

Excerpts on the History of the Concept of Development of the Autonomous Subject: Plato and Aristotle as Forerunners of Kant and Hegel

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Abstract—The paper looks at concepts of Plato and Aristotle according to which reason is a common feature in regard to autonomy of the subject. It shows the role of the state and society towards autonomy of the subject. Plato preferred a society organized in the ideally efficient way but Aristotle favored government which, in his opinion, had to represent some combination of different types of authority. Based on the analysis, it was concluded that an autonomous subject can be viewed both in absolute and relative mode of existence. Theoretical and practical significance of the study is in the understanding of the further history of the important for us idea of autonomy of the subject, which leads, among other things, to research of Kant and Hegel, because autonomy of the subject is in the centre of reflection of these German classical thinkers.

Keywords—*subject; autonomy of the subject; ability of the subject soul; cognition; reason; cognizing subject; independence of mind*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times philosophers were interested in main characteristics and abilities of the human being. Philosophical research took various very different directions, from practical activities to purely scholastic speculations. At that, one of the key questions in the understanding of the human being isn't only what is a human being and what is the human nature (including the way it is determined — individually or socially), but also, how autonomous is the human being. Of course, these questions are very closely related, forming the proverbial vicious circle, in which both the former and the latter can be viewed as a foundation [1].

II. FREEDOM AS AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF THE HUMAN EXISTENCE

Let's try to solve the problem of foundations of human existence by looking at such essential human features as freedom and self-determination. In fact, the human being is usually viewed as a subject of his or her activities, as opposed to the machine, which acts automatically. Note that free target setting is usually considered an essential human feature, and in this context the thematic structure is organized around categories of targets and means. On the other hand, classic problems are represented by the question: how personal freedom can be possible, if events, happening in the world, are not determined by the person's conscious actions [2].

A human being is incorporated into the world, or at least, into the processes taking place in the world. This is an undeniable, obvious fact, which, however, can be viewed as something unauthentic, visible, untrue, as just a phenomenon — accidental, not reflecting the essence of the human beingness or existence. However everyday needs, practical necessity, responsibilities towards other people, duty, moral attitudes, values, etc., characteristic of practical, actual involvement of a person with the world, constantly and, it can be said, inescapably remind of themselves, compelling people to undertake actions, changing themselves, their own consciousness, assumed targets, employed means, their environment, and more generally — global situations, in which they find themselves and which they reproduce. In other words, inside the whole mass people take places, playing the role of substances (which corresponds to classic definition of Boethius): substance is "what can act and suffer" [3]. On the one hand, it is not important that people can dream about another, better world, or about escaping

from the snares of this imperfect world. As K. Marx put it, "they do not realize it, but they do it". In other words, the world inevitably changes with the participation of people. On the other hand, self-awareness, self-assessment and outside evaluation are very important for the people themselves. The problem of the subject is closely related with its consciousness, self-consciousness, and realization.

The described range of problems pertaining to research of subject's autonomy can be viewed in aspects both classically developed and open to possibility of modern non-classical development [4]. This study questions, whether the human being is autonomous — not only in a sense of being materially engaged with the world, but also in his or her spiritual and conscious life. At that, autonomy cannot be detached from activity, characterizing existence of the subject as a substance or substantially rooted in the world, or as a creature undergoing changes. This is quite a classical theme, developed both in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the person's autonomy can be associated also with active changing of both himself or herself, and his or her presence in the world, which is within the scope of modern neoclassical philosophical studies. One can agree with A.V. Chusov, who looks at the modern concept of the subject in connection with "points of growth" of the classical concept, highlighting such determinancies of the subject as activity, intentionality, and thingness [5]. This direction diverges from classical philosophy, presenting new ideas and approaches in connection not only with qualitatively new theoretical and empirical tools, which progressed hugely since early modern period and the Enlightenment, but also in connection with far greater scale of intervention of humans into nature, both the surrounding one and their own. This problematics is characterized by formulating specific problems, which have moved to the practical realm. Those are the problems of autonomy attained by the products of human activity in such scale and directions, which were never foreseen or realized by their human author. The problem of "education of the educator" gains significance in case of actual and practical, not illusory inclusion of a person into the world [6] [7].

III. BASIC STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGENCY OF A HUMAN BEING

In order to set up the problem of researching the agency of a human being, it is necessary to determine the main structural features and characteristics [8]. First of all, there is a question about a set of subject's abilities and the possibility of their changing and development. Without going into reasons for choosing major classical philosophers, who worked on this problem, let's point out the important influence of Plato and Aristotle. Let's look at their heritage in order to determine subject's characteristics, necessary for establishing and studying the autonomy of the subject.

When looking at the agency of a human being, practically all thinkers up to XVIII century put the concept of "soul" at the forefront, but Kant put the soul to the methodologically derivative place. For him, it is just an idea of pure reason [9], and his followers and successors based their theories on the concept of "subject".

However, on the social, political, and state level, starting with Plato, it more likely means speculation, reason, or special status or state of mind. Within general classical paradigm of rational, beautiful, and virtuous existence aims of a person are considered in the context of their compliance to nature. This compliance is statutory: the aim of existence of every creature, included according to its nature into Cosmos, must be compliant with nature, be it the nature of being, virtue, etc. [10].

Plato doesn't just describe soul structure. He builds a concept of teaching and cognition, i.e. transformation of soul, which was very well shown by W. Jaeger [11].

Let's note the following basic aspects of Platonic conception of the soul [12] in a concise way. Regarding the individual soul he, first of all, defines such major elements of its structure as duality: the nature of the soul belongs to intelligible, but the soul itself, tying sensory and intelligible, is liable to pressures and appetite. At that, the soul, obviously, is a separate entity. The main function of the soul in the world is to rule, dominate, and be the mistress. As a result, the hierarchy of souls evolves, depending on their belonging to intelligent entities, from the world soul to souls of lower grades. But the soul has its own motions. Those are desire, judgment, concern, advice, correct and wrong opinion, joy and suffering, valour and fear, love and hate. Origins of desires are divided into rational, irrational, and fierce, and each of them can both influence actions, caused by other origins, and subdue other origins. Configuration of such soul characteristics, as judgment, concern, advice, opinion, and three pairs of feelings (joy — suffering, valour — fear, and live — hate) are formed from outside to some extent. The upbringing can convert a soul to one of plans of being, influencing behaviour and character of a person, which extends autonomy features of the soul. The soul has abilities to come in touch with a thing and present the essence of the thing in a word. Reason is ability of the soul to catch intermediate results of judgment, unlike pure judgment. Plato looks at human morality as an object to apply the art of government. Human character develops both under the influence behavior pattern of his or her father, and surrounding persons, first of all inside the family.

So, highlighting the development of human ability towards self-cognition, Plato presents quite an advanced concept of properties and characteristics not only of actively acting subject as such, but also processes of change of these characteristics, both under the influence of external forces and internal action of the subject itself.

IV. ARISTOTLE ABOUT STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGENCY OF A HUMAN BEING

Aristotle, the most well-known follower of Plato, had an uneasy theoretical relationship with his teacher. In a huge number of his works, starting with ethical and metaphysical to physical and epistemological, he studies Plato's concepts and rejects or revises solutions, offered by Plato, because of their inconsistency with nature (*physis*). Among other things, there is subordinate status of ethical matters in his system: as A.A. Guseinov writes, "in his system (unlike Plato's

philosophy) ethics didn't occupy the central spot and didn't constitute its inner pathos" [13]; there is ontologically lower status of mathematical matters, which for him do not exist independently. The above position is known, first of all, as based on sensory knowledge, contrary to notional knowledge. At the same time Aristotle pays much time and effort to the study of both judgment, which belongs to dianoetic virtues, and ascension to the primary beginnings, which are matters of action of the advanced mind. For this study, it is important that Aristotle looked at all abilities of the human being as defined through compliance with his or her nature. In effect, he created encyclopaedic review of these abilities, starting from the lowest, common to all living beings, to the highest, inherent only in the most advanced political man. It can be said that questions of faith as a distinctive human ability were almost unreflected in the works of the thinker, but further development of philosophy was preordained in its theological version.

Based on the above, we do not look at Aristotle's ethical treatises ("Nicomachean Ethics", "Magna Moralia", "Eudemian Ethics") themselves, explicating ethical system of Aristotle. They were comprehensively and in detail studied by international community during milleniums. Turning to his works, containing descriptions and studies of properties and features of the autonomous subject, we will focus on his "On the Soul" treatise, which describes the organization of the individual subject, and look at some main ideas of the "Politics" treatise, which looks at the social subject.

General structure of the subject in "On the Soul" treatise is presented with logic, not allowing different interpretations. This is directly shown in the list of contents, accompanying translations and compiled by commentators and translators of this notable treatise.

In the first book Aristotle — based on previous philosophical concepts — critically analyzes and elucidates two distinctive features of the soul, explicitly named by his predecessors (moving principle and self-movement), and then goes to three distinctive features of things in existence, directly associated with the soul, that he pointed put himself (motion, perception, and immaterialness). In the second book he studies and defines the soul in connection with sensory forms of existence and manifestation of the soul — both lower and common for all souls. The third book looks mostly at the highest abilities of the soul, inherent to the human being, but rooted in plant and animal levels.

In his second book Aristotle defines different aspects of the soul in more and more detail. He talks about the soul as an "entity in a sense of the form of the natural body, possessing in possibility of life", as of the "first entelechy of the natural body, possessing organs", and as an "essence of being and form (logos) ... of such a natural body, which has the beginning of motion and rest in itself" [14].

Plant-like abilities of the soul, characterizing the living being in general, are force, the beginning of alteration (growth and destruction) and ability to take food.

Further details about abilities of the soul pertain to animals as the type of things in existence, which belongs to higher level with more complex organization. Aristotle observes that animals have special intrinsically rooted abilities — senses, the first of which for animals is the sense of touch. He notes that "soul is the beginning of the above mentioned abilities and is distinguished by vegetative ability, sensation ability, ability to think, and movement". Ability to move in connection with existence of body parts forms a new foundation for isolating soul characteristics: "each part has sensation and ability to move in space; if there is a sensation, then there is also aspiration. Sensation everywhere coexists with sorrow and joy, and they are necessarily accompanied by desire". Obviously, here "aspiration" is a soul property, equivalent to sensuous intentionality. Note also that this intentionality is based on different peculiar inner emotions and action-inducing conditions.

New — epistemological — level is introduced by Aristotle in relation of sensation and knowledge. He distinguishes sensation in possibility and in action, with further plans to relate sensation with thinking and comprehension. We interpret this construct as preparation for further conclusions about special nature of a rational person. It is represented by peculiar entelechy, corresponding to this nature, by disclosing and fully developing abilities, rationally oriented towards the highest good. Here it is possible to discern the beginning of the problematics of multidirectional action upon human essence during upbringing.

It can be said that sensation was realized as a body organ because it consisted of such elements as water and air. It is able to perceive an unlike thing, becoming like it, but not taking its matter. Sensation as ability is ability to distinguish bodily things. The above-mentioned is one of foundations for looking at sensation as ability as the form, and soul as the form of forms.

As for abilities of the subject, they are quite diverse at the level of cognizing subject. Sensations are supplemented not only by comprehension (fronesis) and thinking (noesis) as the most common types of abilities of the rational being, but also delusion (apate), which is more common for living beings, imagination (phantasia), cognition (episteme), will (boylesis), opinion (doksia), and faith (pistis). The major update of subject's characteristics pertains to mind, which crowns abilities of the subject. It is the best and highest of all abilities.

Importantly, abilities start to bifurcate at this level: sensation is always true but thinking can be right or wrong, and be represented both by three correct forms — comprehension, cognition, and true opinion, and by corresponding incorrect forms, opposite to mentioned above. Even more interesting is the ability of imagination. It is impossible to build judgments (ypolepseos) without imagination, but unlike opinion, it is totally under our control. Opinion also discovers the chain of conditions of its possibility: faith — conviction — rational foundation. Images, formed in the mind of the subject, can be distorted by emotions, illness, and sleep.

But the subject's autonomy is most evident as we move to intellect (noein). By nature it is an ability of a special kind. Here a condition for the autonomy of intellect is formulated: it must become universal, i.e. really knowing everything in a certain topical area, all-encompassing (literally — "become everyone"). But besides this, the concept of reflection as some kind of unity of possibility and reality of knowledge is also declared here [15].

Intellect can have two states — the lowest, passive, transient, and the highest — producing, persistent. The lowest state of the intellect is similar to matter. In it the intellect becomes everything. Aristotle characterizes the highest intellect as separate — not mixed with anything — activity, which is an acting beginning in its essence. This is a definition of the absolute substance as an absolute beginning. But also present is the concept of the arche as a condition for secondary, derivative thinking, prone to influences. The arche becomes universal based on conceptual foundation different from above mentioned universalization of knowledge. The universal structure of activity as physical movement in general demands unconditional stoppage of regress of foundations in the finitely achievable point of the first foundation. In fact, activity is a type of motion and in reality defined in connection with active beginning.

Aristotle points out that the ability of striving for, and aspiring to something (oreksis) represents the moving ability, common for all three soul parts. It is possible to identify three kinds of motion: the first — aspiration prevails over will; the second — will prevails over aspiration; the third — one aspiration prevails over another. There is no question about the possibility of the fourth kind of motion — with one will prevailing over another — at the essence of body level. Such interaction is implemented at the level of social formations.

Aristotle insists on bodilessness of intellect and characterizes its existence as spanning in definitions of knowledge. At that, as we know from "Metaphysics", intellect becomes identical to divine knowledge and loses all ties with individuality. From our point of view, the sense of this conceptual construct is that a) nature of a person gets lost but b) intellect absorbs nature of the whole world, becoming engaged with primum mobile, and c) rational requirements to the universal social subject get formulated. This makes it possible to move to the state or political subject, in our terms — to the social subject.

Let's briefly characterize general structure of the social subject, and do it on the basis of the first three books of the "Politics" treatise. In the first book "the Stagirite" begins with definition of the state as "political relationship" (koinonian), which is organized to achieve some benefit, strives first of all for the highest of all benefits, turns out to be the most important of all and receives into itself all other relationships, understanding relationship as an activity. The main and specific distinguishing characteristic of people, allowing them to communicate as people, and not animals, is an articulate speech, because specific forms of relationship are based on such notions as benefit and detriment, justice and injustice, good and evil, which can be expressed only

through speech. These value notions are absorbed on the basis of cognition, upbringing and education, Aristotle says in his "Ethics".

Looking at two natural forms of relationship — between the husband and the wife, and between the master and the slave — as nonautonomous, Aristotle points out that together they form the first autonomous type of relationship: "relationship, naturally emerging for satisfying everyday needs", i.e., family and home.

Then the structure of relationship gets more complex because of long-term needs. Several households, united by such needs, form the next level of relationship — hamlet.

Obviously, autonomy of a hamlet is higher than autonomy of a separate household or family, but, in turn, is insufficient. Full autonomy is possible only for a polis which consists of several hamlets and arises from living needs, but aims at achieving virtuous life.

The state is an extreme case of the natural whole, of which the human being is a part. More than that, it precedes every individual person, "because the latter, in isolated state, is not a self-sufficient being" [16]. By contrast, the state is self-sufficient (autarkeias), and realizes the supreme goal — virtuous life.

However the state also must act and move and its actions must form unity. Here emerge many levels and types of wielders of power. In his first book Aristotle calls them "statesman" (politikon), "tzar" (basilikon), "householder" (oikonomikon), "master" (despotikon). Looking at the theory of polis in general, in the second book he talks about a "citizen" (polites). Citizen in general is a person, taking part in court activities and in exercising power. A citizen has specific abilities of exercising power, different from those allowing dominating his wife or slave. These are abilities to a) rule free citizens and b) obey free citizens. These abilities are instilled both by in-home tutoring and legislation (which can sometimes change with dangerous consequences for the state). One can learn such abilities obeying to somebody free, as in the army. Virtue of a citizen consists in doing it "perfectly".

The system of norms of thinking, created in antiquity, was a precondition for forming notions of autonomy of the subject through rational approach.

The philosopher looks at several levels of autonomy of the subject. For an individual person autonomy emerges, when the driving intellect dominates other forces, driving human behaviour. Social individual becomes autonomous when he is included in a whole, exceeding himself — family, hamlet or city. Such autonomy is relative both in external and internal aspects. Autonomy of the subject is rational, i.e. represented in heterogeneous proportions. It changes together with life conditions (birth, growing up and death, climate, natural disasters, wars, trade blocs and so on) [17].

V. CONCLUSION

Both Plato and Aristotle are convinced that reason is the origin of autonomy of the subject. However the former

supposes that a single best organized society exists while the latter thinks that the best organization of authority involves a combination of different types of power. In other words, the autonomous subject can be viewed both in absolute and relative mode of existence.

The further history of the important for us idea of the autonomy of the subject leads, among other things, to studies by I. Kant and G.W.F. Hegel, because autonomy of the subject was the central point of deliberations of this German classics. But this is a subject for future studies.

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