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## THE PROBLEM OF SYSTEMATIZATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORIES: HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION

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*The article attempts to explain the difficulty of systematization of philosophical categories. Philosophical categories are defined as common forms of cognitive and world view attitude of the man to the nature, society and his own existence. The article also analyses basic approaches to the process of creating the system of philosophical categories in the history of philosophical thought. The review of the major historical phases of philosophical interpretation of categories allows to state the existence of the problematic issue connected with forming the system of categories. A lot of attempts have been undertaken on this subject. All of them were found controversial. It can be explained by the fact that all the attempts to systematize categories contradict the following principles - if categories are universal reflection forms of objective characteristics of existence, then their hierarchy (introduced by the system) must be the reflection of these characteristics' hierarchy. But it is impossible to imagine that the "hierarchy" principle operates in the system of being, because the objective world is organized rather on the principle of "equality" than "subordination". The article addresses functional and developmental characteristics of philosophical categories. The article gives the author's understanding of the concept of "philosophical categories".*

**Keywords:** *categories, philosophical categories, meaning, functions, system, category apparatus, thinking.*

**Problem definition and its relationship with important scientific and practical tasks.** In their life people are constantly using categories that have several meanings in everyday language. Firstly, categories mean a kind, a group, a class etc. (for example, this person belongs to the category of highly educated people, a teacher of the highest category). Secondly, by categories we mean the fundamental, basic concept of this or that science (for example, the number, the multitude, etc. in Maths or the field, the mass in Physics). Thirdly, it is the understanding of the categories' meaning that is given in philosophical encyclopedic literature. In other words, categories are philosophical concepts which have the most general meanings (for example, existence, world, spirit). Fourthly, categories are objective universal forms of thinking and existence (for example, such categories as quality and quantity, cause, consequence, etc.).

Philosophical categories are defined as common forms of cognitive and world view attitude of the man to the nature, society and his own existence. Philosophical categories are basic, the most fundamental concepts that express universal characteristics and relations between material and spiritual world through which philosophical thinking is realized and which serve as fundamental principles of cognition and spiritual and practical transformation of the world. Since philosophical categories reflect main characteristics and laws of the world and cognition, they themselves represent the system, complementing each other and serving as theoretical model of the objective world. That

constitutes the problem of systematization of philosophical categories.

**Analysis of recent research and publications in which a solution of the problem to which the author refers.** In the history of development of philosophical thought each scholar tried to define the meaning and significance of this or that category or groups of categories. Among the classic authors of the world philosophy we should mention Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Engels and others. Theories of these scholars represent different historical periods in the development of beliefs about nature and functions of philosophical categories. Philosophers of the Soviet Union also paid considerable attention to the study of categories (P. Kopnin, V. Shynkaruk, V. Melnikov, B. Kedrov, A. Ogurtsov and others). In their works these scholars make a special emphasis on categories of dialectics. The works of modern national scientists are mostly devoted to the study of methodological function of categories and their ontological dimension, etc. These are the works of I. Boichenko, M. Bulatova, I. Nadolnuy, S. Krimskuy, M. Popovich, V. Tabachivskuy and others.

**The purpose of this article** is an attempt to prove the difficulty of systematizing the philosophical categories by analysing basic approaches to forming the system of categories in the history of philosophical thought.

**Summary of the basic material.** So how do categories appear? While answering this question, it's necessary to mention that we know the meaning

of common or special concepts in everyday life or work. However, philosophical categories have historical character. They are created in the process of the man's social and historical activity and reflect objective reality in specific historical conditions. Along with historical development and development of knowledge, each category's meaning is being changed and enriched, and filled with some new material. However, philosophical thinking exists not only as the combination of categories but also as their organic interrelation. We can say that the development of categories means the development of interconnection between them which has social and cultural stipulation and historical character of development.

Philosophical categories are the product of the society's long development. They can't be produced by a single person during his or her life since they have historical and social character and turn to be the generalizations of social spiritual and practical experience rather than individual one. For each new generation or individual these categories appear to be something set in advance (a priori), but as for the humanity as a whole, they have experimental character of origin and development (a posteriori). Cultural experience is not only reflected in these forms of philosophical thinking but is also generalized, accumulated, stored and transmitted from generation to generation.

Philosophical categories appear to be the most important tools for spiritual and theoretical understanding of reality as well as the major means of spiritual and practical exploration of the world. In the historical process of the human culture creating and developing, the man really generalizes the social reality in the process of objective and transformative activity. The categories turn to be the fundamental forms of such generalization. The process of creating and developing philosophical categories is long, difficult and multi-step. It depends on other forms of reality categorization. By the way, I. Boichenko thinks that cultural and world outlook categories are the pre-forms of philosophical categories. In this context the opinion of another Ukrainian philosopher V. Tabachkovskiy appears to be totally rightful. He thinks that philosophical categories, which theoretically conceptualize human ideas about the world, are preceded by categorical forms about the man's place in the natural and social universal world and about the human's environment as the totality of "lifepurport objects". [2].

As for the actual philosophical categories, we can see that their content has historically changed as well as the way they are organized. This is especially important because any culture is an integral formation, which is adequately reflected not

only in separate categories but also in specific ways of their systematization. Thus, in Antiquity one of the first scholars who tried to systematize categories was Aristotle, a famous thinker of that period. By the way, one of his works is exactly called "Categories". According to the scholar, the senses, studied by logic, give extensive explanation of the entity, and any of these senses can be considered as a specific kind of being. Each of them reveals being in general, but in its own way. In particular, it is reflected in the language, in various meanings of the word "being" acquired in the process of its usage. That's why the scholar considers categories to be the common types of statements about the entity as well as the common types of the entity itself. Aristotle distinguished ten types of categories: substance (that answers the question "What?"); quantity (that answers the question "How many?"); quality (that answers the question "Which?"); relation (Regarding what?); place (Where?); time (When?); being-in-a-position (In what position?); having (state); doing (action); being affected (affection).

He came to ontological definitions of being through forms or common ways of its expression. In his "Categories" the ancient scholar introduced the fundamental idea that initiated centuries of philosophical studies in this area. Aristotle noted: "Each of the things said without any connection signifies either substance or "quantity" or "quality" or "relation" or "where" or "when" or "being-in-a-position" or "having" or "doing" or "being-affected". [3, p.55] Categories summarize our knowledge about things and being in general, they contain all the possible questions about it and determine what we can say about being as a whole. Therefore, the main function of categories is to be the meanings of being itself.

Thus, categories in Aristotle's works acquire not only semantic but also logical meaning, forming general structure of thinking. In his opinion, mediations, found in the sphere of categorical meanings of being, determine logical structure of the assertion. The fact that Aristotle understands categories as predicates that define the essence of things, becomes an important step on the way of establishing logic as a science. It's important to emphasize the feature of categories, found by him: categories can simultaneously appear as ontological definitions of being and forms of thinking. A well-known researcher of Aristotle's philosophical heritage, medieval scholar Boethius pointed out that Aristotle created his own system of categories to enable the world's cognition with the help of generic definitions. Summarizing Aristotle's theory about categories, we can state that this scholar reveals their multidimensional character, considering categories as types of being, reflections of objective

reality and limiting generalization of the latter. In other words, he sees categories as statements which reflect general properties of being.

Later Plotin's pupil Porphyry in his work "Introduction to the Aristotle's Categories" asked the question: are there any kinds or types of reality? Boethius tried to answer that question. He claimed that only general concepts, as the result of abstracting from non-essential features, exist in reality. Kinds and types of being and, in accordance, the problem of general things' nature and essence became the cornerstone issue in the medieval philosophy, determining its peculiarity. The attempt to study sense-making foundations of the general concepts' usage caused the dispute between realists and nominalists around the problem of the universals' ontological status. Realists claimed that the most general concepts (universals) exist in reality independently from single objects. Realists (Augustine of Hippo, John Scotus Eriugena, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas) claimed that general concepts exist in reality, forming an independent world of entities. The general is the cause of a particular thing, it exists outside of it and defines it among the other objects.

Depending on acceptance or denial of the general concepts' existence such movements as nominalism and conceptualism appeared in philosophy, in addition to realism. Representatives of nominalism (Roscellinus, William of Ockham and others) claim that only things which can be perceived sensually are real, universals do not really exist as they don't exist independently from other things; universals are no more than names of the things, and so any idea is the verbal reality but not the ontological one.

Representatives of conceptualism take an intermediate position in answering the question about the forms of general concepts' existence. Abelard is considered to be the founder of that movement. He thinks that universals don't have independent existence (reality), only particular things really exist; however, universals acquire some reality in the field of the mind as concepts. They are the results of abstraction of things' certain properties or qualities. In Early Modern philosophy conceptualism was represented by J. Locke who thought all the forms of generalization to be the results of human mind's activity in the form of certain ideas. J. Locke paid special attention to the conditions of forming the experience's corresponding structure that consists of two basic and equal components: they are outer and inner experiences (reflections). The reality of general ideas is equal to the reality of human thinking which is formed by experience. The problem of categories was also the central one for rationalists. In particular, R. Descartes considered categories as

"light", innate ideas of pure mind. Instead, Empirics (for example, F. Bacon) maintained experiential origin of general concepts.

A new approach to the study of categories was offered by Immanuel Kant, the founder of the German classical philosophy. In his work "Critique of Pure Reason" he does not consider categories to be the reflection forms, he sees them as a priori (non-experiential) forms of understanding, aimed to organize sensual experience [4]. According to Kant, categories do not characterize the world of "things in themselves", they define the subject of cognition himself as well as his way of thinking and define the structure of the thought. Regarding sensory material people get as the result of the sensory experience, categories perform the role of a priori (non-experiential) forms of understanding, thanks to which this material is comprehended and takes a rational form. In Kant's opinion, there is some certain category in the core of any judgement. The German philosopher created his own table of categories basing on their logical functions. The table contained twelve categories, which were united into four groups: quantity (unity, plurality, totality); quality (reality, negation, limitation); relation (substance and attribute, cause and effect, interdependence); modality (possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency).

Among the functions that categories perform in the process of cognition and logical comprehension of reality Kant differentiated two main ones: synthesis of ideas through which they acquire rational form of a judgment and objectivation of these ideas. In relation to the second function, it's necessary to mention that logical categories as general definitions of being become those necessary means through which our thinking expresses its objective content and its connection with the objective reality. Categories are the forms connecting subject and object as well as thinking and reality. Another representative of German classical philosophy G. Hegel offered his original interpretation of categories. Being generally positive about Kant's theory of categories, however, he criticized it. According to Hegel, one of Kant's theory's drawbacks is that Kant considers categories only as a priori forms of subjective thinking, and he does not see them as objective definitions of things themselves. Hegel considered categories to be the most general concepts, the "stages" of Absolute Idea's development as well as of thinking development because "objective logic" of reality has the same logic and consists of the same concepts as "subjective logic". Moreover, Kant only gives the table of categories, overlooking the research of necessary logical connections between them. Hegel builds the system in which categories are connected with

each other by natural process of development. His famous "Science of Logic" represents such a system. In this work, Hegel explores categories as a dynamic system for the first time in the history of philosophical thought. The subject of that system is thinking as a holistic formation, and its forms and content are embodied in philosophical categories which simultaneously serve as the world's concepts and objective definitions.

In the work mentioned above dialectic logic coincides with the theory of cognition, being the system of philosophical categories, each of which – (the specific definition of the principle, the area of its action) – does not represent just means and tools of human cognition but, foremost, it looks like some steps of returning to oneself, self birth and self-cognition of Absolute Idea. So, categories appear to be logical forms which precede reality, reflect its essence and are the stages of the world's cognition. Besides, Hegel attributed separative nature to categories. He also emphasized their synthetic character. Herewith, he explained synthesis a bit differently than Kant did. In particular, Hegel thought that the usage of categories is not limited by the science field. People also use them in their real life where categories appear to be abbreviations for expressing the similar phenomena, things, events, activities (people, God, love, etc.) and means for expressing and discovering relations between objects (causality, interaction, etc.) [5].

Hegel was the first to introduce the idea of formation into the understanding of categories. Categories are a living whole that is developing. They are connected by the unity of origin and development: each of the categories emerges from all previous movement as its necessary result. Hegel discovered logical basis, the driving force of the development of categories: development happens thanks to the inner contradictions hidden in the notion's nature, that's why thinking in general appears as a constant occurrence and solution of contradictions. It is manifested in the fact that one category predicts another one: this one exists because the other one exists: the internal exists because the external exists and vice versa. They simultaneously complement (you can learn one category through another one) and contradict each other. Dialectical method is based on this peculiarity of connection between categories.

In general, Hegel's understanding of categories and their development is mystified. He thinks categories are not means and tools for human cognition but stages to Absolute Spirit. This interpretation of categories was determined by the new way of understanding as well as by dialectic logic Hegel had created. According to his theory, categories simultaneously appear as semantic characteristics of

things and as necessary stages in their cognition. They are special steps in learning the truth and their sequence, in Hegel's opinion, has to mirror this natural movement.

Since Hegel admits the possibility of comprehending the truth, logic turns to be the science about all things as well as the science about forms of thoughts. That leads to the understanding of categories as universal forms of thinking and being. According to Hegel, all the categories are divided into the doctrine of being (quality, quantity, measure), the doctrine of essence (ground, appearance, actuality, illusory being, necessity, contingency, substantiality, causality, reciprocal activity), the doctrine of the notion (subjectivity, objectivity, the idea).

Marxist philosophy represented by K. Marx, F. Engels and others was an important stage in the study of the nature and content of philosophical categories. Their main idea was to create dialectic and materialistic system of categories instead of Hegel's idealistic system. The basis of this attempt is the conceptual idea of the categories' nature based on principles of social and historical practice. Marxism accepted Hegel's thesis about the identity of forms of thinking (subjective dialectics) and forms of being (objective dialectics). According to his followers, the basis of this equality is practice which, on one hand, takes into account objective ties and relations between things and, on the other hand, is the materialization of human ideas about these ties (materialization of objective structures' understanding). Thanks to this, identification of things' structures and forms of thinking occurs in reality.

Practice in the broad sense (as social life, as culture in general) turned out to be a fruitful idea to explain categories' origin. It is commonly known that categories of space and time did not appear in cognition, they emerged in the man's practical orientation. This fact also applies to other categories. Thus, the categories of single and general appeared as projection of ratio "individual and family line" to the world. The man relating himself to the family line looks for this relationship model among animals and things. Therefore, categories are a priori concerning experience as they aren't formed by it but they are brought into it from the cultural sphere. Categorical structure of thinking is formed on the basis of socio-historical practice. Categories of thinking reflect universal schemes, forms of social and practical activity. Dialectical and materialistic philosophy defines them as general principles of the man's cognitive and worldview attitude to the reality as well as to his own life. The main categories of dialectics are being, substance, consciousness, move-

ment, development, space, time, antinomy, antagonism, quantity, quality, measure, bouncing, negation, becoming, singular and universal, causality and effect, content and form, necessity and contingency, possibility and reality, a part and the whole, system, structure, element, etc. Since categories are reflections of objective in subjective, they are pertinent both to object and subject, in other words they are objective in meaning and subjective in form. Their subjectivity means that they are ideal forms of consciousness that only people possess. As forms of consciousness, categories are universal and essential. Their universality and essentiality are rooted in socio-cultural genesis: they appear in the system of philosophical culture, in certain intellectual environment. Their objectivity is based on collective human experience, thus their subject content is guaranteed.

Thereby, Marxist philosophy sees categories as reflection of essential and universal relations and forms of being; as reflection mediated by activity forms and socio-historical practice, thus categories have social nature and are passed from generation to generation along with language and knowledge; as stages of learning the truth; as forms of thinking which help to perceive universal and essential in things and reality phenomena as well as to carry out synthesis of thinking logical forms - concepts, judgments and conclusions; as forms of practical transformation of reality. The problem of categories suffered some transformation in modern philosophy, too. Having taken into consideration uncertainty and difficulty of philosophical categories' systematization, representatives of the XXth century philosophical movements abstain from creating the table of categories. For example, logical positivism focuses on the language character of categories. They are not considered being forms of thinking or consciousness, they are thought to be the language structures. In analytical philosophy categories are assumed to be means and forms of dismemberment, classification of things and phenomena, innate into the natural language. Existentialism studies categories of life, caring, fear, bounding situations and existence instead of traditional forms of thinking. Postmodern trends narrow categories' understanding to ideological schemes, which are imposed onto the man in his attitude to the world. Such philosophical categories as "system", "element", "structure" etc. start taking the leading place in modern philosophical theories of self-organization. These are the main historical stages of categories' philosophical interpretation. We should note that there is polyvariant space of philosophical categories. Separation of new philosophical categories is productive for philosophy development because it provides systematizing of philosophical knowledge and identifying

its new aspects. In this context G. Ryle's words about the system of categories in general are quite appropriate: "There is a supposition, shared by many philosophers together with Aristotle and Kant, that there is a limited list of categories or types, for example, ten or eight types of terms or exactly twelve forms of thought. It's a pure myth". [6, p.332].

Another problem, connected with attempts to systematize philosophical categories, is the question of fullness or completeness of categories' tables. The scholars mentioned above tried to single out a certain number of main categories. It's also problematic because the set of categories must be dynamic, open to changes and ready to develop to correspond to the dynamically developing world. Therefore, any attempts to create a complete system of categories are utopian. The rational kernel in the theories discussed above is the desire to show integrity, complementarity and mutual determination of categories as well as their dynamism and inability to create a complete, universal system of philosophical categories. Mobility and variability of categories lie in their constant change, development and their content enrichment in connection with the development of the material and spiritual world. Herewith, it is interesting to learn I. Boichenko's opinion who explained relations between "system of categories" and "categorical apparatus" the following way: "When it comes to systemogenesis, our attention is focused on separating, content filling, ascertaining, structuring and developing of the philosophical categories' system as the certain integrity and educational ideal. When it comes to the functioning of this system or separate categories, composing it, with the system of categories being considered the basis and means of the cognitive process instead of its goal, it is more practical to use the term categorical apparatus. The scholar stressed that the system of philosophical categories can be characterized as the cognitive ideal, the goal of a researcher that requires constant revision, addition and change. Instead, categorical apparatus is a tool, the basis for further cognitive movement, functional and operating system of categories used by a researcher for solving current cognitive or practical tasks [1].

**Conclusions.** To summarize all that is mentioned above, we can state that in philosophy categories are considered to be common forms of the man's cognitive and world view attitude to the nature, society and his own being. They are the results of real and practical interaction between the person and the surrounding world. As forms of abstract thinking, categories reflect the most common, universal characteristics and relations, interconnections between objects, things, phenomena, processes

of reality and common development patterns of material and spiritual phenomena by means of which philosophical thinking is executed. They appear to be original principles of cognition and the world's spiritual and practical transformation. It's impossible to philosophically understand fundamental problems of human existence and controversial, interconnected globalized world without mastering them. Categorical cognition of reality leads to analysis of its controversies - opposites, such as relative, absolute, freedom and necessity, existing and proper, justice and responsibility etc. Combinations of these controversies are main problems of both philosophy and the person.

The review of the major historical phases of philosophical interpretation of categories allows to state the existence of the problematic issue connected with forming the system of categories. A lot of attempts have been undertaken on this subject. All of them were found controversial. It can be explained by the fact that all the attempts to systematize categories contradict the following principles - if categories are universal reflection forms of objective characteristics of existence, then their hierarchy (introduced by the system) must be the reflection of these characteristics' hierarchy. But it is impossible to imagine that the "hierarchy" principle operates in the system of being, because the objective world is organized rather on the principle of "equality" than "subordination".

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#### ПРОБЛЕМА СИСТЕМАТИЗАЦІЇ ФІЛОСОФСЬКИХ КАТЕГОРІЙ: ІСТОРИКО-ФІЛОСОФСЬКА КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЯ

У статті здійснено спробу обґрунтувати проблематичність систематизації категорій філософії. Категорії філософії визначено як загальні форми пізнавально-світоглядного ставлення людини до світу і свого власного буття. Аналізуються основні підходи до побудови системи категорій в історії розвитку філософської думки. Розгляд основних історичних етапів філософського осмислення категорій дав змогу констатувати наявність проблемного питання щодо побудови системи категорій. З цього приводу було зроблено чимало спроб, які виявилися суперечливими. Це пояснюється тим, що спроби систематизації категорій суперечать таким принципам – якщо категорії це універсальні форми відображення об'єктивних властивостей буття, то їх ієрархія (що передбачає система) має бути відображенням ієрархії цих властивостей. Але неможливо уявити собі, що в структурі буття діє принцип «ієрархічності», оскільки об'єктивний світ організований скоріше за принципом «рівності» ніж «підпорядкування». Розглянуто особливості функціонування і розвитку категорій філософії. Дано авторське розуміння змісту поняття «філософські категорії».

**Ключові слова:** категорії, філософські категорії, зміст, функції, система, категоріальний апарат, мислення.

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**ПРОБЛЕМА СИСТЕМАТИЗАЦИИ ФИЛОСОФСКИХ КАТЕГОРИЙ:  
ИСТОРИКО-ФИЛОСОФСКАЯ КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ**

*В статье предпринята попытка обосновать проблематичность систематизации категорий философии. Категории философии определены как общие формы познавательно-мировоззренческого отношения человека к миру и своего собственного бытия. Анализируются основные подходы к построению системы категорий в истории развития философской мысли. Рассмотрение основных исторических этапов философского осмысления категорий позволило констатировать наличие проблемного вопроса по построению системы категорий. По этому поводу было сделано немало попыток, которые оказались противоречивыми. Это объясняется тем, что попытки систематизации категорий противоречат таким принципам - если категории это универсальные формы отражения объективных свойств бытия, то их иерархия (что предполагает система) должно быть отражением иерархии этих свойств. Но невозможно представить себе, что в структуре бытия действует принцип «иерархичности», поскольку объективный мир организован скорее по принципу «равенства» чем «подчинение». Рассмотрены особенности функционирования и развития категорий философии. Дано авторское понимание содержания понятия «философские категории».*

**Ключевые слова:** *категории, философские категории, содержание, функции, система, категориальный аппарат, мышления.*

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