

PHILOSOPHY, lecture no. 2

Contents: Main concepts of philosophy – part II. Irrational concept of philosophy. Philosophy as a form of life expression. Friedrich Nietzsche and his critique of reason, Christian morality and classical concept of philosophy. Theory of resentment. Wilhelm Dilthey's understanding of philosophy as a form of world view.

Irrational concept of philosophy = philosophy is a world view

There are following statements that are typical of this idea

1. Philosophy has its own autonomous 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 other sciences explorations.
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 cannot 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, false, probable).

This definition seems to be very similar to the classic concept but there is a great difference: irrational concept of philosophy does not believe in a logical value of philosophical statements. The principal difference between classic and positivistic concept of philosophy: point 3 (logical (epistemological) values of statements).

The main representative of this idea of philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey. Oswald Spengler (representative of naturalistic catastrophism).

What is world view? A set of theoretical and non-theoretical opinions about world, life, values, sense of human life, justified human life goals, existence or non-existence of God etc. Every world view must contain emotional convictions about something. There are rational and irrational, scientific and non-scientific forms of world view. There are religious and atheistic forms of world view as well. Different shapes of the world views can be more or less rational, more or less irrational, more or less scientific, more or less connected with monism or with dualism and pluralism.

Question: can we say, that each form of world view is identical with philosophy understood as a form of world view?

Answer: No and Yes.

Every man seems to have his or her understanding of sense of life, moral duties, opinions about life. That is why we can say, that in some understanding each man is a philosopher. But this answer would be too general. There are great differences between philosophy as a form of world view and a world view represented by Tom, Dick and Harry (by a regular man).

Philosophy must justify its statements.

Philosophy must elaborate the problem of the source of its knowledge.

Philosophy must be expressed in a form which is understandable for others.

Philosopher cannot believe in his or her statements only. Philosopher must look for proofs.

There are two types of philosophical relation to the world view. 1) The first one is connected with the ancient philosophy and presented by ancient stoicism, epicureanism and scepticism. 2) The second one is connected with philosophy developed by Friedrich Nietzsche and Wilhelm Dilthey

Generally one can say: the most important goal of philosophy is to elaborate practical world view, it means to answer the question how to live. Practical part of philosophy is principal. Philosophers try to formulate a theory about world in order to solve practical problems only. They are not interested in a pure theory; they do not want to know or to understand only. The point is to be able to use this knowledge in order to solve real practical problems we meet.

I want to know because I must act practically.

It does not mean, of course, that my theoretical knowledge is something without importance. If I want to act successfully, I must have a good justified or simply true knowledge.

This kind of thinking was very typical of so called Greek schools of (happy) life:

Stoicism
Epicureanism
Scepticism

Stoicism: we must resign from activity that tries to correct the world itself; we are not able to change the course on nature and its regularities, we cannot change such elements of life which are its necessary components. We must accept everything what happens; we must accept illness, death, passing away, human stupidity, different negative events or misfortunes.

We must accept it because we cannot change it. Philosophy is a teacher of acceptance.

Representatives of stoicism believes that everything that exists is necessarily determined by God. They understand God not personally, as a person that is conscious and knows about the world. According to stoicism God is identical with a system of laws that determine all processes and events in the world. That is why they talk about patience understood as a proper form our attitude in relation to the world. We must remain stoic, we must remain indifferent.

And that is why our language contains the term: stoic patience.

Scepticism: It is impossible for man to achieve a certain knowledge about the world. Because:

- Dates given by our senses can be illusions
- Logical reasoning can be wrong or contain mistakes
- We cannot know what to be true means: to know it we would have to formulate a proper definition of truth and, as a matter of fact, we do not have such a definition (such definitions as: truth is logical conformity or truth is what is identical with opinions of majority or truth is conformity between fact and theory – must be rejected; because we cannot accept one of them without contradiction: I have to know what truth is to choose true definition of true).

How to live in such a world? The answer given by stoicism seems to be very logical:

If you are unable to achieve objective knowledge about world, you must resign from having any objective knowledge. You cannot formulate any objective statements. Eg. you cannot say: The world is of material nature, or: human happiness consists in pleasure. You always must add: In my opinion, according to me, I think that...

Epicures and epicureanism:

The main goal of philosophy is to recognise the nature of being in order to create basis for human happiness. That is why Epicures is interested in physics. His materialism means that God does not exist and that we should not have any negative fears in relation to our death.

Death is nothing to us, because while we exist, our death is not, and when our death occurs, we do not exist.

Reason must understand that death is something beyond our existence. It means: it is impossible to experience death and be aware of that. That is why fear of death is something deeply irrational and unjustified.

People feel fear in relation to God and think: he wants to punish me after my death. According to Epicures idea of God who wants to punish people is wrong. It assumes that God is someone who makes his own happiness something dependent on human activity and choices. God cannot be understood in this way. He is a perfect and totally independent self-sufficient being.

He does not depend on us and we do not depend on him.

This understanding of philosophical world view can be summarised in the following statements:

1. The main goal of philosophy is to find a proper way of life, it means: to find a definition of happiness.
2. The most important part of philosophy is practical philosophy.
3. Pure theory is not interesting.
4. But theory is a only way to solve the secret of happiness.
5. Theory is something we need because we all want to be happy.

This understanding of philosophical world view was typical of the ancient philosophy. But this understanding is not typical of the irrational concept of philosophy. This new concept was rather connected with XIXth century and consequences of Darwin's evolutionism.

- 1) Human being is an accidental product of biological evolution
- 2) Human being is not a product of God.
- 3) Human being is not a goal of evolution
- 4) We cannot exclude, that evolution will be continued
- 5) Human reason is a product of evolution
- 6) Human reason is a tool of life only.

Question: Who is a man?

Answer: Man is a being who lives.

Life and its properties is more important than reason.

Human being is not a rational being. Reason is secondary. Life itself is primary.

Let us remember main statements which are characteristic for this new understanding of philosophy:

1. Philosophy has its own autonomous object in the world. It has an object that is interesting for itself; only philosophy explores it. The field of philosophical explorations does not conflict with other sciences' explorations.
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 cannot 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, false, probable).

Point (3) is essential: Philosophy is not true; philosophical statements or theories cannot be called true... but they cannot be called false also.

Philosophy is expected to be useful, beneficial or favourable. Philosophy should not be true, philosophy should make me happy.

The idea that philosophy should be true is a kind of utopia. Truth about the world is unavailable due to perspectivity which is always contained in human thinking and seeing.

A German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) asks very interestingly:

Which picture of the mountain we have is true? This one we have being on the mountain-side or that one we have being on the mountain top? And he answers: both of them are false and both of them are true. True is always of perspective nature, and it is always related to who we are, what kind of nature we have, what we prefer, what kind of temporal place we have in the world.

The last factor is very typical of understanding of philosophy presented by Dilthey because it means that history determines our opinions and attitudes.

A very famous Dilthey's sentence states: Human being does not have any nature, human being has history. On the one hand Dilthey himself distinguishes three types of the world view: religion, poetry and philosophy, and on the other hand he describes three types of philosophy:

1. naturalism
2. objective idealism
3. philosophy of freedom.

According to Dilthey our world views are not products of pure thinking; they are rather products of our life experience, our life attitude and our psyche. That is why there is no one philosophy; there is no one world view at all only. Human world views are various because of different human perspectives that are connected with different life positions.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) identifies human being with a living being. He says shortly: Human being is a will to power, like everything that lives. To be will to power means to be someone who wants to strengthen his own or her own life and to develop it as far as possible.

According to Nietzsche there are two types of lives and two types of men: weak form of life and strong form of life. The first one concentrates on such qualities: reactivity, luck of success in action, collectivism, intelligence. The second one is characterised by following qualities: activity, success in action, spontaneity, direct character, individuality, feeling. Sometimes terms “slave” and “master” are used by Nietzsche. Slave represents weakness and intelligence and master realises strength, individuality and intuition.

According to Nietzsche a weak man is a founder of the western culture and morality. What is typical of this culture is negative attitude to life and its values. A western man dreams about eternal paradise after death because of his weakness, and it means; he or she is unable to achieve happiness during real life.

To explain main sources of the western culture and morality Nietzsche describes phenomenon of **ressentiment**:

Ressentiment is a feeling which reverses valuations of weaker: he wants to achieve something but he cannot because he is weak. This process is permanent; the weaker is always unhappy because he is unable to realise his will to power and achieve what he wants. To avoid some negative psychological consequences of the permanent dissatisfaction weaker's subconsciousness produces mechanism of resentment which causes some essential modifications in weaker's valuations. Now he starts to think that what he has is good and what he is unable to achieve is evil. This way he can feel better. But the point is that on this way the foundations for western morality are ready. Their historical form was Christianity.

Which form of morality is true? This one connected with slave or that one connected with master? Nietzsche, obviously, appreciates very highly morality of master and criticises slave morality. But it is also evident that on base of his understanding of philosophy and rationality (philosophy expresses life, reason is a tool of life) both form of morality are expression of life, even if they are not equal in their value.