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*THE IDENTITY OF A PERSON(ALITY) AND A RATIONAL ASPECT
OF THE WEAKNESS OF WILL: STRUCTURE AND MEANING*

SUMMARY: The text examines the phenomenon of irrational behavior in the context of the problem of weakness of will. The first part of the paper is dedicated to the analysis of a person, that is, the mechanisms which a person accesses in adoption and analysis of the information available to him, as well as their application in practice. After determining cognitive, narrative and identification process in the structure of consciousness, we approach the analysis and criticism of rationalistic, Socratic thesis about weakness of will. We argue that it is impossible to determine the problem of weakness of will axiomatically, whereby we introduce a correlative phrase - relativity of weakness, triggering an identification process characteristic of every person individually. The identification process, we further argue, is an unavoidable initial step when explaining akrastic behavior.

KEYWORDS: weaknes of will, person(ality), individual, identity, irrationality, logos

Introduction (the Identity of a Personality/Consciousness/Rationality/Irrationality)

Determining identity, or in a somewhat broader sense, recognizing identity – that is, looking for an answer to a question what one thing (“an apple“, “a stone“, “a river“ and so on) *is* – implies determination of characteristics whose total represents a sufficient condition in order for a certain thing to be recognized as exactly *such* thing. In other words, in order to determine the identity of a certain entity, we have to recognize within those characteristics which separate it from other entities. In that way, that which constitutes the identity of a certain entity is based on the *difference which* that entity establishes with regard to other entity or entities. Once determined identity of a certain entity can have its identity profiled again, that is, can have new or different characteristics attributed to it, with regard to the originally established identity base. Thus, for example, by determining the characteristics which an apple possesses, not only do we postulate a minimum requirement to call something an apple, but we also

determine crucial differentia specifica which separates the apple from other entities, hence, non-apples (houses, trees, and the like). However, the total of sufficient characteristics to call something an apple does not mean that that apple is unique; identical characteristics, which represent a minimum requirement to call something an apple, can be found in other entities as well. This means that an apple itself (as a fruit) falls under a certain system which prescribes (that is, devises in its identity) sufficient conditions to call something an apple. We call such broad system a kind. The kind of apples, as is indicated, can be further structured in its identity and divided – into species. Complicating conditions which a certain entity has to fulfill in order to be recognized (identified) as a *certain* entity, can extend indefinitely (species can be further divided into subspecies, and these into sub-subspecies etc.). When the characteristics, which characterize a certain identity, are no longer common, i.e. when they cannot be determined as common for two entities – we have a *unique, singular and unrepeatable identity*. Thus, the very apple we have started from, although belonging to a certain species, subspecies (etc.) in accordance with the minimum conditions it fulfills, ultimately retains certain characteristics (the totality of certain characteristics), which not a single apple in the system of apple species has. Therefore, every apple is at the same time a part of a certain system of values (species, subspecies etc.), but also a unique, singular identity set based on specific characteristics which only *that* apple possesses.¹

To speak about the identity of a person implies, however, a more complex analytical apparatus relative to the discourse on the identity of the entities which we cannot say to possess a personality. What the concept of personality singles out from other entities is the concept of consciousness about its own constant identity transformation.² The consciousness of own identity is differentia specifica of personality.³ However, conscious-

1 We do not enter here into issues which could arise from *cloning*, i.e. the assumption that it is possible to create artificially two completely identical entities. Something like that is not impossible to imagine; in that case, the difference between them could not have been possible (we could not say, as is usually the case when we use the concept of difference in determining identity, that one element is what the other element is not, on the contrary - one element is precisely that which the other element is). Complete identity would cancel the principle of difference. However, we think that in that case as well, we could talk about two entities (two apples), instead of one. Physical separation of those two entities represents a necessary condition to talk about them in plural.

2 Here, one can notice that many things, which demand identity positioning, are also subject to change. (Thus, for example, we can assert that the identity of an apple changes in time: from fruit, via maturity to rotting). What personality singles out from other entities (thus, no personality) is the consciousness about one's own change, i.e. the consciousness about one's own identity dispositioning.

3 We note that we have not said that consciousness is differentia specifica of personality, but that it is the *consciousness of self*. The reason for that is that it can be argued that consciousness is a feature of many beings, which would then implicitly imply that we are obliged to call all the

ness is not the only feature a personality possesses; just as we can claim that an apple has a unique identity (i.e. features that are characteristic of *precisely that organic* structure of an apple), so in the same way, we can also say that personality, besides self-consciousness, possesses a unique specific organic structure.⁴ That structure can become a subject of study by consciousness itself (biological, physiological research), just as consciousness itself is subject to its own analysis, i.e. internal retrospection.

Personality understood like this determines its identity via two grounds: a) via specific characteristics of its organic structure (whereby it differs from other beings of its species) and b) on the basis of specific characteristics of its own consciousness (whereby it differs from other personalities on a psychological plane). It is precisely on the basis of this twofold identity perception of personality, that we can draw a distinction between a personality and an individual. “To be a personality is not the same as being an individual, given that one becomes an individual by birth itself, while a personality represents an optimal possibility, which is either realized or not, through a process of psychophysical maturity.” (Govedarica 2006: 58) An individual does not possess the capability of self-reflection; he is devoid of the possibility of *signifying* his own being (existence), that is, self-reflective narrativity which would profile him psychologically. An individual is a body devoid of speech.⁵ A body is organic matter which represents a necessary but not a sufficient requirement for the formation of a personality. On the other hand, a personality is characterized by a *possibility* of observing its own development (the consciousness of physical and psychological changes). Therefore, a personality represents a *potential* which we cannot say that it has reached its final psycho-physical stadium; change (maturing) is always present, and therefore the abilities to observe one’s own development are ongoing as long as there is consciousness of that development. In our study, we will focus on the analysis of specific characteristics of a personality on the basis of the consciousness of themselves.⁶

beings, which we assume to have consciousness, personalities. We reject such implications (therefore, a dog cannot be a personality to us) and we connect the term personality only with self-conscious subjects. Compare with a difference between self-consciousness in people (that is, personality) and awareness in animals described by Jon Elster 1986: 20-21.

- 4 One, of course, ought to be careful when speaking about unique (and especially, unrepeatable) organic structures, taking into account the remarks provided in the footnote 1. The possession of “specific organic structure“ is certainly a feature of all organic matter in nature. Therefore, we cannot say that a “specific organic structure“ is *differentia specifica* of personality. What, however, arises from this specificity is that it enables identity determining (difference) between all organic beings that belong to the same species.
- 5 We will discuss somewhat later the significance of narration in mental life and the moment of *mastering* speech (i.e. determining the moment when an individual turns into a personality).
- 6 One should bear in mind that the division of personality into physiological and psychological aspect (or in a somewhat broader sense into organic and spiritual part) is not exactly simple

However, what does that consciousness about oneself imply and how does it affect determining personal identity? “To be conscious means to be awake and receptive to information, but also to be composed and selective in directing your own attention. Consciousness also implies introspection, the internal observation of one’s own being, the observation of one’s own problems and wishes, their articulation and coordination. To be conscious means to know yourself, remember what has happened and predict what is yet to happen. To have consciousness means to have your own self, to be characterized by subjective experience and unrepeatability of your own experiences. (...) To have personal identity means to have your own self, to build an image about yourself, to know what you want and have self-respect. Personal identity is one of the characteristics of personality, which concerns its relation to self and self-representation, but also its recognizability to others, in the sense of its singularity and susceptibility to identification and re-identification“ (Govedarica 2006: 54, 58) Here we should pay attention to three things: a) consciousness implies the ability to receive and *process* information, thereby determining willingly, through a course of selection, that information which merits further processing. On the basis of that processing, it is possible to “remember“ and “predict“ certain events (that is, constitute new information which is worthy of being remembered). We will call this part of the activities of consciousness – *cognitive process*. Furthermore, b) consciousness implies introspective activity, where “the observation of one’s own problems and wishes“ seeks for some kind of symbolic (linguistic) explanation. This means that the process of introspection is inseparable from the process of symbolization, i.e. the articulation of the *state* that we observe via introspective insight, and in accordance with the symbolic mould (language) which is *independent* of personality itself.⁷ We will call this part of activities of consciousness – *narrative process*. And finally, c) consciousness implies a construction of one’s own image of self (that which I observe as Self, while I am performing introspection). We will call this characteristic of consciousness – *identification process*.

and leads towards opening a new, complex issue which concerns psychophysical identity taken as a whole. This again implies the generation of different conceptual framework (mental or physical) based on which identity features of personality itself are to be interpreted. One of the questions that is to be answered regarding this is: in what way can we speak about psychological autonomy of personality (and its analysis in accordance with the conceptual framework of mentalism), if the cause of psychological processes (reception, perception, thought and others) is physiological (which means that the psychological processes are given as a consequence of certain physical-chemical processes in the brain)? The answer to that and similar questions goes beyond our work. However, for further details about this, see: Grahek 1990: 7-85, Govedarica 2006: 21-36, 60-62 and Govedarica 2013: 48-58

7 This simply means that a language exists regardless of whether there is an introspective activity of individual personality. The personality is thrown into a previously formed linguistic simulacrum.

We can say about the processes we have recognized in human consciousness to be directed at each other. It is difficult to imagine a process of cognition without narrative shaping, while the process of identification itself, that is, self-identification, includes both cognitive (to recognize and extract the information we possess about ourselves) and narrative process (to build a construction about own Self on the basis of recognized information about ourselves). “Mature consciousness of one’s own self has a linguistic character and narrative form. Narrative articulation enables time stretching of one’s own self so that it encompasses the memories from the past, as well as intentions, short-term or long-term plans, facing the future. However, a question arises about whether there is pre-language and atemporal consciousness about one’s own self, which would imply nonconceptual content and which could, for instance, be attributed to babies.” (Govedarica 2006: 65) Narrative articulation is necessary to synthesize information determined during cognitive process. Temporality actually represents causal-consequential juxtaposition of information (for example, we have first a) bought an apple, b) washed it c) in order to eat it in the end) i.e. the consciousness of their chronological organization. Personality is oriented on the basis of consciousness of causal-consequential relation between the information it selects and processes in cognitive process. However, the question raised (whether there is pre-language consciousness about one’s own self) is not purposeful only because it is supposed to answer the problem about whether pre-language consciousness about one’s self is possible (which would lead to some kind of formulation of aconceptual notion of self, which seems paradoxical), but it is also significant in order to determine the moment of constituting a narrative process (or a process of temporalization itself) in consciousness and to recognize the moment of constituting a personality.

We tend to believe that it is impossible to have the consciousness of self outside symbolic determination. We have already said that differentia specifica of personality is the consciousness of self.⁸ However, it is not impossible to assume that there is a nonconceptual relation of certain beings, who are not personalities in the sense we have ascribed to that term.⁹ Animals, for instance, can distinguish other animals or humans and, with considerable certainty, recognize a hostile or friendly figure in them, although they do not know the concept of “friendship”. Non-conceptual consciousness of self is not possible precisely because it demands cognitive (namely, conceptual)

8 See footnote 3.

9 Christofer Peacocke distinguishes between three kinds of conscious subjects: a) the first kind are those he calls “mere subjects” which can have a certain non-conceptual image about themselves and what they have been previously doing. According to this philosopher, the consciousness of animals is characterized by this kind of awareness. b) The second kind of consciousness concerns persons who have “the first person concept”, while c) the third kind of consciousness implies a complete self-awareness, that is, mature and formed consciousness of one’s own personality. For more details, see Peacocke 2010: 521-522.

leap from the observation of other to consciousness (concept) that that other is – Self. The concept of time is essential for that leap, that is, the consciousness of causal-consequential relation between gathered information. In a word, we need concepts. The inability to bridge that gap reduces every attempt of the constitution of consciousness of self to mere atemporal identification. However, we cannot equate the identification itself with a complete narrative consciousness, which (exclusively) a personality has about itself. On the other hand, what we can do is recognize when that identification turns into complete consciousness of self. So as to explain this problem in detail, as well as to determine the moment when this “leap“ is bridged, we will present Lacan’s thesis on “the mirror stage“, in short.¹⁰ Namely, it is about the period of an infant’s development (from 6 to 18 months) when it recognizes its own reflection in a mirror, for the first time. Although this is not yet about a symbolic identification (for which the notion of the Other is necessary), the infant nevertheless succeeds in establishing a connection between himself and his own reflection in the mirror. He recognizes his image (imago), but still waits for its symbolic shaping. “It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [*assume*] an image – an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity’s term, ‘imago’. The jubilant assumption [*assumption*] of his specular image by the kind of being – still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence – the little man is at the *infans* stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.” (Lacan 2006: 76) This imaginary identification of an infant who “gathers“ the outlines of his image is some kind of aconceptual, primordial identification, i.e. the identification outside linguistic, temporal plane. However, that primordial, imaginary *I*, should not be confused with the consciousness of self. It is on the path of its symbolic identification, which will constitute later as “I-ideal“. Language waits to grasp a subject (to “catch him” with the *name*, to put him under the control of a *signifier*) and to determine it further via the relation with Other (i.e. via its wish), whereby not only narrative structure, which a subject is capable of producing, is established (in the sense: what it wants to be and in what way it wants the others to observe it), but also a symbolic order, which it is not capable of avoiding

10 Christofer Peacocke calls the attempt at determining self-consciousness on the principle of mirror reflection “mirror-motivated criterion“. To Peacocke, that criterion has the following syllogistic form: “G is F“, G is I, I am F“. For further details about the ability of subjects to constitute self-consciousness on the basis of mirror-motivated criterion and the problems which occur regarding this, see Peacocke 2010: 523-525.

(through naming). The place of accepting language – is the place of the formation of a personality. That place signifies the moment of the beginning of *identification process*. *Cognitive, narrative and identification processes* represent structure of consciousness; consciousness is determined in accordance with these three processes. They are directed at each other and it is difficult to imagine a case where one of them could activate itself, without, simultaneously causing the activation of the other two.

We have emphasized that consciousness has the capability of receiving and *processing* information, thus willingly determining that information which can be considered relevant in order to structure a certain model of behavior, i.e. so as to rationally determine, predict and execute a certain action which a person intends to do. This means that one of the main characteristics of conscience is the ability of *rationalization*. Not only do we have the capability of processing information at a certain moment in time, but we also possess the consciousness of that very moment, that is, the awareness of its significance in the context of time (historical) stretching. The possibility of juxtaposed determination of various moments gives us an idea about time, which again leaves us with the possibility of specific, intentional and purposeful action in the moments ahead. In that way, a person orientates itself in time, using time stretching as a ground for cognitive process: we remember information from the *past*, process them in the *present* so as to realize certain intentions in the *future*. In a word, complete self-consciousness implies rationality. To be conscious means to have a possibility, as an independent and free person, to decide about the direction of one's own activity in the future time perspective, bearing in mind cognitive processing of information on the basis of which we determine the reasons for our actions. Consequently, the activities ought to be in accordance with cognitive process. In a somewhat simplified form, and in the spirit of folk psychology, this thesis can be expressed in the following manner: we adjust, that is, conform our activities to the opinion we consider to be in our best interest. This means that a person is guided by the reasons (wishes, plans) which are supposed to lead towards the fulfillment of certain purpose, which we consider to be the best for us. It would not be contrary to the spirit of rationalism to conclude that it is purposefulness which ultimately motivates a rational being to act. Which means that the action itself represents a part of the entire rational activities of consciousness. The problem, however, which we encounter here, does not concern arational activity, i.e. the activity which would be completely deprived of the guidance by any kind of rational reasons and purposefulness, but irrational activity, i.e. the behavior which defies the logic of the guidance by the reasons which are good for us. Irrationalism calls into question the relationship, or more precisely a *conformed* relationship, between the activity and the cognitive process itself. "Irrationality represents a certain break in continuity of rational experience, due to which it cannot be identified with a complete absence of reason, nor can it be explained solely on the basis of non-rational human abilities. (...) Guiding by the causes implies conscious directing and

organizing one's own life, the continuity of rational activity, but sometimes imprudence occurs, the behaviors that are not motivated by clear reasons and which indicate episodes of discontinuity and interruption in the usual train of thought. In such moments, one feels different than usual, thinks what one does not usually think, expresses beliefs for which one does not possess satisfactory evidence and appropriate justification, and wants what one does not usually want and considers wrong. *The fact that he is even then conscious and that he is thinking about his behavior, tells us about the presence of a certain level of rationality, while deviation from his own common views and wishes tells us about the irrational character of such states.*" (italics – N.M./M.G.) (Govedarica 2006: 9, 11) Irrationality is connected to rationality. It is a characteristic of person and it signifies some kind of interfering in rational processes in consciousness. What is interesting in the analysis of irrationality itself is that when it occurs, a rational aspect of consciousness is not interrupted. On the contrary, a person can still have a harmonious cognitive-narrative process in consciousness, and at the same time his behavior is still characterized as irrational. Consciousness still has the control over cognitive processes, but not over the *implementation* of conclusions, which can be observed as a consequence of the work of cognitive processes, in practice. In that case, consciousness monitors its own relation compared to certain action in practice being faced with a paradox of its own cognitive process and the application of conclusions (as a consequence of that process) in reality. This paradox can be expressed in the form of a question: how is it possible that a person, who is self-conscious and who is guided by reason he reaches through his own cognitive process, and who is thereby free to apply the results of that cognitive activity to a specific situation in practice, does exactly the opposite to what has been "recommended" through the action of that cognitive process? If we assume that every action is motivated by a certain purpose, i.e. the work which we assume – this is a product of a cognitive process – that it should fetch us a certain benefit, we come to the conclusion that the discrepancy between a cognitive process and the action in practice, leads toward a person working in favor of his detriment. Considering we have defined rationality as the action we adjust, that is, conform with the opinion which "we consider to be the best for us", it is easy to see that here there is a suspension of certain rational activity (it does not mean the suspension of consciousness itself, because the person, as has been emphasized, is conscious of this irrational procedure) in the domain of continuity between a cognitive process and practice (to which the outcome of the abovementioned process refers to). Further in the paper, we will pay/dedicate the attention to explanation (which is nothing else but an attempt at rationalization) of the just described phenomenon of irrationality, that is, the discontinuity between the cognitive process and practice.

Weakness of will: one rationalist controversy

Weakness of will is a kind of irrational behavior, which can be defined as incompatibility between cognitive processes and certain activities in practice. We examine information through cognitive processes, in order to determine the course of our behavior. It is logical to assume that the course is always defined by some benefit, which we consider to be useful to us. Therefore, it is not difficult to draw a conclusion that through cognitive processes, we direct our own behavior towards some, to us, immediate benefit (or good). It is irrational to assume that someone, knowing the difference between a good and a bad option, without thereby being made or forced to act in a certain direction, would (for himself) choose the worse option. However, we can find the examples for such (irrational) behavior in everyday life. Therefore, the first question which ought to be asked, in accessing the problem of weakness of will: how is weakness of will even possible?

The question “how is the weakness of will possible?“, however, implies that we have already accepted the fact of the existence of the weakness of will and that we are now exclusively wondering about its causes and characteristics. By stating that we find the examples of weak-willed, irrational behavior, in “everyday life“, in some way, we have already drawn a conclusion that irrationality is an inherent phenomenon of a self-conscious personality. However, before we answer the question which we have marked as the “the first“, we have to consider the existence of the possibility of absolute rationality (that is, calling into question irrationalism itself, and therefore our potential acts of irrational behavior from “everyday life“). It can be argued that the question “how is the weakness of will possible?“ is posed not with the aim to find something more about such irrational behavior (for which, we reiterate, we have unquestionable examples in practice), but with the aim to answer the question how is absolute rationality (the beings who are by their definition rational – *animal rationale*) actually impossible? There is the impression that the question about the possibility of the existence of the weakness of will is asked more as an impulse – as a surprise (and maybe even as astonishment) at some “unquestionable examples from practice“, than as a demand for a sincere philosophical analysis. In any case, we will now supplement our “first“ question, formulating it in the following manner: how is the weakness of will possible, bearing in mind rational nature of a person? Alternatively, more precisely (in any case, more acrimonious and direct), as we have just formulated it: how is absolute rationality impossible?

This question, from rationalist perspective, can also act as a surprise. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first serious altercation with the weakness of will phenomenon started from rationalist perspective. In other words, the first altercation with irrationalism started by negating irrationalism and placing it in the context of rationalism.¹¹ In that

11 We notice incidentally that such procedure – the procedure which implies some kind of “higher“ rationality, i.e. the rationality which is not immediately obvious (that is, cognitively processed),

way, rationalists succeed in accessing the problem “rationally“, i.e. to assimilate it into their own causal-consequential explanatory model. The first rationalist who rejected the possibility of weak-willed, irrational action, that is, the action that is not in accordance with one’s own better judgment, was Socrates. According to him, “no one who either knows or believes that something else is better than what he is doing, and is in his power to do, subsequently does the other, when he can do what is better. Nor is giving in to oneself anything other than error, nor controlling oneself anything other than wisdom” (Protagora, 358b-c) In other words, no one who is in a position to be able to choose between two open possibilities will choose what he considers a worse alternative, but what is, according to their knowledge and judgment, a better option. In our understanding, Socrates does not claim that passions and unrestrained are not possible, but only that all deliberate passionate and unrestrained actions are performed with the agent’s consent, *i.e. according to the given state of knowledge and judgment of one’s own agents, and not opposed to them. In his view, there is no opposition between passions and knowledge, because the passions are one form of knowledge, given that they represent certain beliefs about what is, and what is not good.*

Having in mind what has been said, we can now outline the structure which characterizes the concept of the weakness of will, in order to better acquaint ourselves with the issue of its (im)possibility in practice, that is, in order to value more precisely the justification of Socrates’ critique of irrationality. Thus, the weakness of will presupposes uninterrupted work of cognitive process, whereby, as a consequence of that activity, judgments are made. A person acts in accordance with various value aspects of his own judgments. Socrates believes that the better judgment (i.e. that judgment which is good)¹² cannot have disadvantage in choosing, with regard to the worse judgment. If, however, it happens that, under the influence of passion or unrestraint, a person chooses a worse option, according to Socrates, something like that still does not lead to weakness of will, because our action, although performed under the influence of passion or unrestraint, has never gone beyond rational context precisely because these passions are aligned with the process of judgment itself; in a word, passions are only part of a wider rational image that leads to a certain good – which has already been calculated by the cognitive process. Reason never loses control; in that way, unrestraint and passions become only the constituents of a specific cognitive equation. Surrendering to passion

but which undoubtedly stands “behind“ all apparent irrationalities (whereby that irrationality itself is negated, and is thus put into function of that higher rationality) – represents one of the main hermeneutic strategies of theodicy. The functionality of irrationality (or in the case of theodicy: functionality of evil) negates that very irrationality by making it only a part of a bigger rational structure (in the case of theodicy: the structure of good) which ought to know cognitive processes.

12 In this case, Socrates does not connect the notion of good to “moral meaning“, but to what “result in pleasures and the relief from and avoidance of pain“ (Protagoras 354 b-c), which means that this notion is used in experiential-psychological sense.

means – ignorance! Choosing a worse option is conditioned by the incapability of reason to figure out (calculate!) the benefits we are due if we do not go for the worse option. Implicitly, choosing a worse option represents reason's demand for an illusory award which is momentarily promised. This manifestation is reflected in "evaluation illusion" which makes that "more immediate good looks greater" (Watson 1977: 319) For example, we can presume that certain persons have great affection for - food. The pleasure offered to us after a favorite meal or a treat certainly falls under the goal of rational behavior. However, the negative effects of the act become apparent only afterwards (high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.), which means that the original pleasure was more obvious to a rational process, which led to that, now already conditionally-speaking – worse choice. We can now more clearly comprehend contextual-rationalistic understanding of a worse choice. We choose less tasty food (so, something which obviously does not lead toward direct pleasure and which at times even causes displeasure), to reach the benefit (which is reflected in health). The choice of tasty and less tasty food would, in this case, depend on the capability of reason to recognize a better option. What Socrates ultimately claims is that all intentional actions (even those we consider irrational) are in the end – rational. Let us use another example. We will assume that someone rationally assesses the consequences of the jump from the fifth floor of a building. That person, realizes very clearly, that the consequences of that jump will be catastrophic, maybe even fatal, to his health. Apart from that, the pain he will feel after the jump is clearly presented to him as an unquestionable necessity. On the other hand, if he decides not to jump, not only will there be no pain, but there is a strong chance for him to live long to a comfortable old age (which therefore presents "the good" in a "experiential-psychological sense"). Standing on the edge of the fifth floor of the building, the person is completely conscious of these judgments and their inherent values. However, after some time, under the influence of adrenalin, our subject has an unbridled desire to jump – and he jumps! How would Socrates rationally justify the subject's choice? In our opinion, there are two plausible explanations of the described phenomenon. The first one implies the reevaluation of previously reviewed good and bad aspects concerning the jump from the building itself. So, for instance, before deciding to jump, the subject can "realize" that the pleasure which would cause him pain¹³ (which he felt such dread of in the first evaluative assessment) is far greater than the prospect of experiencing a comfortable and long life. This means that he jumps for a reason, or something more specific: his jump is a consequence of his own cognitive process based on which he reviewed his original assessment. In other words, he jumped firmly believing in logical justification of his choice. The other way of clarifying the abovementioned situation, from Socrates' perspective, concerns the explanatory matrix of theodicy, and which implies "broader"

13 This would be a satisfactory way to explain masochism, whereby the masochistic process itself is actually placed within rational framework.

logical context, which would justify the choice to jump from the building. We will imagine, for instance, that, before deciding to jump from the building, our subject was in a disagreement with his wife, which ended up in her firmly asking for a divorce. Bearing in mind that our subject does not want a divorce, and does not see the way to prevent it, he decides to jump from the building, thereby estimating: a) that it is better to be dead than divorced and b) that, if he survives, due to undoubtedly serious injuries he will sustain, his wife will not want to divorce him, out of compassion, which may later even strengthen their strained relationship.

It is precisely because Socrates defines the notions of “good“ and “bad“ in “experiential-psychological sense“, that we are able to apply the principles of *immediate reevaluation* and *broader logical contextualization*, which we have just explained. Cognitive processes, as has already been emphasized, process information whose result is a certain judgment. The information possessed by a certain person can be, and most often is, different from the information possessed by another, objective observer, and therefore the justification for a certain action can have two completely different, but *identically* rational narrative (interpretative) courses.

It should be pointed out here that Socrates does not negate the possibility of choosing a worse option (in the sense of objective worse option), but that possibility is perceived only afterwards, retroactively, that is, after a worse option has already been chosen. The state before making a decision or the state which causes a certain judgment to be made, never – from rationalist perspective – goes beyond the domain of rational. What affects the changeability of our assessments of the value of individual pleasures is the time distance: temporally closer and, as a rule, short-term pleasures usually seem greater and more valuable than temporally more distant and potentially long-term pleasures. Time distance in relation to the committed period, namely, the period *after* choosing a worse (or better) option is significant precisely because, in this period, the knowledge of judgments (i.e. the amount of information), which led to a certain act, is *complemented* (or at least, has the possibility to be complemented). Precisely this complementation will condition the *cognition* of a worse choice. It is therefore easy to realize that, from rationalist perspective, the choice of a worse option is a matter of a miscalculation, based on a certain number of unknowns, and not a matter of irrational behavior.

However, what happens if we assume (at least theoretically) that there are no unknowns in this complex equation of decision making? That the knowledge on the basis of which we make a decision (about both, a better or a worse choice) is absolutely¹⁴ present. If the presence of weakness of will is discernible even then, it is clear that a

14 We introduce the thesis on “absolute knowledge” in order to radically escalate this rationalistic argument. It would imply knowing *all* the circumstances and consequences we access in order to evaluate a better option. Absolute knowledge is, certainly, a theoretical construct which we cannot count on in everyday interpersonal behavior.

rationalistic perspective is seriously lacking in its explanation of akrasia. In that case, we would have to separate evaluative assessment (which remains under the command of reason and information it possesses) from will or (instinctive) need to acquire immediate gain by using a worse option. "It is possible that one's evaluations and desires diverge in certain cases in such a way that one is led to do things which one does not think worth doing, or as much worth doing as some available option." (Watson 1977: 320) In this case, wish fulfilment would take priority compared to a better alternative which the subject is aware of. By following Watson, we can introduce a distinction between "evaluative and motivational sense" where the access to the decision (of a better or a worse choice) would be conditioned by a different, psychological, motivational dynamics of an individual, and not necessarily mathematical-evaluative resolution of the issue of choice. "In the first sense if one wants to do x more than one wants to do y, one prefers x to y or ranks x higher than y on some scale of values or 'desirability matrix.' In the second sense, if one wants to do x more than y, one is more strongly motivated to do x than to do y." (Watson 1977: 320-321) Therefore, the subject's interest, embodied in motivation, can condition a worse choice, despite a clear, evaluative assessment of the consequences of that choice. For instance, a subject can be motivated to eat tasty food, despite being absolutely aware of the harmfulness of the choice to his own health. The clarity of evaluative equation possessing absolute knowledge is here opposed by a basic desire to enjoy himself, as a driving, motivational force. Therefore, the subject can obviously do x, whereby he is aware of all negative consequences that the choice carries.

However, although in the moment of choosing a worse option (where we are not yet conscious that the option is really worse), we, from rationalist perspective, are not able to assess that option as worse, but exactly the opposite, we consider it better, we can still be aware that in the context of a certain time distance, the option we choose can really be worse. Furthermore, in some cases, it is very difficult to conclude (on the basis of the information we possess) whether some judgment leads to good. In these cases, it appears that the moment of reevaluation itself is actually irrational, because there is no sufficient reason to abandon the judgment formed initially. This issue can further be intensified by assuming that we can have an indefinite number of such reevaluation moments. Whether, in the end, the impossibility to remain true to the original judgment can be taken as a case of the weakness of will? So as to explain this issue in more details, we will use the example by Robert Audi. We will imagine the situation in which the subject, despite the unsuccessful marriage, concludes that it is still better to remain together with his wife, than to file for a divorce. However, while arguing with his wife, which ensued after the aforementioned judgment, the subject nevertheless decides that it is better to get a divorce. The question which is raised here is whether the subject's action can be characterized as weak-willed if, after the reevaluation, he still does not get a divorce. "I agree that the act is incontinent, but it would also be against one's better judgment in what seems the standard sense and is in any case the

sense that concerns me: acting against a present (overall) judgment of what it would be better to do. That *S* would be acting consistently with a previous judgment better than his present one shows at most *vacillation of intellect*, not action against his better judgment or incontinence.” (Audi 1979: 177) Audi’s thesis on “vacillation of intellect” actually has the aim to undermine the resolution and faith in the ultimate judgment we reach in cognitive process. It implicitly emphasizes the impossibility of constituting a better judgment or at least the impossibility to determine an unquestionably better judgment in the cognitive process. Is it then rational to change the judgment, that is, *initiate* the moment of reevaluation, bearing in mind the vacillation of intellect regarding the possibility of constituting the unquestionable judgment? Audi continues: “But if we conclude that because the change was unwise he did not act against his better judgment when he acted against his present overall judgment, what will be our standard for the occurrence of weakness of will? Why say *S* exhibited it if he acted in accord with his better judgment? On the view I am imagining, the reply would be that acting against one’s better judgment is something like acting against what one takes to be a more *reasonable* judgment one has made on the relevant alternatives, and incontinence does entail acting against one’s better judgment in this sense. But then whether *S* exhibits weakness of will must often depend on his resolution of such intellectual questions as which of his judgments about a situation is more reasonable. Yet surely whether the will is weak does not depend on the intellect’s discernment, or on whether it vacillates.” (Audi 1979: 177-178). Precisely due to absolute knowledge of all the facts based on which we make a decision about better evaluation being impossible, it is logical to assume that evaluation processes constantly occur. Moreover, if the time of the final decision is approaching, the constancy of evaluative change can be more apparent. From that perspective, weakness of will becomes more epistemological, and less psychological or perhaps a psychopathological issue.

The thesis as to whether it is possible to reach an objective judgment of good via cognitive activities is not very problematic here, but whether is, at the moment when we do not have enough reasons to initiate a reevaluation, and whereby we do not have sufficient information to fully believe in the validity of the previous judgment, the very pursuit of reevaluation rational? The solution to this issue seems to rest on the subject’s judgment on whether it is justified to initiate reevaluation or not. It is precisely this kind of approach to the problem of the weakness of will that Richard Holton occupies, when he inserts the principle of intention into the (irrational) equation of the weakness of will. To Holton, the weakness of will is noticeable when a certain intention is revised, without valid (or sufficient) reasons for such revision. “A person exhibits weakness of will when she revises her intention, in circumstances in which she should not have revised it. (...) A person is weak willed if she revises her intentions too readily.” (Holton 1999: 247) The established intention to do something serves us as some kind of motivational reference for what we are doing. If, on the basis of a certain judgment, we have assessed and

determined the structure of our own action, it is doubtless that the withdrawal from this action, without thereby having sufficient reasons for that, can be called irrational and characterized as a weakness of will, precisely because we were not able to carry out the given action to the end. The purpose of an intention is to *prevent* the weakness of will. It is supposed to serve as a motivational reference based on which we are supposed to confront “passions“ and “unrestraint“, which would disrupt us on our way to reach a certain goal (which is always purposeful). The intention presents a rational determination of the path leading to a goal; in that sense, it has a teleological function. Following Michael Bratman, Holton states two essential characteristics of intention: control and stability. “The agent forms the intention at one time by making a decision to perform the action. Then, unless it is revised, the intention will directly lead the agent to perform the action; it is, as Bratman says, *controlling*. Moreover, it is relatively immune to reconsideration and hence to revision. Once formed, intentions have a tendency to persist. They have what Bratman calls *stability*.” (Holton 1999: 244) Control and stability are key characteristics of intention, which are supposed to provide the will with *strength* to endure on its path toward a goal. What remains problematic is the question how to recognize the moment in which the revision of a certain intention is rational and necessary. In the context of the structure of the weakness of will, this question may also be formulated in the following manner: how to handle the cases in which withdrawing from the revision of intention (in order to preserve the strength of will) leads toward a worse option (namely, the option which would have been avoided if we had not preserved the strength of will). Still following Bratman, Holton provides the following explanation: “His [Bratman’s] idea is that it is rational to reconsider an intention just in case doing so manifests tendencies that it is reasonable for the agent to have; similarly, it is rational to fail to reconsider an intention just in case this manifests tendencies that is reasonable for the agent to have” (Holton 1999: 248) However, Holton himself notices that this seems “pretty vague“.¹⁵ (Holton 1999: 249) The issue with Bratman’s statement, cited by Holton, is that we still cannot clearly determine the manner in which we recognize the tendencies which are reasonable to the subject, without thereby falling into some kind of “stubbornness“ (that is, the decision to keep to our intention regardless of “tendencies“) or, on the other hand, not to falling into the trap of “caprice“ (i.e. to revise constantly our own intention). Holton therefore reviews the initial statement and now considers the issue of the revision of intention in the context of “contrary inclination defeat-

15 Besides this “vagueness“, Holton tries to determine the cases in which the tendency to reconsider intention seems plausible. He lists five cases; three of which are about the rationality of having the tendency to reconsider intention, while two explain the rational justification of the tendency not to consider the reconsideration of intention. However, even after determining these cases, Holton notices that ambiguity is not completely removed. “Vagueness is a problem when we try to determine the extension of a concept: when we try to provide a means of telling for each particular act whether it does or does not display weakness of will”. (Holton 1999, 249)

ing“. “I mentioned before that one reason for forming an intention can be an attempt to overcome contrary desires that one believes one will have when the time comes to act. An intention can be, as we might say, *contrary inclination defeating*. (...) So we have distinction between intentions which are designed to be contrary inclination defeating, and those which are not. (...) If someone overredily revises an intention that is, at least partially, contrary inclination defeating, that is weakness of will; if they overredily revise an intention that is not, that is caprice. A person shows strength of will when they stick by their intentions in circumstances in which they are right to do so; that is, when they do not reconsider them, and not doing so exhibits tendencies that is reasonable for them to have. Strength of will turns to stubbornness when they stick by their intentions even when it is reasonable to reconsider and revise them. (Holton 1999: 250, 252) In this way, Holton clarifies the concept of intention itself, that is, its cause and necessity, which personalities ought to possess so as to be able to resist the irrational phenomenon of the weakness of will. It is not enough only to form intention and to rely on its stability and control, but it is necessary to clarify the reasons due to which we decide to form the intention. That clarification implies determination of wishes, passions and other “unrestraint“ which threaten to disrupt the act of work itself. Thus, we can conclude that the intention of contrary inclination defeating has, in its structure, a twofold function: a) to lead as toward a certain goal (this is common to all intentions) b) to clarify, in itself, the obstacles on the path to that goal (this is a feature of the intentions which are linked to the determination of strength – and implicitly also the weakness – of will).

The issue with this thesis by Holton, nevertheless, remains the epistemological ambiguity of the phrase “contrary inclination defeating”, for which we are not provided with a clear analytical apparatus in order to evaluate it. Certainly, it is sometimes obvious (as in the example of consuming unhealthy food which gives us momentary pleasure), whereby the intention to consume better food (as following a better choice) is clearly justified. However, are all the inclinations we encounter while determining the intention so clear? Whence, ultimately, that naivety that the inclinations which threaten to damage the intention have clear epistemological basis and that the subject is absolutely aware that those inclinations lead toward a worse choice. This is especially important in the domain of ethics. Not only can the inclinations be called into question, but the intention itself can suffer from the same ambivalence that Holton attributed to Bretman. For example, if S decides to get a divorce (intention x), but wavers due to psychological health of his own children (reason y), and decides, however, not to get a divorce because of the happiness of his descendants (decision and inclination z), can we truly talk about the weakness of will. The problem is here exclusively epistemological, since neither intention (x), nor reason (z), nor a new decision and inclinations (y), can confirm the validity of its/his activities. In a word, a) who guarantees to S that the divorce decision is the best possible choice (not only due to the assumption that it is better to be married than divorced, but also because of the

supposition that the woman he wants to divorce from is the best of all women), b) that there is a connection between psychological health of their children and divorce, c) that his decision not to get a divorce (because of affection toward his children) is right, precisely because it can seem to his children to be a worse choice. Whenever the subject is condemned to evaluative assessment of his actions (intentions, choices and assessment of the inclinations that threaten to violate the intentional act) we are left with relativism that, theoretically at least, can perpetuate re-evaluation ad infinitum.

Conclusion. Weakness of will and struggle with relativism

A rationalistic aspect cannot lightly accept irrational behavior. Logocentric basis of rationalistic criticism cannot simply accept the possibility of the existence of “delay” in a cognitive process, where striving for truth, ultimate knowledge or, as post-structuralists would say “transcendental signified”, is not primary goal. Therefore, every such irrational phenomenon, that is, the phenomenon which resists to be reduced to an equation, the arithmetic idea of truth, has to be understood functionally from the aspect of rationalism. In other words, instead of accepting such possibility of a mistake (where it would be proclaimed that truth is not the ultimate value, that a conscious and free choice of a worse option is possible, etc.), rationalism tries to give a form of reason to that error; it tries to measure, analyze, correct and “restore” it to certain logocentric context. Thus, the question “how is that mistake possible?” most often leads to the question (or even a request): “what should be done to rectify that mistake?”. Rationalism cannot abandon its position. It cannot “think” irrationally (in the sense of non-logocentric), and if it contemplates about irrationality, then it does so on rational bases, turning irrationality itself into a functional aspect of the rational. Donald Davidson correctly perceives this paradox of (ir)rationality: “The underlying paradox of irrationality, from which no theory can entirely escape, is this: if we explain it to well, we turn it into a concealed form of rationality; while if we assign incoherence too glibly, we merely compromise our ability to diagnose irrationality by withdrawing the background of rationality needed to justify any diagnosis at all.” (Davidson 2004: 184)

We are like the persons doomed to live through this paradox. In a certain sense, we can say that the inherent property of a person’s life is imbued with constant experiences of paradoxicality, which we are trying to situate in the logocentric system of values known to us, through cognitive and narrative processes in the consciousness (and that is our inherent quality as a person). We have no other matrix but the one provided to us by logocentrism, based on which, we measure, add, subtract, conclude, axiomatically determine, etc., in order to grasp that which is promised to us as the supreme value - truth. Therefore, we are simultaneously confused and fascinated when we face phenomena that are outside of our logocentric conceptual coordinates.

Observing a bigger picture, that is, the consequences arising from a worse choice, which is the basis that rationalism is counting on, does not necessarily lead to choosing a better option. Why is the worse option chosen, despite knowing its negative consequences and based on that, how to explain weakness of will, if this Socratic, rationalistic explanation appears to us as insufficient? We believe that the first step to approach this problem implies removal from logocentric inclination toward the axiomatization of the issue of weakness of will, that is, the removal from the ultimate definition of this problem under which we could include all the examples from everyday life. The answer to the question of weakness of will, in our opinion, has to start from determining identification process, that is, the subject's response to the question: "Who am I?". Only after one's own identity is determined, the weakness of will is reduced from the axiom level to the level of personal experience. The first part of our paper dealt with precisely proving a person uniqueness; just as there are fingerprints, we think that irrationalism of weak-willed behavior has to be individualized. In that way, the very parameters of the evaluation of weak-willed behavior become transformative and adjusted to a person. Why is that necessary? Because it is impossible to establish a universal standard (limits) whereby weakness of will would be recognized. By trivializing, we can say, it is all relative there; first, not all the people are weak-willed toward the same passions (someone cannot resist food, someone else to procrastination, the others to adrenalin, etc.), second, there are various degrees of weak-willed behavior toward the same passions (someone eats more, someone less, someone procrastinates more, someone less, etc.). Or as Watson properly realizes: "Relativity is in any case a feature of the concept of weakness in general – for example, the concept of physical weakness. The possible existence of races of creatures who could lift 500-pound weights, or of training programs which would enable most of us to do so, would not mean that those of us who cannot lift this weight were physically weak." (Watson 1977: 333) In a word, the standard whereby weakness is determined (and weakness of will) has to be adjusted to each character respectively. Only after the questions: "Who am I and what I want to achieve (what are my intentions)" are answered, we can, from an objective distance, evaluate the characteristics of weak-willed behavior, and potentially problem solution. Only after the identification process, which is formalized through a narrative process, is completed, the question "Whence weakness of will" can be asked. The responses to it, of course, vary depending on an individual. That equation (which can include motivational, psychological and psychopathological unknowns) has to be solved in the domain of a person's structure itself.

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Identitet ličnosti i racionalni aspekt slabosti volje: struktura i značenje

(Apstrakt)

Tekst ispituje fenomen iracionalnog ponašanja u kontekstu problema o slabosti volje. Prvi dio rada posvećen je analizi ličnosti, odnosno mehanizmima kojima ličnost pristupa usvajanju i analizi dostupnih mu informacija kao i njihovoj aplikaciji u praksi. Nakon determinacije *kognitivnog, narativnog i identifikacionog* procesa u strukturi svijesti, pristupamo analizi i kritici racionalističke, Sokratove, teze o slabosti volje. Argumentujemo da je nemoguće aksiomatski determinisati problem slabosti volje, pri čemu uvodimo korelativni termin – *relativnost slabosti* – na bazi kojeg započinjemo *identifikacioni proces* za svaku specifičnu individuu. Identifikacioni proces, dalje argumentujemo, jeste nezaobilazan početni korak prilikom objašnjenja akraističkog ponašanja.

KLJUČNE REČI: slabost volje, ličnost, individua, (i)racionalizam, logos