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PHILOSOPHY – AN UNDERSTANDING WISDOM

Philosophical Reflection as a „Hit“ of the New New Time

The beginning of the Third Millennium is a kind of a challenge for the history of philosophy. The parameters of the new 21st century do not suppose deep philosophical absorption. The bearers of the new thinking – the rising generation – refuse to plough deeply the field of knowledge because they do not see any sense in learning inapplicable, in their view, knowledge which could be substituted by the average statistical skills of dealing with the products of mass culture. The search for a meaning starts losing meaning.

Futurologists are confronted by the difficulty of precisely foreseeing the development of the social organism. The more ordered and structured cognition becomes, thanks to computerized reality, the more difficult forecasts about where rationality is heading to become. The dynamics of information flows burdens the horizon of thoughts of contemporary man to such an extent, that he refuses to deepen into the reflection on the fundamental ontological premises of being and becomes interested in what is happening here and now. Sinking into the deep waters of rationality is turning into an incomprehensible lonely activity for the chosen few, called upon to preserve the traditionalism of philosophic thinking. And it, in order to survive in the stormy whirlpool of the change of values, gradually starts to acquire the character of a technology. But the rules of contemporary philosophical discourse have not been settled yet. The philosophical community is divided between the need to modernize its expression and the desire to preserve its identity. On the border between these two positions stands a problem which is becoming more and more topical – the understanding.

Philosophy as a Searching Understanding

If „the only intellectually important goals are: formulation of problems; temporary suggestion of theories for their solving; critical discussion of competing theories“ [Попър 1998: 24] then what actually are the ways of achieving these goals?

„The formulation of problems“ is the result of a rather complicated mechanism for transformation of the knowledge about something into a new kind of meaning.

„The suggestion of theories for their solving“ is a selective methodological ability of specifying the exact instruments thanks to which the formulated problems become something else as a satisfactory solution (result).

„The critical discussion of competing theories“ is the basis for that searching understanding which constantly takes us back to the pre-formulation of newer and newer problems.

But what does actually this searching understanding include? „The understanding of a theory is always an infinite task . . . theories in principle can be understood better and better.“ [Ibid., p. 29]

Understanding is connected with the acquiring of a certain system of signs and as such a procedure it occupies a place in the structure of the theory. It specifies the meaning which is revealed only in a certain context. At the same time the understanding leads to a new meaning of a given reality and in this way it is related to the theoretical instruments. In its basis is the principle of interrelation between the whole and the parts, from which follows that from a certain point of view understanding could have a systematic character.

„The problem of understanding does not arise as a specific gnoceological and methodological problem as long as the subject of cognition is directly involved into the act of continuation and development of some scientific or world outlook tradition. It arises (is realized) in situations where the traditional experience is confronted by the solving of cognitive and world outlook tasks which require an exit beyond the horizon defined by translated by tradition prerequisites.“ [Быстрицкий, Филатов 1983: 292]

According to the systematization, made by S. B. Krimski, which presents the understanding from different viewpoints, in respect to „all kinds of hermeneutic relations (language communication, analysis of texts, solving of heuristic problems, cognitive and gnostic experience) some postulates, common for all sections of understanding, can be distinguished“:

- logical postulate – reducing all its contents of meaning to some uniform concept;

- gnoseological postulate – „the presumption of having a meaning, according to which only what has meaning can be understood“;

- ontological postulate – „addressing that cultural ontology which outlines the subject pre-understanding and the basis for incontestability related to it“;

- psychological postulate – presumption for „audibility“ and hope for adequate understanding;

- linguistic postulate (or a requirement of the hermeneutic analysis) – a single meaning of the question-answer procedures of understanding [Крымский 1982: 41-42].

But a peculiar centre of understanding could also be the methodological postulate – „What cannot be achieved by the tool of the method must and really can be achieved mostly through a discipline of asking and exploring which pre-

serves the truth.“ [Гадамер 1997: 680]. In other words, no matter how we classify understanding, it cannot escape from its nature of philosophical quest.

Within the limits of the purely philosophical approach, understanding could be treated as premised within the framework of the classical methods of cognition (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, generalization) or of philosophy (idealization, abstraction). The same can be done regarding the separate levels of methodology: philosophical; that of the general scientific principles, approaches and forms of investigation; of the concrete scientific methodology (with an empirical and theoretical sub-level); of disciplinary methodology; of interdisciplinary research [Москаленко 1988: 21-44].

It is interesting to note that at the highest level of methodology, which is related to philosophy, there arises the extremely serious problem of mutual understanding among scholars who, by necessity, have to find „common methodological language“. This circumstance suggests that understanding could not be bound only and solely with any separate level of methodology. By its nature, it is a problem both within the frames of every level, and the border between the separate levels. „Clean“ methods are idealizations, and transitions imply a certain type of understanding which transforms philosophical reflection into searching understanding.

Philosophy as a Directive Cognition

There is no theory that can include the world as a whole because there exists the principle of indefiniteness, probability, and partial validity. „... what is important is not the understanding of pictures but of the logical power of a theory: its explanatory power, its relations to its problems and the other theories.“ [Попър 1998: 93] *Understanding as a poly-variant methodological approach* can serve as a uniting principle („a rational network“) of those theories which constitute the picture of the world as it is accessible to us. Approach, and not a method, in the proper sense of the word, because understanding is an element of the procedure for the application of the methods.

The differentiation of understanding as an independent method is problematic because „till nowadays ways have not be found for such a reconstruction of the logic of this method, marked and described in different ways – as a co-experience, following, transference, entering into things, interpretation, etc. – so as to be able to see to what extent it could be treated as an alternative of the explanation“ [Albert 1980: 136. Translation – D. Denkov].

Unlike the explanation, and from a wider aspect, unlike knowledge in general, *understanding does not have a subject of its own*. Metaphorically speaking, *reason and its instrument – the explanation – follow only the way, which*

has been prompted or hinted by understanding. Understanding by necessity implies some general idea of reality which is perceived mainly by intuition. This idea lies in the „socio-cultural matrixes“ [Ганчев 1998] which determine the parametres of the notional contexts of understanding.

After the efforts of analytical philosophy and the logical positivists for determining of rules for exact usage of concepts, the problem of understanding acquires a new close-up – the logical grounds for following of understanding according to rules are sought which will turn it into an instrumental means, a method for a wide range of humanities.

It is important to underline that the natural science actualization of understanding is connected with the theorization and methodologization of contemporary cognition. The new degree of idealization supposes not only inter-theoretical but interdisciplinary understanding. What is of interest is the content link of understanding with such fundamental, but amorphous in respect to meaning, concepts like: style of scientific thinking, paradigm, methodological approach, scientific method, cognitive procedure. „The act of understanding is initially an insight of a genius (or a wrong one), but there are not methods for guessing, as well as there are not rules for making insights“ [Hirsch 1967: 25]. In this context, the problem of understanding between science, methodology, and philosophy is especially topical.

In science, it is important what happens. The scientific approach implies interpretation of facts.

In philosophy, it is important what is being thought about what is happening. The philosophical approach implies interpretation of the reflection of facts. The philosopher, as a person looking at things, phenomena and processes from „above“, must be able to understand what is happening, and to direct the development of cognition. Then what is the meaning of philosophy: a harmonious point of view to the world, an intellectual game, meaningful wisdom, or an abstract logical exercise?

Philosophy is not a science because its insertion into the scheme of strict science would deprive it of its authenticity.

Philosophy is not an art, although it borders on art, because it is not free enough in its expression.

Philosophy is not a religion because it is alien to the system of dogmas of faith.

Philosophy is not politics, although they turn it into ideology, because its leading principles go beyond the field of partial interests.

Philosophy is the freest field for deployment of understanding, of the understanding wisdom.

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