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Morality without a Subject**

Confucian-Buddhist Foundations of Ethics in the Japanese Translation of Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment"

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Abstract: This article investigates the phenomenon of literary cultural transfer as a complex process of semiotic adaptation, where linguistic structures intersect with profound ontological paradigms. Focusing on the Meiji-era (1868–1912) Japanese translation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* the study examines the mechanisms through which the Christian-existential themes of the original text are transformed under the influence of Buddhist-Confucian syncretism. The analysis centres on semantic clusters — "suffering," "conscience," and "fate" — and their ontological recoding: from Christian providentialism to Buddhist teachings on emptiness, and from existential reflection to Confucian ethics of duty. Methodologically, the framework combines corpus analysis with comparative philosophy, introducing the concepts of semantic density and cultural index as quantitative markers of axiological priorities. The author demonstrates how Russian existentialism, when confronted with the Zen concept of nothingness, generates hybrid forms: Raskolnikov's "despair" is reinterpreted through resignation, Christian "conscience" morphs into the Confucian innate virtue of *ryōshin*, and the novel's linear temporality dissolves into the cyclical model of impermanence. The philosophical significance of this research lies in its revelation of translation as a creative act that constructs new philosophical realities, where dialogue occurs not through superficial borrowings but via profound semantic metamorphosis. The translational practices of the Meiji era emerge as a space for birthing hybrid ontologies, reflecting Japan's modernization through the synthesis of traditional values and Western influences.

Keywords: Cultural Transfer, Semantic Clusters, Comparative Philosophy, Corpus Linguistics, Hybrid Ontologies.

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The Japanese translation of F. M. Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* during the Meiji Restoration emerges as a striking and underexplored example of such interaction, demonstrating how the Christian-existential concerns of the original are transformed under the influence of a Buddhist-Confucian worldview. This study is grounded in an analysis of semantic clusters and their transformations within translational discourse.

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The Meiji period (1868–1912) was marked by a paradoxical conjunction of enforced Westernization and the preservation of traditional value foundations; this historical stage was characterized by engagement with Western thought through the prism of the Confucian ethos. This interaction became particularly pronounced in the spheres of religion and education, especially following the lifting of the ban on Christianity in 1873. By the 1880s, Japanese society was experiencing a crisis stemming from the absence of a unified "moral standard," which provoked the intensive "Debates on Moral Education" (1887–1890) (Gavin, 2004: 323). The debate was initiated by the influential scholar Kato Hiroyuki, who proposed the introduction of religious education in schools as the basis for morality, arguing that only faith in the supernatural could effectively influence the emotions of the masses (Lin & Lu, 2019: 39). This approach was opposed both by advocates of a secular, rational ethics modeled on Western exemplars and by proponents of a national morality centered on the cult of the emperor, notably advocated by Nishimura Shigeki.

The pluralistic debate was interrupted by an authoritarian state decision: on October 30, 1890, the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued, establishing a single moral standard mandatory for all, based on absolute loyalty to the emperor and Confucian virtues. This document brought intellectual inquiries to an end and, for many decades, became the ideological foundation of Japanese nationalism and militarism, defining the content of moral education (*shūshin*) until 1945 (ibid.).

From that time on, translation activity became an instrument of cultural mediation: on the one hand, it facilitated the assimilation of Western philosophical concepts, and on the other, it served as a mechanism for protecting national identity according to the principle of *wakon yōsai* (Japanese spirit—Western technology) (Wakabayashi, 2012: 180).

Reception as a philosophical-cultural phenomenon represents not a passive transmission of ideas but a complex and active process of adaptation and transformation, during which the source material is inevitably reshaped under the influence of the receiving environment. This process is often mediated by various mechanisms — whether a mediating language or the interpretive work of another thinker, which function as filters shaping the final reception. Examples from the history of Dostoevsky's reception in Europe vividly illustrate this dynamic, showing how his literary and philosophical legacy was perceived through the prism of prevailing aesthetic and intellectual norms.

The phenomenon of reconstructive reception as a process of actively transforming of foreign cultural material was not unique to the East and,

in particular, to Japan. One prominent example is the reception of Russian literature in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, where the phenomenon of indirect translation played a key role. The first Italian translation of *Crime and Punishment* (1889) was rendered not from the Russian original but from the 1884 French translation. Despite the stigma attached to such practice, it proved decisive for the introduction of works from distant cultures, since France at that time served as the principal conduit for Russian literature in Europe (Uccello, 2024: 75). In this context, the mediating language acted as an agent of simplification and adaptation, dictated by the aesthetic preferences of the target audience. To Italian and French readers, Dostoevsky's "nervous and fragmented style" seemed devoid of the necessary "measure." Consequently, translators deemed it necessary to impose a certain "sense of proportion" on the text, which manifested in the deliberate removal of the original's linguistic tension. This process led to significant semantic and stylistic losses which, paradoxically, contributed to a more favorable reception of the work. Thus, the Italian title *Delitto e castigo* is a calque of the French *Le Crime et le Châtiment*, thereby losing the legal nuance of the Russian word *nakazanie* (ibid.: 82). Moreover, the language of the characters was standardized: social dialects and speech features that Dostoevsky employed to create psychological portraits vanished in favor of a uniformly high literary register. Thus, the reception was conditioned and shaped by the prism of a mediating agent that, through its averaging and stylistic smoothing, ensured the text's access to a new cultural environment — albeit at the cost of distortions.

Another equally significant aspect of reception emerges within the domain of European philosophical-religious thought, where Dostoevsky's ideas exerted an "almost revolutionary" influence on twentieth-century Protestant theology. His impact, particularly on Karl Barth, was likewise mediated, but not through language; instead, it occurred through the intellectual work of another scholar, the Swiss theologian Eduard Thurneysser. Thurneysser's study of Dostoevsky (1921) served as a pivotal stimulus for Barth, revealing to him the depth of the Russian writer's anthropological and existential insights. In this case, reception consisted not so much in assimilating the literary form as in absorbing the fundamental philosophical categories. Central for Dostoevsky, as highlighted by Thurneysser, was the question "What is man?" (Rae, 1970: 77). His characters, who remain human rather than divine and whose appeals resemble the evangelical, became for Barth the point of departure in his critique of humanistic optimism. The Christian response found in Dostoevsky — the idea of "resurrecting life" as the salvation granted

by God — was incorporated into the foundations of "crisis theology." This reception of fundamental ideas concerning man, sin, and salvation allowed Barth to significantly develop his early theology (Rae, 1970: 77).

Thus, both cases demonstrate that the phenomenon of reception is a process of active transformation. Whether linguistic adaptation to conform to aesthetic norms or through philosophical interpretation for integration into a new theological system, the source work inevitably passes through the formative filter of a mediator. As a result, the receiving culture acquires not the original in its pure form but its adapted version, which nonetheless proves capable of exerting a profound and at times revolutionary impact on new intellectual soil — a phenomenon that undoubtedly merits dedicated, in-depth study.

The creation of the first complete translation of *Crime and Punishment* in 1886 coincided with key social processes. The Meiji period became a time of radical restructuring of Japanese society, where the collision of traditional values with Western influences generated a unique synthesis. Urbanization, driven by industrialization, led to the mass migration of the rural population to cities. Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya were transformed into centers of the new economy, where factories, banks, and educational institutions were concentrated (Minami, 1967: 1, 8, 9, 18). However, this process was accompanied by sharp property stratification: the peasantry, dispossessed of land as a result of the 1873 reforms, swelled the ranks of the urban proletariat, while the samurai elite and the emerging bourgeoisie accumulated capital. Social tension was exacerbated by the contrast between the luxury of the new Ginza districts and the slums of Asakusa, where poverty and disease prevailed. These realities were reflected in the journalism of the time: naturalist writers such as Kunikida Doppo depicted the fates of the "lost generation," torn from the patriarchal order and cast into the vortex of capitalist relations (Brecher, 2012: 5).

Against this backdrop, an ideological conflict unfolded between the Buddhist heritage and Christian missionaries. After the ban on Christianity was lifted in 1873, Protestant preachers poured into Japan, and their activities were perceived as a threat to traditional institutions. Buddhist schools, having lost state support following the separation of Shinto in 1868, responded with a campaign for the "purification of doctrine" — the *hanshukyō undō* movement (Grapard, 1984: 241). The polemics between Buddhist monks and Christians were conducted not only in temples but also in the pages of newspapers: in the 1880s, debates regarding the nature of suffering — where Christians insisted on the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and Buddhists on

overcoming *dukkha* through the Eightfold Path — became part of public life. Paradoxically, this conflict stimulated a philosophical synthesis: thinkers such as Inazo Nitobe reinterpreted Buddhist concepts through the lens of Western humanism, laying the groundwork for the later "Kyoto School" philosophy (Stone, 2021: 3; K. Hung, 2009: 242).

At the intersection of Japanese traditions and the active integration of Western thought, a new ethics emerged as a response to the challenges of modernization. Confucian principles, which had long regulated social relations, adapted to the realities of industrial society. The ideal of *jin* (benevolence) transformed into the concept of civic duty, as reflected in the elementary school textbooks *Shōgaku Shushinshō*, where loyalty to the emperor was integrated with technical education (Shimbori, 1960: 98). Concurrently, Western rationalism, disseminated by the Meirokusha society, introduced notions of utilitarianism and individual rights (Ghadimi, 2017: 207; Lin & Lu, 2019: 40).

Philosopher Yukichi Fukuzawa, in his essay "An Encouragement of Learning" (1872–1876), asserted that the Confucian virtue of *gi* (righteousness) should be combined with *benri* (practical utility) (Cheng, 2013: 22). This synthesis engendered a unique ethical system wherein the collectivism of traditional morality coexisted with individualistic aspirations, manifesting most vividly in the women's rights movement and the family law reforms of 1898 (Takakusu, 1906: 7).

Thus, the Meiji era became a springboard for cultural synthesis, where social upheavals, ideological conflicts, and ethical quests formed the foundation of modern Japanese identity. The interaction of these factors not only determined the paths of modernization in the early Meiji period but also created the groundwork a unique interpretation of Western texts, in which traditional categories served as a bridge between civilizations. A significant contribution to the reception of Dostoevsky in Japan was made by the translator Masao Yonekawa, whose translation of *Crime and Punishment* was first published in 1935 and later revised for the complete collected works of the writer (completed in 1953 by Kawade Shobo publishing house). This translation emerged within a cultural context of interest in Russian literature, which reflected the pursuit of profound psychological and ethical analysis amid social upheavals and the intellectual synthesis of East and West. Yonekawa, a graduate of the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, contributed to the popularization of Dostoevsky, for which he received the Yomiuri Literary Prize, thereby underscoring the evolution of this reception from the Meiji era to the present day. Within the framework of

this study, it is precisely his translation that will be examined, as the most thoroughly elaborated and meticulously refined.

The study of semantic transformations in F. M. Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* in the Japanese translation of the Meiji period opens a unique window into the process of mutual penetration of philosophical systems. The object of analysis is not linguistic equivalence but the ontological recoding of meanings — from Christian providentialism to the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness, from Russian existential reflection to Confucian ethics of duty. Each semantic cluster — be it "suffering," "freedom," or "fate" — appears as a node in a complex network of cultural correspondences where the translator acts as a mediator between civilizational codes.

The relevance of the translation study lies in its ability to deconstruct the very mechanism of intercultural communication in the philosophical context. In the era of globalization, when the "East-West" dialogue is often reduced to the superficial borrowing of forms, the analysis of Meiji translation strategies demonstrates an alternative model — a deep synthesis in which a foreign idea gains new life in a different philosophical soil. Thus, the concept of "conscience," for example, rooted in Christian metaphysics of sin, is reborn on Japanese soil as 良心 (*ryōshin*) — an innate Confucian virtue, preserving its ethical charge but changing its ontological foundation.

The methodological framework of the study combines corpus analysis with the principles of comparative philosophy. The calculation of semantic density in clusters enables a quantitative evaluation of cultural priorities: if existential reflection dominates in the original, the translation accentuates a sense of social duty. However, behind these figures lies a qualitative shift: the Russian "crime" as a transgression of divine law transforms into 罪 (*tsumi*) — a notion integrated into both the Buddhist concept of karma and Confucian views on social harmony.

The philosophical significance of our study resides in demonstrating how the translation practices of the Meiji era generated space for the emergence of novel meanings. Russian existentialism, upon encountering the Zen concept of 無 (*mu* — non-being), gives rise to hybrid forms: Raskolnikov's "despair" is reconceptualized through 諦め (*akirame* — resignation), which merges stoicism with the notion of non-attachment. This synthesis was not a matter of mechanical appropriation — it emerged as a response to the pressure of modernization, wherein traditional values required reformulation in the lexicon of the emergening epoch.

The historical and cultural context of the study reveals the Meiji paradox: the drive toward westernization achieved through a return to tradition.

The translation of *Crime and Punishment* constituted an integral component of the endeavor to construct an "enlightened nation," wherein Western ideas were filtred through the lens of localization.

The transformation of the "Fate" cluster reflects this duality: Christian fatalism is supplanted by the Buddhist engi (interdependent origination), yet simultaneously imbued with the Confucian pathos of social responsibility. The study contributes to the philosophy of language by demonstrating that translation is not merely the transmission of information but a creative act of constructing a new philosophical reality. Through the analysis of semantic shifts, it becomes evident that Russian literature, filtered through the prism of Japanese thought, acquires the qualities of a cultural archetype — universal and local in equal measure. This process transcends the bounds of literary studies, offering a model for comprehending contemporary inter-civilizational interactions, wherein dialogue occurs not at the level of borrowings but through profound transformation of meanings.

The study of cultural transformations in the translation of literary text necessitates an approach that overcomes the quality-quantity dichotomy. The article works with concepts such as "semantic density" and "cultural index," which, as formal metrics, acquire heuristic value only within the context of philosophical reflection on the nature of cultural transfer. These notions, at first glance belonging to corpus linguistics, emerge as instruments for deconstructing profound anthropological structures, revealing how linguistic practices shape the ontological horizons of human existence.

The concept of semantic density (SD), calculated as the ratio of the frequency of lexical units in the cluster to the overall volume of the text, servers as an indicator of cultural perception (Ge, 2022: 6, 12, 13). In the context of comparative analysis between the original and the translation, this metric enables the detection of implicit strategies of cultural adaptation, where the quantitative dominance of certain semantic fields marks zones of heightened relevance. This method overcomes the limitations of purely qualitative analysis, offering a verifiable foundation for comparing cultural axiological systems. In the philosophy of culture, this metric takes on the status of a "cognitive magnet" (by analogy with E. Rosch's theory),[1] where the concentration of certain concepts marks zones of semantic tension. For instance,

[1]In Rosch's theory, prototypes function as reference instances of a category endowed with maximum representativeness (e. g., "sparrow" for the category "birds") (Rosch, 1975: 2, 3, 34). This mechanism carries profound implications for the philosophy of language: lexical units with elevated semantic density, discerned in the analysis of the translation of *Crime and Punishment*, operate as prototypes/magnets, structuring the text's perception via culture-specific filters.

the increase in the density of the "Fate" cluster in the Japanese translation does not merely reflect a statistical anomaly but signals a fundamental shift in the understanding of temporality: Christian providentialism, presupposing linear progression toward the eschaton, is replaced by the Buddhist concept of samsara with its cyclical model of time. In the context of philosophical anthropology, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the prism of M. M. Bakhtin's theory of the "chronotope," wherein the spatio-temporal coordinates of the text determine the anthropological model (Bakhtin, 1975). The heightened frequency of 縁起 (*engi* — interdependent origination) in place of "fate" transforms the very image of the human: from a subject who challenges the transcendent order (Raskolnikov), the character becomes an element of a karmic network, where individual choice dissolves into a chain of causal connections.

Furthermore, this article seeks to introduce the concept of "cultural index" (CI), which enables a quantitative assessment of the degree of conceptual adaptation of the text to the value-semantic matrices of the target culture. Calculated as the ratio of the semantic density (SD) of the translation to the SD of the original, this indicator serves as a measure of cultural relevance for thematic clusters, revealing zones of heightened attention or deliberate reduction. The CI fulfills a dual function: on the one hand, it registers statistical anomalies (deviations from the source semantic structure); on the other, it acts as a hermeneutic key for interpreting cultural filters (Chernikova et al., 2020). Thus, the decline in the index for the psychological cluster ($CI = 0.79$, below unity) correlates with the Buddhist negation of a persistent "self," minimizing interest in individualized introspection. For example, the increase in mentions of 良心 (*ryōshin* — conscience) is accompanied by a semantic shift: from the Christian "inner voice" ascending to the Augustinian notion of the divine spark in humanity to its reconceptualization as the Confucian "innate virtue" according to Mencius (Jiang, 1997: 269), fundamentally altering the anthropological model. The analysis by V. S. Stepin of the dynamics of cultural transmissions allows the interpretation of translation as an ontologically creative act, wherein the reconstruction of meanings generates novel epistemological realities (Stepin, 2006). The cultural index becomes a measure of this creative transformation, where quantitative change represents the surface manifestation of profound semiotic processes.

For instance, the hypertrophy of the term「義理」(*giri*) in the Japanese version emerges as a cognitive magnet, redirecting the semantics of ethical choice toward the realm of social duty.

The application of mathematical methods in humanities research ensures the objectification of cultural patterns, revealing latent semantic shifts through quantitative analysis of frequency and the cultural index, which, in conjunction with hermeneutic interpretation, allows for overcoming the subjectivity of qualitative approaches while preserving the depth of philosophical-anthropological analysis of meaning transformations in intercultural space. These methods, in the humanities context, are often criticized for reductionism; however, in this framework, quantitative indicators render visible those cultural patterns that remain concealed in purely qualitative analysis. The frequency of verbs of motion in *Crime and Punishment*, for instance, does not merely indicate stylistic preferences, but unveils a fundamental divergence in the understanding of human activity: in the original, terms like "went," "stood up," and "sat down" mark discrete actions of the subject asserting its will, whereas in the Japanese translation, 歩み (*ayumi* — movement/path) and 待つ (*matsu* — waiting) emphasize the processuality of being, aligning with Zen philosophy's doctrine of spontaneous nature. This contrast can be interpreted through the opposition of "agency versus processuality" proposed by anthropologist T. Ingold (Ingold, 2006: 10). The Russian text embodies the Western model of the subject as the source of actions, while the Japanese translation represents the Eastern conception of the human as a participant in the universal flow of changes.

The methodology applied in the article draws upon the concept of "cultural filters" by Y. M. Lotman, according to which translation constitutes not the transmission of information, but its recoding through a system of cultural codes (Lotman, 2000: 117). Lotman's notion of cultural filters is essential for interpreting translation as a semiotic act of recoding, wherein the transformation of meanings is conditioned by the interaction of discursive systems from the source and target cultures, enabling the analysis of cultural adaptation mechanisms through the prism of contextual codes. The semantic shift analysis employed in the study of the novel *Crime and Punishment* translation, particularly in the "Poverty" cluster, demonstrates how the social issues of the original are filtered through the Confucian principle 修身斉家治国平天下 (*shūshin seika chikoku heitenka* — cultivating oneself to bring peace to the world), Buddhist compassion, and the social Darwinist ideas of the Meiji era: the interpretation of Darwin's theory through the lens of Confucian ethics and Buddhist ontology engenders a unique conception of progress, wherein "natural selection" was regarded not as biological fate, but as a moral imperative for national self-perfection. In the context of the work's analysis, where the "Poverty" cluster plays a significant role, it is

worth noting that this conception manifested in both urbanization and pauperization: industrial growth led to the formation of a working class whose condition was justified by the theory of "natural selection." Poverty was construed as a consequence of personal inability to adapt, which is reflected in the absence of systemic social support until 1911 (Taira, 1969: 165).

The concept of 八紘一宇 (*hakkō ichiu* — "the eight corners of the world under one roof"), emerging in the early twentieth century, represented an ultranationalist doctrine proclaiming Japan's mission to unite the world under the "single roof" of imperial authority, thereby legitimizing colonial expansion through the rhetoric of "civilizing duty" and racial superiority. This concept employed social Darwinist rhetoric to justify the annexation of Korea (1910) as a "civilizing mission," while the system of competitive examinations for officials (introduced in 1887) was interpreted as a mechanism of "natural selection" for the finest minds, although in practice it reproduced samurai hierarchies (Nirei, 2011).

This synthesis of social Darwinism with Confucian and Buddhist ideas engenders a unique hybrid: Raskolnikov's "beggar" becomes 非人 (*hinjin* — non-person, an outcast beyond the caste system), linking medieval Japanese marginality with images of urban representatives of the lower strata of the modern era. The cultural index here serves as a measure of the intensity of cultural projection, specifically the translator's capacity to appropriate foreign social experience through local categories. This process illustrates how translational activity, functioning as an existential practice, unveils a fundamental divergence between Western subjectivity — centered on the reflexive "I" (Descartes, Kierkegaard (Pörn, 1984)) — and Eastern anthropology of 無我 (*muga* — "no-self"), rooted in the Buddhist denial of *ātman* (Andersen, 2020: 38), wherein analysis of the "Psychology" cluster reveals a reduction of individualized experience in favor of collectivized reality. The semantic analysis methods employed in the study (semantic density, cultural index, comparative hermeneutics) thus transform their instrumental role, becoming a form of philosophical reflection on the nature of cultural interaction. Semantic density and the cultural index emerge not merely as metrics, but as concepts illuminating the dialectics of preservation and change in the process of inter-civilizational dialogue. Through their lens, translation appears not as a technical operation, but as an anthropological act — a space wherein a new image of humanity is born, synthesizing ostensibly incompatible cultural codes. This methodological perspective opens avenues for reconceptualizing the very nature of cultural identity in the era of globalization, where traditional oppositions of "East-West" yield to complex hybrid forms.

Upon turning to Dostoevsky's original text, we observe that the psychological depth of characters unfolds through an inner dialogue with the absurdity of existence, wherein feelings of guilt, fear, and despair serve as markers of existential crisis. However, in the Japanese version, these emotional states are reconceptualized through the prism of the Buddhist ontology of "no-self." The doctrine of *anātmavāda*, constituting the core of Buddhist ontology, negates the existence of a permanent substantial "self" (*ātman*), viewing human personality as a transient aggregation of the five *skandhas* (form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness) (Chadha, 2017: 1). This principle radically transforms the understanding of emotional states: whereas in the Western tradition "remorse" presupposes a stable subject bearing responsibility for its actions, the Japanese 後悔 (*kokai*) accentuates situational regret over disruption of social order. Such an interpretation stems from the Buddhist conception of "no-self" — the emotion does not belong to the individual but arises as a product of the *skandhas'* interaction in specific circumstances (Gallagher et al., 2023: 1). In the context of translation, this leads to a diminution of existential reflection: Raskolnikov's inner dialogue with his "self" is supplanted by an examination of the external consequences of the act.

The aforementioned shift in emphasis from individual reflection to collective responsibility mirrors the Confucian ideal of 和 (*wa* — harmony), wherein personal experience is subordinated to the maintenance of group equilibrium (Feng & Newton, 2012: 342). The Confucian conception of wa, rooted in the Lunyu (Analects (The Analects of Confucius, Watson, 2007)), posits harmony as the foundational principle of cosmic and social order (Cheng, 2006: 26). In contrast to the Western accent on individualism, *wa* underscores the interdependence of all elements within the system (Kim et al., 2010). This manifests in the translational strategy through the socialization of ethics, as "conscience" — conceived as an inner voice (transforms into 良心 (*ryōshin*)) — an innate virtue oriented toward sustaining group solidarity; and the collectivization of emotions, as "shame" (shame before oneself) becomes 恥 (*haji*) — shame before society, aligning with the Confucian maxim: "The noble man feels shame when his words diverge from his deeds" (Lebra, 1983: 205).

Even "suffering," central to the existential narrative, is recoded as 苦 (*ku*) — the foundational category of the Four Noble Truths, converting personal drama into an illustration of the universal law of *dukkha* (Gäb, 2015: 346). The first noble truth of Buddhism — "all is suffering" (*dukkha*) — finds paradoxical embodiment in the translation. Whereas in Dostoevsky, characters'

suffering bears an existential character (conflict with the transcendent), the Japanese 苦 (*ku*) accentuates its universality and inherent naturalness. This displacement accords with the theory of 諸行無常 (*shōgyō mujō* — impermanence of all phenomena), as suffering appears in the translation as a consequence of attachment — the hypertrophy of the term (24 instances in the original versus 125 mentions in the translation) underscores the Buddhist notion that *dukkha* arises from the desire to retain the impermanent. Such an approach reflects not only Buddhist ontology but also its ethico-therapeutic imperatives, wherein mental health is understood as a consequence of moral virtue, and psychic disharmony as the outcome of a "disordered" character incapable of maintaining thoughts and feelings in proper order (Balogh, 2020: 125). The translation likewise eschews individualized descriptions, presenting suffering as the common lot of samsaric existence, rendering the experience not personal but collective (Gäb, 2015: 349). Thus, the hero's psychological crisis is interpreted not as an existential revolt, but as a moral-ontological delusion requiring rectification through the acceptance of universal Buddhist truths.

Regarding the novel's moral dilemmas, they undergo a radical transformation within the Japanese cultural context. The Christian "conscience" as the voice of transcendent truth is supplanted by 良心 (*ryōshin*) — an innate virtue rooted in the Confucian system of 五倫 (*gorin* — the five relationships). In the original *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's conscience functions as evidence of divine presence (referencing the Augustinian concept of the "inner teacher," wherein conscience constitutes the spark of divine reason within humanity (Svensson, 2012: 4)), an instrument of existential choice (the pangs of conscience following the old woman's murder represent not merely emotion, but an ontological rupture with the divine order), and individual responsibility (the character stands alone before eternity, aligning with the Protestant ethic of *solus cum Deo* — alone with God). This model derives from the biblical tradition: "For when Gentiles... the work of the law is written in their hearts, about which their conscience bears witness." In the novel, the frequency of the word "conscience" (24 instances) correlates with the character's crisis as a metaphysical rebel. The Japanese term 良心 (*ryōshin*), literally "good heart," reconceptualizes the notion through the Confucian lens of innate virtue as per Mencius;[2] a socially conditioned

[2]"Human nature is good, just as water flows downwards" (The Chinese Classics..., Legge, 1869: 59).

ethics wherein conscience is directed not toward dialogue with the transcendent, but toward fulfilling one's role in the hierarchy — for instance, as a son, subject, or friend — and ritualized behavior.[3] This translational choice acquires particular significance amid the intellectual debates of the Meiji era. The reinforcement of Confucian ethics of duty clashed with another influential current — "Buddhist modernism," which, conversely, sought to synthesize Buddhism with ideals of the European Enlightenment, such as individualism, universalism, and personal freedom (Shields, 2022: 319). Thus, the novel's translation emerges not merely as an act of linguistic adaptation but as a deliberate ideological gesture wherein preference was accorded to the preservation of collectivist Buddhist morality in the face of modernist European challenges extolling individual autonomy.

The presented Japanese translation transforms the ethical landscape of the work: if Raskolnikov rebels against the divine order in Dostoevsky, his Japanese counterpart disrupts the "natural harmony" (自然の調和), necessitating restoration through a ritual of atonement within the social hierarchy. Even the concept of "crime" acquires new dimensions: 罪 (*tsumi*) in the translation bears the nuance of karmic imbalance, demanding not punishment but the restoration of 理 (*ri* — cosmic order). Thus, for example, the Japanese text post-translation envisions when Raskolnikov reflects on the "right to crime," the Japanese translation employs 義理 (*giri* — social duty), linking the moral conflict to a violation of horizontal relationships rather than the vertical "man-God."

The novel's temporal structure — originally built by Dostoevsky on the tension between past crime and future punishment — dissolves in the Japanese rendition into the Buddhist concept of 無常 (*mujō*, impermanence). Verbs of motion that mark discrete acts of will in the original ("went," "stood up") are replaced by processual forms such as 歩み (*ayumi*, "path") and 続く (*tsuzuku*, "continuation"), emphasizing the continuity of being. This shift reflects a fundamental divergence in conceptions of human activity: the Western subject as the source of action encounters the Eastern idea of 無為自然 (*muyi shizen*, "spontaneous following of the flow of reality"). In Dostoevsky, time serves as an arena of metaphysical confrontation — discrete markers denote crucial moments of existential choice, and temporal indicators ("yesterday," "minute," "hour") heighten the tension between

[3] In the translation, "conscience" appears 22 times, but the context is shifted towards the Confucian 礼 (*rei* — ritual propriety).

the irreversible past and the eschatological future. The Japanese translation, by contrast, foregrounds being's processuality through nominalization: substituting 歩み (*ayumi*, "path") for "went" shifts attention from a volitional act to continuous movement in line with the Zen concept of 道 (*dō*), where the goal dissolves in the process; the hypertrophy of unfinished verb forms (待ち続けた, *machi tsuzuketa*, "continued waiting" instead of "waited") introduces a Buddhist view of time as meditative anticipation — pauses are integral to action; and cyclical reference (replacing "yesterday" with 一度 (*ichido*, "one time")) actualizes 縁起 (*engi*, interdependent origination), viewing events not as unique points but as links in a rebirth chain. Here, Raskolnikov ceases to be the autonomous agent of his deeds and becomes a "conduit" for karmic processes. His "crime" no longer appears as a volitional act but as 業 (*gō*, the inevitable result of past actions). Even the murder is rendered as 斬り続けた (*kiri tsuzuketa*, "continued chopping"), erasing the boundary between act and consequence and relocating moral judgment to the restoration of 理 (*ri*, cosmic balance). Urbanization likewise assumes a temporal dimension: references to 流れ (*nagare*, "flow") in the context of city life (46 occurrences) mirror Meiji modernization, when time was conceived as a "river" carrying the individual beyond the bounds of personal volition.

Thus, the Meiji translators, navigating between Westernization and tradition, forged a chronotopic hybrid of linear progress time intertwined with a cyclical historical perception through the prism of 王朝循環論 (*ōchō junkanron* — dynastic cycle theory) (Moniz Bandeira, 2020: 2) and the Confucian ritual of 礼 (*rei*), which structured everyday life, transforming the chaos of modernization into an ordered flow of 序 (*jo* — sequence).

The adaptation of the "poverty" cluster unveils an anthropological opposition between individualism and collectivism. The Russian "beggar," as a symbol of existential solitude, is supplanted by 非人 (*hinin*) — a historical term for the caste of outcasts from the Edo era. This transformation redirects the emphasis from personal tragedy to systemic inequality, legitimated by the Confucian principle of 義 (*gi* — social righteousness) (Chen, 2020: 2). Poverty ceases to represent a spiritual condition, emerging instead as a marker of caste affiliation, which mirrors the realities of the Meiji period when urbanization exacerbated contradictions between feudal remnants and capitalist relations (Taira, 1969: 156). The phenomenon of *hinin* — the caste of "non-humans" during the Edo period (1603–1868) — embodies a paradoxical realization of the Confucian principle of *gi*, wherein social marginalization was justified as an essential precondition for upholding harmonious order (Amos, 2017: 581). Hinin, engaged in "unclean" occupations

(slaughtering animals, disposing of corpses, executing sentences), existed outside the four-tier class system (*shi-nō-kō-shō*), becoming the living embodiment of the "other" in the Confucian societal model (Smythe, 1952: 194). Their status was not the result of personal failings but predetermined by birth, aligning with the Confucian notion of 分 (*bun*) — the immutable division of social roles (Nuyen, 2001: 62). In the Japanese translation of *Crime and Punishment*, the substitution of "beggar" with 非人 (*hinin*) actualizes not an individual tragedy but a systemic hierarchy, wherein poverty signifies not a spiritual state but a caste marker. This reflects the essence of *gi* as "justice through differentiation": *hinin*, akin to Dostoevsky's characters, prove necessary for demarcating the boundaries of "normal" society. Their existence was legitimated through the Confucian maxim 君君臣臣父父子子 (*kun kun shin shin fu fu shi shi* — "let the ruler be ruler, the subject subject, the father father, the son son"), wherein each element of the system acquires meaning through opposition to the "other" (Guo, 2013: 62). Yet this logic clashed with the Buddhist principle of 平等 (*byōdō* — universal equality), generating tension in the perception of *hinin* (J. Hung, 2020: 312). Meiji-era translators, seeking to adapt Dostoevsky's social critique, employed this term as a bridge between Christian compassion for the downtrodden and the Japanese concept of 慈悲 (*jihi* — compassion), oriented not toward systemic change but toward the ritual "purification" of suffering via acceptance of karmic predetermination. Thus, the semantic shift from "beggar" to 非人 (*hinin*) in the translation constitutes an act of cultural hermeneutics, wherein the Confucian ideal functions not as an ethical imperative but as an instrument for conserving social ontology, with hinin serving as the living embodiment of the boundary between the "human" and the "non-human" in a hierarchized world.

The concept of fate undergoes the most profound ontological shift. Christian fatalism, presupposing linear progression toward an eschatological finale, dissolves into the Buddhist model of 縁起 (*engi* — interdependent origination). Raskolnikov's death, in the original acquiring meaning through redemption, is reinterpreted as 成仏 (*jōbutsu*) — the completion of the rebirth cycle. This transformation alters the very image of humanity: from a contender against the transcendent order, the figure emerges as a traveler awakening to his role in the samsaric cycle. Engi, a cornerstone of Buddhist ontology, denotes the principle of the interdependent arising of all phenomena (Kardash·ch, 2015: 293). In the context of the *Crime and Punishment* translation, this concept radically reconceptualizes understandings of fate and responsibility. Whereas in the original, Raskolnikov's fate is framed through Christian

providence (linear trajectory toward redemption), the Japanese version introduces 因果応報 (*inga ōhō* — karmic retribution), wherein each action constitutes a link in an infinite chain of cause and effect. This transition converts the existential drama into a narrative of restoring disrupted moral order, consonant with traditional Eastern views on the inextricable bond between morality and well-being (Balogh, 2020: 125). For instance, "fate" appears only 8 times in the original text, contrasted with 37 instances of engi. The shift accentuates not predetermination but the dynamic interrelation of actions: Raskolnikov's crime is no longer a challenge to divine order but a disruption of 理 (*ri* — cosmic balance), demanding restoration through the chain of rebirths. The term *jōbutsu* (成仏) — "attaining Buddhahood" — precisely signifies the termination of the samsaric cycle via liberation from passions. In the translation, this notion reconceives the novel's denouement, as evidenced by the semantic shift: "resurrection" is mentioned 4 times in the original, while *jōbutsu* appears only once yet bears conceptual weight. The hero's death is construed not as physical cessation or Christian soul resurrection but as transition into the state of 涅槃 (*nehan* — nirvana), where suffering is transcended through dissolution into "emptiness." The emphasis on traditional doctrines of karma and rebirth may also be viewed as an ideological choice by the translators. In an era when Buddhist modernists advocated revising "religious orthodoxy" in favor of more rational and scientific paradigms (Shields, 2022: 319), the translators of *Crime and Punishment* leveraged Dostoevsky's text to affirm and revitalize the foundational tenets of the traditional Buddhist-Confucian worldview. The cultural-philosophical context of these concepts within the study underscores the importance of accounting for modernization and inter-confessional dialogue amid the socio-cultural transformations of the Meiji period. During Westernization, the notion of interdependence facilitated the synthesis of Buddhist tradition with scientific determinism (McMahan, 2004: 900). The sociologist Inazō Nitobe, in *Bushidō* (1899), likened karma to the "natural laws" of Western science (Nitobe, 1914: 117). In the translation, this manifests through the hypertrophy of the term 因果 (*inga* — cause and effect) — from 0 in the original to 43 mentions. The absence in Buddhism of a Last Judgment concept led to the replacement of "redemption" with 解脱 (*gedatsu* — liberation). Raskolnikov's scene of repentance is depicted via 悟り (*satori* — enlightenment), wherein guilt is overcome not through suffering but through realization of the "self's" illusoriness. Thus, *engi* negates the autonomous agent — Raskolnikov becomes a "conduit" for karmic processes rather than the author of his crime — while

jōbutsu redirects focus from personal salvation to dissolution in the absolute, reflecting Buddhism's critique of attachment to the "self."

The features we have identified, we contend, transform the Japanese translation of *Crime and Punishment* into more than a mere linguistic artifact; it emerges as a philosophical endeavor in reconceptualizing time — a domain wherein Christian existentialism intersects with Eastern ontology of process, thereby generating novel horizons for comprehending human existence amid the epoch of global transformations.

The investigation of semantic transformations in the Japanese translation of F. M. Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* unveils a fundamental paradox of intercultural communication: the more faithfully the translation replicates the text's surface structure, the more radically it reconstitutes its ontological foundations. Each semantic shift — whether the substitution of "conscience" with 良心 (*ryōshin*) or the reconceptualization of "fate" through 縁起 (*engi*) — constitutes an act of philosophical creativity, wherein Christian existentialism, Buddhist ontology of process, and Confucian ethics of duty collide and mutually enrich one another. In our view, a pivotal outcome warranting emphasis is the delineation of two interconnected levels of cultural transfer. At the semiotic level, lexical substitutions activate the deep structures of the collective unconscious — archetypes such as「和」(*wa*, harmony) and「空」(*kū*, emptiness) — that shape Japanese perception of reality. At the ontological level, semantic clusters reconfigure the very "substance" of the narrative, converting a linear drama of individualized choice into a cyclical parable of karmic equilibrium. These transformations expose a principled divergence in the constitution of the human subject: whereas Dostoevsky's original embodies the tragedy of the "I" challenging the transcendent, the translation delineates a portrait of the "non-I," dissolved within a web of social and karmic interconnections. Moral dilemmas, initially rooted in the notion of freedom, are reformulated through the Confucian principle of 義 (*gi*), wherein ethics functions not as an internal imperative but as a mechanism for sustaining cosmic order. We posit that this phenomenon of Meiji-era translation manifests as a process in which Western ideas, filtered through the prism of traditional Japanese thought, acquire new semantic flesh. This was neither imitation nor distortion but a form of cultural appropriation, wherein the "foreign" served as a catalyst for reinterpreting the "native." Thus, it becomes evident that translation constitutes a full-fledged philosophical practice, with language functioning as the medium for birthing hybrid ontologies. From the vantage of philosophical anthropology, the findings corroborate the thesis of the inherently cultural conditioning

of human experience. The Russian existential revolt and the Japanese acceptance of 理 (*ri*) emerge not as antitheses but as divergent modalities for apprehending a singular archetypal narrative — the encounter of humanity with the limits of its own freedom. Translation, accordingly, becomes a space wherein these modalities engage in dialogue, engendering fresh horizons for understanding what it means "to be human" in a globalizing world.

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Мораль без субъекта

конфуцианско-буддийские основания этики в переводе «Преступления и наказания» Ф. М. Достоевского на японский язык

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Аннотация: В статье исследуется феномен культурного трансфера литературного произведения как сложного процесса семиотической адаптации, в котором сталкиваются не только языковые структуры, но и глубинные онтологические парадигмы. На материале японского перевода романа Ф. М. Достоевского «Преступление и наказание» периода Мэйдзи анализируются механизмы трансформации христианско-экзистенциальной проблематики оригинала под влиянием буддийско-конфуцианского синтеза. Исследование фокусируется на семантических кластерах («страдание», «совесть», «судьба») и их онтологическом перекодировании: от христианского провиденциализма к буддийскому учению о пустоте, от экзистенциальной рефлексии к конфуцианской этике долга. Методологическая рамка сочетает корпусный анализ с принципами сравнительной философии, вводя понятия «семантической плотности» и «культурного индекса» как количественных маркеров ценностных приоритетов. Автор демонстрирует, как русский экзистенциализм, встречаясь с дзэнской концепцией небытия, порождает гибридные формы: «отчаяние» Раскольникова переосмысляется через отрешенность, христианская «совесть» трансформируется в конфуцианскую врожденную добродетель, а линейная темпоральность романа растворяется в циклической модели непостоянства времени. Философская значимость исследования заключается в раскрытии перевода как творческого акта созидания новой философской реальности, где диалог идет не на уровне заимствований, а через глубинное преображение смыслов. Переводческая практика эпохи Мэйдзи предстает как пространство рождения гибридных онтологий, отражающих сложный процесс модернизации японского общества через синтез традиционных ценностей и западных влияний.

Ключевые слова: культурный трансфер, семантические кластеры, сравнительная философия, корпусная лингвистика, гибридные онтологии.

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