Deduction of the Constitutive Possibility of Reason in the Domain of Morality (Review)

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Emilian Mihailov, *Arhitectonica Moralității* (*The Architectonic of Morality*), Paralela 45, 2017.

DEDUCTION OF THE CONSTITUTIVE POSSIBILITY OF REASON IN THE DOMAIN OF MORALITY

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The stake of the critical effort found in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is establishing and justifying what Kant labels *the supreme principle of morality*. In this aspect, it is surprising to notice that Kant continues to describe the supreme principle by no less than five formulas, without fixing the system of relations they are enlisted in or the rapport they have with the categorical imperative. This is the catalyst for Emilian Mihailov's book *Arhitectonica Moralității* (The Architectonic of Morality) published by Paralela 45 in 2017. Localizing these formulas and enlisting them into a system of relations presents itself as Mihailov's main effort. The central promise of this effort is, foremost, justifying the possibility that reason can be constitutive in the field of morality, or, more precise, the very legitimacy of an architectonic of morality, and secondly, reinterpreting the formulas of the categorical imperative in light on this theoretical framework.

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According to Mihailov, there are two main approaches to understanding the formulas of the categorical imperative and their relationship, namely *reductionism* and *non-reductionism*, each line having its own weak and strong version respectively. The reductionist line in its strong version proposes to reduce all formulas of the categorical imperative to a single one, while the weak version proposes the reduction of some formulas to others. The non-reductionist line, however, in its strong version offers an independent status to all formulas, and in the weak one, at least one formula is considered derivative. In the case of the positions that imply the equivalency of principles, the multitude of positions may be approached starting from the type of equivalency, intentional or extensional, where the latter implies logical equivalence and the former implies the identical normative finality that all principles lead to. Mihailov, however, defends a new non-reductionist position.

The manner in which this new non-reductionist approach is offered to us is one that implies the reiteration of the problem of the formulas within a system of an architectonic of practical reason. More precisely starting with three types of principles: constitutive, regulative and intermediate. The origin of the trichotomy lies in the architectonic of pure reason, where the constitutive/regulative taxonomy is analogous to the one between the analytical and the dialectical, intellect and reason. The constitutive principles are here the transcendental mechanisms (*i.e.* that precede and make experience possible, in the case of intellect – pure concepts) responsible for the order and unity of the phenomena at the level of experience. Kant argues that the unity we find at the level of our experience cannot stem from this, moreover, responsible for these are a series of pure and constitutive transcendental mechanisms that simultaneously ensure the possibility of an experience alongside that of a universality within it, *i.e.* a *lawfulness* of the natural world. In the case of the first critique, the regulative principles are the *Ideas* of reason which can be understood as an asymptotic point that our knowledge reaches towards, *i.e.* an ideal. These cannot have a constitutive use since they cannot determine objects of experience and cannot be localized at the level of a possible experience, in which case their use would be dialectic. Their role is to offer the intellect an ideal point to

asymptotically strive for. The role of intermediary principles is to comprise all transcendental structures at the level of sensibility and of intellect into a system of pure reason that accounts for the homogenous and unitary finality observable in the act of knowledge, these being characterized by the schematism realized at the level of imagination.

Mihailov argues for a transition from the architectonic of speculative reason towards the possibility of a practical one, in the field of morality. Such an effort cannot take place strictly within the system of pure reason or of practical reason, but in the idea of the general ensemble of the critical system.

The first two moments of the Kantian system (*The Critique of Pure Reason* and respectively *The Critique of Practical Reason*) may be understood analogically with switching from the problem of necessity to the one of freedom, or more precisely from the one of truth within pure reason to the one of good (or morality) within practical reason. The critical optics can be described by the act of identifying and formulating a series of pure principles by an anchoring in which our knowledge may claim an objectivity that does not come from contingent sources. These sources can offer at best an empirical universality (moving from what is valid in most cases to what is valid in all cases), but never a true universality, which is the gesture of ordering all diversity starting not with the recurrent characteristics of species, but with a principle that determines any possible diversity of a specific domain. The finality of such an effort is the capacity to determine the legitimacy of a claim to knowledge. In the case of pure reason, objectivity is ensured by the appeal to the transcendental mechanism that precedes experience and makes it possible, therefore avoiding the act of anchoring the objectivity of knowledge strictly in the empirical or in the knowing subject. In the case of practical reason, Kant avoids appealing to subjective affects to describe the manner in which we understand our own morality, proposing rather what is more like an act of founding, whose finality is the supreme principle of morality, described as the categorical imperative, that has the role to ensure objectivity and universality in morality, therefore avoiding the appeal to circumstances or psychology.

Therefore, the *Architectonic of Morality* presents itself as a new interpretation in the non-reductionist line that appeals to the idea of an

architectonic of practical reason with the purpose of localizing and enlisting the formulas of the categorical imperative into a system of relations. Such a proposal imposes and automatically needs a Kantian *deduction*. The meaning of *deduktion* is of a juristic nature, that hints to *quid juris* (*i.e.* on what base is a claim legitimate). In this case, the claim is to be able to use the architectonic of speculative pure reason in the case of the practical one. The manner in which we find the issue of such a deduction treated here starts with the question: how can we break the constitutive/regulative distinction from the domain of experience to move the domain of architectonic from speculative pure reason towards the practical one? The answer to this question represents the very foundation for the possibility of Mihailov's effort and can be rephrased into the problem of demonstrating the constitutive possibility of reason in the field of morality.

At a first glance, practical reason may contain only regulative principles, since the constitutive ones are instantiated in experience, or in the case of practical reason there isn't one. The constitutive possibility of reason in the domain of morality is announced by Mihailov by appealing to Kant's idea that with the existence of pure practical laws the role of reason extends. The following gesture of deduction is to shift the way in which we understand the idea of a constitutive principle from one that implies determining an object of experience to the contribution to the possibility of a domain of objects in general, thus breaking off the constitutive/regulative pair from the domain of experience, reducing the whole issue to the question: does practical reason form its own domain by its *a priori* contribution? The answer to this question signalizes the end of the deduction and is an affirmative one, more precisely: practical reason has its own domain, and it is an *a priori* influence on the will.

> "Theoretical reason aims at the knowledge of objects in the natural world [...], and practical reason aims at the a priori determination of the purposes of human will." (57)

Once the legitimacy of the claim of the architectonic of practical reason to localize and enlist within a system of relationships the formulas of the categorical imperative has been proven, one can move to systematize these into an ampler structure of morality.

Thus, the Autonomy Formula (AF) becomes the condition of possibility of the categorical imperative (CI), with a metaphysical primate against the other formulas, and it is the supreme principle of morality, that is a constitutive principle. Beside a supreme constitutive principle, two more of its species become imposed, more precisely an objective constitutive principle, and respectively a subjective one. An objective principle is here defined as the form of the activity of will capable of ensuring the objectivity of moral knowledge, while the subjective principle is the manner in which the human being represents their existence and purposes. The objective constitutive principle is a condition of possibility of the CI from an objective point of view, role played here by the Formula of Universal Law (FUL), and the subjective one, which is a condition of possibility from a subjective point of view, is played by the Humanity Formula (HF). The Formula of the Kingdom of Ends (FKE) is described as an ideal of moral excellence with a significant practical force and is therefore described as a regulative principle. The Formula of Natural Law (FNL) is not described as an intuitive version of FUL, nor as an application principle, but as an intermediary principle between moral law and action.

Regarding the place where one might situate Mihailov's work within Romanian exegesis, alongside the importance of the subject itself, Valentin Mureşean says: "There isn't too much talk on justifying a priori duties, but too little" (7). While making an exception from the finality of his work which deals with restructuring the CI formulas into a larger system of morality, we can attribute an innovative factor to the very act of the deduction of the architectonic of practical reason, by which he legitimizes the possibility of reason to be constitutive in the domain of morality and to be able to produce a domain of its own, and therefore the possibility of starting from these three types of principles to produce a new non-reductionist interpretation regarding the problem of the formulas of the categorical imperative.