



Ontology

Starting Philosophic Problem

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ABSTRACT: The starting philosophic problem is related to the categories 'being' and 'nonbeing.' This is the problem of the relationship between being and nonbeing. The cardinal question of philosophy is: 'What can be considered to be primary, being or nonbeing?' In the history of philosophy, it is possible to speak about two basic philosophic paradigms: philosophy of being and philosophy of nonbeing. This paper is an elaboration of the 'philosophy of nonbeing.'

One of the most fundamental problems of philosophy is related with the most meaningful philosophic notions, that is, with the categories of "being" and "non-being". The notion "being" is the philosophic notion that denotes: 1) something that is existing, 2) the totality of really existing things, the existing reality.

"Non-being" is the other philosophic notion that denotes: 1) absence of something, 2) all things non-existent in reality, non-existent reality. The form of manifestation for being is "something" and the non-being manifests itself in the form of "nothing".

So, according to the author, the most fundamental philosophic problem is the problem of the relationship between the being and the non-being, it is the problem of relationship between these two categories, "being" and "non-being". In the first line, this problem brings up the question about the existence of any real things existing in the real world: things that were existed, exist, and will exist; also put forward is the question about the existence of the world as a whole. In the final account, it is a matter of the problem of existence as such.

The German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (XVII-th century) attacked this problem in the following way:

he states that the first and cardinal question must be expressed in the form: Why there exists "something", but not "nothing"? A similar thought was expressed later by the German philosophers Friedrich Schelling (XIX-th century) and Martin Heidegger (XX-th century).

The problem of the relationship between being and non-being turns to be the starting philosophic problem, inasmuch as all other philosophic problems and questions are meaningful in cases when it is necessary to solve this problem that deals with the matter of principle, more specifically, the existence of things, phenomena, world on the whole, object and subject of cognition. The very solution of the problem of relationship between the being and the non-being is the basic and key solution for a number of philosophic problems

such as: world origin, world space-time structure formation, causes and mechanisms of motion and development, build-up and destruction of objective forms, human being life and death, meaning of human being existence, mankind survival, and others.

The starting philosophic problem includes a number of cardinal questions; one of them is: what can be considered to be primary, being or non-being? In the history of philosophy the diametrically opposite approaches to the problem solution are traced; it makes it possible to speak about two basic philosophic paradigms ⁽¹⁾ : philosophy of being and philosophy of non-being.

1. Philosophy of being.

A number of the philosophers, more specifically, their overwhelming majority assumed, explicitly or implicitly that the being is primary, that the world has always existed in this or that form (ideal or material), while the non-being is relative and can be derived from the "being". The formula of this philosophic paradigm:

"From nothing follows nothing" (Latin saying "Ex nihilo nihil fit"). This thought was first formulated by the ancient Greek philosopher Meliss (V century B.C.).

The ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides (VI-V centuries B.C.) unambiguously asserted that "there is only the being, but nonbeing does not exist"; in saying so, the being was understood by him as the material globe-shaped world, solid, homogeneous and motionless.

The other Greek philosopher Plato (V-IV centuries B.C.) links the true being with the world of ideal entities, viewed as an eternal spiritual origin on which the non-being (inert matter) depends.

In the philosophy of the Middle Ages the school of the cataphatic (positive) theology takes as the initial point the spiritual being of God who possesses absolute qualities and generates the entire world. The Marxist philosophy (XIX-XX centuries) identifies the being and matter and negates the existence of absolute non-being, and states merely its relative nature.

The representative of the existentialism, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (XX-th century) derived the nothing from the being. According to J.P.Sartre the "nothing" is the seamyside of the being.

2. Philosophy of non-being.

A number of philosophic theories and some philosophers proceed from the non-being origin and the being derivativeness or illusory nature of the being as such. The general formula of this philosophic paradigm can be written as: "All from nothing" (Latin saying: "Omnia ex nihilo"). The extreme point of view stating that there is nothing real — neither spiritual nor material — is known as the philosophic nihilism.

For example, the ancient Greek philosopher-sophist Gorgy (V-IV centuries B.C.) proved that "nothing of the existing things can exist", and, if exists, it is noncognizable or inexplicable.

The representative of madhyamic school, the Indian philosopher Nagardzhuna (II nd century) asserted that all Universe is in the long run the void ("shun'ya"): "Things do not have their own being, they do not exist".

In the medieval philosophy the representatives of the apophatic (negative) theology proceeded from the primary being that was meant as the divine Nothing. The German mystics Johannes Eckehart (XIII-XIV centuries) and Jakob Bohme (XVI-XVII centuries) identified the God and the Nothing.

The German existentialist Martin Heidegger considered the nothing as the basis of the human being's life, making though a number of reservations.

3. We must note that the history of philosophy includes the other, transient or combined variants of solution of the starting philosophic problem. For instance, according to the ancient Greek philosopher Democritus (V-IV centuries B.C.), the world is based on two independent eternal origins: the being (atoms) and non-being (void space).

The representatives of the ancient Chinese doctrine of daosism stated that "the being and non-being generate each other" and are inclined to the opinion that "the being is generated from the non-being" (the book "Dao-de-tzin").

In solving this problem the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (XVIII-XIX centuries) is also distinguished by unambiguity; according to Hegel, formation of the being begins with the identity of "pure being" and "nothing"; the first and the latter are here the opposite logical forms of the Origin that represent the spiritual kind of the being.

So, we can conclude that the combined variants of the problem of relationship between being and non-being also tend to either the being concept philosophy or the philosophy of non-being.

Let us note finally that the starting philosophic problem gives rise to the problem of origin or creation of the world (onthological aspect) and the question of possibility of solving the fundamental problem examined (a question about capability to cognite the causes of the world existence (gnosiological aspect). Also derived from this problem are the question about nature or entity of the world (world substance) and the question of cognition of the world itself and its laws, i.e., the basic question of philosophy.

Notes

(1) By the term "paradigm" we mean here the initial conceptual scheme of the problem statement in the history of philosophic community and its solution.

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