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The phenomenon of spirit in philosophical understanding of man

Abstract. There is a widespread opinion that philosophical anthropology is a field of knowledge about the origin, history and content of culture. This statement is only partially true. Culture is demonstrative of a certain way of being. Many anthropologists and cultural scientists do not set themselves the task of finding out why man is as he is, what is his existential reality, in which his determined originality is manifested. Reduction of the whole problem of man to description of culture would mean disregard of the principal side of the question: what determines the cultural essence of man? The integrity of philosophical anthropology distinguishes it from other disciplines that study man in one particular aspect. Philosophical anthropologists wish to grasp, at least, the live wholeness of a person, his concrete «I». Philosophical anthropology more decisively than, say, gestalt psychology finds in man configurations and behaviours that are impossible to split and put to the final analysis. Spirituality is undoubtedly among the basic human existentials. The notion of «spirit» in philosophical anthropology has a long and peculiar history. Since time immemorial, freedom, reflection, spirit were considered to be man's essential qualities. Spirit is man's highest ability permitting him to become a subject of meaning-setting, personal self-determination, conscious transformation of reality. We, people, are the present existence, consciousness in general and spirit, that is the ideas-driven wholeness of comprehensible relationships in ourselves and in all that we have created, done and thought.

Key words: philosophical anthropology, man, culture, human existentials, spirit, existence, meaning, wholeness, psyche, memory.

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The scientific inquiry of the problem of man presupposes, apparently, holding in the field of attention of three interrelated aspects — historical, psychological and philosophical. People live in history. They are in the present but retain their relationship with the past. Man's past was not fruitless. If we embrace the whole of it and single out from it those threads that make up human reality, if we retrace man's gradual development until the currently existing self, if we carefully analyze our own consciousness, the problem of man will become more clarified.

The other inseparable characteristic of man is his psyche. Man is a sum total of passions, desires, impulses, strivings. Some authors believe that they create philosophical anthropology, collecting scientific facts, employing the rules of theoretical reflection. They want philosophical anthropology to be purely scientific. This refers, for example, to A. Adler's work «Understanding Human Nature» [1]. «Now we have to explain why we are trying to approach the problem of human nature from the position of medical science, — wrote Adler, — having a goal to lay the foundations of exact scientific knowledge in this vast and therefore not exactly researchable field yielding to no exact study. Also, we will consider prerequisites for creation of such a science of human nature and determine what problems it should solve and what results we should expect from it» [1, p. 7].

The problem of man cannot be solved, if we proceed only from the data of biology, physics, psychology or sociology. M. Buber in his work «The Problem of Man» points out that from scientific data alone one cannot find out what man is. «In order to become genuine philosophical anthropology, everything that is discovered about historical and modern man, about men and women, Indians and Chinese, tramps and emperors, the weak-minded and the genius, must be built up and crystallized round what the philosopher discovers by reflecting about himself, — he wrote. That is quite a different matter from what, say, the psychologist undertakes when he completes and clarifies by reference to his own self in self-observation, self-analysis and experiment, what he knows from lit-

erature and observation. For with him it is a matter of individual, objectivized processes and phenomena, of something that is separated from connexion with the whole real person» [2, p. 163-164].

In Christianity, theology and anthropology go hand in hand. Christianized Platonism and Neo-Platonism only pretend to be differentiating between the sensual and the spiritual. St. Augustine the Blessed is the greatest example of how an individual finds his own self in the spiritual sphere. The great contribution of this thinker into philosophical comprehension of man lies in the tendency to introspection. «Man's amazement of himself that Augustine sought in self-knowledge is not quite the same feeling with which Aristotle, being in Plato's circle, requested to begin any reasoning. Aristotle's man, along with all other things, admires man as well, but only as a part of the admirable in all respects universe. Augustine's man is not amazed in man by what should be understood as part of the universe and as a thing among things. While the admiration of the former has long ago regenerated into metaphysical philosophizing, the amazement of the latter appears for the first time in all its depth and anxiety. This is not philosophy but this will influence the whole future philosophy» [2, p. 166].

Kant's way of thinking and solving philosophical problems is based on the presupposition that any science, especially philosophical one, should be a science about man, any scientific achievement helps man to better understand himself. In the work «Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View» Kant writes that an individual who studies himself is an important subject of knowledge, since through him one can comprehend the universe. Such anthropology is regarded as knowledge of the world [3, p. 139].

In the «Critique of Pure Reason» Kant pays to anthropology much more attention [4]. Kant was the first to offer critical interpretation of anthropological problems and it becomes an answer to Pascal's vital requests. Though this answer was not of metaphysical but of epistemological character and did not imply man's existence but his attitude to the world, it depicts fundamental problems: what is the world

that man comprehends? How can man in his concrete reality know the world whatsoever? In what relations he is to the world, which he comprehends in some way or another? What is this world to man and man to this world? Self-analysis makes us closer to what we understand as spirit. Hegel, Sheler and many others emphasized the dynamic of spirit. This emphasis contains a great deal of truth, because only he comprehends spirit who feels its presence in himself and develops it in himself. This is a hidden treasure, whose price we come to know in the process of development of our inner content through reflection and concentration. Some individuals lose their spiritual properties, being incapable of developing personal independence and freedom. The nonorganic, organic, vegetative and animal roots of man partly interfere with his spiritual development. But at the same time they promote his growth, being transformed into the goal of his activity, or into an objectivity that is a subjective condition of spirit.

In spite of its freedom, spirit cannot avoid conditionalities. We can feel it in our activity. Spirit develops and manifests itself in temporal and spatial conditionality. We distinguish between a mere fact of being in space and time — the only way of the existence of human beings and nature — and how space and time influence us, or how we respond to these conditions. Nonhuman nature exists and acts in space and time in quite a different way than human one.

Man exists in space and time consciously. Chance may place man here and now but man highlights this chance with his knowledge. We differentiate between time and space. But they act in man as an inseparable couple. There is no time that is concentrated on itself. Time influences something or is present in something or somebody. Space is perceivable and comprehensible only in time. Space by itself, stationary and passive, is meaningless. No spatial point possesses reality, if it does not exist in determined time. Due to this spatio-temporal conditionality every being is a concentric point in the universe. Space and time seem to form the structure of man but when spirit becomes active they interfere with its development. Time and space that we experience turn people into historical

and conditioned creatures. To be a historical creature means to see oneself as a link of one chain arising in the present, related to the past and preparing the future.

Things are indifferent to the flow of time. Animals are identified with their present, with their here and now, whereas man analyzes his presence in time. Time and space do not suppress him; he is their part and parcel. He experiences their continuity and exists in this continuity not in a passive way but as an active and responsible creature. Out of his reality, he highlights the past and the future, understands how they influence his existence in time. It is up to him whether to throw himself in the mercy of time flow or to be active.

Man is capable of taking care of his time and space, using them and in many respects managing them. One of the greatest achievements of spirit is man's awareness of himself as a historical being. Man's similarity with highly organized animals can be proven by the fact that they use symbols. But the difference in using symbols lies in the fact that human symbols, due to their progressive evolution, seem so free that one might wish to place them into a completely new sphere of nature.

A significant role in philosophical understanding of man belongs to Hegel. «The individual has an infinite value», — he wrote in the «Philosophy of Religion» [5, p. 297]. Believing that man possesses an infinite value, he noted that he is an end in himself by virtue of the divine in him. «God is god only so far as he knows himself, — wrote Hegel, — his self-knowledge is, further, his self-consciousness in man» [6, p. 389]. The merit of the German philosopher is that he analyzed the problem of man in the ontological aspect through general understanding of the world, its nature and its absolute.

Not knowing the whole of Hegel's system but having only a partial idea of it, one might conclude that the German philosopher is a convinced evolutionist who glorifies freedom. Indeed, Hegel argues that in the process of evolution history tends to the victory of spirit and freedom but these are only words that have a meaning when applied to integrity or to absolute spirit that manifests itself in various forms in space and in time. Only therein does univer-

sal history acquire meaning. But they are not applicable to everyday human activity, where almost insurmountable obstacles and various alternatives arise. History and individuals, which are its inseparable part, are presented by Hegel as a mere manifestation of absolute spirit, and he believes that each particular form of absolute spirit that arose exclusively by his request and to his services is a temporal phenomenon destined to be destroyed.

Schopenhauer was one of the first philosophers who approximated theory of evolution and investigation of the universe. But his system is in conformity with that age when discovery of human similarity to nature meant growth of knowledge. Schopenhauer holds that there exists a unique thing in itself, a starting point of energy, blindly leading ahead the dynamic that makes life. This energy is present in both man and nature. Schopenhauer's theory and similar theories demonstrate that a philosopher might get fascinated with particular achievements of his time [see: 7].

A. Bergson believes that spirit is primary, that it acts as a means and attains its perfection in the goal. It accompanies reality and animal life and with the origination of being strives for more and more autonomy. This conception of spirit might be considered a finalist one. A. Bergson, showing a way to knowledge of man, holds that one cannot pass over in silence the problem of consciousness of the animal world. Following him, the French scientist P.L. du Noüy stresses that man's destiny is in his spirit. The world exists for spirit and molds it. He believes that spirit abides by a certain law or certain spiritual forces. A. Portman holds that the idea of spirit transforms not only our concept of man but the concept of nature and life. Theory of evolution and deep penetration into psychology help to elucidate these concepts. He argues that even in protoplasm there can be discerned unified, never interrupting activity, that protoplasm is a poorly studied phenomenon. Spiritual process accompanies life process and in the end attains the highest level in man. Therefore, man is always something more than one can tell about him at a given moment.

Spirit does not exist without nature, it is present in nature but is not equal to it. Within the framework of their science biologists cannot say anything more. But even this is enough for knowledge of man. Knowledge of spirit takes the central place in philosophy. Philosophical anthropology would become pointless without it. Two tendencies can be mentioned in the history of philosophy: one was destroying the personality making it a manifestation of absolute spirit, the other reduced the conception of spirit to its expression in human individuality. These two tendencies go different ways but come to one conclusion — to negation of «I», of consciousness, personality. W. Dilthey, M. Sheler, N. Hartmann actually share the view of biologists who ascribe to spirit the exclusively material origin.

The main property of living organized creatures is memory. Animal instinct attains such perfection that it creates a new form. However, in animals it does not possess the traits of individuality but acts as a tradition inherent in the whole species, as its main content. It is this form that is an immediate source of the appearance of the human sphere. J. Huxley characterized man as a purely animal being, but so original and peculiar that it appears in nature as a unique and alienated phenomenon.

A. Portman, determining man's specificity, pointed out that the common between man and higher animals provides clear evidence that all living things make one whole. Biology, he believed, shows that biological genetics is realized in man due to the process of selection, in the course of which life forms of the human type are transformed much faster than this occurs in nature. This is associated with the influence of tradition and the spiritual sphere.

One can envy that certainty with which philosophers of the past were creating their systems. Nicolai Hartmann in his work «New Ways of Ontology» points out that the time of constructing the great systems is gone. Now we should be satisfied with the fact that any progress with due consideration of the spiritual sphere means correction of mistakes and it is therein that the inner meaning of the apparent relativity of truth lies.

We should be grateful to E. Husserl for his emphasizing the uniqueness and significance of a subject, thought he is almost alone in the cultural setting subservient to the influence of psychoanalysis and sociology. He believes that there is no reality outside any consciousness. This would be invention of an emptiness. An object is present in all our thoughts and acts. Heidegger, Sartre and other existentialists continuously stressed that we should rate highly our uniqueness. To put the problem of personality means to see that it is surrounded by an infinite number of dangers. The autonomy of the self requires the almost simultaneous dual activity: self-attention, constant awareness that «I» am master of my life. A relatively normal man can lose his «I», or his personality only to an insignificant extent. If the personality disappears, the human race would disappear as well, man would descend to the animal level [8].

M. Sheler believes that man has never been so problematic as today. Philosophical anthropology is not a sum total or an encyclopaedia of all sciences. But it necessarily includes, expressly or by implication, the whole human progress, achievements of any kinds of knowledge fields related to human studies. In philosophical anthropology, man cognizes himself not as an abstraction but in his existence. Self-knowledge is

not only a goal but also a method. Human subjectivity is constantly threatened by destruction. Man is a creature that is preliminarily molded to the highest degree. Therefore, man always faces the danger of turning the non-objective which he is into the objective truth. In philosophical anthropology, scientific inquiry goes in circles, and the closer researcher approaches the object of study the more difficult the attainment of the central point seems to him.

Experiencing «I», independent and autonomous, in one's consciousness is an expression of non-conditionality. Man is aware that he does not depend on general causal relations that guide the physical world. The notion of freedom disappears when the process of human development is described as similar to development of the products of nature. Everyday life confirms that man faces many obstacles, which he has to overcome, win or bypass [see: 9]. One cannot speak of the freedom of will if there its no «I», or a subject that influences an object, overcoming obstacles. Human being is complex. Man's every step is restricted by conditions and requirements put forth by natural environment and society. Man almost always surrenders, because it is physically and morally impossible to be in constant fight. But it is exactly exclusions from this rule that mould us into genuine people.

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