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Philosophy and its Relations to Science and Humanities

Filosofía y sus relaciones con las ciencias y las humanidades

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we will attempt to determine the essence of philosophical thinking with respect to a closely-related form of spiritual culture – scientific knowledge. The purpose of the study is to identify the possibility or impossibility of defining philosophy as one of the sciences belonging to the humanitarian sphere. The pro arguments of the scientific status of philosophy and the arguments rejecting the possibility of defining philosophy as a science are discussed. Nevertheless, philosophy *per se* is significantly wider than its purely scientific segment, creating fundamentally new ways of understanding reality, and thereby leaving the limits of concrete scientific knowledge.

Keywords: Criteria of scientific content, humanities, philosophy, science

RESUMEN

En este artículo intentaremos determinar la esencia del pensamiento filosófico con respecto a una forma de cultura espiritual estrechamente relacionada: el conocimiento científico. El propósito del estudio es identificar la posibilidad o imposibilidad de definir la filosofía como una de las ciencias pertenecientes al ámbito humanitario. Se discuten los argumentos a favor del estatus científico de la filosofía y los argumentos que rechazan la posibilidad de definir la filosofía como ciencia. Sin embargo, la filosofía *per se* es significativamente más amplia que su segmento puramente científico, creando formas fundamentalmente nuevas de comprender la realidad y, por lo tanto, dejando los límites del conocimiento científico concreto.

Palabras clave: Ciencia, criterios de contenido científico, filosofía, humanidades.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is part of the cultural background of any educated person, and nevertheless remains spiritual, fundamentally underdetermined in its own essence. Religious sermons about immortality of the soul and futility of the material, political ideologies, and some works of art can also be treated within a particular context as philosophy (Berdyaev: 2006, p.254). This is precisely why the determination of the relation of philosophy to other traditional forms of spiritual culture remains priority. The relation of philosophy to religion and art was revealed in one of the previous articles (Kondratiev&Smirnov: 2017, p.132-138). In this article we will try to identify the points of similarity and discrepancy between philosophy and science.

In the recent past, there would not be much point to this issue: for thinkers of the 17th-18th and even most of the 19th centuries there was no doubt that philosophy was a science. However, the reason was not that philosophy was truly scientific, but rather science was philosophical: a clear dividing line between scientific activity and philosophical one was not drawn. Most of the sciences (with the exception of mathematics and physics in the form of mechanics) were still in their infancy, and their position, which T. Kuhn called "pre-paradigmatic," very much resembled the state in which philosophy was existed: several completely different schools and directions independently developed their categorical apparatus, key ideas and concepts, as well as ways and methods of solving the most common problems (Kuhn: 1962). Philosophy was considered alongside other sciences with its own special subject – the study of a special principle uniting the world ("substance"), the nature of the divine, human soul, virtue and evil. Also, all social sciences – the study of political life, the principles of organization of society, and so on – were usually attributed to philosophy (Heidegger: 2007, p.303).

However, by the 19th century most of the sciences comprehended in the corpus of modern natural science had already acquired their paradigmatic status, while philosophy could not only substantiate its scientific character by forming the solid foundation of the paradigm, despite the numerous attempts made by thinkers of the 17th-19th centuries, but, on the contrary, by the beginning of the 20th century it had moved away from dualistic fragmentation, more or less unchanged for the entire previous history of philosophy (Plato-Aristotle, realism-nominalism, rationalism-empiricism, idealism-materialism), to complete pluralism of schools and trends (Rolbina&Khametova: 2016, pp.1178-1183). If we consider philosophy to be a science, in any case we have to choose some part from this variety of traditions, cutting off the rest as superfluous, unscientific. If for the early positivism of A. Comte, philosophy in the form of metaphysics is not a science, since it is useless and even harmful for science, then for existentialism in the spirit of M. Heidegger, philosophy is not a science, since the matter of philosophy is thinking, whereas "science, for its part, does not think and cannot think." (Perova: 2015; Mardasov: 2019)

METHODOLOGY

The main method used in our work is dialectical. Its essence consists in comparing the diametrical points of view and an attempt to form a new, synthesizing position that incorporates the most powerful aspects of the analyzed concepts. A comparative method is also used. It allows for the identification of the specifics of the subject being determined by comparing its characteristics with other phenomena similar in content and form.

RESULTS

Our reasoning is built in the classical dialectical vein: we will consistently analyze the arguments for the scientific status of philosophy, and then the arguments against its scientific nature. At the end of the article we will formulate preliminary conclusions (Husserl: 1994, p.357).

Pro-1. Philosophy is a science, because it has the formal institutional status of scientific knowledge. This means that philosophy is studied in higher education institutions, articles and monographs are published in philosophy, and candidate and doctoral dissertations are defended. This should also include formal requirements for writing most philosophical publications – a certain structural division, the presence of references to sources, a list of references, and the like. And by writing this text, the author seeks to follow these established rules as well.

Contra-1. Alack, the institutional nature of philosophy is not sufficient to consider it a science. In the recent past, such interesting disciplines as “scientific communism” and “scientific atheism” existed in the Soviet academic system. It is interesting that the epithet “scientific” was already present in the very name of the specialty – was it not because there were certain doubts in reality in the scientific status of this discipline? Is it necessary, for example, to add the epithet “scientific” to the name of the specialty *Computational Mathematics* or *Molecular Chemistry*?

At the very beginning of the lecture course *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, M. Heidegger very wittily calls the existing academic structure a “university factory” and exclaims about it further, “Maybe something broke in the very bowels of the mechanism? Is it really only the obtrusiveness and banality of the organization and the prevailing structure that keeps it from collapsing? Have falsehood and secret despair settled the depths of this whole activity?” (Heidegger: 2007, p.351) In fact, the union of philosophy and academic institutionality has a relatively recent history: approximately since the end of the 18th century this practice has become widespread in European universities, especially in Germany: J. Fichte, F. Schelling, G. Hegel – all of them were university professors of philosophy, chairholders. However, already in the 20th century we can see how often philosophy experiences a certain embarrassment within the walls of the university and tends to issue forward – into the theater or cinema (existentialism), into politics (Marxism), into medicine (psychoanalysis). And the past professors of philosophy would probably be very uncomfortable within the modern, overly strict framework of academic science: which reader would allow F. Schelling’s monograph under the heading *Presentation of My Philosophical System* for the publication? Insufficient accuracy of the formulation of the objectives of the study, the lack of analysis of the elaboration of the problem in the sources and insufficient list of references are the most obvious challenges that would have arisen for such a hypothetical reader (Barbera et al.: 2020, pp.661–673). Thus, the institutional affiliation of philosophy to the sphere of academic science is not naturally necessary, and is not always beneficial (Mikryukov et al.: 2020).

Pro-2. Philosophy is a science, because it has a specific subject and method of research. The subject of philosophy depends on the specialization that we choose (as in any science): this is knowledge of the world for epistemology, being per se for ontology, society as a dynamic system for social philosophy, morality for ethics, and so on. Concerning the method, it also somewhat differs when we move from one philosophical tradition to another: this is dialectics for Marxism, a logical analysis of the language for positivism of the 20th century, an introspective analysis of the internal states of consciousness for phenomenology. In addition, there is also a body of general scientific methods that are used in any philosophical research: this is the method of historicism, the hermeneutic method, the comparative method, the method of analysis and synthesis, and others.

Contra-2. Striking is that it is much easier to identify subjects of philosophical disciplines than the subject of philosophy itself. In any other science this does not present a problem: if the subject of physics is the whole set of interactions of material bodies, then mechanics studies mechanical interactions, electrodynamics –

electrical, thermodynamics – thermal, and so on. What will be a generalizing subject for particular subjects of ontology, epistemology, ethics, and other philosophical sections? It is usually claimed that the world as a whole is the common subject of philosophy – but is the world as a whole a combination of being, cognition, and virtue? The bare ontology studies being itself, that is, everything that exists – it turns out that the subject of one branch of philosophy is equal in volume to the subject of the whole philosophy (Usubjonovna: 2020). On the other hand, the same subject – the world as a whole – is the subject of concern of science as such, while each particular science studies a specific segment of this world. And it is philosophy that claims to study exclusively this subject, however, philosophers will never reveal to us the secret of how they succeed. Probably, precisely because of the lack of certainty on the subject of philosophy itself, the so-called “seams”, “paradigmatic vaccinations” appear in philosophy, all kinds of series of “turns” are proclaimed, different kinds of “-centrism” are criticized (Badiou: 1999, pp.181; Saykina: 2014, pp.22-27; Saykina&Krasnov: 2015, p.1923-1927)?

Pro-3. Philosophy, like any science, has a specific language – terminology by which it seeks to describe its subject. The conceptual language of science allows us to immediately point out the most essential properties of things or processes, abstracting from features that are insignificant in a given research context. Philosophical research pays great attention to the analysis of meanings and the logical syntax of concepts: within the framework of the tradition of logical positivism that activity was even considered as the only occupation worthy being considered truly philosophical (Hauck: 2019, pp.227-252).

Contra-3. Nevertheless, the mere existence of a terminological apparatus does not in any way make philosophy a science – astrology also has a terminological apparatus, very extensive and elaborated. The problem is that philosophy, contrary to the conviction of logical positivists, cannot, in any way, confine itself to an analysis of the existing concepts – philosophical or scientific. Any sufficiently developed philosophy begins to create its own concepts beyond the existing ones – which inevitably leads to ambiguity, metaphoricity and bias of meanings (Deleuze&Guattari: 1996). Perhaps this is true even for the tradition that itself considered the creation of concepts as a meaningless occupation – after all, it is logical positivism that introduces philosophical terms such as “atomic fact”, “protocol proposal” and others (Metzger: 2019, pp.245-295).

In general, the nature of philosophical concepts, in contrast to scientific terms, is not so much to designate objects or their essential properties, but to formulate a completely new way of thinking, by using which we can see the same objects in a completely new way. For example, before Plato’s having formulated the concept of “eidos”, a person, in principle, could not imagine the incorporeal reality underlying the foundation of the physical world. It is unlikely that we will be right to say that Plato has discovered the world of ideas, just as a historian discovers a new fact described in a previously unknown archival document, or a biologist discovers a new, previously unknown species of animal. In fact, Plato creates the world of ideas by the power of his own thought, however, after Plato, the world of ideas becomes part of our reality, and we must live by treating it in some way – by agreeing with Plato and recognizing its existence, or denying it. But if not for Plato, how would his critics know what they should deny?

Pro-4. The purpose of science is the formation of a certain body of knowledge, which in future can be transmitted in the form of courses for secondary and higher schools, study guides and the like. Philosophy is also studied by students in higher educational institutions, textbooks on philosophy are written, lectures are delivered.

Contra-4. In fact, a textbook on philosophy, just like a “course on philosophy for beginners,” is impossible in principle, since philosophy is not something that can be taught. Any textbook on philosophy can be either a textbook on the history of philosophy, or a kind of detailed philosophical dictionary, which will expound the basic terms and concepts, as well as key questions of philosophy – and those answers to be offered to these questions by thinkers of different epochs. Of course, this kind of knowledge is necessary, however, not sufficient for a true philosopher (Atkins: 2020, pp.500-513).

DISCUSSION

Probably the main problem is that in any science today there exists, albeit rather conditional, division into “great” scientists and “ordinary” scientists. The latter do not lay a claim to be great, to crucial discoveries, but they are conducting ongoing work to obtain and process scientific data, which can be further used to obtain revolutionary results. In order to become an “ordinary” scientist, it is necessary to master a certain body of already existing knowledge on this issue and a relatively simple technique for acquiring new knowledge – methods of organizing experiments, mathematical apparatus, etc. This is quite enough to obtain a *significant* result with *scientific novelty* in the framework of scientific research – although this result, of course, will not overturn the scientific paradigm.

It is rather difficult to imagine in philosophy an “ordinary” philosophical activity. Having become proficient in the terminology and the elementary philosophical “technology”, which incorporates the rules of logical thinking, the rules of argumentation and criticism, we understand that it is practically impossible to get any new result. We have only to state that Descartes, Kant, Schelling or anyone else obtained similar results in solving the problem posed and to explain how they obtained these results and what this ultimately led to, and therefore, ultimately, a philosophical work turns into a historical-philosophical one. This is not surprising, because in order to achieve a new result in philosophy, it is necessary not to describe an existing one, but to go beyond the existing and create fundamentally new terms, concepts, ideas – and for this, it is necessary to have an extraordinary power of thought and imagination, which possessed only by great philosophers. Thus, “ordinary” philosophers only suffer the fate of systematizing commentators, or historians of philosophy – however, can we then call them philosophers? We prefer to leave this question open, and although the authors are more inclined to a negative answer, very interesting arguments for its positive solution are given in the paper (Lishayev: 2014, p.3-25).

CONCLUSION

The arguments of the proponents of the scientific nature of philosophy are not so convincing in reality, does this mean that we must reject them and finally recognize philosophy as not a science? Our position is somewhat different: scientific philosophy still exists and constitutes an important layer of philosophical culture in general, but *it does not fully exhaust it*. Having acquired a certain body of knowledge, the basis of which is the history of philosophy and a specific philosophical dictionary, as well as the technique of working with this material, a person can carry out scientific research on a particular subject: it can be a philosopher or a philosophical school, work with the meaning of a certain term or a group of terms, as well as an analysis of the argumentation for a particular problem or a search for new arguments.

This investigation may well meet the criteria of scientific nature (at least the criteria accepted in the humanities), and therefore it can be published in the form of an article, a report at a scientific conference or a monograph. Nevertheless, philosophy itself turns out to be wider than this scientific paper: as already mentioned, its purpose is not so much to describe the properties of existing objects (be it philosophical systems, terms or arguments), but to formulate a fundamentally new way of thinking about these objects – and the criteria for this thoughts are created by the very act of thought, and therefore cannot correspond to any a priori given forms, including the generally accepted criteria of scientific content.

Philosophy as a whole is not a science, although it must always be based on scientific matter in its development. This also applies to the material of the very *philosophical sciences* – logic, the history of philosophy and other disciplines that formally form part of philosophy and constitute a kind of scientific segment of the philosophical whole. However, those who seek to limit philosophy to this scientific segment alone make a great mistake. Without belittling its significance at all, we dare to assert that there is a philosophy

beyond science. And it is these uncharted areas within which the most important ideas are formulated, the most significant breakthroughs are realized and the most revered idols are subverted.

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