

Culture And Philosophical Reflection

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ABSTRACT

Philosophical categories focus on both emotional and evaluative meanings and become forms of worldview. They make people experience the world, and thanks to this – they are again transformed into cultural universals, and thus become established as cultural foundations.

The analytic attitude to philosophizing in New European culture takes place primarily in the form of a scientism orientation.

Philosophy in the European context is often built in the image of science and is oriented to the highest degree towards the analysis of those worldly consequences that give rise to fundamental scientific achievements. It is also in this discourse that the understanding of philosophy as the science of the most general laws of nature, society, and thought emerges.

Keywords: Culture, Categories, Philosophy, Science, World-perception

1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy as such does not always coincide with the system of world-perceiving images established in culture, but it always makes sense of their theoretical core. New ideas created in philosophy can be translated and extrapolated into culture long enough, can interact with themselves as well as with concepts previously established in it. Only under certain conditions, however, do these new ideas become preconditions for a new worldview or a new cultural narrative. When such conditions objectively arise, seemingly abstract philosophical propositions begin to actualize. They are embodied and developed in the public sphere as well as in science. Philosophical categories thus focus on themselves both emotional and evaluative meanings and become forms of worldview. They make people experience the world, and thanks to this – they are again transformed into cultural universals, and thus become established as cultural foundations.

2. CULTURAL UNIVERSALS

These categorical structures form a certain syncretism in culture, so that the notion of man, good, evil, freedom and justice correlate with the perception and conception of nature, causality, space and time. The reciprocity and interconnectedness of the universals in culture create the generalized picture of the lifeworld, introducing a system of marginally general conceptions of nature, society, and the cognitive process as their medial copula. This picture is what is called the authenticity of the respective historical epoch. It is associated with the peculiar genotype of social life, with its basic cultural-genetic code. Thanks to it, man not only understands and makes sense of the world, but also evaluates the events in it, experiences them in relation to the system of values that is expressed in the universals of culture.

The difference in values largely determines the difference in cultures. If we think on a universal scale, we will inevitably conclude that in order to live and survive within a culture, an individual does not need to

engage in philosophy. Therefore, we should not be bothered by the existence of civilizations that for centuries and even millennia (e.g., ancient Egypt) did not support any particularly developed forms of philosophical knowledge. And if social life did not change (sometimes even colossally) philosophy would not be needed at all. In the development of society, however, conditions periodically arise in which the traditional life-means do not allow and even block the possibility of finding an adequate response to new cognitive challenges. Such paradoxes arise, to overcome which the spiral of civilization must seek new ways. The latter often requires revising and even replacing previous cognitive paradigms and value systems.

In such moments of schism and obscurantism, when tradition ceases to determine the purpose of human activity and to organize social life, when the system of superimposed images that guarantees the selection and translation of social experience is destroyed, from which it becomes unclear what to preserve or discard from the experience of previous generations ("the link between times breaks down"), then the simple questions that people try to answer to "calm" their own cognitive perception, and with it the world, appear. With the search for such answers, philosophical reflection begins or is rediscovered.

To obtain answers, the cognizant mind must stand in a particular position vis-à-vis the universals of culture, make them objects of inquiry, turn them into particular objects to which thought is turned. And insofar as in each epoch reason develops in accordance with the dominant categories of culture, this means that it analyses and evaluates its own grounds.

One of the basic characteristics of human thinking is the ability to be self-aware (reflection). Thinking itself can refer to the ideas, images and concepts it generates as special phenomena, and the latter in no way prevents it from analyzing and evaluating them. This is philosophical reflection. Trivial consciousness, however, does not exercise reflection in relation to its own deep foundations. The man of everyday life understands what this space or time is and evaluates concrete events in accordance with them. But he does not usually reflect on the meaning of these categories, and when it comes to defining them or making sense of the relations and relationships within them, trivial thinking comes to a dead end. These senses are the subject of philosophy. It is the philosopher who reflects on the universals of culture, presents them to the "court" of reason, turns them into particular ideal objects, and then operates on them as the mathematician operates on numbers and geometrical figures, studying their properties and relations. The universals of culture, which have become the objects of philosophical discourse, are modified into philosophical categories. They are emphasized on conceptual and semantic aspects, leaving in the background (and often eliminating) those of their correlates that are related to the emotional experience of being. From the latter, philosophical categories lead to schematization and simplification of the categories (the world-perceiving universals) of culture. On account of this simplification is found the possibility of operating with these categories as being particular entities. The latter, in turn, leads to theoretical problematization and definition of new definitions of the categories. Such definitions can now go beyond the limits of those perceptions of the world that are expressed in the universals of the culture of a given age.

Philosophy does not limit itself to making sense of and rationalizing the established and culturally rooted world-pleasing orientations but models a new understanding of being addressed to the future, offering humanity new forms of possible world-doing. Philosophy, of course, does this not only in periods of crises in worldview, but permanently – systematically generating new ideas and conceptions in the sense of movement of its own theoretical problems.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORIES

Even in the early stages of its development, philosophy demonstrated an ability to produce ideas that went beyond the stereotypes and archetypes of consciousness that dominated the culture of the age. Thus, discussing the problem of the parts and the whole, the unity and the plurality, ancient philosophy proposed all possible options for solving the problem: the world is divisible into parts up to a certain limit (the atomistics of Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus); the world is infinitely divisible (Anaxagoras); and finally – the absolutely improbable from the point of view of common sense – the world is indivisible at all (the Eleatians).

The consistent justification of this unusual idea opens up new meaning aspects not only of the categories "part" and "whole" but also of the related categories "time" and "motion" (Zeno's aporias). In the process, problems were raised to which scientific thought has subsequently returned repeatedly. This concerns above all the discovery of the paradoxes of the infinite. In Zeno's aporias themselves it is essentially shown that any distance to be travelled by a moving body can be viewed as an infinite set of points, and any segment of that distance is also itself an infinite set of points, which in turn leads to the paradoxical conclusion: the part is equivalent to the whole. This problem, as the historian of science Alexandre Koyré quite rightly notes, became one of the fundamental problems in mathematics a few centuries later. (Koyré;1981) Bernard Bolzano and Georg Cantor reflected on it, and it greatly provoked the modern development of set theory. (Cantor;1955), (Bolzano;2006)

By elaborating new categorial meanings, often ahead of their phenomenological time, philosophy prepares the worldly preconditions for the cognitive and practical assimilation of the cognitive paradigms of the future. We could, for example, argue that the values and the structure of world-understanding that have determined the path and development of European culture starting from the seventeenth century to the present day were largely prepared by the philosophical ideas of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the beginning of the Enlightenment. In the philosophical discussions and reflections of this historical period, new conceptions of man and nature, space and time, were elaborated in relation to the European cultural Middle Ages ... It was these conceptions that later became the ingredient and the value guide for the science of the Modern Age.

Philosophical reflection actively participates in the formation of a person's world-perception, in the systems of values that form the foundation of one culture or another. This participation, however, should not be understood vulgarly – in the sense that philosophical knowledge, identical with the world-perceiving foundations of culture, empties their content.

Whenever philosophy develops some world-perceiving ideas, it encounters systems of values and meaning-bearing orientations that are called upon to ensure the becoming and reproduction of a certain vital image. It can substantiate and justify that image – that is how ideologies arise. But philosophical reflection also has another function: the ability to critically relate to arbitrary world-perceiving ideas (including the dominant universal world-perceiving ideas in culture), and, by theorizing, to create rational sketches of possible future grounds of culture, and therefore possible future worlds of human creativity. This function brings it as close as possible to the definition of basic science. The famous maxim of mathematics as the science of possible worlds is in mind here. It could also be applied to philosophy to some extent, considering, however, the specificity of its subject and methods. Just as the theoretical concepts of the basic sciences open possibilities for radically new technological achievements, so too the theoretical systems of philosophy contain the possibility of new world-perceptions designed to regulate the human-nature relation differently.

We must now turn our creative intentions to a consideration of the features of creative inquiry in philosophy. It implies not only a theoretical movement in dialectically developing concepts (philosophical categories) and solving the problems immanent to philosophy, but also a constant "turning" to other spheres of culture, thereby pursuing the goal of highlighting the new world-perceiving images and ideas (new senses of perceiving universals) being formed in them.

There are two complementary and interrelated types of philosophical reflection, and by "type of philosophical reflection" we should understand a certain mode or attitude of self-awareness. The first is oriented towards the elucidation of culturally established (or emerging) world-perceiving meanings, which, in turn, presupposes the extensive use of metaphors, analogies, and signifiers, which exist not only as a means of making sense of existence, but also express one's emotional experience of it. The second seeks a more constructed conceptual analysis of the problems immanent to philosophy and a more systematic exploration of the relationships between the various meanings of categories, creating in the process categorical models of "possible worlds". In the first case, philosophy is partialized into a multitude of elements akin to the artistic conceptualization of the world; in the second, it is oriented towards its theoretical assimilation. We could not eliminate or diminish either type of reflection without liquidating the essence of philosophical knowledge of the world.

4. CONCLUSION

The analytic attitude to philosophizing in New European culture takes place primarily in the form of a scientism orientation. We cannot deny that science and scientific rationality play a special role in this type of culture. They actively influence all types of thinking, including philosophical thinking. Not surprisingly, philosophy here is often built in the image of science and is oriented to the highest degree towards the analysis of those worldly consequences that give rise to fundamental scientific achievements. It is also in this discourse that the understanding of philosophy as the science of the most general laws of nature, society, and thought emerges.

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