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The phenomenon of philosophy in the system of modern higher education in Russia

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Abstract

The modern world is situated in a very complicated period of existence. Today we are talking about the phenomena of transition to a new type of higher professional education with new digital technologies and standards, and this transition to something new always entails complexity in adaptation and some breaking of familiar stereotypes. The article deals with one of the most complex phenomena of the modern information age – the modern stage of development of the higher education system in Russia and its role in the formation and development of human thinking. The article is devoted to the phenomena of philosophy in modern universities in Russia. Thanks to the extensive historico-philosophical and sociocultural discourse, it shows the main milestones of the transformation of understanding and attitudes towards philosophy in the history of human thought and analyzes the current situation of philosophy in the post-Soviet educational space. The article points out that the modern world requires a modern scientist fundamentally new approach to the study of the world. True intellectual thinking is the ability to solve logical puzzles and create new ones. The heuristic function of philosophy aimed at the formation of creative thinking, the ability of non-standard solutions in non-standard situations, the formation of a specialist with high innovative potential can play a very significant role.

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Philosophy, consciousness, reflection, society, values, worldview, personality, experience, modernity.

Introduction

Some years ago I read a surprising book *Apologia of History* written by the famous French historian Mark Bloch. This book remained incomplete. Its author who brought such concepts as “historical time” into historical science, and offered studying of the person in unity with all his manifestations (economic, political, social, psychological), was shot by the Nazis in 1944, in the Second World War.

Apologia of History is an unusual work. In this book Bloch contemplates on what history is and why it is necessary to study it. This book begins with the words “Father, please, explain to me, what is history, and what for is it for?” [Bloch, 1964, 26].

Bloch shows the necessity of history, opens the features of history, underlines the importance and necessity of this science in an absolutely unusual aspect. Bloch notes that the term “history” is very old, “so old that sometimes it becomes boring. Some time ago people even wanted to delete this term from the dictionary” [Ibidem, 35].

Bloch was convinced that history is not simple facts and dates but that it is an extensive and various, the most complicated, polyphonic experience of the mankind, that is constant meetings of people living in different epochs. Bloch was convinced that history can't be learned, it can be understood only, and for high-grade and adequate understanding one nuance is necessary – the understanding process should be friendly. Otherwise, history remains for us as only a set of the facts and events, it will not touch our mind, our heart and our soul.

The book of Bloch helped me (at that time the third-year student of the faculty of philosophy and cultural studies of Rostov State University) to understand, why we study philosophy and why philosophy, being one of the most ancient sciences, is still included into the set of obligatory disciplines at high schools. Today I am sure that without philosophy, to be exact, without philosophizing the person can't find his own place in our diverse world.

Mark Bloch shows that the subject of history is «the human spirit» that there is a certain area of knowledge where “Euclidean proofs”, or conclusive laws which can apply for the status of scientific discipline, don't work. Bloch acts as a real philosophizing historian, or the historical philosopher in this book, – he reflects, conducts a thread of the reasoning, opening history from unusual positions for the reader.

I believe that Bloch in his book answered not only the question, why we need history, he showed, what philosophy and other humanities are for in the modern world.

I suppose that the question of the place and role of philosophy in the modern world is important, so important that to neglect this issue, or to consider it from a distorted, inaccurate point of view can play an ill turn to present mankind.

The main part

Today we raise the problem of necessity of philosophy (and other humanitarian disciplines) in modern high school education in Russia. In my opinion, the question of necessity and importance of philosophy should be divided into two points. The first point will concern some theory, the second – some practical life. Answering the first question, I want to show an absolute must of presence of philosophy in the system of modern education. Answering the second – to consider the base principles thanks to which philosophy can become not only the most terrible examination subject (owing to the incomprehensibility), but also to turn into one of the most interesting subjects for students.

Throughout centuries the destiny of philosophy has been developing differently. Philosophy was

considered as the queen of sciences and the servant of divinity. It was idolized and ruthlessly rooted out from human consciousness. People admired philosophy and despised it.

As a strong intellectual tradition, as a system of thinking and a rational-expedient approach to the world, to oneself and others, philosophy arose in Ancient Greece.

This type of thinking had been developing throughout almost millennium, responding to all public processes. Antiquity for the first time raised the question of the so-called authoritative instance which is capable of making decisions on a choice.

Really, ancient Greeks, perhaps, appeared the first to see this world as a question demanding the answer. And searching for the answer to this question they managed to create a powerful tradition of critical thought. Together with the birth of this tradition and this search the western thinking was also born. The thinking of the Greek philosophers incorporated all the largest cultural and intellectual directions of the epoch of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Antiquity showed that without reflections, without philosophical reasonings, the person is only half the person.

In antiquity philosophy was the life. On a question when it is necessary to start to be engaged in philosophy, Epicurus said that it is never too early and never too late to start to be engaged in philosophy, because it is never too late or too early to be happy.

During the times of the Middle Ages philosophy as a critical thinking was categorically pushed aside to boondocks of human culture. Logical and rational types of thinking gave way to blind belief and unconditional admiration of church authorities. There were even demonstrational-exemplary fires on which under decisions of inquisition tribunals classical antiquity books were ruthlessly burned down – the most precious heritage, understood as “godless”.

In the twentieth century, in the Soviet Union philosophy became a state symbol, it really appeared “the voice of the epoch”. “One of the major defects of the social order existing at us, consisted in the fact that people were not taught to think independently. Blind belief in those or other positions was demanded from them. Having rejected religious dogmas, they replaced them with others, one belief passed into another. The style of their thinking thus didn't change at all. They became dissenters, but completely not liberal” [Semenov, 1996, 292].

In the modern world the relation to philosophy is ambiguous. For the celebration of the world day of philosophy which was marked on November, 18th, 2010, the set of polls was carried out. Usual people in the streets of various Russian cities were asked the same question: what is philosophy. And what is interesting, the majority of people answered that it was something very ancient. Among the answers, I will pick up the most curious ones: philosophy is “Socrates”, “different clever reasonings”, “a science of philosophers”.

I would like to point out two statements of well-known people in the modern scientific world. The first belongs to Alexander Dugin, one of the Russian thinkers, the second belongs to Abdusalam Gusejnov, the Russian philosophers.

- 1) “Philosophy is the spiritual discipline demanding huge attention and understanding, it is a science for the elite. To the usual person it is not necessary to study philosophy, he will understand nothing in it. After all to understand philosophy, it is not enough to read Immanuel Kant. To study philosophy “from the end” and under the popular literature is absolutely impossible. As Plato said, philosophy is a science for the dominating over destinies of the world. It is absolutely not necessary for the man of the street” [Pavlova, 2011].
- 2) “Philosophy needs to be studied for the same reason on which the person in general thinks. The main value of philosophy that it teaches us to think. What it means to think and how to think

correctly, how to connect one with another, how to live adequately – people trying to study philosophy or simply interested in it are looking for the answers to these questions. You know, this question is similar, for example, to why people sing songs. Or why they laugh. It helps them to live, and to live better. Philosophy should be studied for the same reason. A thinking person can't do without philosophy" [Ibidem].

It is possible to point out at least three positions highlighting the relation to philosophy. So, some people consider that the searching, live philosophy of the great classics of last centuries, philosophy of Socrates and Plato, Kant and Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, is irrevocably lost, that today we can't create anything essentially new, therefore it is necessary to be limited only to comparisons, compilations, the analysis and synthesis of the great systems.

Others believe that we must refuse from philosophy as a claim for independent critical thinking. In this approach, thus, it is affirmed that philosophy is absolutely not necessary. I will notice what some of my students rhetorically and very carefully asked when they found out, that we would study philosophy, or philosophy history, – "Why do we need to study different views of different people which all were denied? We have come here to receive quite concrete knowledge on the speciality, instead of one hundred erroneous opinions". To this statement I will return a bit later. And, now we will describe the third approach.

The third group of people argue, philosophy is necessary for the general education, for base erudition, believing thus that it is possible to understand the basic philosophical problems, having given on perusal works of philosophers or having told their main ideas. Certainly, here there is a part of true but... such approach works only among those people Who have a natural propensity to philosophy, those people who constantly reflect on themselves, on the world. In this case studying of those or other works of the well-known philosophers can serve as the original catalyst for the subsequent reflections, for formation of own world view. Unfortunately, there are not many people who possess such natural ability to philosophize. The others won't learn philosophy at such approach, they'll remain with the knowledge of a cover of philosophical knowledge, they begin to tell with belief about senselessness and uselessness of the given sort of employment. What is interesting, in their own way they will be right, because actually, philosophical essence consists not in what one said, but in why the philosopher came to this or that conclusion, and also to stimulations of own thinking. If we read the philosophical book and its plot causes in us neither questions, nor disagreement, if we don't think of the read philosophical product, it means that we receive only a wrapper, a philosophical candy wrapper, but not philosophy.

Philosophy, as ability to critical judgment of validity, as ability to think and reflect, arises at the beginning of the mankind development. And as some people are purposefully and profoundly engaged in philosophy, as much time, others, not engaged, don't understand, what it is for. In the ocean of our life there are a lot of components – sea currents and river passages, small streamlets and huge falls, our daily occurrence consists of a set of streams, political, social, family. Philosophy, of course, is not the fastest and most appreciable among them, not the most energetic and vigorous, but the most sated and qualitative, from what the person can operate.

What is philosophy and why it is necessary for the modern mankind? Philosophy, in my opinion, is some ability of intelligence to a certain sort of thinking. Certainly, in other sciences, both humanitarian, and natural, mental abilities and talent are also necessary, however the original sense of these sciences consists in results which they receive, in those concrete questions which are already formulated and demand the practical permission. In philosophy the end result is not so important, but the course, the thinking direction, on the contrary, is important. This base difference which doesn't

allow to equate philosophy to other sciences, as the validity or falsity of philosophical conclusions is defined only by understanding, philosophy can't be learned, it is possible and it is necessary to understand only.

If scientific thinking, trying to find the answers to the questions, leans against already existing categorial device, on scientific concepts available, the philosophical thinking checks existing concepts that is called "on durability", creating, at the necessity, the new ones.

Let's take, for example, a physicist. Prosecuting the subject of acceleration of free falling, he takes as assistants such concepts as speed, space, time, and he considers these concepts as some axioms which do not demand proofs because for the decision of his problem obligatory specification of the given concepts is not required. And here if the same physicist suddenly decides to study what is time and space in the essence, here he should become the real philosopher as the unambiguous answer to this question isn't present and in the decision of this problem only his own thought will help.

Biology, being one of the natural sciences, developing scientific knowledge, often uses the concept "life", however the question what life is in itself, in the essence, is a philosophical question.

The political science works within the limits of the concepts of "state", "justice", "person", "society". The political scientist, contemplating on the problem of legitimacy of the political power, as a rule, doesn't set the purpose to answer questions on the reasons of occurrence of the phenomenon of the power. Why people admire the ruler; he is interested in the concrete displays of this phenomenon. However, when a crisis strikes the society, when old concepts lose the substantial value when there is a necessity of their revision, here then also the political scientist is compelled to become the philosopher.

How philosophy and science interact? In my opinion, philosophy increases science borders, expands them, philosophy puts questions and problems which then other sciences dare. Ability to bring an attention to the question is a merit of the present philosopher. I will notice that representatives of natural sciences – mathematicians and physicists – became the best philosophers in the history of mankind. When it became too close within the limits of the scientific concepts, when they reached a certain virtual "ceiling", they always addressed to philosophy to gather any new ideas in it. Besides, the most ancient prerogative of philosophy is that it developed (and continues to develop!) universal methods of knowledge which are then used in various branches of science.

My deep belief is that it is impossible to reduce philosophical knowledge to external laws and axioms. It always will be above natural-science because it forms the person, instead of simply giving him the chance to cut out better wood, to smoke fish, to make cars which go faster, or the computers possessing more perfect possibilities.

Thus, it is necessary to say that spiritually and intellectually developed person a priori understands value of philosophy, and he shouldn't explain it its usefulness, and here the person who hasn't reached in the development level of understanding of importance of philosophy, will, without reflecting reject any, even the most skillful arguments.

But there is one more measurement of philosophy which I haven't mentioned yet. This is the influence of philosophy on a society, philosophy as the tool of global social development. Yes, today this influence is not so appreciable, in the past, certainly, it was more essential: we remember that ideas of philosophers could change cardinally a social system (we can say, ideas of the French thinkers have led to great French revolution of 1799).

However even now philosophy, maybe in the latent way, influences a society. Unfortunately, results of influence often have long-term character, they aren't visible "here and now" what is expected always by "daily" household reason.

Philosophy possesses the rare jewelry – it brings up the person, teaches him many things. When the person learns about Socrates and Plato, Kant and Hegel, when he gets acquainted with the diverse views on the same problem, when he reads books of great thinkers it should influence this person. Be it the economist, the linguist, the lawyer, the doctor, the turner, but this knowledge lifts him above himself. Such person voluntarily or involuntarily turns to Baron Münchhausen who is pulling out himself by hair from a bog of daily occurrence. He thinks of questions without which he basically would live (after all it is possible to live without the answer to a question on meaning of the life). So, this knowledge as Aristotle confirmed, is necessary in itself, and it is impossible for the economist or the physicist to refuse the possibility if not to comprehend then to concern it.

What is philosophy and what it can and should become for the modern person? Only by thoughtless reading of other people's thoughts which were thrown out on a paper in an impulse of despair, or ecstatic delight? No. Being soaked with other's sights and installations, how can we live? No. By possibility to flash knowledge to surprise others? No.

Probably, philosophy, first of all, is necessary for us to have a possibility to remain the thinking person, not subject to another's opinion at times inadequate and sample. It is ability to be tolerant to another, different, in comparison with you, to outlook.

Recently, absolutely accidentally, I could hear conversation of two first-year students that philosophy is not the clearest discipline and philosophy taught in educational institutions is a waste of time.

What is philosophy in university necessary for? What can it teach? In my opinion, its most important problem consists in formation in people their philosophical thinking. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Austrian-English philosopher, one of founders of analytical philosophy and one of the brightest thinkers of the 20th century, believed that “philosophy is logical clearing of thoughts” [Wittgenstein, 2011].

What is philosophical thinking? It is the constant analysis and the critic, both another's and your own opinions, this deep understanding of life's meaning problems. What can philosophy be for students? It can help to think, teach to put questions and problems. Every time when people reflect on meaning of the life - they philosophize. When we reflect on ourselves and this world – they philosophize. When we think of the behavior, when aspire to spiritual and physical perfection – we philosophize. When we observe death or illness of close people, it appears, in other words in boundary situations of M. Heidegger – we philosophize. When we fall in love and endure various stages of mutual relations – we, speaking E. Fromm's language, reflect, to have, or to be – we philosophize.

If we speak about higher education as about creative process, about the process of the solution of problems which nobody never faced (this is what higher education should be like) we see, that without philosophy it is impossible to manage. One of base features of philosophy is that it always teaches the person to take a detached view of a problem. Certainly, it is possible to know, for example, physics or mathematics, economy or the English language and to be the fine expert in the area, but not to be able to take a detached view of it, to comprehend its problems, means to turn in homo faber, the person limited and unilateral as considered by H. Markuse. We believe that the modern economist, the lawyer or the psychologist cannot become isolated today in narrow area of the specialization any more. In the modern world of globalization and continuously developing information technology, we cannot be “one-dimensional” workers from economy any more. “We can fill the economist with special knowledge, it will be the scientist-handicraftsman while you will not give him a humanitarian sight at the social and economic parties of its trade” [Gorokhov, Rozin, 1998, 12].

Students, being in the majority young men, often do not understand, what philosophy is for. They come to university and assert that they need to receive a concrete specialty, but why philosophy is

necessary, it is not clear. What should philosophy in this case do? The answer is simple: philosophy should help students study the specialty. Philosophy can be help, the servant for the physicist, the doctor, the economist. And in it there is nothing bad because without the good servant in the house the full chaos will reign.

Students today should accurately understand that in modern conditions of the informational, global world, the economy, as well as any other science, has ceased to be independent of others spheres of scientific knowledge. One of our compatriots, the scientist in the field of global studies, A.P. Fedotov formulated a number of economic postulates, the harmonious unity and interaction of three basic global spheres of human activity – ecological, social and economic [Fedotov, 2002, 129-131] is the first of which. Modern western scientists believe that the economic markets “...never include the purpose of achievement of beauty or justice, stability or spirituality. The markets very well reach the purposes put before them, but these purposes are far from the general mission of the person. And for achievement of the prime target we have policy, philosophy and religion. If we sometime admit the thought that it is possible to replace these greatest achievements of human spirit with economic theories, we risk to crush our souls” [Weizsäcker, Lovins, Lovins, 2000, 387].

It is necessary to notice the fact that today solutions of modern economic problems, assume the creative, original approach. Base value of the modern world is the intellectual capital, human imagination and creativity.

The modern world demands a modern way of education. We should understand today to learn great volumes of the information is simply senselessly as the information becomes outdated, without having had time to be shown up to the end. The present intelligence is defined not by volume of the information jagged by heart and ability to flash this information in a proper place in due time. The original intellectual thinking consists in ability to solve logic problems and to create the new ones. And the heuristic function of philosophy directed on formation of creative thinking, is the ability to non-standard decisions in non-standard situations, formation of the expert with high innovative potential, it can play here very considerable role.

Certainly, it is bad, when philosophy begins “to pull a blanket on itself”, crushing under its own interests all other subjects. And except philosophical faculty where philosophy is taught for the sake of itself, in any other educational institutions, philosophy should adapt under those faculties on which philosophy course is read. Coming to any university, we should teach philosophy to the future experts, instead of philosophers.

Here again there is one problem. The matter is that it is impossible to teach philosophy neither it is too simple, nor it is too difficult. If we read philosophy in university, believing that students in general can understand nothing and consequently we go down to kindergarten level, explaining elementary concepts, we won't cause any reaction, except bewilderment. If we, on the contrary, rise to the academic level in the employment, and from the cathedral ambon we argue on certain higher trues – we turn to boring mentors. Philosophy should be interesting, and interesting it can become only when the student sees in philosophy something, native. And how can we do it? We must show that philosophy of the last centuries is not the historical atavism, not died out dinosaurs, and opposite to manage to explain and tell that in all centuries and epoch lived, created, living people, and that they reflected, these people, in the essence, different from us, living in a modern technologically-information and industrially developed society, just a little. To show that conditions surrounding the person change only, and the person is still the same, as hundred, two hundred, one thousand years ago that at all times there are eternal questions, which people will always aspire to answer, and if we cease to aspire, we will cease to be people. Philosophy will be interesting to students, if we draw bright analogies between the past

and the modern world, between problems of people of the last centuries and the questions of modern people.

Any physicist and mathematician will tell that their applied sciences have arisen on the basis of knowledge of laws of the world and the nature, that is on the basis of philosophy. The law of transition of energy from one kind in another in the physics, is it not the reflection of laws of dialectics of Hegel in philosophy?

The problem is that such reasonings as: “what is philosophy for”? can lead to sad rather results. We will say that philosophy tomorrow and history today are not necessary. We will say that the cultural science and ethics today aren't necessary, tomorrow – we will unite biology, chemistry and physics in one subject under the name a science and we will study it facultatively. And the fourth day we will wake up and we will see that people have forgotten to think – here so then we will live – with atrophied brains.

In my opinion, philosophy is necessary for formation of the person as the person. All our life is reflections, knowledge, any activity. What does philosophy do? Philosophy gives the chance to learn correctly, to formulate the point of view so that it can be understood by the people surrounding you.

Hegel, the top of German classical philosophical tradition, asserted that philosophy makes clear what was vague in a myth. Clearing of thoughts and consciousness becomes the higher problem of philosophy, thus. “To think clearly, it is necessary to possess a sensible mind”, N. Tesla will say, and it will be absolutely right. What is philosophy in the essence? This higher art of formation of thinking, world contemplation, without it the person can't manage. People often say to themselves that they are allocated by thinking and a correct sight at the world by nature. Actually, as to thinking, here the person is, speaking in Aristotle's or Locke's language, “tabula rasa”, the pure board, a paper clean sheet on which appear records only as a result of a knowledge of life, any vital circumstances.

Depending on what sphere we can realize ourselves in, that type of philosophizing which appears to us useful and necessary follows also. So, for example, purely theoretical philosophy gives to the philosopher-expert the general orientation and a general vector of a direction of scientific activity. The existential philosophy (existence philosophy) helps to understand the basic types and forms, ways of life and problems which each person faces throughout the life, at least once. The person who is guided by problems of spiritual life, not being the religious adherent, can tend to certain forms of mystical philosophy, and this philosophy will appear for him as that spiritual and intellectual harbor in which the person will find sincere calmness and emotional comfort. It turns out that in philosophy the person searches and finds himself in the maximum completeness of the life [Marcuse, 2002].

The philosopher is really, in Hegel's well-aimed expression “the voice of the epoch”, and philosophy always reflects problems of the present reality. We know that the outlook and the life of people are formed under the influence of various circumstances: education, formation, the life experience, separate vital impressions. Living conditions, epoch common features, national features of culture affect it. And here means of working out of outlook are philosophical reflections. In systems created by philosophers, various variants of world outlook sights compiled by people and their beliefs are generalized, given reason. Therefore, ideas of philosophers are recognized in the society. Thus, philosophy is the means of expression, ordering and outlook substantiation, a theoretical basis of the solution to world outlook questions.

In consciousness of many people philosophy is abstract-abstruse reasonings which in no way are connected with practical needs and affairs of the person. But after all philosophy history has the heroes and martyrs that testify its direct and close connection with public practice and consequently philosophy plays a huge role in a society, in formation of the human person.

M.K. Mamardashvili once said that the philosophical act is always a pause, movement against the current daily, ordinary life. Probably, it is good that during the key moments of history of mankind there appeared the Buddha and Confucius, Socrates and Plato, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, people who helped and help us to stop and think for a second of who I am, what I am capable to learn, what I should do and what I can hope for. Today such reflections are a necessary element of protection of humanity and happiness to be the unique person on this earth.

Conclusion

The modern world demands from the modern scientist a fundamentally new approach to the study of the world. We must understand that true intellectual thinking is the ability to solve logic puzzles and create new ones. And the heuristic function of philosophy, aimed at the formation of the creative thinking, the ability to the non-standard decisions in the non-standard situations, the formation of a specialist with a high innovative potential can play a very significant role.

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Феномен философии в системе современного высшего образования в России

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Аннотация

Современный мир находится в очень сложном периоде существования (пандемия коронавируса, карантин, глобальная изоляция). Сегодня мы говорим о переходе к новому

типу высшего профессионального образования с новыми цифровыми технологиями и стандартами, и этот переход влечет за собой сложности в адаптации и ломку привычных стереотипов. В статье охарактеризовано одно из самых сложных явлений современной информационной эпохи: исследуется современный этап развития системы высшего образования в России и его роль в формировании и развитии человеческого мышления. Позиция автора, перекликающаяся с ключевыми философскими идеями Г. Маркузе и Г. Гегеля, Э. Фромма и Л. Витгенштейна, А. Федотова и др., тем не менее является оригинальной. Статья посвящена феномену философии в современных университетах России. Благодаря обширному историко-философскому и социокультурному дискурсу показаны основные вехи трансформации понимания и отношения к философии в истории человеческой мысли, проанализировано современное положение философии на постсоветском образовательном пространстве. Отмечается, что современный мир требует, чтобы ученый являлся носителем принципиально нового подхода к изучению мира. Следует понимать, что истинное интеллектуальное мышление – это способность решать логические головоломки и создавать новые. Показано, что это эвристическая функция философии, направленной на формирование творческого мышления, способность нестандартных решений в нестандартных ситуациях, формирование специалиста с высоким инновационным потенциалом при этом может играть очень значительную роль.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Философия, сознание, рефлексия, общество, ценности, мировоззрение, личность, опыт, современность.

Библиография

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