

**THE PLACE OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEMPORARY PARADIGM  
FOR THE PRACTICE OF SCIENCE**

**Павел Гондек. Место философии в современной парадигме науки.** *Статья является введением в проблему определения соответствующего места и роли философии в современной научной рефлексии. Показаны в ней различия между наукой и философией. Современные научные знания под влиянием технологической парадигмы становятся прикладными знаниями. В свою очередь, философия представляет собой знание, целью которого является мудрость, понятая как познание принципов и причин существования вещей. Поэтому любые формы редуцирования философии к практически-полезным знаниям являются результатом непонимания её цели и свойственного предмета.*

**Ключевые слова:** философия, наука, технология, мудрость, действительность

The reflection presented here is intended to present arguments for the cultivation of philosophy as “sapiential” or wisdom-oriented knowledge whereby human knowledge is realized most fully. Philosophy has indispensable heuristic value because it considers the understanding of the world and man in the context of the question “why.” Philosophy consists in the discovery of the cause of existence. The search for an answer to this fundamental question is an expression of the human person’s natural inclination to explain the reality in which he lives. Classical philosophy concentrates on explaining man’s place in the world. John Burnet expressed this precisely: “Philosophy is the progressive effort of man to find his true place in the world.”<sup>1</sup> That is how the ancient pioneers

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<sup>1</sup> J. Burnet, *The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul*, London 1916, p. 3.

of philosophical knowledge understood it, and that is how the task of philosophy as it is classically understood is still understood to this day. Classical philosophy is not only the explanation of the context of reality, but it is a way of forming man. Therefore it is a proposal for a method of philosophical education that is an interesting alternative to contemporary forms of practicism.

The “sapiential” or wisdom-oriented way of cultivating philosophy is especially typical of the realistic current, which reached back to the Peripatetic tradition (Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas) and was rediscovered in the twentieth century by J. Maritain and E. Gilson. In Poland in the second half of the twentieth century, realistic philosophy acquired an important scientific center in the form of the Lublin Philosophical School, which not only continued that tradition of the cultivation of philosophy, but also engaged in discussion with other currents (such as positivism and Marxism). That bore fruit in the development of a cohesive philosophical system that tried anew to show the place of man in the contemporary world.<sup>1</sup>

**Types of Human Knowledge.** Man’s cognitive attitude does not constitute a uniform way of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge as it has gradually been discovered and formulated leads us to discern three fundamental types of knowledge, namely everyday knowledge, scientific knowledge, and philosophical knowledge. Ordinary knowledge (also called common-sense knowledge) is an attempt to respond to the problems that result from present needs of life. It is a collection of information resulting from daily needs that affect the problematic and character of acquired knowledge. Therefore it is knowledge about concrete things or processes; it is not methodically organized and is often discovered unintentionally or for the purposes at hand. It arises on account of shortcomings or shortages seen in man’s living environment. It is not solely practical knowledge (although the practical element is dominant), because at that level we see constant rules that operate in man’s relation to the world and to other persons. However this type of knowledge becomes insufficient with respect to the possibilities of the human intellect.

Scientific knowledge is a type of knowledge that is much broader in content and much more cognitively systematized. Since the beginning of history, the cultivation of science was closely connected with philosophy and was one of the conditions for the formation of philosophy. The transition from the perfected form of practical knowledge (*technai*) and the first form of scientific knowledge (*epistemai*) was due to the exception experience in apprehending the world that was started by the ancient Greeks. They noticed that reality is cognitively accessible to man, and the principles discovered in reality can be rationally organized. That allowed for the formation of the first sciences (such as astronomy and geometry) but also allowed for the formation of knowledge concerning the nature of the world in general.<sup>2</sup> That cognitive paradigm was basically in operation until the times of R. Descartes.

Modern natural science became the actual model for contemporary scientific knowledge. Mathematics as the ideal of theoretical knowledge (as considering what is constant) was joined with natural sciences, and so were the particular natural sciences that formed the model for the cultivation of the empirical sciences. That model took the dominant role in contemporary tendencies in sciences, and especially in the aspect of technological development. Scientific activity is important insofar as it is reflected in practical applications. The precision we encounter in the natural sciences arouses a justified admiration for their investigative abilities. The results, however, are material for the formulation of minute pieces of information about the world. The cognitive results and the laws formulated on that basis influence the rise of specialized domains that have application in daily life. The practical dimension of the sciences gains for them social recognition because they have influence on the formation of the world in which the postulates of technological progress have application. Technological development has become the paradigm for the practice of the sciences and for the interpretation of social phenomena.<sup>3</sup> If we use instruments that are constantly refined and help man in various domains of life, the importance of the sciences that produce them seems to be beyond doubt.

The technological perspectives for the cultivation of the sciences determine the way it functions and the areas in which it functions. It is noteworthy to show man’s place in the technological paradigm. Man is not a subject who is qualitatively set apart in the world, because he has been reduced to the order of nature and is subject to the same laws. On the one hand man is presented as the reference point for deliberate changes in nature. However, like all nature, man ultimately is merely material to be transformed. Man is a biologically constituted organism. In this context, life determines the power and mode of man’s existence. Therefore, as they seek man’s essence, they indicate structural factors that perform vital functions. Man is set apart from the background of other natural beings only by his different biological structure and the functions it performs (e.g., mental functions and functions that produce culture). Those functions are not treated as the consequences of personal acts that inte-

<sup>1</sup> On this topic, cf. M. A. Krąpiec, A. Maryniarczyk, *The Lublin Philosophical School*, Lublin 2010. The reflections below have been based on the legacy of this school.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Early Greek Science: Thales to Aristotle*, New York 1970, Chapters I and II.

<sup>3</sup> N. Postman showed this in an interesting way in his work, *Technopoly: the Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York 1993.

grally belong to man because they go beyond the organic order and are not subject to the methods of research in the natural sciences. Naturalism presents a standard exposition of scientific research in which technology is an expression of utility. Technology is precise in its methods, it is useful, and progress is visible in technology.<sup>1</sup>

In this context philosophy does not fit among the particular sciences. Philosophical knowledge is definitely different from the technological paradigm, and the aim of philosophy is not utility. However, human cognitive possibilities are not fulfilled by stopping at the level of the production of useful goods. The need for philosophy springs from the nature of man, from his ability of intellectual knowledge and free action. Therefore philosophy constitutes another type of knowledge, and it cannot be reduced to the particular or productive sciences.

In the ordinary way of understanding, philosophy constitutes a specific desire for something that seems to be indefinite, unknown, but also all-encompassing. This somewhat psychological description is not intended to take away the scientific dimension of philosophy, but to indicate an experience that is not easy to describe. It is a desire resulting from the need to satisfy man's natural ability to gain knowledge.<sup>2</sup> It refers to reality, which astonishes us with its mode of existence, its variety, and its dynamism. At the same time, reality puts man in a situation that constitutes a cognitive challenge to interpret and organize the contents he discovers. The cognitive act is not only the engagement of the intellect, but it is also a reaction to discovered reality. The way the natural desire to know is realized is therefore the starting point for the rational explanation of reality. Contemplation (Gk. *theoria* – beholding, investigation, contemplation) is the cognitive act proper to the philosophical apprehension of reality. Contemplation is a type of knowledge that consists in the intellectual apprehension of the structure of things in order to show the causes of existence and the elements that constitute the structure of things. The uniqueness of the cognitive act does not reside in the apprehension only of what is given as the proximate cause, but this act also investigates the ultimate reason for existence. Philosophy is the rational interpretation of the causes of the existence of things and for this reason it becomes theoretical knowledge to the highest degree.

Today the term “theory” is associated more with mathematics or natural science. Without doubt those sciences spring from the act of knowing the world in the aspect of the discovery of the laws that operation in the world. However, at the same time they enter into the area of applicability and in this way become the proper foundation for the creation of technological progress. The dominant tendency, and even the postulate of the high status of science is the application of science. The combination of the theoretical order with the order of the application of knowledge determines the value of science. It seems unscientific to practice the sciences without the possibility of the practical application of the sciences. This causes an attitude that wants to make knowledge particular to narrow aspects of applications. Man is not in a position to apprehend the world as a whole. Knowledge is always affected by some aspect in view of which we apprehend the object. This is not an artificial operation but results from the specific character of human knowledge. The aspective character of knowledge results from the structure of the knowing subject. However, the need to understand the world as a whole, and the act of showing its reason for existence and end or purpose do not lose their position in man's cognitive field. The question of the meaning of existence remains constantly relevant. Therefore only philosophy in a proper sense is purely theoretical knowledge, knowledge that investigates the fundamental principles and causes of the world's existence.

In contemporary philosophy there is a tendency to combine philosophy and the particular sciences into one realm of knowledge concerning the world. It is proposed that philosophy in order to explain the world should consider the findings of the particular sciences. Philosophy is often understood as a group of contents concerning the world. Philosophy then takes the form of a synthesis of the sciences, that is, knowledge understood as the accumulation of various pieces of methodically arranged and organized information. Philosophy is in a position critically to analyze the foundations of the other sciences, but that does not mean that this is the proper task of philosophy. The accumulation of prepared results of research sometimes loses cognitive value because it constitutes a methodologically varied group of data about the world. However, such an approach leads to a loss of neutrality in the object of research, because if at the foundation we have research material that has already been constituted, we are not explaining reality, but only explaining the thought of the other sciences on reality. Such an approach reduces philosophy to a discipline that organizes the sciences. Meanwhile, philosophy appears as the need for knowledge that explains (and not merely describes or leads to production), and philosophy constitutes man's response to the riddle of existence.

**What is Philosophy?** To explain what philosophy is we must indicate the basis for singling it out as a separate discipline and the ways in which it is practised. This will allow us to understand the meaning of philosophical questions and answers. Philosophy is the rational explanation of reality that is given in experience. Philosophy strives to discover what determines that reality exists, that it is something that acts, and that it is the

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<sup>1</sup> The treatment of technology as a paradigm for science was started by Francis Bacon. P. Jaroszyński described this phenomenon in *Science in Culture*, Rodopi B. V., Amsterdam New York 2007, pp. 129-175.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle expressed this in the first sentence of the collection of books called the *Metaphysics*: “All men by nature desire to know.” Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I – II, W. D. Ross, London 1997, 980 a 20.

cause of something. Such knowledge is called philosophy. It is not practical knowledge, a sort of knowledge that exploits its results for some particular application, but it is knowledge that strives to find an essential explanation of the world and to indicate the causes of the world's existence.<sup>1</sup>

Philosophy is an expression of the ability to acquire knowledge and to reason. That ability allows us to seek the ultimate reasons for the existence of what is. The way of explaining the world realized in this way constitutes a systematic body of knowledge that possesses its own autonomous object and its own independently developed methods of research. By investigating causes, we can cognitively apprehend the thing itself (in that which constitutes its essence) and discover the reasons for its existence. We can rationally explain what something is like and why it is. This aspect, singled out in this way, of research on reality is not taken up by any of the particular sciences. Philosophy starts from a broad perspective in which it shows the causes of everything that exists, and thereby it becomes the most general body of knowledge. As we more precisely define the object of philosophy as it is so broadly understood, we arrive at the term "being," which is a kind of cognitive shorthand, and at the same time it is the formulation of a specific domain of knowledge. The term "being" was formulated on the basis of the infinitive form of the verb "to be" ("to exist"). The accepted noun-form of "being" means "that which is." The emphasis on the existential aspect constitutes the fundamental meaning of the formulation, which despite different connotations was primarily ordered to existence.

The ancient definition of the object of philosophy emphasized that philosophy considered being as being, and what being is in itself. Being as "that which is" constitutes the object, the field of research of which concerns the existence of everything that is. For this reason the object of philosophy is something real (that which exists) and universal (as everything that exists). Understood in this object, the object is beyond denotation because only non-being, or that which is not, can be the boundary of being (although non-being as something constitutes only an intellectual construction). However, universalization does not mean the unification of the object. The universalist mode of research has a twofold meaning in philosophy. It is the broadest conception in terms of denotation, with respect to the aspect of existence (everything that is constitutes the object of philosophy). At the same time, it shows the universal foundations for the particularized apprehensions of reality that appear in the particular sciences.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the above properties, the postulate of philosophy as an autonomous body of knowledge appears even more strongly. If the object of philosophy is the broadest in denotation, it cannot be considered on the basis of something that is narrower in denotation. Therefore the object of philosophy must be neutral and cannot present the findings of the other sciences at the starting point.

The way the object of philosophy is formulated as "that which is" already appears rarely in contemporary research. This is because all theses and terms that have a strong assertive aspect are avoided. Today, the consideration of being as the object of philosophy is reduced to a reflection on the concept of "being," the content of that concept, and the semiotic regions connected with that concept. Instead of really existing reality as the fundamental reference for philosophical enquiries, most often they bring in language, the structure and meaning of which are treated as the only meaningful field for the cultivation of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> The cultivation of philosophy is often reduced to attempts to formalize language, and the existential aspect of things completely disappears. The popularity of the linguistic method today became the reason why philosophy was transformed from a theoretical science into the practical knowledge of the analytic investigation of language. Although it is a useful method, it cannot replace the philosophical explanation of reality. The linguistic method is what analytics was for Aristotle, that is, a tool (*órganon*) needed for the cultivation of philosophy.

Philosophy is also often reduced to pure thought and treated as speculation "divorced" from reality. Such an approach accents the role of the subjective factor in knowledge and sees in the subjective factor the guarantee for the adequate knowability of the world in the act of thinking (idealism). Philosophy is reduced to the subjective mode of perceiving contents that constitute intellectual representations of the states of things. The absolutization of cognitive intellectual contents causes philosophy to be reduced to the analysis of internally non-contradictory structures of thought. Meanwhile, there is an essential difference between thinking and knowing. Thinking is exclusively an intellectual operation on signs (concepts) that are the result of knowing. Philosophy, however, is a method for knowing reality. Only knowledge (and sensory knowledge in particular) allows us to read the states of things. Without that content there would be no cognitive contents for operations of thought, and there would be no possibility of explaining reality.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophy can also engage in thinking about practical matters, about moral activity, politics, art, and education, by indicating the general reasons for those actions (why they occur), but philosophy does not concentrate on presenting concrete modes of action.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore philosophy in many conceptions is understood only as a methodological reflection on a particular discipline, and it is reduced to the level of a metascience. The universalism of the object is realized by the discovery of the ultimate reasons of being of everything that exists.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Harris, *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein. How to Play Games with Words*, London and New York 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. A. Krapiec, *Knowledge and Reality*, Forum Philosophicum 11: 2006, pp. 29-35.

The term “speculation” appears in philosophy, but it does not mean operations of thought leading to the search for something inaccessible, or leading to the construction of a model of the world. The Latin term *speculabile* means “that which is knowable” and corresponds to the Greek term *theoria* or contemplation. Philosophy as speculative knowledge is a “reading” of the nature of things, and it is the process of discovering on that basis the principles that constitute the nature of things. As it follows from the etymological definition of philosophy (the love of wisdom), wisdom is the proper end of philosophy. Wisdom here is not supposed to be the accumulation of information about the world. Aristotle accurately described wisdom in philosophy as the knowledge of the first causes and principles of things.<sup>1</sup> Philosophy is the highest kind of knowledge because it concerns everything that exists, and it is a kind of knowledge that is independent, that is, worthy to be chosen, not on account of something else as a tool, but for its own sake – *scire propter scire*. Philosophy understood in this way is not a game divorced from the world and from human life, but a process that uses reason and discovers reality; it is the process of discovering “what it is as it is.” At the same time, philosophy is the most difficult kind of knowledge because it concerns the intellectual discovery of something that we do not find in any of the particular sciences. Aristotle described knowledge thus understood as first philosophy (*prote philosophia*). The wisdom for which philosophy strives is its maximalism, that is, a universal, holistic, and harmonious apprehension of knowledge concerning the world.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the purpose of philosophy is expressed in this. That purpose in the context of the technological paradigm that goes with the contemporary sciences must be faithful to the ideal of *theoria*.

With respect to the object and end of philosophy, a method of knowledge is formulated that unites philosophical discourse into a whole. The method becomes a tool to provide rational justification for the permissible source of knowledge. The object is the fundamental guarantee for the right choice of the method of knowledge. This does not mean that the object in the act of knowing is something that has been constructed, because it is the object and the end that determine the method of knowledge. The investigation of the conditions for philosophical discourse is the rational demonstration of the causes of the occurrence of the process of knowledge. The context in which philosophical knowledge arises and reaches a reflected form becomes important. In realistic philosophy, reality is that context. The discovery of the truth about what we know (the truth about the world, about man, and about relations) is the indication of the factors that determine the reason for the existence of what is (being) and the way it exists. The specific character of the philosophical way of knowing the world is that it shows the factor without which that which is could not exist. For that reason, the existence of being and the way it cognitively apprehended form the central point of philosophical enquiries.

Philosophy as the body of knowledge that explains reality can, at the same time, make knowledge itself its object, and it can reflect critically on the method for engaging in discourse. This practical knowledge of how to look at the act of knowledge is an expression of the universality of philosophy and its maximalist approach to reality. The investigation of the relation of agreement of intellectual conceptions with what is in reality is the business of logic, which in philosophy is an auxiliary discipline. The correctness of scientific discourse is a condition for engaging in it properly. Therefore the significance of the act of knowledge is a necessary but insufficient condition for a sound explanation of reality. However, here the relation to reality becomes the final reference point. Philosophy must first of all show what reality is, and then show how reality can be adequately apprehended.<sup>3</sup> In this context we can see the fundamental purpose of philosophy.

Despite the contemporary domination of meta-philosophical thought, which goes together with the development of the philosophical knowledge of reality, meta-philosophical thought is not the only or final guarantee of the rationality of enquiries. The potential of man’s intellectual abilities is still ordered to the object of knowledge, which in order to be known must correspond to the nature of the intellect. The actualization of cognitive abilities occurs when the object is real (when it exists as something), knowable (when it is intelligible and non-contradictory in its existence), and rational (when it actualizes the intellect cognitively). Also, we cannot assume realism. Only the discovery of existence and of the rationality of reality allows us to explain it and to provide a rational justification for it. Therefore, the basic condition for the rational explanation of reality is not that we set forth the conditions for reality as such, but that we reconcile them with reality. This is the fundamental postulate of philosophical realism.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle indicates this in the first book of the *Metaphysics* (cf. 981 b 28 – 29, 982 a 2, and ff), and in other writings (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139 b 17).

<sup>2</sup> “It seems that, while ascribing to philosophy a depth of knowledge and a supratemporal view of the object, metaphysics should be treated not as a route to be taken towards wisdom, but also as knowledge provoked by wisdom.” S. Kamiński, *Wisdom in Science and Philosophy*, in: *Studies in Logic and Theory of Knowledge*, ed. L. Borkowski, S. Kamiński, A. B. Stepień, vol. 1, Lublin 1985, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. Kamiński, *The Methodological Peculiarity of Theory of Being*, in: *Theory of Being. To Understand Reality*, ed. S. Kamiński, M. Kurdziałek, Z. J. Zdybicka (ed.), Lublin 1980, pp. 7 – 23.

<sup>4</sup> Gilson showed this well in his work *Methodical Realism*, trans. P. Trower, Front Royal 1990, especially in the chapter, *The Realist Beginner’s Handbook* (pp. 127 – 145).

**Conclusion.** Most types of knowledge show the wealth of man's possibilities in the process of his perfection of himself and of the world around him. Those types of knowledge are the foundation for organizing information concerning the world and for discovering the causes of the world's existence. They release creative possibilities in man that develop culture and the technical tools needed for live. However, this can be achieved under the condition that we consider man's role as the subject of all knowledge. In this context, the problem of the domination of technological tendencies in the practice of science is clearly seen. The divergence of ends between philosophy (*scire propter scire*) and the technological paradigm of the sciences (*scire propter uti*) leads to a loss of balance in man's cognitive life. The measurable results of technological development permit us to think that the only scientific progress that occurs is due to the method it uses (praxism). Philosophy, on the other hand, is reduced to the role of an instrument for organizing the particular sciences. Meanwhile, it is not only a question of changing the world, but a question also of knowing the world rationally and of showing man's place in the world (realism). In this aspect, philosophy performs a systemically justified role in relation to all the sciences.

The remarks presented on the way philosophy is cultivated are only an introduction to a problematic that requires the detailed investigation of research procedures and the rational justifications of theses that are presented. Such enquiries have been made in the Lublin Philosophical School in which a system of realistic philosophy has been developed. Philosophy expresses man's relation to everything around him. This is knowledge, or cognition, understood as a method for acquiring a body of knowledge about the world and for the rational justification of that body of knowledge. Therefore the task that philosophy performs today is the same as it was two and half millennia ago, to explain reality rationally.

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**Павло Гондек. Місце філософії в сучасній парадигмі науки.** *Стаття є вступом в проблему визначення відповідного місця і ролі філософії в сучасній науковій рефлексії. Показані в ній відмінності між наукою і філософією. Сучасні наукові знання під впливом технологічної парадигми стають прикладними знаннями. У свою чергу, філософія є знанням, метою якого є мудрість, що зрозуміла як пізнання принципів і причин існування речей. Тому будь-які форми редукування філософії до практично-корисних знань є результатом нерозуміння її мети і властивого предмету.*

**Ключові слова:** філософія, наука, технологія, мудрість, дійсність,

**Paweł Gonddek. The Place of Philosophy in the Contemporary Paradigm for the Practice of Science.** *For man the explanation of reality is a natural process that results from man's existential situation. Man makes a space for himself to live by intellectually discovering the world and by determining his own needs. Even the most simple operations involve man in the sphere of the intellect, and the process of learning about the world allows man to perfect his own existence. From experience comes knowledge, and knowledge appears in the form of the various domains of science. The fact that there are many sciences is the result of the fact that there are many aspects of the apprehension of things. The aspective character of knowledge is a consequence of the relation between reality and the subject who knows it. That allows us to discern and organize domains of knowledge that will serve as the foundation for the formation of the various kinds of the sciences. Contemporary tendencies in the practice of the sciences tend to practicism in which knowledge is that which can be applied (*scire propter uti*). The ideal of theoretical knowledge as the leading kind of knowledge is no longer mentioned. Among the theoretical science, philosophy seems to be the most useless; it sets for itself the goal of knowing the truth about the world (*scire propter scire*) and strives to discover the ultimate causes.*

**Keywords:** philosophy, science, technology, wisdom, reality