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### ***Rediscovery of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Philosophy***

[Джеймс Сканлан, *Достоевский как мыслитель*, Академический Проект, Санкт-Петербург 2006, s. 255, примечания, именной указатель, содержание]

James P. Scanlan is a research worker of Ohio State University in USA. He is known from several studies of Russian philosophy and culture. His reviewing work is reedition of book from 2002 edited by Cornell University Press in London. It contains six chapters named as follows: Master and Spirit, The Case against Rational Egoism, The Ethics of Altruism, The Logic of Aesthetics, A Christian Utopia and The Russian Idea. An introduction: Dostoevsky as a Philosopher, what is worth noting, bring us closer to the case of Fyodor Dostoevsky's philosophy. We can find there some different opinions of selected known people on the essence of Dostoevsky's philosophy. Just to name some of them: Nikolai Strakhov (close friend of Dostoevsky), Vladimir Soloviev (close friend of Dostoevsky and great Russian nineteenth century philosopher), Nikolai Bierdaev (well-known, emigratory twentieth century Russian philosopher and author of Dostoevsky's biography), Georges Florovsky (theologian, philosopher, historicist and orthodox priest) and contemporary researchers: Victor Terras (Dostoevsky's biographer), Joseph Frank (American professor), Walter Kaufmann, William Barrett and Reinhard Lauth. Scanlan is analyzing their statements, the same as he does with original Dostoevsky's statements about philosophy. He concludes his eloquent introduction with an assertion about essence of Dostoevsky's work that his thinking was dialogical in the style and monological in its essence.

General view on this book is let us point out that it is fresh, bright glance on Dostoevsky's though and pretty original analysis of writer's work. Another reason why it is worth paying attention to this book is the fact that Scanlan looked upon Dostoevsky's legacy from pure philosophical point of view. The question of reason to call author of *The Idiot* philosopher is still disputable. But as I can put now, after lecture of *Dostoevsky the thinker* our doubts will finally disperse.

First chapter contains Dostoevsky's metaphysical views. Scanlan tries to recreate writer's views on nature and essence of human being. There are touched such problems like: existence of God, immortality of the soul, possibility of connection of two human's life's spheres — mental and material one. Actually, these are the main themes of writer's philosophy. He was involved in research on those topics for whole his life. From Dostoevsky's point of view that mental sphere was more important, actually the most important in human's life. Main work, which handles that metaphysical themes as well as these mentioned earlier is *Brothers Karamazov*. There is possibility to find there even Arguments for the Existence of God, as noticed author. To be more precise: scholastic Argument for the Existence of God and Teleological Argument for the Existence of God appeared in fifth and sixth chapters of *Brothers Karamazov*. It means that Dostoevsky was familiar with history of philosophy. The idea of soul's immortality appears as „absolute foundation and the greatest idea of human being”. It is main source of true essence and human's cognition of reality.

It is worth noticing that author's conclusion sounds like: Dostoevsky was a metaphysical realist, who with the great regret admitted existence of objective barriers for spirit from material word.

The next chapter is about Dostoevsky's attitude towards so-called rational egoism (posted by Nikolai Chernyshevsky). This problem, with no doubts, finds exhaustive discussion although it is compatible with general interpretation of this issue. Of course, it is not any objection.

It seems to be suitable place to recall *Notes from underground*. Author do so. Mentioned novel was the widest and the most passionate attack on the concept of human nature named rational egoism, which was created by Chernyshevsky.

Dostoevsky's objections and protest was caused by the fact that rational egoism excluded freedom of the will, what was in writer's opinion a very false view. Underground man argued with these postulates of rational egoism. Scanlan pays his attention on analyzing hero's reasons of rejecting Chernyshevsky's concept.

Rational egoism had two sides: descriptive and normative one (psychologist and ethics egoism). Author stands, that Underground Man was actually an egoist, but not in a significance of Chernyshevsky's rational egoism. Author put the question: Would Dostoevsky agree with his hero's argumentation against egoism? We receive the answer: yes, but only in case of psychologist egoism, which assumes rejection of freedom of the soul. It clearly depicts that Dostoevsky was huge opponent of deterministic conception of human reality.

Directly after analysis of egoism, author goes to discuss case of altruism. Active altruism as a foundation of Dostoevsky's vision of ethics contains problem of right of love and individuum's right. This chapter is supposed to be about ethical views of Dostoevsky. Author discuss moral views, ethical standpoint, issue of usefulness of suffering, issue of collective responsibility, such characteristic for Dostoevsky's moral outlook.

Chapter fourth is about aesthetic. Aesthetic, part of philosophy, science about beauty bothered writer a lot. Here we have repeated polemic with of Chernyshevsky's utilitarianism. The main object of attention is *The Idiot* and statement that „The beauty will redeem the world”. With no doubts this chapter is well composed, but it doesn't touch the problems of poetic of Dostoevsky's novel, what actually is part of aesthetic. Scanlan is rather interested in proving the roots which caused identifying Good and Beauty. He is fighting with such view of redundance of art in human's life.

The last two chapters are about *sui generis* Russian features of writer's thought. The Christian utopia that is about socio-political views. It contains considerations about serfdom, autocracy (organized in an adequate way does not limit human's freedom), revolution (Dostoevsky in the fifteen of XIX c. saw revolution as a possibility to abolish the serfdom) and socialism. In turn, Russian idea is referring to the concept of *pochvennichestvo*. It is an attempt to systematize Dostoevsky's argumentation on

Russian superiority under The West. We have: brotherhood, generality and vision of historical mission of Russia.

Undoubtedly the biggest advantages of the book are its logic and precision. All the thesis the author puts across, are backed with numerous examples of quotations and their analysis. It proves authenticity of Scanlan's work. Also, what makes this book truly valuable is the fact that it is totally devoted to the writer's philosophy. This is something that does not happen often among huge availability of materials regarding Dostoevsky's output. This book, as I remarked earlier on, constitutes valid evidence against the opinion that Dostoevsky is not a philosopher. I heartily recommend this book to Dostoevsky's enthusiasts with all responsibility.