

Foundation of Human Freedom in Religion and Science*

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Abstract—The article considers the grounds of freedom of human consciousness as the basis of religious faith in the conditions of rapid development of neurophysiology, explaining the material foundations of consciousness, which is expressed in the formulation of the fundamental problem, widely known in modern philosophy as a "hard problem of consciousness". It is shown that the correct realization of the principle of onto-gnoseological uncertainty eliminates the difficulty of a "hard problem" and opens the way to a productive solution to the problems associated with human freedom (understood as the possibility of self-determination) both in religion and philosophy.

Keywords—*human freedom; consciousness and brain; religious faith; onto-gnoseology uncertainty; hard problem of consciousness*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 21st century "hard problem of consciousness" (the problem of the relation of various elements of consciousness, such as feeling of pain, pleasure, will of the person to neurophysiological processes) becomes one of the main issues for philosophy. Discussions around this topic are fueled by neurophysiology's success in the study of human brain activity. The reduction of the highest qualities of human consciousness: will, thinking to specific brain activities is used as an additional argument of skeptics-materialists against the existence of human freedom and self-will. Faith is analyzed as a special condition of the brain caused by some peculiarities or even deviations of its work.

At the same time, the antinomy solution to the "hard problem" of consciousness has long had to show scientists and philosophers that the question is formulated incorrectly. The hard problem of consciousness is a pseudo-problem on four grounds: vagueness of concepts; unacceptable reduction and simplification; elimination of approaches where this problem is "simple"; and misunderstanding of the nature of onto-gnoseology uncertainty.

II. VAGUENESS OF CONCEPTS

There is no generally accepted, even within the scientific discourse (there are a lot of these discourses, because the sphere of consciousness studies many disciplines, and different philosophical traditions are based on different scientific understanding) definitions of consciousness. They say in such a case that the concept can be defined on the principle of "family similarity", but this is perhaps the most absurd concept, entrenched in the philosophical tradition: on this principle, it is possible to establish easily a "family" similarity even between a fly and an elephant. This is all the more important when we talk about a familiar, but elusive phenomenon of consciousness. There are three related concepts in philosophical discourse: psyche, consciousness, thinking; their meaning is different, but philosophers very often do not distinguish between them and mix different aspects characterized by these terms.

Hence the first "difficulty" of explaining consciousness: as soon as we begin to explain one of its aspects or one of its interpretation, we immediately face the question of another aspect or from another perspective of the vision of consciousness. For example, if an explanation of the relationship between the subjective content of consciousness and neuroprocesses is given, then there is a question about the intersubjective content and its connection with the consciousness of a single subject. Dealing with the objective content of consciousness and universal laws present in both "subjective" and objective reality, the problem of individual consciousness with personal will emerges.

The significance of this lack of clarity can be easily revealed in the historical context. Philosophers often say that that "mind – body" problem is a modern version of the old philosophical problem "spirit – matter", refined by the achievements of neuroscience. However, there is a significant difference between the concepts of "spirit" and "mind", which is associated with unacceptable simplification.

Oddly enough, but the same vagueness characterizes the opposite side of the issue – the physical reality. "The concept of 'physical' clearly or implicitly acts as an epicenter of theoretical constructions in analytical philosophy concerning the problem of consciousness. It serves as a basis for

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explaining the “mental” not only for physicalists, but acts in the same role (often implicit) and for the functionalists... meanwhile, the elemental analysis shows the ambiguity in the use of these terms that strongly affects the quality of theoretical constructs related to the “consciousness - brain” problem. “Physical” often interpreted too broadly – as any objective reality, as “matter” in a whole, and thereby acquired metaphysical meaning.

This overly broad definition of the category of physical, in fact, breaks with the meaning of “physical” based on the real content of physical science, on understanding of the prospects of its development... Objective reality is multidimensional; and that is called “physical”, is one of its aspects” [1].

III. UNACCEPTABLE REDUCTION AND SIMPLIFICATION

Unacceptable simplification of the problem of existence of consciousness elements is connected with its reduction to “subjective reality”. In the context of the discussion of the “hard problem” researchers are dealing with “qualia” – the subjective side of perceived phenomena, but the objective content of consciousness is often left aside. Ancient philosophers were interested not so much in consciousness as in the representation of subjective experiences of external objects (in this sense, the bat probably has consciousness, and perhaps even the fly), as in the possibility of access to the objective content of spiritual reality. Exploring “mind-body” problem we pose a spatial question: how can consciousness be “here” and not “there” – for example, in my brain or in the pineal gland. But exploring problem of “spirit – matter” we also pose a question about a time: how eternal ideas and laws are reflected in the transient consciousness’ content and maybe even generated there (any version of naturalism or eliminativism means the identity of consciousness with the reproduction of its material carrier. The opposite is also true: the non-identity of consciousness with the full copying of the brain and its states proves the existence of a certain “monad”, irreducible for material manifestations. The identity of consciousness here means that the clone and its pattern must have one consciousness for two).

What means in particular that a certain problem is a pseudo-problem? This means that any its decision is meaningless and will not lead to further growth of knowledge. Let's say the “hard problem” is solved. What does it mean? This means that correlation between qualia and brain processes is established. Will this mean that when we examine the brain of a person suffering from pain, we will experience pain ourselves, or will we study the brain of a believer gain faith ourselves? The absurdity of such assumptions is obvious, so is the inability of any solution to a hard problem to clarify the question of the relationship of matter and spirit.

It is widely believed that the decoding of the brain code will give many answers to the question of consciousness. Decoding assumes that you have a one-to-one correspondence between mental and neurophysiological processes. Simply put, “scanning” my brain, you can say

exactly what I think. But what does this mean for the understanding of consciousness? Nothing more in effect than the fact: if someone hit me on the head, I lose consciousness. That is once again confirm the existence of a relationship between mental and neurophysiological “substances”. For greater clarity, it is possible to draw an analogy with the DNA decoding: knowing all genes and even all the features they encode (although even here one should not forget about the complex, “nonlinear” connection of genes and traits, even the genotype and phenotype), we will not be able to describe and understand all the behavior not only a person but even a simpler animal [2].

Further, this correlation can be ascertained either in a reductionist manner, either antireductionist way. The antireductionist variant assumes the existence of two (at least) realities between which the interaction takes place. It will lead to a new problem of the relationship between these two layers of reality, and so on to infinity. The reductionist variant is absurd in any of its interpretation and it is easy to demonstrate. For example, this article printed on paper is an element of the material world. At the same time, the objective content of the article, manifested in any copy of the journal, is an element of the spiritual world. While each individual reader can understand this meaning in its own way. Each of these elements (thing, subjective reflection and objective reality of meanings) belongs to its own “world” or “layer” and cannot be represented in the language of another world.

IV. ELIMINATION OF APPROACHES WHERE THE PROBLEM IS ‘SIMPLE’

Analytical philosophy “opens” a hard problem as something new and previously unexplored. However, for philosophy the problem of the relationship between the layers of reality (as, indeed, between the brain and consciousness) is not new. It is historical blindness that makes modern analytic philosophers, in fact, repeat the reasonings and disputes that have been discussed for a long time in the philosophical tradition. Also, in scientific consideration of the problem of the relationship between the different layers and of self-determination of each layer of reality were formulated in various research programs (from the non-reduction of chemical laws to the physical, ending with the irreducibility of the laws of the market allowing traders to enrich basing on the technical analysis of price movements on the market).

No matter how we put the problem, consciousness is not a fact, it is not an object – it is a process. It is impossible to compare directly the process and the object; it is impossible to talk about the process in the language of the objects and it is not possible to reduce consciousness to an object. The first attempts to “objectificate” the process can be found at the origins of philosophy: the Fire of Heraclitus. Fire itself is a process, but if we think of it as an object, much less a substance, we get a very strange language for describing the world.

If try to connect the consciousness not with the object (the brain), but with the processes taking place with the

person (included in social practice), then, maybe, the problem of consciousness will cease to be perceived as a mystery [3]. Of course, this does not mean that consciousness can be reduced to a brain process or the full dependence of cognitive processes from neural processes can be showed, but this is the wrong statement of the problem. When we describe the laws of life, the functioning of the biosphere, why do we not feel the mystery of irreducibility to the chemical reality? We understand that biological reality cannot transgress chemistry laws, but biological laws are irreducible to the laws of chemical, and, moreover, can generate new in chemical reality, new substances and the laws of their functioning – organic chemistry. Similarly, consciousness does not transgress neuro laws, but forms his own reality with its own laws, with the reverse influence on the reality of the brain.

“Cartesian theater” arising in the philosophy of consciousness, can also reveal in biology, if one try to similarly “solve”, for example, the problem of life [4]. The new category brought by life is the category of purpose, however, if we try to explain this category in reductionist language, we will also get into a vicious circle of explanation. One can endlessly ask for what is the task performs a particular process in the living organism, and to always get a specific answer to this question. However, such explanations will not bring us closer to understanding the essence of life, and just will lead this reasoning in a circle; for example: “Why does the organism eat? - To receive energy. What does it need energy for? - To be able to move. Why it needs to move? - To eat....”

This provides the opportunity to understand that the difficulty of the “hard problem” arises from the mixing of scientific and philosophical types of questioning. “Why does the organism eat?” -a scientific question. “What is the essence of life?”- a philosophical question. We do not find a definitive answer according to the philosophical aspects of life, just the sharpness of the debate was forgotten amid the success of the positive biology, which gained its own subject and method. Today, no one remembers the “difficult problem of life”, but in the XIX century there were numerous disputes over this issue.

The presence of unique laws in some layer of reality demonstrates self-determination of this layer. This means that laws of a certain reality layer do not transgress the laws of basic underlying layers, but their invariance cannot be explained through the laws of other layers. And after all self-determination – that is action under the internal laws - this is what freedom is.

V. MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF ONTO-GNOSEOLOGY UNCERTAINTY

The fundamental problem of scientific approaches to the explanation of consciousness lies in the sphere of objectification. Instead of being seen as a process, a process of awareness and cognition, consciousness is arbitrarily objectified. And after this unconscious step, taken by default by all approaches in analytic philosophy, thinkers begin to solve the problem of the “substrate” of this “object”.

Evidently that this problem turns out to be “hard”, that is, unsolvable. T. A. Barkhotov shows that the problem of the relations of soul and body in Descartes's philosophy arises from the transfer of the epistemological questions (“certainty” of consciousness as the basis of reliable method) to anthropological questions (the existence of consciousness itself in the human body); and at the same time, analytical philosophy, despite all the ridicule of the “Cartesian theater”, does not come out of the paradigm set by Descartes: “not only the dictionary and categorical apparatus, but also the formulation of the problem itself and the way of seeing reality, the basic epistemological model of modern intellectual culture inherited from Cartesianism” [5].

This situation is defined as the onto-gnoseology uncertainty [6]. Two ways of questioning co-exist in the knowledge of any object: the question of the essence of the object itself (ontological question) and the question of the method of representation of the object, its accessibility to the subject of knowledge (gnoseological question). Indeed, it is impossible to understand the object by giving an answer to only one question. This is the ontological and epistemological uncertainty: ontological and epistemological questioning cannot be satisfied in isolation, they constantly refer to each other. Ontological and epistemological uncertainty is an objective characteristic of both the cognition process and the phenomenal world.

However, these issues cannot be confused. Substitution of the answer to one question by the answer to the second question speaks about misunderstanding of the nature of onto-gnoseology uncertainty and leads to many “hard” philosophical problems. The reason for this misunderstanding is the desire for simplification and reduction. Philosophers are constantly tempted to give one answer to two questions, to reduce the ontological questioning to epistemological, or vice versa. This simplification and “flattening” of the world always returns to the philosopher in the form of insoluble problems.

But how then can one understand the interaction of subjective and objective reality? We can explore in ontological terms the objective reality: the brain and behavior, as behaviorists do. However, there is no need to claim to explain subjective reality in such studies, it is not necessary to try to “localize” it and describe it in language of objects.

Behaviorists approach and “language games” of Wittgenstein are sufficient for specific scientific researches of human brain and behavior. These approaches form the closed languages (not referring to the phenomena of subjective reality inaccessible for objective description), which are so necessary for the scientific description.

VI. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that the “hard problem” of consciousness is a pseudo-problem, discussions around it can have a certain positive significance for science and for religious consciousness:

- For the sciences: it is necessary to recognize that there is an interaction between different “layers” of reality: neuroprocesses, social practices, human psyche, spiritual reality. All of them have their own internal determination, but each of them affects the other and cannot do without it. Both brain processes affect the human psyche and social activities affect the development and formation of the brain [7];
- For religious consciousness and philosophy: we should not hope that natural sciences will solve philosophical problems, and not try to flirt with them in this way (that seeks to do reductionism); philosophy should not impose its problems and solutions to natural sciences (what happens when the “difficulty” of explaining consciousness is imposed). The task of philosophy in the comprehensive study of consciousness and, as always, the development of clear and universally accepted definitions of key concepts (psyche, consciousness, thinking) and the distinction and description of the above-mentioned layers of reality. Religious faith finds its foundation in the self-determination of the human spirit, which is irreducible to other layers of reality, that is the basis of man's freedom.

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