



# An Essay in the Philosophy of Transdisciplinarity (the “Bioethics” as a Casus)

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The current situation in philosophy is characterized, practically unanimously, as a crisis of scientific rationalism. This crisis frightened and continues to frighten some researchers with its possible negative consequences for modern culture as a whole. Others are enchanted and interested. For our part we believe that the unfolding historical situation is where the formation of new opportunities for philosophy and science takes place. Moreover, these new opportunities are discerned most easily when there occurs a meeting of philosophy, on the one hand, and other types of scientific reason (as represented in natural sciences and the humanities), while, on the other, that of philosophy and the extra-scientific forms of rational experience (religious, esoteric, everyday, etc.). The peculiarity of the current meeting between philosophy and the other forms of rational assimilation of reality consists in that it takes place in the context of transdisciplinarity. Lying at its base are impulses directed at finding solutions to the ecological, energy, information and demographic problems, as well as the problem of health, and so on. This results in the formation of a new type of investigative activities. In the philosophy of science this new type of investigative activities is represented as “postneoclassical science” (Vyacheslav Stepin); in the sociology of science, as “type 2 science” (Michael Gibbons, Helga Nowotny,

Peter Scott), postacademic science (John Ziman), “other modern” science (Ulrich Beck), etc. The production of scientific knowledge at the modern stage is a hybrid of fundamental research oriented to the cognizing of truth and investigations that are pragmatically oriented to a useful effect. In the classical knowledge production method, the value orientations are as it were implicit (like Merton’s science ethos) and controlled by a system of intrascientific mechanisms. In the new one (expressed to the greatest extent in biology and medicine), there arises a reflection to these value orientations, which is realized via transdisciplinary (institutionalized both inside and outside of science) mechanisms for normative presentation of scientific practices. Active in these transdisciplinary interactions are (aside from natural scientists) representatives of the humanities and the public. Let me emphasize this: transdisciplinarity proves one of the vectors of a multidimensional transformation of science, which exceeds the boundaries of its classical self-identification. It is in this respect that transdisciplinarity is for us an object of philosophical discussion. While studying the phenomenon of transdisciplinarity, we will regularly turn to the “bioethics” as a casus.

**Keywords:** transdisciplinarity, place studies, complex problems, place.

## 1 Introduction

Bioethics as a casus Historically bioethics took shape as a search for answers to the most difficult moral and anthropological problems (sometimes balancing literally on the brink of life and death) generated by advances in biomedical technologies. Cloning, organ transplantation, euthanasia, gene therapy and eugenics, as well as many other occurrences in the recent history of the biomedical science make philosophers, doctors, biologists, lawyers, theologians and other experts look for solutions to crucial ethical and anthropological problems.

Rationalization and responsible decision-making in critical situations, first, cannot be based solely on expert findings coming from natural scientists (primarily doctors and biologists). Their cooperation with representatives of the humanities and the public is a vital necessity. Second, there is not a single philosophical, moral or religious doctrine which is able to suggest a system of universally recognized values or anthropological ideas to deal with the fast-growing number of conflicts and difficulties. Third, the public forum tends to become the sphere for decision-making, with bioethics itself proving a factor in the formation of a public space. Finally, fourth, the existential significance of upcoming problems predetermines valid decision-making in the "here and now" mode.

Thus, philosophers and other experts, while not renouncing their traditional posture as "side observers," actively co-participate in the acceptance of existentially important decisions. For example, we must decide, here and now, whether the embryo is human and thus protected by the precept, "Thou shalt not kill", or if the embryo is a conglomerate of cells which it is lawful to manipulate for scientific and medical purposes, such as isolation of stem cells to treat sick people. It is precisely in this existential situation that the eternal philosophical problem of the "human-being" requires a concrete solution. And the solution is possible only as a result of complex interactions between scientists representing different disciplines, politicians, theologians and members of the public (who do not possess specialized disciplinary knowledge, and are, in a sense, "untrained").

The specificity of the situational rationalization and "here and now" decision-making finds its expression in "casuses" of bioethics, or single occurrences (like the discovery of the cloning technology or legit-

imization of the euthanasia)[1].

In the context of our reasoning, casus can be defined as an occurrence of a special type or real-life event, which provokes a variety of disciplinary and extradisciplinary responses, and simultaneously involves them in a certain joint action, literally acting as a common cause. The casus "plots" a certain concrete space of opportunities for those responses, though these are not something to be grasped by the mind and are precisely ones that really operate in persons lifeworld. Moreover, the concrete circumstances of an event and its position (place) in the sociocultural context are also included in the sphere of opportunities.

To be sure, not each event in biomedicine can rank as a casus. It is necessary that a life-event contain an impulse, provoking a need for rationalization and for movement beyond the generally accepted and established view, both scientific and among the public. An occurrence must be paradoxical. It must hold within itself a quality of tragic "aporia" or "amechania," contain an imperative demand for scientific, philosophical, theological and other disciplinary rationalization aspiring to the status of universal. But the complexity of existential problems in bioethics is such that not a single disciplinary rationale can not pretend to sufficiency. Verity clashes with verity, good with good, truth with truth, the clash causing an aporia of reason that generates a paradoxical transgressing impulse to look for base and basing, but already in the communications sphere of the life-world, the sphere of the generally significant.

Thus, bioethics as a casus provokes the formulation of fundamental philosophical problems. How is it possible to conceive, not only a unity of diverse definitions of reality but also a variety of possible unities? How is a rational intercourse between reasons of a different type possible without them being generalized within a concrete disciplinary perspective (for example, within the framework of some specific philosophical doctrine)? How the paradoxical experience of transdisciplinarity is possible?

## 2 Transdisciplinarity: community in attunement

We will start by describing a specific existential attunement which paradoxically defines a fundamental community, "community in attunement." It is this community that can retain philosophical and

disciplinary approaches which differ in their interpretation of reality, as well as individual and parochial preferences within the conventional framework of a unified investigative perspective. The community in attunement creates an opportunity (prerequisite) for intercourse without a preliminary theoretically (disciplinarily) selected basis.

The life dynamics of human communities is defined by the play of the dominant existential attunement that determines the orientation between the poles of threat and rescue, one specific for each culture. The culture of the classical epoch and science are characterized by a linear orientation to the fight against danger embodied in outer nature. The salvation in this context is seen as a scientifically valid technical control over the natural factors. Modern culture preserves the existential vector of the classical epoch, but it is supplemented with a vector pointing the opposite way. At this stage, the threat to human existence is diagnosed as lurking not only in nature but also in the technological expansion and domination of the objective scientific type of rationality. In this case, salvation is believed to consist in the preservation or revival of humankind’s original natural environment. Paradoxically, science emerges as a savior and as a source of existential threat at the same time.

Lying at the base of transdisciplinarity is a continuous repetition in the interplay of the moods of hope and fear, their paradoxical merger in a single human feeling that causes an existential aporia. People hope for a scientifically-based technological solution to their problems and yet fear technology, in which is seen both a savior and an ultimate threat. The boundary between what is one’s own and someone else’s, a stable one in the classical consciousness, is called into question. And it is the paradox of existential attunement that cements life into a specific integrity. Such being attuned, in which we are one way or another and which determines us through and through, lets us find ourselves among beings as a whole. The founding mode of attunement [die Befriedlichkeit der Stimmung] not only reveals beings as a whole in various ways, but this revealing—far from being merely incidental—is also the basic occurrence of our Dasein [5].

### 3 The main themes of transdisciplinarity

Let me say that the word theme is not accidental in this context. Our understanding of the genesis of knowledge in the life-world sphere are based on the ideas of Gerald Holton as presented in his book *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein*. Holton’s approach is of importance to us precisely in that he looks for the origins of science in the same place where the transdisciplinary experiment unfolds, to wit, in life-world structures. It is not accidental that he works, not only with scientific and philosophical texts but also with diaries, correspondence, interviews, laboratory logs, and general education curricula. Holton notes that the thematic structure of scientific activities can be regarded as mostly independent from the empirical and analytical content of investigations. It is displayed in the process of studying those opportunities for choice, which are basically open to a scientist [6]. Holton’s thematization idea is labile enough to be able, on the one hand, to keep the inner complexity of the scientific experience and its formation, while, on the other, to express certain thematic repetitions in the development of both scientific and philosophical thought.

The modern type of paradoxical existential interplay, imposes on philosophy and science a repetition of a whole series of traditional themes (which we view as paradoxes)—power and vulnerability of the human mind, freedom and determination, part and whole, reductionism and holism, preformism and epigenesis, creationism and gradualism, individual and social, natural and artificial, etc. Notice that these themes (paradoxes) open the way for the multiplying bioethical collisions. In the net of paradoxes that is being constantly woven we will single out three knots which are of most importance for the understanding of the transdisciplinary philosophy: the paradoxical relationship of one and many, philosophy and sophistry, as well as the transposition of philosophy.

### 4 One and Many

Heraclitus’ polemos governs the polyphony of scientific and philosophical perspectives that come into being and are locked in a debate in bioethics. This kind of “polemical” interaction of diverse forces that are drawn into joint action may have an uncountable

number of variations, ranging from an ideological feud to synergy motivated by the attainment of a mutually beneficial consensus. But in either case the “polemicist” feel the need for each other in order to become realized as their own selves. In a clash, they are “communicated” to each other, and they are in it together.

But if neither in teology, nor in reason, nor still in nature we assume a certain “eternal law” or a unity principle that is the same for everyone, the question arises as to what one may hope for as one comes face to face with the most difficult existential problems? How is association possible without generalizations? How can one conceive not only the unity of the diverse (this is something that dialectics is good at) but also the diversity of possible unities? The bioethics casus is of interest in that it contains a useful tip, a spontaneously found vital practical solution. To deal with the most difficult life-aporias generated by advances in biomedical technologies, committees on ethics were formed in the 1960s, which are turning, by the start of the current century, into an institutionalized form of bioethics which is present in the structure of modern science. The answer is being formed in the context of a joint communicative transdisciplinary dispute or discussion, where a doctor doesn't cease being a doctor, nor does a philosopher stop being a philosopher.

Their expert positions (definitions in categories of the universal) arise as a reaction to the existential aporias that rend the naive general significance of everyday views on life, death, and humankind as such. They are vitally needed for a reasonable solution to the identified problems, but they are insufficient. What makes them sufficient is a joint transdisciplinary effort to achieve, via public discussions, an agreed generally significant evaluation of unfolding events. Once achieved, the agreed general significance (universality, as it were)—such as when death is defined as the “death of the brain”—on the one hand, imparts legitimacy to certain biomedical practices (in our case, transplantological), while securing the congruity of wrangling disciplinary perspectives as a peculiar social contract, on the other.

Yet, no matter how convenient, this kind of “social contract” does not relieve philosophy of the responsibility for making a properly philosophical rationalization of its co-participation in transdisciplinary bioethical communications. We believe that Juergen Habermas' idea of “unassuming philosophy”,

which he formulated in the context of a debate on liberal eugenics projects [4], is an important step forward in this kind of rationalization. The philosophical search for universal foundations is, in this case, correlated with the communicative strategies used to identify the general significance in a variety of disciplinary unities.

According to Habermas, the naive identification of one's own private speculative perspective with a certain self-evident position of the universal has proved its irrelevance in present-day philosophy. The assumption that there is a universal, one-for-all perspective of truth or idea of good life, which until recently used to inspire the philosophical community, is not just called into question. It is itself perceived as a threat of an inadmissible interference with each persons right to “develop an ethical self-awareness in order to implement in reality, in accordance with ones own capacities and good intentions, a personal concept of ‘good life’ [4, 12]”.

But then the question arises as to whether the reason's unassumingness is a manifestation of its impotence? What can a philosopher hope for while unassumingly putting forward judgements on, in particular, ethical acceptability, or, for example, liberal eugenics? What can mankind hope for in the face of existential threats? In modern democratic secular society, references to God are relevant only within a community of fellow believers. In this situation, Habermas suggests his “reduced proceduralist” variant of reading “the other” as a language or communicative practice. According to Habermas, not only can a correct moral judgement determining relations between subjects be obtained, but also a correct ethical self-awareness “can be obtained either in revelation or be given in some other way. It can only be won by joint efforts [4, 21]”.

Participants in communication get a chance to advance towards an understanding of what the common good is via: challenging the presupposition of “the other;” consistent advancement, criticism and rejection of poor judgements; and selection of successful premises for the possibility of being one's own self in the face of each other. The basis of this understanding is the fact itself of an agreement being reached. It is not accidental that the principles and rules of bioethics are, in effect, the rules of competition between different value orientations in the space of the public dialogue rather than general “solutions” to problems.

The attainment of “the generally significant by agreement” is guaranteed by the resolve of the participants in communication to be true to the commitments they assumed in the face of each other, not by a certain universal logic. The joint effort to move to a transposition along with the other in response to his reciprocal wish to become himself precisely together logically justifies the position of philosophizing in transdisciplinary investigations, and provides the most general answer to the Kantian question, What can I hope for? It is the “greater thing” that is revealed in the dialogue bound by a community in attunement in the face of urgent existential problems.

## 5 Philosophy or sophistry?

The transdisciplinary theme can also be considered as a repetition of the collision between philosophy and sophistry, a repetition that creates resources for its own new rationalization. To quote Natalya Avtonomovas expressive writing, “Once in Greece, in the times of the Second Sophistry, philosophy took the upper hand over rhetorics, proving over persuading, and the object thought over the attainment of some outside goal. In the current situation, rhetorics in world culture had its revenge on philosophy, subordinating its objective aspirations to functional justification. Today, possibly, it would make sense to put rhetorics at the service of philosophy again [2]”. We agree with the idea of this formulation of the theme; yet, we believe that speaking in terms of victories and defeats is unproductive. The comeback of sophistry and its rehabilitation does not mean that “object nature” and “objectivity” are renounced; rather, it is a case of one wishing to find the means to rationalize their transforming (disappearing and reappearing) character. The public forum is where the projects “object nature” and “objectivity” are approved. Simultaneously it is where the methods and skills enabling one to form one’s own opinion are practiced. And it is not a consequence of disrespect for truth but an attempt to reveal the quality of the “human-dimension”. “Truth” reveals its “human dimension” in crisis situations where the existing rules and unwritten laws fail, and things foreign are put in a presence via resistance. Rhetorics uses its “intercourse aids”—argumentation, proofs, demonstration of probabilities, and other techniques—in order to generate definite emotions

and sensations capable, in turn, of forming new or modified stereotypes, perceptions, and behaviors.

Standing behind objectivism is reason’s desire to assume the point of view of God. In following this philosophical tradition, Bertrand Russell wrote this: “The free intellect will see as God might see, without here and now, without hopes and fear... calmly, dispassionately, in the soul and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain[9]”.

It’s important to note, however, that philosophy is a variety of philosophies, which grows increasingly complicated, and each of those philosophies offers its unique view of the world as a whole. Culture has in its possession powerful resources enabling it to retain, the human and the divine, without letting them blend though they are inseparably, that is, what is of human dimension and what is objective, the sophisticated and the philosophical. It suffices to point to Peter Abelard’s conceptualism as interpreted by Svetlana Neretina, from whom we will borrow (albeit in a somewhat modified form) the ideas of equivocation (double rationalization) and concept [8]. With regard to concept we will also take into account the approach suggested by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari [3].

In our interpretation, the idea of equivocation or double rationalization implies an immanent two-stroke nature of thought, as well as an active role of not only reflection that determines the specificity of the theoretical thought process but also the intellectual procedure which we will allow ourselves to call “transflection.” Transflection is, in our view, a specific validating method in “unassuming philosophizing,” which differs from the classical method of philosophical reflection in that it takes into account the non-linear nature of intercourse occurrences.

The meaning of classical reflection is the recognition of the identical in itself (self-identity) and in the other. Therefore it is immanently retrospective. Transflection is attuned by amazement and oriented to a “fundamental meeting” (Deleuze) with otherness in itself and the other, rather than to recognition. In this sense, it is prospective and open to an unknown and perilous future. The otherness is rhythmically structured by the governing existential attunement. It retains the plane of integrity as a fundamental riddle (problem) whose solution is the target of scientists’ and philosophers’ transdis-

ciplinary communicative activities. As a validating procedure, transflection is due to retain the zone of openness to one another and need for one another (tolerance towards itself and the other), and to defend against reflective "removals." Reflection and transflection do not abolish each other. They are in contact and thus define (impose the limits) and redefine the Kantian question, "What am I able to know?"

The important thing is to retain in the word able, not only the cognitive plane but also the communicative one: I am able to know what I am able to communicate to the other (implying intersubjective universality by agreement or general significance), as well as something greater, something that can come into being and do so precisely in the zone where intersubjectivity is called into question. While notion is the expressive means of reflection, transflection, as a method of the unassuming philosophy, works with concepts. These are the forms of thought that operate as conditions of a direct dialogue intercourse between the one who speaks and the one who listens, or the one who writes and the one who reads.

The existential energy of aporias of life-occurrences (casuses) and the paradoxical experience of their rationalization is concentrated in the variety of paradoxical problem knots, concepts as embryos of thought. For example, the development of heart transplantation techniques revealed the concepts of "life" and "death" as a problem knot (subject of interdisciplinary dispute). The meaning of paradoxical situations cropping up in connection with the progress in new reproductive technologies (abortion, test-tube fertilization and embryo transplantation, cloning) is concentrated in the specific bioethical concept of "human." The paradoxes of the new models of doctor-patient relations are embodied in the concept of "personality."

As distinct from the definiteness of notion, concept (in view of its primordial paradoxicalness) is originally underdefined. For classical thinking, the indeterminacy of cognition and mutual understanding was of "subjective" nature related to the insufficiency of reason. In modern science and philosophy it becomes "objective," pointing to "coming-into-being" as an imminent property of reality itself. A concept "lives" in a conversation, reproducing in itself the subjective and objective aspects of the interlocutors' utterances as well as the "something greater" transflection retains. It is for this reason

that it is an indispensable "intermediary" in dialogue or "generalization-free intercourse," localizing itself in the border zone between everyday speech (the word) and disciplinary discourses (the notion).

At this point we come to the next important distinction between the notion and the concept. An extended form of the notion is a scientific, logically coherent theory (or a theoretical model). The concept unfolds into a conception, while retaining the paradoxicalness of conceptual grasping (a possibility of alternative theories). Inside philosophy (its specific areas such as ethics or anthropology), theology, biology and medicine, psychology, and other disciplines a concept-powered conceptions of man, personality, death, life, etc. take shape.

As they pass to the sphere of transdisciplinary communications, concepts take on the form of conceptual narrations. Unlike ordinary narrations that structure relations in the life-world, the plots of conceptual narrations and structures of their peripeteia include the above-mentioned existential aporias, of which the concepts are the paradoxical clots of meaning.

Mediated by the translation of disciplinary knowledge into the language of narrations, the transdisciplinary communication models concrete forms of joint living of individuals in a bid to solve existential paradoxes packed in concepts. It is a specific kind of "preemptive living-out" of the situations that may yet arise. For example, a biologist, who has invented a new technology, must translate his results into the language of the life-world in order that the meaning of his discovery be comprehensible to non-specialists. Thus, he is forced as it were to expand the framework of his experimental dialogue with nature by converting the dialogue itself into an experiment designed to coordinate his position with the moral positions of other subjects. It is with those primary narrative representations (knots, of which concepts are plots) that philosophers, lawyers or psychologists start working. Proceeding from a narration as the initial empiria, they (each in his own way) study it professionally and thus translate it into the specific languages of definite disciplinary areas. This research may result in interpretations of the meaning and moral value of the scientists discovery. But the intelligibility of the professional judgement of the philosopher, psychologist or any other expert for others (non-experts) can again be achieved only as a result of retranslating the results of the philosophi-

cal, legal or psychological analyses into the language of life-world narrations. The meanings they reveal and evaluations they produce must be retold as open or closed variety of life-stories that are possible as a result of realization or non-realization of some biomedical technology (for example, permitting or banning to clone human beings).

In this context, the mutual under-translatability of the languages of partners in transdisciplinary communications (the insolubility of the fundamental paradoxes) is of substantial positive importance as a meaning-generating zone. As Yury Lotman stressed, “The value of the dialogue proves linked, not with that intersecting part [the intersection of the language space of the one who speaks and the one who listens. L.K., but with the transmission of information between non-intersecting parts. This puts us face to face with an unsolvable contradiction: we are interested in an intercourse precisely in the situation which complicates the intercourse and ultimately makes it impossible. Moreover, the more difficult and less adequate the translating of one non-intersecting part of the space into the language of another is, the more valuable the fact of this paradoxical intercourse becomes in informational and social respects. One can say that translating the untranslatable proves a high-value information vehicle [7]”. The thinking act performed in the context of this kind of translation is a type of transflection. It is thanks to the retention of the meaning-generating zone of the paradoxical “translation of the untranslatable” that the transdisciplinary communicative effort contains within itself the possibility of a meeting with “something greater,” which is unattainable in principle from within the individual expert perspective.

In the inter-speech situation of transdisciplinary communications we considered above, the voices of the philosopher (in the classical sense) and the sophist are only situationally distinguished self-identifications of the internal and external speech of a real individual whose specific position (transposition) we will now consider.

## 6 Trans-position of philosophy

We will single out three thematically possible positions of philosophy relative to the experience of transdisciplinarity, with account taken of how they unfold within the “bioethics” casus. First to note is the position of Side Observer, which was historically

secured in the new European philosophy. Philosophy speculates about transdisciplinarity as a subject existing within the context of a new type of science. Characteristic of this form of a thinker’s reflectively imposed self-identification is a paradoxical positioning of being outside of the world (and thus being able to comprehend it as a whole) and being in contact with it on its border. The peculiarity of the thematization in this case consists in that the human effort is eliminated from the result, to wit, the integral idea of the world. In this respect, speculating about transdisciplinarity changes nothing in the subject of thought itself. Any speculation about genes, clones, organs, moral principles or rules naturally reproduces this trans-position of a philosopher or scientist’s self-identity in the situation of transdisciplinarity. Lying at its base is the idea (it’s of no importance whether it is conscious or not) about the uniqueness of the universal (truth), which aspires to both integrity and universality.

The second form of philosophy’s trans-position is congruous with the position of the cognizing reason in neoclassical science, for which the effort of a cognizing individual, as objectivized in language and instrument, itself becomes observable. The subject nature of science acquires traits of human presence, with human dimension as its object of investigation. We denote this position as that of the Participant. Not only does a philosopher speculate about bioethics, he himself becomes an active participant in transdisciplinary communications. His thinking—his effort as a real individual—proves an occurrence that changes the state of a subject of speculation.

In transdisciplinary experience, the subject nature of disciplinary areas is pinpointed at the moment of its coming into being, and, in effect, it experiences a reincarnation of its own element, for which reason it necessarily appears as unstable (arising and disappearing again). Accordingly, Participant’s self-identity is likewise unstable; one can say that it comes into being along with the subject nature of the transdisciplinary experience. But it is in this transitional, unstable transdisciplinary state that scientific disciplines become open to meeting with other forms of disciplinary scientific knowledge, religious experience, and “auxiliary knowledge” (Martin Heidegger) of everyday life.

The third trans-position of philosophy, which we denote by the word Witness, is, as we see it, the embodiment of the philosophy of transdisciplinarity as

such. While keeping the connection with the life practical casus, pushing itself into the interdisciplinary experience under the imperative pressure brought to bear by concepts, and deploying its reply in the conceptual universality of Observer and the contextual general significance of Participant, Observer constitutes itself as the one who retains the distinction (polemos) of the above two conceptual personages and secures the experience of their connected realization. He retains the primary paradoxicalness (the determined chaos) of transdisciplinary experience, which secures as *causa sue* its constant repetition in multiple existential situations generated by the biotechnological (in our consideration) progress. As he retains the orientation to truth as the basis, and is conscious of the relativity and multiplicity of the truths, Witness introduces his own act of witnessing into his decision to act this way and not the other.

Witness’s universum of judgements unfolds within a paradox of two simultaneously present ultimate assumptions of “the universal” and “the generally significant.” In the strict sense, Witness is he who, as a unique human individual, testifies the veracity of “the divine,” the general significance of the universal. And the power of this testimony depends not only on the truth that is open to him, but also on the luck of Witness receiving two gifts of the real existence—attention and recognition of the others. These others are the communicative community which in respect of the testimony plays the part of Judge whose trial is realized precisely in the communicative effort together.

In a situation where mankind once again is losing its unity and internal stability, where it reveals in itself a menacing and hypnotizing abyss of chaos, a wave of new barbarianism that makes its cultural foundations crumble, the experience of transdisciplinarity, as we attempted to show it, throws light on the positive sense of the existential situation we are living through, where culture turns to its own flesh and matter of re-creation.

## References

- [1] We borrow the term “casus” from the civil law tradition (where the US is the most characteristic case in point), in which precedents (casuses or cases) court decisions on particular legal collisions that are accepted as standard for purposes of evaluation and decision-making in other situations play the normative role. Thus the single becomes the standard for

the general. “Casus,” in this sense, differs in principle from “example” which denotes application of some general rule to a particular case. Playing a special role in Russian moral self-consciousness are “casuses” enshrined in belles-lettres (the writings of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky).

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