PHILOSOPHY, lecture no. 1

Main concepts of philosophy – part I.

Content: Classic concept of philosophy. Its definition and selected representatives: Plato, Aristotle. Positivism and its understanding of philosophy. August Comte's law of three stages. Neopositivism and its idea of the destruction of philosophy; empirical statement and statements without meaning. Analitical-linguistic concept of philosophy.

What is philosophy; what does it mean to be a philosopher; what does it mean to philosophize

Unfortunately there is no one general answer to these questions
We should rather talk about very different answers to these questions and very differential understanding of this topic as well
We can rather talk about **five different concepts of philosophy**
Therefore some criticisers thing that philosophy is not a science; through science should know what its object is; through science is being expected to define precisely what is its topic, problems and methods. And philosophy does not do it actually. So is it a science at all?
Maybe it is rather a wisdom about life and existence but not a science.

There are at least **three types of definition: lexical, ostensive, and stipulate**.

"Definitions may be classified as **lexical, ostensive, and stipulative.** Lexical definition specifies the meaning of an expression by stating it in terms of other expressions whose meaning is assumed to be known (e.g., a ewe is a female sheep). Ostensive definition specifies the meaning of an expression by pointing to examples of things to which the expression applies (e.g., green is the colour of grass, limes, lily pads, and emeralds). Stipulative definition assigns a new meaning to an expression (or a meaning to a new expression); the expression defined (definiendum) may either be a new expression that is being introduced into the language for the first time, or an expression that is already current" (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

A very important form of the lexical definition is so called **classic definition**:
To define something it is necessary to fix art and specific difference:
What is a square? A square is a regular rectangle; a square is an equilateral rectangle

What is the meaning of the term: "PHILOSOPHY"
The term itself originates via Latin from Greece:
Philosophy = love to wisdom; philosopher = someone who loves wisdom
But what does to mean to be wise?
For Socrates to be wise means to be a moral person. The only one thing is interesting for philosophy according Socrates: to find the proper form of good life. Everything else is not valid, indifferent.
For Plato to be wise means to have a knowledge about everything. A similar understanding of philosophy has been formulated by Aristotle.
For St. Augustin to be wise means to have knowledge about God and own soul: I want to know God and soul, and nothing else. ("God and the soul, that is what I desire to know. Nothing more? Nothing whatever.")

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For Karl Marx to be wise means to have a scientific understanding of laws that determine world and social processes. To be wise means also to have practical knowledge. Not only to know is important; it is important to know how to act. "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it" (thesis on Feuerbach eleven)
[*These words are also inscribed upon his grave*]

For Jean-Paul Sartre to be wise means to understand that human being is absolutely free and that our life depends on our decisions only. Nothing else is able to determine human behaviour. Nothing else, only our own choices and decisions. To be a wise men means to use this freedom in a responsible way.

The understanding of wisdom and philosophy has been changed in the history. But it is possible to distinguish some general understandings of philosophy. Not every philosopher has his or her own idea of the philosophy. Many philosophers belong to the philosophical schools or theoretical tendencies or orientation.

The first great concept of philosophy is the **classic concept**. It is composed of three typical statements:
1. Philosophy has its own autonomic object in the world. It has an object that is interesting for it itself; only philosophy explores it. The field of philosophical explorations does not conflict with others sciences explorations.
2. Philosophy creates its own methods, that are not identical with the methods used in other types of knowledge.
3. Philosophical theories and (or) singular statements can be assessed for their epistemological value, we are able to fix whether they are true, false or only probable. There are also the statements that cannot be decided in a relation to their epistemological value (true, falsa, probable). Examples: questions, poetry, poetical phrases: My sadness is white like white roses. Are you happy today? Do you remember Lora Lynn?

Another example: Aristotle`s **Metaphysics**

Metaphysics means: beyond physics

Beyond chemistry, beyond biology, beyond history, beyond psychology, beyond every natural or human science.
What can we say about thing beyond physics, psychology or chemistry?
The thing is, the thing exists.

The second concept of philosophy was formulated in the XIXth century in positivism; it is tre **positivist concept of philosophy**. It states:
1. Philosophy has not its own autonomic object in the world. Each part of the word which can be explored at all is being explored in the sciences. There is no place for the specific, autonomic philosophical explorations already. Philosophy tries to formulate a general description of the world only based on the solutions given in sciences. Philosophy does not explore. It follows the sciences only. A goal of the philosophy is to create a kind of synthesis of the cognitive perspectives given in sciences.

2. Philosophy elaborates its own methods, that are not identical with the methods used in other types of knowledge.
3. Philosophical theories and (or) singular statements can be assessed for their epistemological value, we are able to fix whether they are true, false or only probable. There are also the statements that cannot be decided in a relation to their epistemological value (true, falsa, probable).

The principal difference between classic and positivistic concept of philosophy is that positivistic "philosophy" does not have its own object.

Main representative of this idea of philosophy: August Comte (he founded sociology).
Comte's laws of three stages (periods, stadia)
"Comte's "law of the three stages" maintained that human intellectual development had moved historically from a theological stage, in which the world and human destiny within it were explained in terms of gods and spirits; through a transitional metaphysical stage, in which explanations were in terms of essences, final causes, and other abstractions; and finally to the modern positive stage. This last stage was distinguished by an awareness of the limitations of human knowledge. Knowledge could only be relative to man's nature as a species and to his varying social and historical situations. Absolute explanations were therefore better abandoned for the more sensible discovery of laws based on the observable relations between phenomena" (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

1. At the very beginning we prefer religion and its explanation referred to God and His revelation; the most important human mental ability is faith
2. Than we prefer explanations offered by philosophy; the most important power of human being is a reason now;
3. And ultimately we start to understand that the proper form of reason is not a philosophical but scientific reason.

If I am sick:
- In the first stage I am looking for a shaman or a witch doctor
- In the second period I am looking for a medicine man (quacksalver)
- And in the third stage I am looking for a medicine doctor

Positivism is very closely connected with **scientism** (that underlines the importance of natural sciences), **empiricism** (that underlines the role of observation and experiment), .
It underlines also a practical character of the real knowledge. The main goal of the human cognition is to find the methods of successful organisation of social happiness (**utilitarianism**).

Three periods in the development of positivistic thought:
- The first positivism (August Comte, John Stuart Mill)
- The second positivism – empirio-criticism (Ernst Mach, Richard Avenarius)
- The third positivism – the philosophy of the Wienerkreis (Vienna Circle) – logical positivism (Rudolf Carnap, Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath, [partly] Karl Raimund Popper)

With a logical positivism (logical empiricism) is connected the third concept of philosophy: a **neopositivist concept of philosophy**. It contains the following statements:

1. Philosophy has not its own autonomic object in the world. Each part of the word which can be explored at all is being explored in the sciences. There is no place for the specific, autonomic philosophical explorations. So it means (in a opposition to the positivist concept of philosophy) that there is no place for philosophy in the structure of human cognition at all. Philosophy was only a period in the human development and recently as a separate branch of knowledge has to be removed from a human cognition. It means a **death of philosophy**.

2. There are two types of science: **real sciences and formal sciences**. To formal sciences belong such sciences like logic, mathematics, geometry. Real sciences are composed of natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, astronomy, veterinary medicine, biology) and humanities (like history, literature, sociology, psychology)

3. There are **two types of the theoretical sentences** (statements): the proper formulated statements (statements with meaning): the weather is beautiful today; the end of communism in Europe was connected with the polish revolution of Solidarity. And **statement without meaning** – nonsensical sentences: God exists, human behaviour is very often determined by subconscious, human soul is immortal.

   To have a meaning the sentence must be reducible to so called protocol-sentences. More general one can say: they must be reducible to experience, to information given in our experience and to sentences that describe what we experience. For example: the sentence "john is a student" has a meaning because it may be reduced to following observation-statements: John has a student`s book; John passes the exams at university, John spends every Monday listening to the lectures and participating in classes at university.

   Where is the place of philosophy. Does it belong to humanities or to natural science? According to neopositivism philosophy is not a science at all; it does not belong neither to humanities nor to natural science. It means a destruction of the philosophy understood as a separated, autonomic part of knowledge. Theories about the real world must be reducible to observational/empirical facts. Any problem which cannot be solved through reduction to the observational statements is of metaphysical nature. It is in fact a pseudo-problem.

4. But some philosophical issues or questions are included into sciences. Biology asks about the nature of life, physics try to consider the nature of the matter, psychology or cognitive science try to understand the essence of the conscience.

5. Philosophy understood as a form of the life experience can still exist but it has to remember that it has not an epistemological value and validity. Its statements are not true or false. They are rather of the poetical nature. To philosophize is identical with an artistic creativity given in the painting, poetry or literature.

6. Main thesis: there is no place for the autonomic philosophy in the area of knowledge. But there is place for several philosophical issues **inside** specific natural scences and humanities.

An analitical-linguistic concept of philosophy.
It seems to be connected with neopositivism and its understanding of philosophy because of its high appreciation of logics; both definitions underlines a great role of the natural sciences

The most important statement which is very typical of this concept says: our language is not neutral. Language determines our understanding and opinions about world. Words we use do not describe things simply. They rather set down what things are. They define or set down the meaning of things. For example to express what reality is we can use many different words and each of them is connected with a different understanding of world.

In German:
Wirklichkeit means reality; the word itself derives from *wirken* (meaning: to act)
Tatsächlichkeit means reality. The word itself derives from *Tatsache* (meaning: thing, or fact)
Both term suggest a different understanding what real word is. If someone prefers the term *Wirklichkei*t they must believe also that the word is of dynamic nature. World is understood as a process and not as a state. It is not composed of static elements. Everything changes, everything is dynamical.

Haraclitus: no one can step into the same river twice. Everything exists in a process of constant change. Permanence is an illusion.

If someone uses the word Tatsächlichkeit they suggest that real being is composed of unchanging parts, like in atomism for example.

Democritus: representative of atomism: everything is composed of eternal and unchanging atoms which move in a void.

A goal of philosophy is:
1) To describe nature of language and its relation to reality
2) To describe different logic and language errors that are made by using language people
3) To show that many philosophical arguments are based on language misunderstandings