SELF-DETERMINATION OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Despite its millennia-long history, philosophy has not yet formed as a self-determined area of conscious reflection. This often leads to confusion, philosophy being treated as a science, or an art, which hinders the development of philosophical thought subduing it to the styles of thinking alien to it. Also, momentary political goals have always been trying to shape philosophy to class interests, dissolving it in polemics. As a result, many thinkers came to despising any philosophy at all as a useless rudiment of the primitive culture, as an underdeveloped form of reasoning preceding truly creative activities like science and art. I claim that philosophy is a separate level of reflection complementing science and art to a complete triad, and it is bound to overcome the primitive syncretism and become culturally institutionalised. This assumes the cultural recognition of the principal function of philosophy as the universal unifier, thus establishing the clear criteria for distinguishing philosophy from pseudo-philosophising. To simplify the philosophical treatment of special issues a hierarchical approach has been suggested, with the hierarchy of logic comprising the traditional classical and dialectical logic, as well as diathetical logic suited to describe hierarchies and development.

Introduction

Traditionally, educated people are accustomed to thinking about philosophy as an ancient discipline that has been continuously developing throughout the centuries up to the modern time. The numerous names of famous philosophers seem to support this view: Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Leibnitz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and many others. Today, professional philosophers produce an immense literature and gain considerable money, albeit incomparable with the income of a popular sportsman. Nevertheless, paradoxically, philosophy has not yet taken a place in the culture comparable with that of science, or that of the arts. Yes, opinions may differ on whether field of research can be rated as science; yes, some artefacts are difficult to assume the name of art; however, people do not generally fail to discern art and science from the everyday activities. It is not so with philosophy. Many people pretend to be philosophising when doing something quite different, and some people pretend to do art or science, while occupying themselves with philosophical questions. This confusion indicates lack of cultural determination required for philosophy to become socially appreciated and recognised.

Insufficient clarity in the definition of philosophy, its domain and methods, hinders its development making it erratic and obscured by numerous pseudo-philosophies. This also produces a negative effect on science and art. Without a proper philosophical basis we cannot always tell art from non-art and science from non-science. Today, when the technologies used by artists and scientists come to the disposal of the widest masses due to extensive computerising, many people are apt to think about themselves as of artists or scientists just because they can imitate the activity of an artist or a scientist,

producing something that looks like that. A sound idea of philosophy is needed to properly asses such amateur products.

1. Typical fallacies

One can hardly enumerate all the possible ways of identifying philosophy with anything else. Here, I will only mention a few representative cases.

1.1. Philosophy and science

Taking philosophy for a kind of science is one of the most common mistakes. It is only as late as in the XIX century that science has established itself as a separate cultural domain, no longer remaining a part of "natural philosophy" (but the relics of the syncretic past still live in scientific PhDs). Since then, science developed in a pace that philosophers could never keep with. This resulted in two complementary fallacies: philosophers called themselves scientists and adopted scientific slang and look to gain more public respect and significance, while scientists, with their heads turned by success, told that they needed no philosophy at all, and science was enough to explain the whole Universe. The problem is aggravated by that, quite often, philosophers remain ignorant in science, save the popular renderings; similarly, scientists do not much care for studying philosophy. Hence, science gets stuck when its models reach the limits of their applicability, and philosophy becomes stagnant and scholastic lacking practical support.

However, there is an important difference between scientific and philosophical approach. Science is always occupied with special models, albeit very general. Philosopher will rather ask about the roots of these models and their relation to the world as a whole. The abstract nature of science means that there will always be something beyond science, and one still needs to bind scientific results to that something, which can never be done within science.

1.2. Philosophy and art

The major task of the arts is to express abstract ideas in common forms; the very reproduction of a piece of reality in a quite different material produces a kind of abstract idea opposing the semblance to the difference. The universality of such a technique makes some artists believe that they could provide final answers to any questions, while some philosophers get too fascinated by the arts and declare that art is the highest form of reflection. This trend is especially pronounced in belles-lettres: the public tries to ascribe philosophical ideas to the writings of a favourite author, the critique invents mystical explanations for the author's popularity, metaphorical quotes bring in a scent of prophetic universality... One could mention such metaphysical reinterpretations of Omar Khayyam, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, and many others. The same happened with some painters and musicians. Even rock music did not escape from that fate—as, for instance, the fans of Jethro Tull demonstrate. As a result, people come to the arts to express their ideas, thus compromising the arts. Some philosophers would mimic the fiction style to discredit philosophy. Yes, nobody prohibited the co-presence of multiple talents in one personality; but this is no reason for taking one for another, even with all the mutual influence.

The important difference between art and philosophy is in the quality of their products. While art produces masterpieces that entirely depend on their form and material, philosophy deals with abstract ideas that can (and eventually must) be expressed in many ways, including the arts, scientific models and practical activity.

1.3. Philosophy and religion

Many philosophers were religious, and they tried to justify their faith by philosophising. On the other

hand, religions have always been considering themselves as the final truth, as true and only spirituality; this stand does not leave philosophy any role other than a servant of theology. The common inability to distinguish a conviction from mere belief supports this deprecation of philosophy.

However, the very attempt to develop a comprehensive picture of the world is contrary to religion since it requires consistent reasoning, which does not admit any divine intrusion. As long as one thinks, one does not believe. That is why theologians trying to rationalise religious dogmas have always been the first to expose their ideological weakness to the public, and a religious philosopher is bound to compromise both religion and philosophy.

Religion can reflect certain aspects of the world; however, it does that in an essentially syncretic way. In religion, there is no distinction of the object, the subject and the product, which is always present in art, science and philosophy; all religious systems merely prescribe mystical solutions to real problems, they do not need any creativity.

1.4. Philosophy and politics

Yet another common fallacy is to regard philosophers as the representatives of a certain class, trying to justify its striving for power. Of course, philosophers line in the society, and they may belong to one of the conflicting parties. This equally holds for artists and scientists. The way of life will necessarily influence one's creativity; however, this influence can only be superficial, adapting the form of one's thought to the class demands, while the universal content of creation will reflect the situation in general, including the objectively determined positions of all the participants. Some people can consciously use the products of somebody's creativity for political needs; this does not deny the freedom of creativity as such. The attempts to force the arts, science or philosophy to accept *a priori* given opinions is contrary to the very nature of creativity.

Some philosophies are more suited for the interests of particular classes that the others. But this political value can be nothing but transitory; the universal core of a philosophical doctrine will virtually come in contradiction with the narrow pragmatism of class struggle.

2. Universal integrity

Despite all the differences, philosophy is akin to science and art in that it takes the world as it is in order to transform it into another kind of reality, producing objectified forms of reflection. This "augmenting" the world in the course of a conscious activity is known as creativity. One could observe that art, science and philosophy form a complete triad, representing the inner organisation of creativity in general. In this triad, every two members are opposite to each other, with the third member complementing them to the whole. Thus creativity is understood as the analytical level of spirituality in general (Ivanov 1984; Ivanov 2009). This understanding gives philosophy its own place in the culture, and predicts cultural self-determination of philosophy following that of art and science.

2.1. The principal question of philosophy

Now, it's time to formulate the general principle distinguishing any philosophy from all the other levels of reflection. A few such attempts are known from the past; philosophers divided themselves into large groups opposing each other in respect to a particular problem, commonly expressed in the terms of priority of one philosophical category over another (materialism vs. idealism, realism vs. nominalism etc). This dialectical approach served well for refining the categorical apparatus of philosophy, but it was of little help in consolidating philosophy as such, regardless of any special way of its development. The first principle of any philosophy at all must be unary, to prevent any opposition; however, it must allow for deducing various contradictions when applied to special issues.

I state that any philosophy, as long as it deserves that name, is seeking for the integrity of the world. However different the ideas of integrity may be, this is what distinguishes philosopher from any other thinker, as surely as deep thought distinguishes a thinker from mere pretender.

A scientist trying to extend scientific models to the whole world leaves the domain of science to become a philosopher. An artist trying to deliberately express a universal idea abandons art. Any lay person who dares to think about universal regularities rises from everyday life to philosophising.

Search for integrity is in the core of philosophy. However, integrity does not mean mental rigidity or formalism. There are different kinds of consistency, and some of them might seem chaotic or self-contradicting. Still, the presence of a unifying principle prevents them from falling into arbitrariness and eclecticism.

The integrity of human consciousness reflects the integrity of the world. That is why explaining our ability of productive thinking is intimately related to fundamental principle of philosophy, being another its aspect, its reformulation.

2.2. The forms of universality

Three interdependent aspects can be discovered in the principle of the integrity of the world:

1. *Uniqueness:* the world is *all*. Nothing can exist "outside" the world, and the very thought of another world puts that "another world" within the world, where the thought has been initiated. There is only one world, and any multiple worlds can only be its parts or aspects.

2. *Universality*: the world is *everything*. The world is diverse, and it is a universe for all its parts, as well as every part of the world plays the role of a universe for its constituents. The world comprises any possible distinction, thus consisting of innumerable partial "sub-worlds", which will be referred to as *things*. The world must shape itself in every possible way, and show all possible manifestations.

3. *Unity*: the world is a whole. Any two things are somehow connected in the world, however different they may seem. Any particular thing is virtually equivalent to its environment, which complements that thing to the world.

The idea of the integrity of the world in this $3U$ form may seem too general to offer any practical implications. However, it can be further unfolded for any specific demand, and the special philosophy of a particular sort of things can virtually be derived from the integrity of the world. In particular, the integrity of every separate part of the world acting as a world within itself is to obey the $3U$ principle, which gives clues to understanding how a conscious being can create worlds. Yet another immediate consequence of the unity of the world is that every two things in the world have something in common, and phenomena akin to consciousness can be found at any other level. That is, one is certain to encounter analogues of conscious behaviour in inanimate or biological systems; consequently, their study helps to comprehend human consciousness, bringing more understanding of the respects, in which inanimate and biological existence is related to conscious, and hence, what in them is of a different kind.

Further unfolding this $3U$ principle one comes to the triad of matter, reflection and substance representing the three aspects of the integrity of the world (Ivanov 2009). The hierarchy of reflection explains the fundamental difference between inanimate existence, life and conscious activity. Finally, one comes to the idea of the conscious subject as an agent of universal mediation, something that links together any two aspects of the world, thus completing its integrity. The origin of the mental processes and the hierarchy of consciousness can be derived in the same lines.

3. Hierarchical approach

Philosophy has never been monopoly of professional philosophers, as well as scientific thought or artistic creativity cannot become usurped by institutionalised science and officially recognised arts. Everybody can wonder how this many-faceted world can hold all that diversity within, and how we can comprehend it. However, without proper education, such attempts are bound to often reproduce already surmounted difficulties and fall into well known fallacies. An amateur philosopher is no better than amateur scientist or artist, but possibly more harmful, as the fruits of philosophical reflection are assumed to be more universally relevant. There is always something to learn in the arts, and science is impossible without learning; the more so with philosophy, which must have some patterns to guide the novice, or to relieve an experienced developer of unnecessary wandering.

For a few decades, I have been assisting to the efforts of building a general framework for consistent thinking which is conventionally referred to as *hierarchical approach*. In particular, the elements of hierarchical logic have been studied, to complement the classical and dialectical logic (Hubey & Ivanov 2001; Ivanov 2007; Ivanov 2009). It is not enough to learn the history of philosophy and get acquainted with various examples of philosophising; one also needs to develop a uniform attitude to all that experience, to build it into one's own philosophising as an integral component. The presence of a universal logical background like the hierarchical approach significantly simplifies this integrative learning.

Hierarchical approach involves such categories as "a structure", "a system" and "a hierarchy"; hierarchical logic makes use of the form like monad, diad (opposition), triad or tetrad.

Obviously, many other conceptual frameworks can be developed up to the level of universality fit to philosophy. Still, a few applications of the hierarchical approach have already produced promising results (Avdeev & Ivanov 1993; Ivanov & Koren 1998; Ivanov 1994; Ivanov 1995; Ivanov 2003), and any additional applications may be envisaged.

Below, I summarise the basic principles of the hierarchical approach. Of course, this list is neither unique nor exhaustive; there may be other listings stressing the different aspects of the same. The very idea of a complete inventory of relevant categories and principles is incompatible with the hierarchical approach. However, this summary could be as useful as any other to grasp the general idea of hierarchy as an intrinsic mechanism of any development.

Holism

The category "a hierarchy" conveys the idea of a self-contained thing that remains the same in all the possible contexts. Though it may differently exhibit itself in different respects, all such special manifestations are intrinsically interconnected, being determined by the same organizational center, the whole of the thing. While interaction with the environment is necessary to define to form of the thing and its motion, the thing's development is initiated by its inner dynamics, albeit externally regulated and shaped.

Hierarchical structure

Each hierarchy manifests a number of distinct levels, with the higher levels dominating over the lower levels in certain sense; this distinction depends on the aspect of hierarchy under consideration. The elements of an upper level may, for instance, represent classes of lower level elements, or some integral characteristics of lower level motion. In any case, the higher levels are "built" on the basis of lower levels, and they cannot exist without them, despite the apparent higher level control over lower level behaviours.

Hierarchical system

At any instance, each hierarchy interacts with its environment as a hierarchical system, transforming some hierarchically structured input into hierarchically structured output. This assumes some inner hierarchy of the system, which can be formally represented by the hierarchy of the system's states. Hierarchical systems are impossible without a hierarchy of feedback channels, and systemic motion is hierarchically structured by feedback cycles. The distinction between "inner" and "outer" structures hence becomes relative, typically determined by the characteristic times of the cyclic processes.

Infinite divisibility

The relations between any two levels of a hierarchy constitute a specific entity which may be considered as a level of the same hierarchy lying between the two original levels. Therefore, there is no "final" structure in any hierarchy, since one can always find a new level between any two previously discovered. This procedure will be referred to as *unfolding* the hierarchy.

Foldability

The collection of intermediate levels between any two levels of hierarchy can be treated as mere mediation of their connection. All the intermediate levels are thus considered as the inner organization of connection irrelevant to the interrelations of the two selected levels. *Folding* that mediation, we observe the two levels as adjacent. In this way, the total number of levels in a hierarchical structure or system can decrease, and we arrive to grosser view, which presents a logical inverse of hierarchical unfolding.

Convertibility

Any hierarchy can be folded, and then unfolded in a different way, hence manifesting a hierarchical structure or system quite unlike the original (another *position* of the hierarchy). Therefore, no hierarchical structure or system should be considered as absolute and rigid; the hierarchy is thus comprehended as the unity of all its possible positions. This multi-faceted nature of any hierarchy is referred to as its *convertibility*, and the transition from one hierarchical position to another is called *conversion of hierarchy* (or *rotation*).

Relativity of subordination

Because of convertibility, there is no absolute "topmost level" in a hierarchy, though any hierarchical structure or system will certainly have one. Any element of hierarchy can become its topmost element in some hierarchical structure, thus representing the hierarchy as a whole.

Strong integrity

Within hierarchy, the distinction between the elements and their relations can only refer to a particular position of hierarchy, and therefore this distinction is relative. In the same way, any functional distinctions (like input and output, inner and outer) are related to a particular hierarchical system, a specific position of hierarchy.

Self-conformity

Any component of hierarchy is a hierarchy too, and it may be unfolded in the same way as the whole hierarchy. The very distinction between the part and the whole therefore becomes relative, and any part of hierarchy may be said to contain the whole of it, the part being virtually equivalent to the whole. To put it differently, a hierarchy is reflected in any one of its elements.

Qualitative infinity

Hierarchy does not imply any strict ordering of levels; it rather is a multidimensional formation. The number of its dimensions is "infinite", in the same sense as the number of levels. However, every position of hierarchy implies a one-dimensional ordering of levels, and any level of hierarchical structure or system has a definite dimensionality.

Conclusion

The inner organisation of any philosophy assumes the levels of ontology, epistemology and ethics. In particular, the principle of the integrity of the world as the core of philosophy implies certain ethical consequences (Ivanov 2009). That is, one can organise one's life either in correspondence with the idea of the subject as universal mediation restoring the integrity of the world or in a manner rather characteristic of the inanimate existence or life. It is much more difficult to behave in the universal way than to universally think. However, the cultural consolidation of philosophy as an integrative mechanism of creativity will certainly enhance the people's ability of bringing things together and thus develop their spirituality. Universality means freedom.

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