

PHILOSOPHY

RENÉ DESCARTES' PHILOSOPHY AS A FORMING ELEMENT OF GREGORY SKOVORODA'S WORLD-VIEW INTUITION

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ABSTRACT

Skovoroda's philosophy is considered through the prism of philosophical ideas and features of the scientific discourse presented by the modern philosophers, in particular René Descartes. Special attention is paid to the similarity of these philosophers' views, who focus their attention of the method of self-cognition. However, Descartes engages in the gnosiological aspect and pays attention to the process of cognition and on the correctness of conclusions. Whereas Skovoroda is concentrated on ontology or even on metaphysics speaking not so much about the process of cognition, but about the essence of existence. Besides this it is important that both thinkers have the same world-view intuition, in particular Skovoroda, akin to Descartes, considers God to be the only source of final and absolute truth.

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Investigating Skovoroda's works, where moral and theological treatises are organically bound, together with his ideas of natural philosophy about the universe and methods of its cognition, he is considered in this paper as a self-sufficient and fully autonomous figure. The basis of this statement is syncretic unity of the mentioned views. However, examining Skovoroda's philosophy it is important to take into account world culture achievements of that time. At the heart of this approach philosophical ideas and the scientific discourse features, presented by the modern time thinkers, are the key ones. Among them an important place is given to René Descartes, who influenced greatly the formation process of cognition and the development of not only cognitive philosophy but also philosophical ideas in general.

Cartesius (Descartes' name in Latin) worked out the conception that determines cognition, the subject that cognizes, to be the primary object of the philosophical reasoning but not existence or the cognitive object, "I, but not the World" (Mondin, 2010, p. 37). According to his conception everything has to come from *Cogito*¹, because everything else depends on the solution to the question of *Cogito* (Hertogh, 2016). Thus, in Descartes' paradigm metaphysics becomes fully inferior to the gnosiology (Caden, 2015). Descartes is an opponent of the statement that the source of knowledge and the criterion of verity is the sensual experience. He regards sensual experience information as unreliable stating that in one's sleep a person also gains sensual experience unconnected with reality, and this enables to characterize this information as an illusion of senses (Thibaut, 2018).

According to René Descartes' God is the most general foundation of existence, which helps us to come to unitary things. In the context of ideas close to existence principals preceding the experience should

¹ *Cogito* (lat. «to think») - the concept, introduced by Descartes, denoting every reflection of consciousness which is simultaneously realized by a subject as if indirectly.

be viewed; as well as premises they have their own aim (Ljutyj, 2019, p.204). Cartesius saw the aim of these premises in human's prevailing over the nature forces, in methods discovering and inventing, in understanding the reasons, in human nature perfecting. To achieve this aim Descartes thinks that firstly it is necessary to doubt all the surrounding existence. Descartes' doubt does not mean being convinced of one's uncognition but it is only the way to find absolute reliable knowledge (Ivliev, 2003, p.48).

Talking about the principle of radical doubt Descartes suggests a theory that three kinds of ideas participate in the cognition: innate, derived from sensual experience, and "invented", i.e. induced by human thinking activity. Thus, there are only two acts of thinking, that allow to us to acquire knowledge without a danger to making a mistake: *intuition* and *deduction*. It is needed to clarify the term of "*intuition*" which Descartes explains as follows:

"Intuition is not an unsteady evidence of feelings or a deceitful judgment, which is wrongly formed by an impression. I believe that intuition is understanding of clear and attentive mind; this understanding is so easy and expressive that there is no doubt what we actually understand. It (understanding) comes from the light of mind [...]. Thus, everybody using their mind can reach the idea that they exist, they think, that a triangle is limited by only three lines, and a sphere has a sole surface. The same relates to the similar things whose number is far more numerous than most people notice, because they consider it to be unworthy to pay attention to such obvious things" (Il'in, 2003, p.187).

In this case it is noticeable that Descartes and Skovoroda's opinions and philosophical imperatives are alike. Descartes states that "I think thus I exist" (*Cogito ergo sum*). Skovoroda suggests "Perceive (get to know) yourself". It can be said that philosophers focus their attention on the method of self-perception, as for both the aim of a human life is happiness acquiring. It should also be highlighted that Descartes works on a gnosiological aspect and pays attention to the process of cognition and to the correctness of conclusions. On the other hand, Skovoroda is concentrated on ontology or even on metaphysics speaking not so much about the process of cognition, but about the essence of existence. However, it is superficial to say that their philosophising methods contradict each other.

At the same time it is not fully known how Cartesius solved the gnosiological problem of correlation between God, a human and the world, and a human in themselves (first of all bodies and souls). It is also not clear how he quickly passes from the positive solution of the above mentioned question to the creation of an integral metaphysical construction following Plato and Augustine. He proves that the essence of a human is in thinking, and thus, in the soul. He comes to this conclusion contemplating the unmistakable principle that is reached through the methodical doubt *Cogito ergo sum*. Evaluating *Cogito* shows that the soul is one *res cogitans*¹, apprehensive reality: its existence proves in thinking, as well as thinking. Only thinking is substantial for existence. The body as added to the soul in a very superficial and accidental way. This body is by Descartes *res extensa* (Mondin, 2010).

Thinking about the internal "I" and Skovoroda and Certesius reach the culmination of their metaphysics. They talk about leaving this world (i.e. the world of a Human) in an order to attain other primary world of Primary principle, i.e. God. But to leave the World of a Human, *κοσμος ανθρωπος* according to Skovoroda when he alludes to patristic tradition, both philosophers agree on entering the inner world of "I", i.e. *Cogito* by Descartes. In his *Méditations Métaphysiques* it could be read:

"However, there is another way of research if there exist other things beyond me ideas of which are inside me. It means that if we consider these ideas to be some specific ways of thinking then there is no difference among them. Obviously they all emerge in me identically. But if we consider these ideas to be the images that reflect different things then they are completely different. In fact those reflecting substances are something more, they contain, so to say, more objective reality, i.e. due to the reflection they are related to the greater amount of degrees of existence or perfection than those that present to me only modi and accidents. At the same time the idea through which I cognize supreme, eternal, endless, and allmighty God, universal Creator, and which exists beyond Him, possesses more objective reality than ideas presenting finite eventual" (Dekart, 2000, p.38).

To show the comparison and objectivity of the above mentioned judgments the abstract from Skovoroda's letter to Yakiv Pravvytskyj (January, 5, 1792) is given:

"[...] If you really want to know, you should be aware that we see people as if someone showed to you only one leg or a heel hiding a head and all body. But without a head it is impossible to

¹ Descartes uses *res extensa* and its antipod *res cogitans* in his philosophical system called Descartes' system. *Res extensa* is used to denote the physical world, and *res cogitans* is used to denote a thinking creature.

recognize a human. You see yourself, but you do not understand and does not perceive yourself. And not understanding yourself is the same as losing yourself [...]. Thus, to get to know yourself, and to find yourself, and to perceive a human is the same [...]. All our external body by itself does not act in any way and it is nothing. It is all inferior to our thoughts. A thought is a possessor of our body; it is in continuous activity during all day and night [...]. God, Spirit and our Lord are all it the same. He is all strange in everything and he does all new in everything by himself, and truth of Him is in everything forever [...] (Skovoroda, 2011, pp.1250-1252).

So, it is possible to state that Skovoroda, if not in all his works then at least in some of them, uses Descartes' method of argumentation construction. Descartes creates his deductive rationalistic method. One of the most distinctive features rationalism is the equation of the real reason *causa* and the logical basis *ratio*, i.e. those natural bounds could be treated as logical bounds. Thus, cognizing own logical sense the mind cognizes the whole surrounding world (Khamitov, Gharmash, & Krylova, 2016, p.107). In this case deduction is the chain of reliable logical inferences relying on "absolutely reliable principles" (i.e. axioms). According to Descartes reliability of axioms consists in the fact that they come to mind intuitively: very clear and understanding. The mind armed with reliable facilities (intuition and deduction) is able to "attain the cognition of all" (Antoine-Mahut, 2017).

Judging from all the above mentioned it could be stated that Descartes' works and his construction of logical connections had considerable influence on G. Skovoroda. It is important to underline and that for both thinkers have similar world-view intuition. In particular Skovoroda, alike as Descartes, considers God to be the only source of final and absolute truth. Having different philosophical aspects as their instruments, gnosiological for Descartes and ontological for Skovoroda, both are concentrated on the method of self-perception, since the understanding of happiness is determined by them as the aim of a human life.

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