Kant as an ability to resist the power of temptations in light of the requirements of duty [14, p. 203]. This ability, in turn, is the exclusive prerogative of “I” which, in this confrontation with the temptations and the pressure of random external circumstances, can rely

on nothing but the sense of self-respect, which, at the same time, is the respect for moral law [14, p. 204].

Everything mentioned above in relation to the Kantian interpretation of responsibility and duty makes it possible to highlight a number of key aspects of this concept. First, there is an inextricable connection between responsibility and “I” as an “internal dimension” of human existence. Second, morality’s commands are absolute (unconditional), i. e., independent of any random circumstances. And, finally, the unconditional nature of the moral law underpins the need for self-transcendence of “I” in the act of overcoming temptations and following the duty.

The Kantian tradition of conceptualizing responsibility as a very personal phenomenon not subject to complete objectivization has made a very strong impact on the consequent research into these issues in western philosophy. The abovementioned paradoxical nature of the Kantian understanding of duty, both objective and free, causes certain difficulties in the subsequent interpretations of Kant’s work.

Hannah Arendt’s concept of responsibility may serve as an example of such an interpretation. In her work on collective responsibility, Arendt describes the following conditions necessary for this phenomenon to occur:

I must be held responsible for something I have not done, and the reason for my responsibility must be my membership in a group (a collective) which no. voluntary act of mine can dissolve, that is, a membership which is utterly unlike a business partnership which I can dissolve at will [5, p. 149].

According to Arendt, responsibility of this type is of a purely political nature because it has to deal with the state of affairs in the world rather than with the moral purity of a person. This contradistinction sheds some light on Arendt’s main point of disagreement with Kant. As Arendt tends to see it, Kant limits the area of responsibility to the subjective sphere, a person seeking to live in harmony with oneself. On the contrary, collective responsibility being political in its essence requires in certain cases to disregard one’s desire “to have a clear conscience” in favour of moral risk-taking in the world. This point in Arendt’s reasoning reveals that she may have a certain lack of understanding of the Kantian concept of duty. Fulfillment of duty for the subject of practical reason is determined not by the imperative “Thou shalt not contradict yourself” [5, p. 153], but, first and foremost, by the clear conviction in the “sanctity” of duty i. e., in the unconditional nature of its dictum. “Sanctity” is found in the act of self-transcendence of “I”, being the opposite of egoistic impulses of any kind including the desire to avoid being tarnished with a dubious act.

Arendt’s interpretation of the Kantian distinction between “to think” and “to know” also raises some doubts. In “Thinking and Moral Considerations” [5, p. 159–189], Arendt points out that the faculty of thinking is “good for nothing” in people’s everyday lives and contrasts it with the faculty of judgement — “the faculty to judge particulars”. Unlike thinking, which is oriented towards what is “constant” and “eternal” (similar to Plato’s ideas), the faculty of judgement, while retaining its rational character, does not lay any claims to infallibility. At the same time, this ability enables us, according to Arendt, “to tell right from wrong” [5, p. 189]. Acknowledging the link between these two abilities she, nevertheless, attaches a greater ethical and political significance to judging which “always concerns particulars and things close at hand” [5, p. 189]. This distinction, however, is in

obvious contradiction to the Kantian idea of the *unity* of practical and theoretical (speculative) reason rooted in the transcendental unity of apperception or *ego cogito*. This unity that at its core is based upon the act of self-transcendence not only enables a person to think the “greater good”, but also to establish a connection between the “greater good” and any specific situation requiring an ethical solution.

Another contemporary interpretation of ideas of the Kantian ethics proposed by Hans Jonas, one of the fathers of the ethics of responsibility, also reveals a key disagreement between the two philosophers in their understanding of “I”. The transcendental understanding of *ego cogito* in Kantian philosophy turns “I” into the boundary between *thinking* and *knowledge*. Therefore, “I” itself can never completely become an object of theoretical (speculative) knowledge. In light of our problem in question, this means that the theoretical grounds for the phenomenon of responsibility as duty, according to Kant, cannot be formulated. As a result, the Kantian concept asserts so decisively the primacy of practical reason over speculative reason [14, p. 156]. In his critique of Kant, Jonas argues for the rethinking of the metaphysical grounds of responsibility [15, p. 130]. This attempt to revive the metaphysical grounds of a deed revises the Kantian position of critical transcendentalism. Therefore, the phenomenon of responsibility, in Jonas’s view, is determined by the factors that are external in relation to consciousness and freedom. This situation, as admitted by Jonas, condemns the subject to insurmountable “indeterminacy”. Claiming his or her freedom from changeable and finite, the subject risks falling prey to the illusion that his or her mundane motivations are pure pursuits of the Good [15, p. 226–227]. It is obvious, however, that this recognition of indeterminacy in “I” undermines Jonas’s “principle of responsibility”, making it impossible to determine *who, for what, and before whom* should be held responsible.

The fact that “I” and responsibility are intertwined is more visible in the current debates in which philosophers challenge the very possibility of theoretical grounds for responsibility. For instance, Galen Strawson, representing the analytical tradition, argues that people cannot be truly responsible for their actions because it is impossible to consider the agent of an action as *causa sui* [16]. This idea, remarkably, supports Kant’s radical view that responsibility is possible only if there is *autonomy of the will*. Kant’s and Strawson’s positions differ only in signs — either the negation or assertion of will’s autonomy whose locus, according to Kant is the noumenal rather than empirical “I”. In its turn, the assertion of the autonomy of the will, or freedom, is only possible from the position of practical reason. The search for the theoretical foundation of freedom of “I” casts doubt on the idea of responsibility itself. The criticism of the very notion of foundation in philosophical theories of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries invalidates the idea of responsibility itself. Late twentieth-century French thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze rejected the idea of “metaphysical grounds” rendering meaningless the notion of responsibility. Social reality as a dynamic “system of differences” provides neither a starting point for responsibility nor the agent of responsibility. If “I” is merely a “position in the structure”, it cannot be an agent responsible. Thus, the reconceptualization of “I” in post-metaphysical philosophy of the twentieth century inevitably leads to the problematization of the notion of responsibility. On the other hand, the discussions on collective responsibility demand the reconceptualization of “I” since there is no going back to dogmatic doctrines of classical metaphysics.

“I” as a subject of responsibility in the context of “post-metaphysics”

Raising the issue of “I” as a topic of moral responsibility limits the range of philosophical concepts that offer a reliable answer to the question. As it was mentioned above, the positions affirming the fictitious or epiphenomenal nature of “I” render the subject of moral responsibility nonsensical. However, based on the idea of a possible external access to “I”, the objectivist position also seems irrelevant to the issue of moral responsibility. One cannot dispute the significance of concepts exploring the biological basis of self-awareness or the theories, for instance psychological and narrativist, alternative to these [17, p. 103–115; 18, p. 17–40; 19]. Nevertheless, the analysis of the relationship of “I” with the phenomenon of moral responsibility presented above suggests the “inner” nature of this phenomenon. This means that the usual social practice of bestowing the moral responsibility onto *another person* is in doubt here, revealing its dubious nature. In this respect, the Kantian reasoning in “Lectures on Ethics” is a paraphrase of the well-known Gospel commandment “thou shalt not judge”. Considering the possibility of “moral imputation”, Kant contrasts situations of moral self-assessment and moral judgment of other people’s actions. In the latter case, the subject making the judgment should condescend to the weakness of human nature. However, such condescension is completely unacceptable in relation to the assessment of own actions: “the inner human tribunal” acts here, being unaware of condescension to human imperfect nature [13, p. 87].

Thus, the “inner” nature of the “I” phenomenon makes moral responsibility asymmetric — the imputation of moral responsibility to another person cannot be sufficiently justified since the judge has no access to his or her “moral feeling” as the foundation for the act. Existentialists and phenomenologists discuss this fundamental paradox of being human in works devoted to the issues of ethics [20–24]. In the context of “post-metaphysical thinking”, Bakhtin’s “phenomenology of act” seems to be the most productive interpretation of the notion of “I” as a subject of responsibility. Below we will try to demonstrate some possible applications of Bakhtin’s ideas to the contemporary situation of criticism regarding the substantiality of “I”.

The key element in Bakhtin’s concept described in his early texts, especially in the fragment “Toward a Philosophy of the Act”, is the decisive distinction between the “once-occurrent Being-as-event” [11, p. 2] and “the abstractly theoretical self-regulated world” [11, p. 7]. Acting as an “objective reality”, the latter does not contain an oughtness; in other words, everything that is happening in this world does not bind the subject of an act to do anything. This can be interpreted as a reproduction of the Kantian idea of the practical reason’s autonomy originating in Hume’s rejection of the connection between “is” and “ought”. Bakhtin really views “Kant’s Copernican achievement” [11, p. 6] as an act of freeing the practical reason from the power of the theoretical (speculative) reason. However, according to Bakhtin, it is the *universal* nature of the practical reason that does not let us speak about the true independence of the subject of the act [11, p. 6]. Bakhtin claims that Kant’s practical reason is not “the historical and individual self-activity of my performed act, the self-activity for which I am individually answerable” [11, p. 6].

This Bakhtinian notion of “the historical and individual activity of one’s act”, or “once-occurrent Being-as-event”, has a distinctly post-metaphysical meaning. He is speaking of an act that cannot be conceptualized but only experienced in the process of performing it, “from the inside” of the event. Bakhtin categorically asserts the “inner” nature of “I”:

“Once-occurrent uniqueness or singularity cannot be thought of, it can only be participatively experienced or lived through” [11, p. 6]. Phenomenological reduction here is more radical than in the Husserlian approach — universal structures of pure consciousness and the substance of the act (its matter) are excluded. What is left as a result of this radical reduction cannot be called “existent”. What remains is the act, the deed itself, which does not exist but is performed in the “only and unique way”. Thus, “I” as a subject of an act is not a given but is born through this act and within it. As a result, any possibility of being criticized for “dogmatism” and asserting “I” as a metaphysical entity is eliminated. “I” is simultaneously preserved as a dynamic “center of activity”, acting as a source and, at the same time, a result of a responsible action.

The deed, according to Bakhtin, has a specific structure or “architectonic” [11, p. 54]. The main elements of this structure are, in Bakhtin’s own terms, “I-for-myself, the other-for-me, and I-for-the-other” [11, p. 54]. While these concepts are very typical for existentialist discourse, Bakhtin understands them in a completely different way. The key element of the Bakhtinian “architectonic of the act” is the “I-for-the-other” is interpreted as an act of doing good for an Other, as fulfilment of one’s duty to another person. Paradoxically, the uniqueness of one’s own being is revealed to “I” in this act of sacrifice to an Other:

One should remember that to live from within myself, from my own unique place in Being, does not yet mean at all that I live only for my own sake. For it is only from my own unique place that *self-sacrifice* is possible, that is, the answerable centrality of myself can be a *self-sacrificing* centrality [11, p. 48].

In other words, “I” as the “uniqueness of Being-as-event” is experienced only within the “answerable”, i. e., responsible, act.

Bakhtin, therefore, sees responsibility as a constitutive moment of the very existence of “I”. For Bakhtin, this moment has a spatio-temporal aspect — responsibility or “non-alibi in Being” is based on “my unique place” [11, p. 49] and the only moment as “the answerable and individual historical act” [11, p. 9]. This point opens the only path and the only possible purpose for “I” — to act responsibly. It follows that the answer to the Kantian question “What ought I to do?” does not depend on the categorical imperative but on the act of recognizing one’s “non-alibi in Being” i. e., one’s responsibility before the world and other people. This means that the very act of accepting responsibility underlying the existence of “I” is devoid of any content. Thus, it can be concluded that Bakhtin continues the tradition of Kant’s formal ethics by proposing a more radical interpretation of the form itself. Bakhtin’s concept does not deal with the universal “*form* of a judgment” [11, p. 6], but rather with the unique, happening in the “here and now” inclusion of “I” into the world. This act simultaneously separates and unites “I” and the world. The autonomous, “abstractly theoretical self-regulated world” is opposed to “once-occurrent, living historicalness” [11, p. 7] of the deed that constitutes “I”. At the same time, it is this “gap” that paradoxically makes possible the true participation of “I” in the world as a free and responsible act, which is not determined by any “external” laws or norms.

This brief analysis of Bakhtin’s “phenomenology of act” makes it possible to identify several key aspects in the post-metaphysical understanding of “I”. First, “I” in this context is not conceptualized as an existing subject performing or not performing certain acts. On the contrary, the act itself (the act of accepting unconditional responsibility for the world) constitutes “I” as a subject. This interpretation of “I” makes possible the preservation of

the phenomenon of subjectness despite it being radically criticized by supporters of the “death of subject” concept. While accepting that diverse heteronomous factors affect our self-consciousness and personality structures, we can equally acknowledge that a responsible deed is constitutive of the autonomous “I” core. Second, Bakhtin’s concept permits a more profound understanding of the “inner” nature of “I” — the responsible deed as an act constituent of “I” forms the very opposition of “external” vs. “internal” and creates the “internal dimension” as a space of subjective agency. “Inner” or “internal” here refers to none other than the experience of the single responsibility of “I” in relation to the world as a whole. Finally, the responsibility of “I” itself has by its very nature an absolute, unconditional character. Since the act of accepting responsibility has a formal character, responsibility cannot be limited to a certain content i. e., there is no. assignation for a specific “area of responsibility” to some subject. This does not, however, mean that responsibility is blurred. On the contrary, only the primary recognition of one’s absolute responsibility allows it to be concretized.

In other words, in trying to address the question “What ought I to do?,” it is not the account for the “objective conditions” of my deed that is of primary importance but the deed itself that has a free (unconditional) nature. Outside of the context of this deed, the understanding of a given “state of affairs” becomes impossible:

To understand an object is to understand my ought in relation to it (the attitude or position I ought to take in relation to it), that is, to understand it in relation to me myself in once-occurrent Being-as-event, and that presupposes my answerable participation, and not an abstracting from myself. It is only from within my participation that Being can be understood as an event, but this moment of once-occurrent participation does not exist inside the content seen in abstraction from the act *qua* answerable deed [11, p. 18].

According to Bakhtin, the specific responsibilities of “I” (in all senses of the word “responsibility” — both as the task for the future and as a necessity of being held accountable for what has already been done) cannot be identified by abstract theoretical thinking. Only after acknowledging its “non-alibi-in-being” can “I” obtain an answer to the question “What ought I to do?” The event nature of the “only” task makes it impossible to universalize or represent it in the form of an “ethical theory”.

Bakhtin vehemently defended his concept against any accusations of relativism, pointing out that what is meant here is not the “ethical indifference” but the impossibility to generalize the content of ethical truth. This is why in performing the deed, “I” as a subject is not guided by some impersonal norm but by the “only” knowledge that opens only from the “inside of the deed”:

There *are no*. moral norms that are determinate and valid in themselves as *moral* norms, but there *is* a moral *subiectum* with a determinate structure (not a psychological or physical structure, of course), and it is upon him that we have to rely: he will know what is marked by the moral ought and when, or to be exact: by the ought as such (for there *is no*. specifically moral ought) [11, p. 6].

In the following section we will try to demonstrate that the abovementioned Bakhtinian concept of “I” as an act of assuming absolute responsibility in specific historical circumstances can provide answers to a number of important questions related to collective responsibility.

“I” as an act and collective responsibility

The first question that needs to be addressed when speaking of the phenomenon of responsibility in its connection with the non-substantial “I” is the fundamental status of moral responsibility. All other types of responsibility including legal, in one way or another, stem from the ability of “I” to acknowledge its moral duty. The mutual presupposition of “I” and responsibility demands a consequent recognition that individual responsibility is primary to all the kinds of collective and vicarious responsibility. This acknowledgment, however, does not imply a rejection of the very possibility of collective responsibility. It is possible due to the act of accepting responsibility, which is, in itself, constitutive of “I” as a moral subject. The unconditional character of this act does not just allow but rather requires “I” to accept responsibility for the world in general as well as for the specific community of which this “I” considers itself a part. It should be noted that, like responsibility itself, this identification with a specific community cannot be imposed upon “I” from the outside but may only be accepted “from within”.

This statement does not contradict the abovementioned discussion on collective responsibility found in the works of Arendt and Jonas. We can follow Arendt’s line of reasoning and accept the collective status of political responsibility that occurs by virtue of the subject’s membership in a particular group [5, p.149–150]. Such membership does not, however, automatically stem from the application of “objective” criteria. no. such criteria — ethnic identity, citizenship, age, or gender — can serve as a univocal condition of collective responsibility imputed from the outside.

When Arendt discusses the moral choice that an individual makes not wanting to participate in evil actions perpetrated on behalf of a certain social group, she illustrates it with Socrates’s famous statement, “It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong”. That said, she makes an important reservation that “its validity will be plausible only to men who have a conscience” [5, p. 157]. The conscience, as an ability to take responsibility voluntarily, is a necessary condition not only for a moral but also for a political act. A political act which is an exercise of power and participation in the organization of social life requires human freedom, or autonomy, as its indispensable condition. Therefore, the identification of “I” with a specific community cannot stem exclusively from heteronomous causality. Therefore, Arendt’s statement that “no moral, individual and personal, standards of conduct will ever be able to excuse us from collective responsibility” [5, p. 157] is convincing only for “I” that already recognizes its absolute personal responsibility for everything that is happening in the world.

This observation is in agreement with the key points of Jonas’s ethic of responsibility. Only by accepting its freedom or autonomy, in which absolute responsibility is inherent, can “I” recognize as an absolute value, for instance, the preservation of life on Earth. Otherwise, particularly in a situation of some forced actions performed out of fear or need, we are not talking about responsibility, but rather extrinsic motivation determined by external pressures. For instance, since environmental legislation in developed countries regulates people’s behavior, to what extent can such behavior be described as responsible?

In its turn, the primacy of personal responsibility in relation to collective responsibility demands the recognition of the fundamental asymmetry in the possibility of imputation of responsibility. Due to its “internal” character, individual responsibility is always directed towards “I” itself as an ethical subject, its own “ought” and its own guilt. The di-

rection to the “inside” is preserved when “I” recognizes its identity within a certain group, thus sharing responsibility with all its members. The opposite vector of ethical reasoning linked to imputing responsibility to “others” in a broad sense of the word becomes impossible here, however. This impossibility has both the ethical and the ontological meaning due to the existence of responsibility itself. Not only the “automatic” imputation of moral responsibility to specific groups is ontologically irrelevant in this respect, but so is the right of certain groups for a “moral compensation” from other groups. In both cases we are dealing with heteronomous conditions of moral imputation contradicting the meaning of the phenomenon of responsibility.

The automatic assumption of moral superiority by some groups or imputation of moral responsibility to others based on heteronomous conditions ignores the very essence or nature of the ethical act. Not only does such a situation exacerbate conflicts typical of any society, but it also casts doubt on the very possibility of the existence of the free, autonomous “I”. Such a society, called “the kingdom of purposes” by Kant [25, p. 59], is paradoxically based on the recognition of the “internal” dimension of human existence that cannot be entirely converted into theoretical knowledge. This is why the discussion of social, ideological, linguistic, and other determination of the moral act should be combined with the revision of the fundamental grounding of personal autonomy, or “I”.

In the “post-metaphysical thinking” context, personal autonomy is not founded on a substantial subject, but rather a free act of actualization of subjectness. The meaning of this act lies in the self-separation from the world and accepting absolute responsibility in a specific situation. This “non-substantial” “I” makes possible the very existence of collective responsibility in any of its forms. Therefore, preserving and cultivating personal autonomy, like in the era of the establishment of the neo-European civilisation, remains a task of primary importance for both a person and society. The evidently growing subjection of a person, to the impact of diverse anonymous structures and processes, cannot be used as a justification for abandoning this task. On the contrary, it is the effort aimed at the emancipation of a personal act as a foundation for the non-substantial “I” that can counterbalance the above-mentioned processes of anonymization of social reality. Therefore, the current issues of collective responsibility may be conceptualized only with a prerequisite that the autonomy of “I” gets its revival in these radically new conditions.

Conclusion

It has already been pointed out in the introduction that the contemporary critical analysis of “I” and “subject” is, to a significant extent, aimed at the Cartesian concept of *cogito*. However, when reviewing these metaphysical concepts, one of their key aspects is often ignored. This aspect may be called practical in the Kantian sense, which implies that an act of will precedes theoretical thinking. In Kant’s philosophy, this aspect of transcendental philosophy is clearly articulated. To a certain extent it is also present in Descartes’s philosophy. Descartes regards his *cogito* not merely as a substance of conscience — I think that I think — but also as a volition making the substance real [26].

Personal autonomy regarded in its ethical and practical aspects, in contrast to the theoretical aspect, has an unlimited potential for non-metaphysical reconceptualization. “I” as a free and responsible act which, in fact, is a prerequisite for any thought, becomes impervious to any post-metaphysical debunking attempts. The analysis of the operation

of anonymous social and linguistic structures creating an illusion of the subject's existence as a substance does not reach this elusive "core" of subjectness. On the contrary, contemporary social processes demonstrate a paradoxical situation, in the absence of this virtual "core" or a free and responsible act, where any objective structures reveal their unviability. This implies that, to a large extent, the way out of contemporary social crises and contradictions has a new birth of an autonomous "I" as a prerequisite. This "I" no longer needs "external", theoretically justified, evidence of its existence. The non-substantial "I" appears in the very act of differentiating between "external" and "internal". This statement is applicable to the whole range of issues and questions related to the subject of collective moral responsibility.

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«Я» и коллективная ответственность

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В статье рассматривается связь коллективной моральной ответственности с «Я» как действием реализации субъектности. Утверждается и обосновывается тезис о первичности «Я» по отношению к любым формам и случаям коллективной ответственности. При этом понятие «Я» переосмысливается с учетом критики субъекта, предпринимаемой в так называемой постметафизической философии (Ю. Хабермас). Ключевым моментом данной критики выступает отказ от понимания «Я» и субъекта как неизменной метафизической сущности. В этой ситуации первостепенную важность приобретает выделение динамического ядра «Я», свободного от метафизических коннотаций. В ходе решения данной задачи авторы опираются на концепцию «Я» как ответственного поступка, представленную в творчестве Михаила Бахтина. Согласно данной концепции, «Я» не предшествует поступку, но рождается в самом ответственном действии. Данное действие оказывается здесь лишенным содержания и трактуется как акт принятия на себя ответственности перед лицом абсолютной инстанции. Подобная трактовка «Я» позволяет сохранить возможность ответственного действия в ситуации нарастающей анонимизации социального бытия и обосновать феномен «Я» как ключевое условие коллективной ответственности. В заключительной части статьи перечисляются основные моменты, характеризующие связь «Я» как поступка и коллективной ответственности. Основной из этих моментов связан с невозможностью «внешнего» наделения ответственностью того или иного субъекта в силу его принадлежности к той или иной общности. Коллективная ответственность, так же как и любая другая, может быть признана только во «внутреннем» измерении личностного поступка. Отсюда вытекает принципиальная асимметрия, характеризующая феномен ответственности в целом и коллективной ответственности в частности.

Ключевые слова: «Я», коллективная ответственность, поступок, И. Кант, М. М. Бахтин.

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