

THE PHILOSOPHY SUPREMACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Rationality at the risk of «a dark vision». Contemporary transformations of the world, which are mostly marked by the transition from the analogue culture to the digital one, require that the meaning, role and prospects of such kind of intellectual experience of mankind as philosophy be rethought. In the context of this transition, the traditional modern¹ forms of culture are undergoing significant transformations, which often poses a threat to their further prospects. Especially, this process manifests itself in the weakening of democratic institutions of the Western world. Likewise, the digital age puts all realms of human life to the test for their rational resilience, with the latter characterizing the consciously established way of interaction between people that orientates itself on the commonly established sense. Dismantlement of rationality's foundation of human existence and the risk of human culture sliding into the archaic state can be regarded as the universal threat in the digital age. Disappointment in the «project of modernity» with its ideals and values along with distrust of its institutions provide fertile ground for the demise of modern civilization.

The results of social researches conducted in 2018 in regard to the level of trust of ordinary Ukrainians in state and social institutions attest to their inclinations toward «a dark vision». The findings of the research revealed a remarkably low level of trust in the very institutions that play a crucial role in Ukrainian statehood – presidency, government, parliament, courts² [see 1]. The prevailing in the Ukrainian society climate of pessimism and distrust creates fertile soil for various political shenanigans that threaten Ukrainian statehood. The constant increase in disappointment and distrust is typical not only of Ukraine.

In his book «*Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*», the Canadian scholar Steven Pinker ad

dresses the threats posed by «a dark vision». Thus, he picked the expressions that are typical of «a dark vision» from the speeches made by the current American President, Donald Trump, and his close associates³. Here are some of them: «At the time of this writing, my country is led by people with a dark vision of the current moment: «mothers and children trapped in poverty... an education system which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge... and the crime, and the gangs, and the drugs that have stolen too many lives. «We are in an «outright war» that is «expanding and metastasizing». The blame for this nightmare may be placed on a «global power structure» that has eroded «the underlying spiritual and moral foundations of Christianity». [4, XVII– XVIII]. The question arises as to why «a dark vision» has captured the consciousness of not only «destitute Ukrainians», but also of statesmen of developed countries? What makes thinking paint our life in black even when it's getting better? All the more unexpected it is to hear these words from the leader of the USA, the country that has been successful in placing great value on such concepts as democracy, freedom and prosperity. Nevertheless, it is the population of developed countries that proves most vulnerable to the rhetoric of «a dark vision». The «Brexit» phenomenon is a case in point. We are now witnessing a deep political crisis that Britain is going through due to «a dark vision» of its citizens. Its fear of enraged crowd of refugees, pictures of whose on the billboards triggered the outcome of the referendum, has broken with a centuries-long tradition of British rationality.

Logic and common sense in support of Britain's membership in the EU have proven helpless in view of irrational sentiments and phobias. Lack of trust in prospects and institutions of the EU keeps on crippling Britain's statehood, threatening the durability of its foundations – democracy and rationality. Hence, Max Weber's key philosophical idea of an increasing specific weight of goal-rational actions as the main tendency of social development suffers a crushing defeat. «Anti-Western» reaction to social events in technologically developed countries is not accidental. It expresses resistance to the classic form of rationality backed by the digital culture.

Thus, the digital world becomes a powerful instigator of revealing limitations of modern rationality, which mainly acquires one-dimen-

sional interpretations of scientific truth. However, the digital age opens up new horizons and forms of rationality. Philosophers are faced with an extremely important task of preserving rational instructions of culture and legitimize those of its forms that are being ignored by modern rationality. For this purpose philosophy alone has to understand the directions of its changes.

The challenge of philosophy. The task of modern philosophy is to localize itself in a system of other cultural formsspirit and everyday practices. It is important to understand that philosophy constitutes a special kind of intellectual experience that is profoundly different from any other form of human mind. The problem of localization of philosophy is conditioned on the phenomenon of the blur of its substantial boundaries, which prevails in the consciousness of ordinary people and has become a common stereotype of modern culture. Paradoxically enough, such localization of philosophy requires its constant movement through self-determination in the context of challenges of the real world.

Self-renewal of philosophy has provided it with an opportunity to win back the lost position of the «supreme science», i.e. the transdisciplinary sphere of knowledge keeping the universal core of all other knowledge. Though we have to keep in the mind that the digital age, on the one hand, poses serious threats to philosophy, but, on the other hand, provides it with a chance to revive the lost supremacy. So, the digital culture makes intellectual challenges on philosophy, which changes the requirements for philosophical texts as well as the mechanisms for producing and understanding them. Also in the digital age, the realm of philosophical responsibility has also been penetrated by representatives of other fields of science. Thus, apart from humanities scholars, mathematicians and natural scientists have begun to publicly discuss problems of the universal scale that go well beyond the boundaries of their strict disciplinary specialization, entering the spheres of morality and philosophy. Speaking of Weber's works, we doubt his methodological principle of «freedom without value judgements». The modern scientist can no longer be free from passing judgements in his or her researches or making a clear distinction between empirical expressions and practical assessments.

Nowadays it is not philosophers but representatives of other fields who start initiating broad public discussions. Through social networks and other means of internet communication, the digital culture fosters rebirth of the tradition of such discussions. Discussions of philosophical topics stir up interest from a broader audience. A stronger public interest in philosophical issues may be exemplified by increasing popularity of popular science bestsellers. Books of this sort are read around the world by people of varied employment. Their main concepts and ideas evolve into extremely popular memes.

Thus, just a while ago the book «*The Black Swan*» [see 5] written by a Lebanese-American economist, statistician and mathematician, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, was considerably gaining in popularity. One of the leading British newspapers, The Sunday Times, hailed it as one of the twenty most influential books published after WW2. The concept of «the black swan» is commonly used nowadays and proves its own heuristicity. At least, Taleb's predictions regarding many political and economic events have been confirmed. Interestingly, in 2016 Taleb visited Ukraine at the invitation of the innovation space HUB 4.0, conducting an open seminar «Black Swan: predicting and winning in a world of chaos», which I had a chance to participate in. A world of chaos is a philosophical problem that comes back under the spotlight of philosophy through mathematics. Being a philosopher myself, I had something to learn from an economist. The seminar was open to broad public and drew lots of people of varied employment, profile and age groups: ranging from prominent politicians and journalists to students and those who were simply curious to learn more. Taleb's assertions that every living creature needs to be volatile and changeable along with his appeal to «survive like rats, nourish resistance to any poison», i.e. to practice one's antifragility (another of Taleb's famous concepts) or his assertion that «education makes us foolish», demonstrate the practical side of his theoretical position. It is Taleb's latter assertion in the context of his rather critical attitude to modernity that ensures his enormous worldwide success.

As of today, an Israeli historian, Yuval Noah Harari, has taken up the position of a new leader in intellectual admirations. His popular science book «*Homo Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind*» has already

become an international bestseller. In Israel Harari has gained in popularity to the extent that he is now a regular contributor to the country's oldest daily newspaper, *Haaretz*. His interpretation of a human being as of «an animal of no significance» [3, s. 3] brings about a fundamental change to how human beings conceive of themselves. The statement saying that «the most important thing to know about prehistoric humans is that they were insignificant animals with no more impact on their environment than gorillas, flies or jellyfish» [3, s. 4], provokes much thought on a special status of the modern human being. According to Harari, thanks to the three important revolutions: the Cognitive Revolution, the Agricultural Revolution and the Scientific Revolution, such human species as *Homo Sapiens* has managed to break away from its marginal position in the chain of evolution and to steer the latter towards its increasing domination. It is a matter of convention that a new geological epoch that sees human beings change nature due to their domination is called *Anthropocene*. How has a human being managed to surpass the level of the impact of a jellyfish or flies on its way to becoming a dominating living creature, putting the existence of life at risk? Referring to a large number of modern scientific researches, Harari is inviting as many people as possible to contemplate this issue. The historian reckons that the secret of an astounding evolutionary success of *Homo Sapiens* lies in «probably appearance of fiction. Large numbers of strangers can cooperate successfully by believing in common myth» [3, s. 30]. It is a knack for producing speculative knowledge that determines the specific features of philosophical thinking, enabling a rapid evolutionary breakthrough of *Homo Sapiens*. However, the book has enjoyed much popularity not only for its reflections on power of a human being. Equally interesting and important appears the question about «skeletons in the closet» [3, s. 5], namely the ways of gaining such power, which humankind would rather not talk about.

These philosophical problems are also addressed by Max Tegmark, a Swedish-American cosmologist, one of the founders of *The Future of Life Institute*, research and outreach organization aiming to reduce existential risks of artificial intelligence. Thus, in his book «*Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*» M. Tegmark stimulates right away a lengthy public discussion in the title of the first chapter «Wel-

come to the Most Important Conversation of Our Time» [6, Locations 405–406]. As an epigraph to this chapter, Tegmark chose the idea that «technology is giving life the potential to flourish like never before – or to self-destruct» [Ibid.]. A thorough analysis of human intelligence in view of technological development poses many interesting and important questions that have become the most popular topic of public discussion.

The change of philosophy. The time has come for philosophy to declare its importance. However, to restore trust in philosophy means to reject a wide range of deeply-rooted perceptions of self. One of such perceptions is the definition of philosophy as of a speculative sphere of knowledge, that is to say, a theoretical knowledge that is concluded without referring to experience («speculative judgment»). It is often called an abstract judgement.

Rejection of an abstract side of philosophy does not come easy, since the core of the nature of philosophical thinking is a human ability to think in terms of the imaginary, or according to Kantian tradition, of the transcendental, which implies speculative escape from the boundaries of an existent experience in order to come up with cognitive concepts as tools for producing new knowledge. Strictness, analytical prowess and logic of philosophical thought determine a mechanism for achieving this goal. Hence, philosophy may be considered as a sphere of strict (firmly sticking to the object of reflection and relying on meaningful ground, from which a thought is concluded and on which it is based), analytical (thorough, scrupulous and in-depth) as well as argumentative and logical comprehension of the imaginary (of Aristotelian metaphysical). Consequently, abstract thinking acquires its exact specificity through philosophy.

Unlike the classic modern age, in which the objective and subjective contradistinction play a key role, the digital age blurs the distinction between the real and the virtual (the imaginary), making it more agile and open. For the digital age, the objective and subjective contradistinction lose its epistemological domination. On the contrary, the digital age paves the way for the dissolution of classic dichotomies of thinking. We are witnessing a rapidly growing tendency for overcoming such philosophical dichotomies as spirit-body, subject-object, culture-nature, man-

technology, man-animal, etc. Hence, philosophy's perception of itself in the digital age is to go through both the preservation of its own conceptual and argumentative core and through rejection of the transcendental and dichotomous register of its embodiment. Furthermore, the vocation of philosophy as a realm for posing questions and raising doubts should be preserved.

The practicality of philosophy. Unlike the classic modern philosophy, the contemporary one is forced to enhance its own practicality. It is worth noting that practicality of philosophy can be defined as a life rootedness of philosophical rationality in the process of constituting of human existence. The main difference in the contemporary interpretation of practicality of philosophy lies in this practicality losing features of external instrumentality.

«Practization» of philosophy should be exposed as its immanent property. Thus, from the very outset, the definition of philosophy needs to contain a reference to the practicality of philosophy as a form of rationality enabling the thinking to open up new horizons of understanding of human existence not only in terms of the already accomplished but from a perspective of an imaginary experience. Philosophy as a renewed strategy of thinking for overcoming the real and the virtual might serve an effective tool to solve this problem. Paradoxically, in an era of the triumph of virtuality, philosophy has to come close to the real dimension of human existence, earning a reputation of a practical sphere of knowledge.

Robert Frodeman and Adam Briggie dedicated a whole article to the problem of philosophy having lost its connection with the practical aspects of life [see 2]. In their opinion, it is philosophy's divorce from the practical aspects of life that has led it astray. The authors suggest that the reason why the development of philosophy has gone awry lies in the modern form its institutionalization. According to them, the history of Western philosophy can be presented in different ways. One can talk of its periods (the ancient world, the Middle Ages, modernity), competitive traditions (empiricism vs. rationalism, analytical philosophy vs. continental philosophy) and domains (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics). It is also fairly possible to consider history by accentuating its grounds for research of high priority, such as researches on gender, race,

etc. However, the authors of the article state that despite all the divergences between philosophical realms and problems, the turning point uniting them is modern institutional understanding of philosophy as a scientific structure of a research university at the end of the 19th century. This institutionalization of philosophy turns it into a cause that can be pursued only within the framework of research institutions.

The authors consider the transformation of philosophy into a research activity and an academic subject area as a main reason of philosophy losing its credibility. For philosophy to be studied at university, it has to be free in its presence in culture. Philosophers used to belong both to the circles of diplomats, and lens polishing artisans, and professors at a university. According to the two scholars, it was the institutional «freedom» of philosophy that helped philosophy pursue its vocation as a realm for posing questions and raising doubts. It was Socrates who talked of this nature of philosophy, and it was Skovoroda who practised it. The modern institutionalization of philosophy deprives it of freedom, at the same time changing it from a realm for posing questions and raising doubts into a realm of expert knowledge.

Due to these transformations, philosophy is «purified» of the practical aspects of life. Such «purification», the authors think, happens because of two reasons. First, the rapid development of natural sciences leads to their delimitation from philosophy, encouraging the subsequent emergence of social sciences. It is worth noting that such delimitation has never existed before, that's why naturalists always felt at home in the circles of philosophers. They called themselves «natural philosophers»⁴, that is to say, philosophers studying nature, whereas philosophers, who rather took interest in social issues, used to identify themselves as «moral philosophers»⁵. Second, the modern institutionalization of philosophy as of an academic scientific area puts it on a par with other areas, which leads to philosophy being deprived of its status of the supreme science. The previous hierarchy of knowledge that philosophy was master of is being destroyed. Now it is giving place to the division of knowledge into natural science and humanities, which has contributed to their transformation into a set of independent and equal knowledge areas. Philosophy has become one of them.

The fact that philosophy has been driven away from the position of the supreme science is weakening its motivation to take care of fundamental questions of human existence. In the modern (research) university, the function of contemplating these questions, which was inherited by the very first universities from church schools, is no longer relevant, whereas the questions regarding the nature of human beings and goals of their lives defined the very core of educational program at the first universities. Such disciplines as philosophy, theology, medicine and law were not counterposed; on the contrary, they were cooperating within the single research paradigm offered by philosophy. The strengthening of disciplinary specialization in the modern university exerts a destructive influence on this harmony and interaction.

The processes happening along with the development of the modern university keep weakening the status of philosophy, compelling it to constantly make its mark. These processes are all the more complicated by the philosophy's requirement to correspond with the structure and the standards of the modern university, in particular, with the strengthening of specialization. Only the «disciplined» philosophy, as the authors of the article call it, i.e. the one that complies with these requirements, is considered «true». It is this philosophy that defines the standard of philosophizing as such. Obviously, such a «purified» philosophy is having a hard time competing with natural sciences.

No one really doubts the practical meaning of accomplishments of the latter, whereas the success of the former is mostly known to philosophers alone.

Interstitial presence of philosophy as its supremacy. According to Frodeman and Briggie, philosophy should by no means be «purified». Instead of considering «dirty hands» of philosophy as a problem, we should rather accept them as the native condition of philosophical thought, since hands of philosophy «get dirty» not through the contact with the real world. «Philosophy should never have been purified. Rather than being seen as a problem, «dirty hands» should be understood as the native condition of philosophic thought – present everywhere, often interstitial, essentially interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary in nature. Philosophy is a mangle. The philosopher's hands were never clean and were never meant to be» [2]. The authors speak of *interstitial presence of philosophy* that manifests itself

in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary characteristics of the latter. They compare philosophy with a mangle⁶. Just like a mangle, philosophy appears a necessary tool in everyday life. If a mangle was used to wash sheets and clothes, then philosophy is meant to be used for washing too, though not of dirty clothes, but of human nature. That is why philosophy is tightly linked with morality.

However, not only does the modern university have the division of knowledge into different areas, it also experiences their separation from moral virtues. Before, morality and knowledge used to go hand in hand. This was especially the case in the realm of philosophy. It was no coincidence that philosophers considered themselves moral agents *par excellence*. In Frodeman and Briggles' article, there is a mention of a British thinker of the 18th century, Joseph Priestly, who thought that a philosopher should be better than other people. Priestly thought of philosophy as of *vocation* requiring significant moral virtues, in particular, honesty and selflessness. Summing up their reflections on the connection between philosophy and morality, Frodeman and Briggles arrive at the conclusion that philosophy has always placed more importance on being a good and useful for human existence rather than on the abstract sphere (independent of real human needs) for producing knowledge.

Let's get back to Harari's thought about the fact that the cognitive revolution, which lies in the development of Homo Sapiens' ability to form abstract concepts, determines basic precondition for domination of our species in the animal and human realms as well as justifies the deeply-rooted character of philosophy in human existence. Thanks to this deep-rootedness philosophy stands a chance of winning its supremacy back in the digital age. To achieve this, it needs: 1) to overcome its disciplinary closeness towards other forms of rationality, in particular, towards scientific knowledge and other philosophical traditions; 2) to strengthen its argumentative and analytical apparatus by addressing the problems of morality.

NOTES

¹ The term «modern» is used in terms of the philosophical meaning for advancing an understanding of the world through the lens of human reason guided by the scientific method.

² 13,8% of respondents trust Ukraine's President, 80,6% of them don't; the respective figures for the government are — 13,7% and 80,7% , for the parliament — 10,3% and 85,6%, for the National Bank of Ukraine — 14,1% and 76,2%, for the Supreme Court — 10,6% and 75,2%. 8,6% of respondents put trust in state employees, whereas 85,3% of them don't.

³ «Mothers and children» from Donald Trump's inaugural speech, Jan. 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural-address>. «Outright war» and «spiritual and moral foundations» from Trump chief strategist Stephen Bannon's remarks to a Vatican conference in the summer of 2014, transcribed in J. L. Feder, «This Is How Steve Bannon Sees the Entire World», BuzzFeed, Nov. 16, 2016, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/this-is-how-steve-bannon-sees-the-entire-world>. «Global power structure» from «Donald Trump's Argument for America», final television campaign ad, Nov. 2016, <http://blog.4president.org/2016/2016-tv-ad/>. Bannon is commonly credited with authoring or coauthoring all three.

⁴The definition of «*natural philosophers*» is used in the article.

⁵The definition of «*moral philosophers*» is used in the article.

⁶ A mangle is an old tool for washing, pressing and flattening sheets and another laundry.

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Ольга Гомілко. Верховенство філософії у цифрову епоху.

Сучасні трансформації світу, котрі стають випробуванням усіх сфер людського життя на їх раціональну стійкість, потребують переосмислення значення, ролі та перспектив такого роду духовного досвіду людства як філософія. Світ цифри постає могутнім провокатором виявлення обмежень модерної раціональності, котра здебільшого набуває одномірних тлумачень наукової істини. Разом з тим, цифрова епоха розкриває нові горизонти та форми раціональності. Перед філософами стоїть вкрай важливе завдання збереження раціональних настанов культури та легітимація тих її форм, котрі модерна раціональність ігнорує. Для цього філософія сама має усвідомити напрями власних змін. Самооновлення філософії дає їй можливість повернути собі втрачену позицію «верховної науки», тобто трансдисциплінарної сфери знань, котра утримує універсальне ядро всіх інших знань. Можна говорити про *інтерстиціальний характер присутності філософії*, котра виражає себе в міждисциплінарному та трансдисциплінарному характері останньої. Свою верховність філософія виявляє не лише серед наукових дисциплін, але й у людській практиці загалом. Вона постає необхідним знаряддям повсякденного життя. Ось чому для даного дослідження важливо з'ясувати яким чином філософія суттєво пов'язана із мораллю. У цифрову добу актуалізується висновок про те, що для філософії завжди було важливішим бути корисною для людського життя, ніж абстрактною сферою (незалежною від реальних людських потреб) вироблення знань. Щоб повернути своє верховенство філософії потрібно: 1) подолати дисциплінарну закритість філософії іншим формам раціональності, зокрема, науковому знанню та іншим філософським традиціям; 2) посилити аргументативно-аналітичний апарат філософії за рахунок виходу на проблеми моралі.

Ключові слова: раціональність, філософія, цифрова епоха, «темна візія», мораль, практика, інтерстиціальність філософії.

Ольга Гомілко. Верховенство філософії в цифрову епоху.

Современные трансформации мира, которые становятся испытанием всех сфер человеческой жизни на их рациональную устойчивость, требуют переосмысления значения, роли и перспектив такого рода духовного опыта человечества как философия. Мир цифры становится мощным провокатором выявления ограничений современной ра-

циональности, которая в основном приобретает значение одномерного толкования научной истины. Вместе с тем, цифровая эпоха раскрывает новые горизонты и формы рациональности. Перед философами стоит крайне важная задача сохранения рациональных установок культуры и легитимация тех ее форм, которые современная рациональность игнорирует. Для этого философия сама должна осознать направления собственных изменений. Самообновление философии дает ей возможность вернуть себе утраченную позицию «верховной науки», то есть трансдисциплинарной сферы знаний, которая содержит универсальное ядро всех других знаний. Можно говорить о интерстициальном характере присутствия философии, выражающей себя в междисциплинарном и трансдисциплинарном характере последней. Свое главенство философия обнаруживает не только среди научных дисциплин, но и в человеческой практике в целом. Она выступает необходимым орудием повседневной жизни. Вот почему для данного исследования важно выяснить каким образом философия существенно связана с моралью. В цифровую эпоху актуализируется вывод о том, что для философии всегда было более важно быть полезной для человеческой жизни, чем абстрактной сферой (независимой от реальных человеческих потребностей) знаний. Чтобы вернуть свое верховенство философии нужно: 1) преодолеть дисциплинарную закрытость философии другим формам рациональности, в частности, научному знанию и другим философским традициям; 2) усилить аргументативно-аналитический аппарат философии за счет выхода на проблемы морали.

Ключевые слова: рациональность, философия, цифровая эпоха, «темная визия», мораль, практика, интерстициальный характер философии.

Olga Gomilko. The philosophy supremacy in the digital age.

Contemporary transformations of the world, the ones that put all realms of human life to the test for their rational resilience, require that the meaning, role and prospects of such kind of intellectual experience of mankind as philosophy be rethought. The digital world appears a powerful instigator manifesting limitations of modern rationality, which mostly acquires one-dimensional interpretations of scientific truth. However, the digital age opens up new horizons and forms of rationality. Philosophers are faced with an extremely important task of preserving rational instructions

of culture and legitimize those of its forms that are being ignored by modern rationality. For this purpose philosophy alone has to understand the directions of its changes. Self-renewal of philosophy provides it with an opportunity to regain its identity of the «supreme science», i.e. the transdisciplinary sphere of knowledge keeping the core of all other spheres. We could talk about *interstitial presence of philosophy* that manifests itself in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary characteristics of the latter. For *interstitial presence of philosophy* is considered as the supremacy of philosophy. The latter is viewed not only in the scientific area but in general human practice. Therefore philosophy appears a necessary tool in everyday life for enlightening a human nature. That is why philosophy is tightly linked with morality. To achieve the philosophy supremacy, it needs: 1) to overcome disciplinary closeness of philosophy towards other forms of rationality, in particular, towards scientific knowledge and other philosophical traditions; 2) to strengthen philosophical argumentative and analytical apparatus by addressing the problems of morality.

Key words: rationality, philosophy, the digital age, «a dark vision», morality, practice, interstitial presence of philosophy.