

Self-determination of Philosophy in the Age of German Enlightenment as the Basis of Contemporary Understanding of Philosophy*

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Abstract—One of the main philosophical problems today is the definition of philosophy itself. The answer to the questions of what philosophy is, what its tasks are today, how it differs from other areas of the spiritual life of man and society is extremely important today. Our modern answers to these questions often lead to Heidegger. However, if we take a closer look at the discussions of the German Enlightenment, we will notice that this question was first clearly formulated at that time. One of the philosophers who gave his answer to this question was I. Kant. And it was he, and not Heidegger, who first formulated those features of philosophy that we still attribute to it.

Keywords—philosophy; mathematics; science; understanding; Kant; Heidegger; enlightenment

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the main topics of philosophy throughout its existence was the clarification of its own essence, tasks and methods for solving them, its similarities and differences from other areas of the spiritual life of individual and society. And to this day, starting to talk about philosophy as part of standard philosophy courses for non-philosophical specialties or first-year introductory lectures for philosophers, or just trying to explain what philosophy is to people who don't come across it professionally, we do the same the most. We try to define philosophy by outlining the subject field with which it deals, and identifying the methods that it uses. How do we do it today? And where are the origins of contemporary understanding of philosophy itself?

II. PHILOSOPHY

Already asking ourselves the question of what philosophy is, we are faced with the first difficulties, which are, at the same time, the essential features of philosophy. Determining its subject field exactly is not possible. She seems to be engaged in everything and nothing concrete. The

sphere of interests of philosophers has included to this day and still includes absolutely everything. We could not exclude any of the spheres of human existence from the sphere of objects that philosophy feels called upon to deal with. Thanks to this, it is universal and integral. Setting as its task the description and comprehension of the whole universe, philosophy, in essence, provides the individual with an integral picture of the world, even before breaking it up into separate, private subject areas of various sciences, and thereby fulfills one of its main functions — world outlook. She is engaged in all being, however diverse it may be. It cannot limit itself only to living organisms (like biology), chemicals (like chemistry) or celestial bodies (like astronomy). She cannot say that she deals only with language (as various linguistic and philological disciplines) or only with historical facts and events (as historical disciplines do). She does all this, but everyone in a particular mode of consideration. All this can interest philosophy and really interests it, since all these objects are different forms of being, i.e. one way or another involved in being — one of the main categories of philosophy. Specifically, reflecting on their existential status, philosophy deals with all these subjects equally, but not with any of the groups of these objects in particular.

This feature gives philosophy the ability to perform another important function — a scientific one. Engaged in the entire sphere of existing things even before it is divided into various subject areas of specific scientific disciplines, she is able to clarify something in this universe and thereby do a good service to all other sciences. It is about clarifying the contours of the world in which we live and with which we can only deal, as well as clarifying the boundaries of our ability to know it. It is philosophy that gives and clarifies that picture of the world into which scientists leading their scientific research find themselves immersed. And to a large extent, philosophy itself forms this picture of the world.

Our contemporary world is still the same surface of planet Earth, and we human beings are the same living organisms as the ancient Greeks. The structure of our organisms has not undergone significant changes since then,

*Fund: The publication has been prepared with the support of the "RUDN University Program 5-100 within the framework of the grant No 100336-0-000 "Philosophy and Culture: stereotypes and autostereotypes".

just like our planet has not changed since then so significantly. Nevertheless, our modern world is not the world of Plato and Aristotle. We have a completely different language for communicating and describing the reality we are facing, a completely different conceptual apparatus. It was not the world that changed, our concept of the world changed fundamentally, that picture of the world in which we live and with which we deal. The clarification of those basic concepts and principles on which our understanding of ourselves and the world is built, and from which our thoughts and actions are derived, is also involved, among other things, philosophy.

In such a well-established in our time view of philosophy on itself, we use nowadays to see the influence of the views of such famous philosophers of the 20th century like Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset. Both of them paid a lot of attention to this problematic. Consider their view in more detail.

III. HEIDEGGER AND ORTEGA Y GASSET ON THE ESSENCE OF PHILOSOPHY

Heidegger considered the essence of philosophy (metaphysics) from the perspective of dividing all sciences into two types: ontical and ontological sciences. Ontical sciences are all sciences in our generally accepted sense of the word (for example, physics, chemistry, biology, linguistics, history, etc.). Their peculiarity lies in the fact that they all clearly outline their own subject. They ask it for themselves and for themselves determine it even before they start their research. This definition of the boundaries of the subject field of these sciences is their boundaries. If I am a biologist, I can't study "War and Peace" by L.N. Tolstoy, then as a biologist I am occupied only by living organisms. As well as I can not do experiments with chemicals in search of new vaccines in the framework of linguistics, etc. These are the boundaries that these sciences set for themselves and on which they subsequently depend.

Ontological sciences — and in fact this is just metaphysics alone — are completely different. They deal with all being, with being as such. They do not divide it into subject fields, thereby passing from being as such to different kinds of things. But engaging in this being, they can give specific sciences a clarification of their subject fields, which cannot be clarified from themselves. Biology, being in a closed area of its research, cannot clarify itself. Just like no other science can do this. To do this, you would have to lose your temper, go beyond your own limits and look at yourself from the outside. And this task is subject only to philosophy. It is she who becomes for all the concrete sciences this meta-scientific discipline, clarifying their own foundations, as well as capable of clarifying the foundations of herself [1].

A similar thought, although using a completely different language, was expressed by Ortega y Gasset. In difference with Heidegger's language, he called the subject of primary interest of philosophy the Universe, thereby emphasizing its inclusiveness and integrity. At the same time, this philosopher argued that philosophy looks at things so broadly that it cannot even initially, without first clarifying

the essence of the matter, accept as its initial position the statement that the universe exists and that it is one. Nor can it reach its verdict as to whether it is knowable. All these questions are truly philosophical questions and the answer to them cannot be given earlier than the beginning of philosophical consideration. The answer to them, if the philosopher is honest with himself, cannot even be foreseen in advance. But even at the very end of our journey, getting an answer is not at all guaranteed. However, as Ortega y Gasset emphasizes, if we fail to answer the philosophical questions posed and thereby find ourselves unable to solve the problem before us, the philosopher, again, if he is honest with himself and honestly ready to go to the end in his reflection, should at least give an answer to the question why a final answer is not possible here. This in this case will be a philosophical decision. And in this character of the decision, which can be accepted as satisfactory, Ortega y Gasset is striking to see another distinguishing feature of philosophy. For no science the justification of the impossibility of solving the problem would not be a satisfactory result. For philosophy, if this justification is really justified, it can be a satisfactory one [2].

Such, in general terms, is the contemporary understanding of the philosophy of itself. In different terms, different thinkers speak out in the 20th century, in a very similar way. As an example, we considered only two philosophical personalities — Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset. Moreover, due to the fact that Ortega-i-Gasset expressed his thoughts a little later, as well as due to the fact that, on the whole, he is still not an ambitious and well-known philosophical figure like Heidegger, he often sees in this aspect a successor of ideas, expressed by Heidegger, they see someone who follows the path already beaten by Heidegger, although in his own way. But did Heidegger really beat this path? Should we see it as the founder of the characteristic paradigm of modern philosophy of self-understanding? In my opinion, the answer is no. In the next section I will try to argue this position.

IV. THE ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF PHILOSOPHY

The question of the boundaries of our knowledge in general, as well as in different areas of what is commonly called knowledge and which is far from always proving to be such, was first clearly raised by Kant. It was his criticism, albeit in a modified form, that formed the basis of modern theories of knowledge. He was the first to limit significantly the scope of metaphysics itself, which was even perceived (and is still sometimes perceived) as the elimination of metaphysics. In fact, Kant considered one of the main tasks of theoretical philosophy to clarify the issue of boundaries and the basic principles of cognition, which later transformed into the assertion that the main (if not the only) function of philosophy is the critical function — critical analysis, identification of meaningless statements, clarification of the main principles and concepts, elimination of contradictions in them, etc. Therefore, it is quite logical in our search for predecessors on the path that Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset subsequently followed, will turn to Kantian philosophy.

The main Kantian work devoted to the study of knowledge, and at the same time clarifying the role and tasks of philosophy, can be considered the first Critique — Critique of pure reason. In it we find a number of remarks that are important for the subsequent development of the view of philosophy on itself. For example, in *The Architectonic of Pure Reason*, Kant breeds two different types of cognition — historical and rational cognition: "If I abstract from all content of cognition, objectively considered, then all cognition, considered subjectively, is either historical or rational. Historical cognition is *cognitio ex datis*, rational cognition, however, *cognitio ex principiis*. However a cognition may have been given originally, it is still historical for him who possesses it if he cognizes it only to the degree and extent that it has been given to him from elsewhere, whether it has been given to him through immediate experience or told to him or even given to him through instruction (general cognitions) ... Rational cognitions that are objectively so (i.e., could have arisen originally only out of the reason of human beings themselves), may also bear this name subjectively only if they have been drawn out of the universal sources of reason, from which critique, indeed even the rejection of what has been learned, can also arise, i.e., from principles" [3]. This division is not a Kantian invention and goes back to XP. Wolf, philosopher of the early German Enlightenment [4]. However, it became known not only thanks to Kant, but rather thanks to Hegel. However, it is precisely in Kant's formulations that we most clearly see the roots of modern philosophy (rational knowledge) and the history of philosophy (historical knowledge). Along with this, one of the main aspects in understanding the philosophy of itself arises, which manifests itself in a series of truly philosophical questions: what is the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy? Is philosophy conceivable without a history of philosophy? And is the history of philosophy a philosophy?

But another leitmotif of the Critique of Pure Reason, which appears before us in the Introduction, is even more significant for us, where Kant briefly but very thoroughly considers the question of what is the relationship between mathematics, natural sciences and metaphysics. Subsequently, this topic will be developed in more detail by him in *The Doctrine of Method*. If you try to summarize briefly Kant's thought, there are several main differences. First, mathematics deals with objects of the sensually perceived world (in concreto), while philosophy is deprived of the opportunity to test its conclusions in practice and deals with concepts in abstracto. Secondly, mathematics itself constructs its concepts and positions, while philosophy dismembers the encountered realities in search of the simplest composite elements. And thirdly, in view of all this, mathematics begins by defining its initial concepts and foundations, while philosophy can hope to end this long path of search.

Thus, we see that the main specific features of philosophy that distinguish it from mathematics, which Kant offers us in Critique of Pure Reason, if we distract from the language of expression of thought and turn to the very essence of the matter, are close (if not say, they repeat) what

Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset tell us. But in this connection it is more interesting to pay attention to one more detail. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant in this case only repeats without significant changes what he had already expressed two decades earlier, in one of his subcritical works, namely *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (1764). In this work, Kant devotes the first section to completely clarifying the question of how philosophy differs fundamentally from mathematics and comes to the following key conclusions.

First, philosophy deals with the realities given to it and sees its task in clarifying them. In contrast to philosophy, mathematics itself gives its basic concepts and constructs the subsequent, more complex concepts and principles, from these first data to itself. In other words, mathematics itself determines what it will mean by a triangle. And in the future it is repelled from this chosen understanding. Philosophy, however, cannot initially determine what it will mean by being or a thing in itself. She is confronted with these realities and forced to clarify them. And only at the end of a long way of clarification can an answer be given on the meaning of these concepts [5].

Secondly, mathematics deals with objects encountered in the empirical world. Therefore, she can demonstrate any position and concept in a concrete way. Philosophy deals with abstract concepts, to which full correspondence among sensually perceived objects can never be found. For this reason, philosophy cannot rely on specific images and ideas, which greatly complicates its task and increases the likelihood of errors and errors in the research process [6].

Thirdly, mathematics, setting itself elementary definitions and principles, can rely on a limited and very few of them. Philosophy, which comes to simple definitions and principles only in the process of research, dividing the reality given to it, can never know beforehand how many such simple concepts and principles it will single out in the end. And the list of basic principles and concepts in philosophy for this reason is more extensive than the list of basic concepts and principles of mathematics [7].

The result of Kantian reflections in his early subcritical work is the conclusion that mathematics and philosophy are moving in different directions, as if towards each other. Mathematics starts off from the definitions that it itself chooses, while philosophy must come to these definitions at the end of its study. By virtue of all this, the object of mathematics seems to Kant easy and simple, while the object of philosophy is difficult and complex. These main conclusions are broadly similar to what we later see in the Critique of Pure Reason. But it is also important in this connection to note that the Kant subcritical work considered is an essay submitted to the competition of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, held in 1762-1764, and aimed at finding the answer to the question of whether it is possible to come to metaphysics in the same degree of certainty as in mathematics. An attempt to answer this question was the work in question. To a large extent, the Critique of Pure Reason can be regarded as Kant's answer to the problem of finding a way to achieve reliability in the metaphysics, if not

comparable with mathematical, then at least approaching it in degree. And in general, Kant's answer, both in this early work and later in the Critique of Pure Reason, sounds optimistic: a high degree of certainty is possible for metaphysics.

This view of things was characteristic of the German philosophy of the Enlightenment. It was shared by many thinkers of that time, for example, Mendelssohn and Lambert, who also submitted their essays to the competition of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. But they disagreed on another question: how can metaphysics (philosophy) achieve this desirable and possible high degree of reliability? Are mathematics methods suitable for her in this case? It is in the context of these debates that are characteristic of the second half of the 18th century that Kantian writings should be considered.

This very problem of applying the mathematical method in philosophy in German philosophy dates back to the work of the thinker of the early Enlightenment — Chr. Wolf. And to an even greater extent to the polemic with its philosophical system, which began during the life of Wolf himself and whose echoes are easily visible in philosophical discussions of the late XVIII century in Germany. Wolf himself was a proponent of the use of the mathematical method in philosophy. Although it's worth mentioning right away that by mathematical method he, in essence, meant simply strictly rational one, so to say, logical one, not violating the basic rules of inference [8]. Nevertheless, he entered the history of philosophy precisely as a supporter of the mathematical method. Such an approach, even during his lifetime, found both his supporters and his opponents. And over time, the opposite position became the dominant position. Even philosophers who openly sympathized with Wolf, such as Mendelssohn, were inclined to believe that philosophy is significantly different from mathematics, and therefore the methods of philosophy cannot be identical to mathematical ones, which, however, does not mean that a high degree of reliability is unattainable in philosophy. In the end, Kant was of the same opinion.

V. CONCLUSION

We see that the modern view of philosophy on itself originates at the end of the 18th century, in the era of the late German Enlightenment. The philosopher who clearly expressed it was I. Kant. He transformed the general view for that time into a new form — the form of critical philosophy, which subsequently formed the basis for the development of epistemology and philosophy of science. Of course, the modern version of the answer to the question about the role and tasks of philosophy, if we concentrate on the conceptual apparatus, is quite far from the Kantian language and rather refers us to Heidegger. However, if we concentrate more on the essence of the matter than on its linguistic expression, we will be forced to admit that the modern view of philosophy and its difference from science originated precisely in the era of German Enlightenment. Just as in the Enlightenment, the very task of determining those specific features of philosophical research that distinguish philosophy from

science and other phenomena of the spiritual sphere of man and society arose.

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