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Fluxo Contínuo

Between cognition and discourse:Robert Spaemann's classical aspects of philosophizing

Entre a cognição e o discurso: os aspectos clássicos de Robert Spaemann sobre a filosofização

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Abstract: The German philosopher Robert Spaemann proposed a complex but incomplete concept of philosophy. It has features of a classical approach, but it is difficult to define what is classical in it. Its comparison to the contemporary version of classical philosophy developed by the Lublin School of Philosophy shows that Spaemann may be considered as a representative of a classical, though not metaphysical, manner of philosophizing. Both in philosophy, systematically perceived as a type of cognition, and history, perceived as a type of discourse, classical influences can be observed in terms of the concept of philosophy, its object, purpose, and method. Despite the tension between philosophy as the cognition and philosophy as the discourse, in his concept these two aspects cannot be reduced one to another and cannot be separate from each other. The awareness that philosophy is an endless and controversial discourse on ultimate problems does not relieve philosophers from their efforts to pursue the truth about reality. And this is how Spaemann looks at his own philosophising.

Keywords: Robert Spaemann, Classical philosophy, Discourse, Lublin Philosophical School, Concept of philosophy.

Resumo: *O filósofo alemão Robert Spaemann propôs um conceito complexo, mas incompleto, de filosofia. Ele tem características de uma abordagem clássica, mas é difícil definir o que é clássico nele. Sua comparação com a versão contemporânea da filosofia clássica desenvolvida pela Escola de Filosofia de Lublin mostra que Spaemann pode ser considerado como um representante de uma maneira clássica, embora não metafísica, de filosofar. Tanto na filosofia, sistematicamente percebida como um tipo de cognição, quanto na história, percebida como um tipo de discurso, as influências clássicas podem ser observadas em termos do conceito de filosofia, seu objeto, sua finalidade e seu método. Apesar da tensão entre filosofia como cognição e filosofia como discurso, em seu conceito estes dois aspectos não podem ser reduzidos um ao outro e não podem ser separados um do outro. A consciência de que a filosofia é um discurso interminável e controverso sobre os problemas finais não alivia os filósofos de seus esforços para buscar a verdade sobre a realidade. E é assim que Spaemann encara sua própria filosofização.*

Palavras-chave: Robert Spaemann , Filosofia clássica , Discurso , Escola filosófica de Lublin , Conceito de filosofia .

Introduction

Robert Spaemann has repeatedly addressed the problem of the specificity of philosophy, its subject, method, or purpose in his writings. From

this reflection arises a complex but incomplete concept of philosophy, encompassing both a certain type of cognition and discourse. This concept requires reconstruction, which is a difficult task that Spaemann himself refused to perform [2] . The philosophy of German thinkers undoubtedly has classical features. Spaemann knows the history of philosophy perfectly; on the one hand, the works of the great ancient and medieval thinkers, such as Plato, Aristotle, or Thomas Aquinas, and on the other, important philosophical problems, e.g. nature, purposefulness, or person. Spaemann is inspired by classical thought, and he philosophizes within such a context. Classical thought is his permanent point of reference in investigating philosophical problems and evaluating contemporary opinions and concepts. He also uses classical methods of philosophizing. However, it is not easy to answer the question of what is classical in his way of philosophizing. Nevertheless, we can try to answer this question by assuming the separation of the historical aspect of classical philosophy from the problem and object [3] and referring to the contemporary model of practicing classical philosophy worked out in the Lublin Philosophical School as the starting point for the analysis.

The contemporary version of classical philosophy

An example of doing classical philosophy in contemporary thought includes the achievements of the representatives of the Lublin Philosophical School in Poland, which was created in the 1950s. This group's representatives include Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, Stanisław Kamiński, Karol Wojtyła, Antoni Bazyli Stępień, and Zofia Zdybicka. They dealt with various areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics, methodology, ethics, epistemology, or the philosophy of religion, but, in their philosophizing, they referred to the tradition of the philosophy of being understood as *philosophia perennis*. The realistic style of philosophizing practiced in this school is characterized by: referring to broadly understood experience that includes sensual and intellectual perception, as well as intuition (empiricism); focusing on the knowledge of truth (theoreticalness), which results in practical objectives and causes norms and objectives to be justified by particular essences of things; referring to the natural language that is created under the influence of reality, as compared to the languages of the exact sciences (cognitive realism); asking questions and solving problems based on a critical approach to previous knowledge (aporetical quality); searching for the ultimate factors explaining the reality-being (cognitive maximalism) that are expressed in the question: "because of what" does a given entity exist or a particular state of existence occur; and a neutral attitude toward the exact sciences and knowledge from outside science (religion or ideology) (ZDYBICKA, 1980, p. 111).

The philosophy practiced in the Lublin school is a type of scientific cognition that is, at its starting point, independent of the exact sciences, which means that it has its own object and method. Such independence is

ensured by the reference to the common cognition expressed in colloquial language. If such a cognition is properly purified, it makes it possible for us to capture pre-assumed obvious and common-sense issues. The object of the analysis of the philosophy perceived in this way is a similarly understood being *(that which exists)*, i.e. the "pluralist real world of things and people" (KRĄPIEC, 1997, p. 157). Taking into account that each being consists of an essence and existence, existence is treated as the most perfect act that constitutes the whole beingness (existential perception of a being). Learning about a being consists in explaining it, i.e. showing the only and ultimate reasons for its existence (the fact that it is) and contents (what it is). This is related to the question "why", which contradicts the detailed "how" question asked in the exact sciences. The method of cognition is making a being non-contradictory, based on reductive reasoning in which, for a given fact, we are searching for a factor, the negation of which would be a negation of that fact (KAMIŃSKI, 2018, p. 197-198). And, since a being is understood in a similar manner, explaining it makes it possible to indicate both necessary and transcendental being factors. That is why, within this trend, we emphasize the parallelism of the existence of beings and transcendental relations occurring within particular beings and among beings (existential analogy), as well as the parallelism of human cognition and language. The objective of the whole cognition is the ultimate (necessary and transcendental) explanation of reality (KRĄPIEC, MARYNIARCZYK, 2010, p. 15).

In the philosophical concept of the main representatives of the Lublin School, the most important role is played by Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysics. These representatives believe that the role played by detailed studies on the history of philosophy related to the analysis of original philosophical texts, and by methodological reflection, is important in such a metaphysics and in other fields of philosophy (anthropology, ethics, social philosophy) KRĄPIEC, MARYNIARCZYK, 2010, p. 19). The Lublin School philosophers use the results of those disciplines both in establishing and solving philosophical problems. With reference to classical philosophers, it is not about "a particular output" but about the continuation of a certain tradition, a certain style of philosophizing (KRĄPIEC, MARYNIARCZYK, 2010, p. 24). In the aporetic style of philosophizing, philosophical problems are specified and solved on the basis of the reliable presentation and critical comparison of previous opinions. That is why it is emphasized that analyzing the history of philosophy is an introduction to metaphysics, because it indicates the solutions of philosophical problems and is the basis for solving epistemological problems and for selecting the proper type of metaphysics (KRĄPIEC, MARYNIARCZYK, 2010, p. 38). In turn, referring to contemporary philosophical directions or the results of the exact sciences is to be an inspiration for metaphysical research or a subject of discussion. And, as emphasized by Kamiński, the methodological reflection is to result in working out cognitive tools that are independent of the exact sciences and meet the conditions of scientific cognition (intersubjective

communicability and verifiability) (KAMIŃSKI, 2019, p. 53-56). Due to the adopted method, the whole cognition within such a philosophy is of a metaphysical nature. As a result, metaphysics is treated as the basic philosophical discipline that comprises all other disciplines as exact kinds of metaphysics, the starting point of which is the object of cognition that includes various entities or existence states (KAMIŃSKI, 2020, p. 10). Thus, the above-mentioned philosophers are not only interested in metaphysics but also in other philosophical fields, such as the philosophy of man, ethics, epistemology, and methodology.

The concept of philosophy suggested by the Lublin School has developed within the several dozen years of its functioning, and, in the second decade of the 21st century, its representatives no longer constitute an intellectual monolith. Apart from the representatives of the school who still refer to the metaphysical core in practicing philosophy, there are many other philosophers who approach investigating and solving philosophical problems in a way that is different from the metaphysical one. Nevertheless, they are a certain rarity against the background of modern thought, showing the possibility of the collective practicing of philosophy within a given school and practicing philosophy which directly refers to the classical foundations and method. It is obvious that Spaemann's approach significantly differs from their approach. Nevertheless, in his way of philosophizing, we can also notice some features of the classical approach to philosophy.

The concept of philosophy

In the essay with the significant title "The Controversial Nature of Philosophy", Spaemann claims that philosophy can be treated as a constant discourse on ultimate questions (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 58). It is worth paying attention both to the fact that philosophy is a special kind of discourse (the historical aspect) and to the fact that it touches on ultimate questions (the objective aspect) (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 50). In the objective aspect, philosophy is, first of all, a specific kind of cognition (a system) that answers the crucial questions concerning the reality faced by mankind, and in the historical aspect it is a discourse related to the reflection on philosophy as the field of human cognition (a set of systems) with two and a half thousand years' experience in answering those questions. Thus, Spaemann suggests a complex concept of philosophy that includes both of these aspects. Each of them has different properties and challenges the philosopher in a different way. At the same time, in the German philosopher's thought they cannot be separated from one another or reduced to one another. In both of them we can see people striving to know themselves. That is why the author of the "Borders" (*Grenzen*) perceives philosophy as "understanding oneself in the context of the whole reality" (SPAEMANN; LÖW, 2005, p. 20). Thus, philosophy requires "making steps beyond oneself" (*Schritte über uns Hinaus*).

The discourse carried out in philosophy is not accidental. It has particular features that become clearer against the background of scientific cognition. The most important feature and, at the same time, problem of philosophy as a discourse is controversiality. According to the German philosopher, each science is controversial, but, due to the acceptance of some general theoretical frames (object, basic methodological conditions, and theoretical contents), it is possible to reach a consensus in evaluating the proclaimed ideas (hypotheses). Thus, despite the differences among scientists, practicing a given discipline requires the approval of certain objectives and procedures without discussing them. It is different in philosophy in which there are no (even the most general) commonly accepted foundations, as a result of which everything is disputable (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 57). Therefore, philosophy is a "discussion on those discussions", which means that, as a whole, it is an "institutionalized crisis of the foundations" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 68-69). According to Spaemann, not only is philosophy controversial by nature, but also any attempts to solve philosophical controversies make that controversiality even more profound. Each philosophical view, irrespective of the intentions of its author and their way of justifying it, becomes controversial just because of the fact that it is present in the philosophical discourse. Thus, philosophy exists in the state of intellectual anarchy.

The controversial nature of philosophy does not make it meaningless or useless (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 58; MADIGAN, 1997, p. 105). If it was true, philosophical discourse would not have an objective sense. The truth is, however, that – despite seemingly useless disputes – discourse is so heuristically and existentially important that it is hard to imagine it not being continued [4] . Philosophy, as a discourse focused on ultimate questions, is of a continuous nature (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 59). Zaborowski emphasizes that such continuity can be considered in three strictly interrelated aspects: 1) the continuity of the philosophical tradition; 2) the continuity of certain challenges to which a person has to respond; and 3) the continuity of human nature and natural law (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 47). On the basis of the distinguished aspects it is easy to notice that the continuity of philosophy is ensured by what constitutes philosophy as a discourse (talk) both in terms of the form and the content. In terms of the form, the continuity of philosophical talk is facilitated by the features resulting from the reference to the history of philosophy. Such features include a dialogic attitude, rationality, reflectivity, regularity, and critical thinking. In terms of the content, the continuity is based on permanent existential conditions that manifest themselves in the form of reality, human nature, or natural law and make a person ask questions about the meaning and objective of life.

It is easy to notice that the basic problems of philosophy as a discourse are related to the factors that determine its specific features. The main factor is the problem of the disputable nature of philosophical views which results in their being controversial. And the inability to decide which of them are true results in the issue of the objective establishment

of the rationality of both particular views and philosophy as a whole. Moreover, the fact that the discourse is extended in time both makes it derived from what it was at the beginning and causes us to forget about obvious things. Thus, it is difficult to use and properly place past views in contemporary discourse. Spaemann does not directly approve of any philosophical direction. However, in the systematic aspect, it is worth paying attention to the way he understands ethics.

"The fact that there are disputes about 'good' and 'evil' certainly does show that ethics is a controversial subject. But this fact proves also that ethics is not merely relative. This remains true in spite of the fact that on occasions it is hard to ascertain exactly what the good consists in and some borderline cases are very hard to decide. It demonstrates also that some types of actions are better than others, and better in an unconditional way, not just better for a particular person or better in relation to a particular set of cultural norms. We all know that. The point of moral philosophy is to help us get clearer about what this knowledge consists in and to help us defend it against objections raised by sophists" (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 12).

For Spaemann, ethics is a part of philosophy. Thus, if we refer the above quotation to all philosophy, we will be able to draw a few general conclusions: 1) human cognition is of an objective nature, as it refers to something objective beyond mankind, even if it is hard to objectify such cognition; 2) divergent results of cognition and different approaches to such cognition do not exclude the presence of the objectivist (over-subjective) and universalist (over-cultural, over-historical) aspects; 3) in the context of this fact, the task of philosophical cognition is clarifying this objective knowledge and showing arguments for the objectivism of cognition; and 4) it is impossible to make that knowledge indisputable.

According to Spaemann, practicing philosophy requires looking for arguments and solving disputes. However, he is aware of the fact that arguments can always be refuted with counterarguments. The exchange of arguments always leads to a deadlock (SPAEMANN, 2017, p. 207). Thus, it is impossible to solve disputes. That is why, in Spaemann's opinion, according to the classical attitude, philosophy should provide not only arguments but also a holistic way of perceiving problems and, through them, a holistic way of understanding reality.

The main philosophical problems

The main problems which, according to Spaemann, are discussed by philosophy include systematic issues (related to knowledge of the whole) and historical issues (related to the discourse). These aspects are not separate from one another. Philosophical problems are connected with the problem of philosophy because it is impossible to philosophize in a systemic manner without taking into account the history of philosophy. At the same time, philosophy analyzed historically as a discourse depends on the way of formulating and solving philosophical problems. Moreover, the inability to solve philosophical problems in an authoritative manner

results in the fact that philosophy becomes a discourse. However, the connection between both aspects of philosophy does not make it impossible to indicate what, according to Spaemann, includes systematic or historical philosophical problems.

In his works, Spaemann does not retreat from taking up the most important philosophical issues inherited from classical philosophy, including the main metaphysical question: "why"? This question is the basis for his teleological considerations. "One of the first and constant questions we ask in this world is 'Why?' something happens" (SPAEMANN; LÖW, 2005, p. 13). In natural conditions, this question appears when we experience something we do not find normal or expected in our ordinary life [5] . The answer to this question leads the person to become familiar with what makes them ask the question. According to Spaemann and Löw, such familiarization can occur in two manners. It can take the form of understanding when it refers to analyzing the reason for human action (motive, willingness) or the form of explanation (giving the rules and edge conditions) when it is related to a natural phenomenon. In the latter case, there is a difference between classical teleology, explaining a given fact through indicating its focus on the objective, and teleonomy ("a scientific reconstruction of teleology") oriented at regularities (SPAEMANN; LÖW, 2005, p. 256). According to the Spaemann-Löw concept, philosophy does not consist in "asking about the existence or non-existence of what had been established in terms of definitions, but about the adequate understanding of being in which experience, expressed in the word τέλος (telos) – as the objective, end, and 'Because of...' – is discussed without any shortcuts" (SPAEMANN; LÖW, 2005, p. 20). Only such a way of asking the "why?" question and replying to it can be the basis for philosophy's claim to discuss the "entirety".

The role which, according to Spaemann, is played by the "why" question and the related teleological perception of reality shows that, in his opinion, we cannot remove the traditional questions concerning the reality, the person, or the Absolute from the scope of philosophical problems. This is, for example, expressed in his anthropological or ethical considerations. Philosophy faces such fundamental issues as "the question about the objective and meaning of the entirety, i.e. about the possibility of a reality outside the cave" (SPAEMANN, 2005, p. 620); what a given thing is, as opposed to the exact sciences that are only interested in the conditions in which the thing can exist; or the problem of the criterion of importance, i.e. what is meaningful and what is insignificant (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 48). Spaemann thoroughly analyzes the most important philosophical problems that refer to nature, concerning purposefulness and natural theology; mankind, with the emphasis on the person's personal status and dignity; and morality and ethics, with the emphasis on human nature, the objectivity of moral norms and values, and the meaning of conscience in directing the moral life (ANGIER, 2018, p. 194-196). Taking into account the limitations of the individual way of philosophizing, we have to note that the German

philosopher discusses the most important philosophical issues, which are deeply rooted in the philosophical tradition. The investigation of those issues requires reliable and profound philosophical erudition if we are to treat them seriously and if we want to say something important about them. Spaemann believes that the constant validity of these problems results in the fact that we should also take into account traditional answers and solutions, which requires reminding ourselves of them all the time. These problems are to be discussed both in the historical aspect and in the systematic aspect, which requires making objective decisions. The characteristic feature of philosophical questions and problems is that they are always valid and that we cannot give a non-controversial (i.e. unquestionable and ultimate) answer to them.

In the classical approach, what stimulates philosophy are questions or problems taking the form of aporias. That is why Aristotle structures his metaphysics around aporias. The occurrence of aporias results from the different opinions of philosophers, and solving them (euporia) is the result of considering all the arguments, including those that object to the suggested solution. Solving aporias is based on truthfulness, i.e. it is performed through rejecting the errors in the previous theories and maintaining what was true in them. Spaemann does not negate the need to take up difficult problems and opts for solving them and aiming at learning the truth about the subject of philosophizing. A philosopher is obliged to "provide the philosophers' dispute with what he considers true" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 79). And philosophy as such "lays practical and theoretical claims to the whole" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 42). However, both the philosopher's objective and philosophy's claims can only be made real inside a system. Thus, there is a tension between philosophy perceived as a type of cognition and philosophy as a discourse. Although, on the objective level, it is necessary to aim at learning the truth, on the level of discourse there are no tools for making it firm. Philosophical cognition does not only reveal ultimate questions but also enables us to reflect on them and, while answering them, gain specific knowledge. At the same time, we cannot perceive this cognition or its course as approaching the truth. "Philosophy is not a judge. There are no judges in the issues related to the truth [...]" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 78). This is because, in philosophy as an all-encompassing discourse, it is impossible to ultimately solve the existing problems, i.e. to remove or overcome the related controversies. It does not cancel the rationality of philosophy, but it is not the kind of rationality that can be supported objectively. Rather, it is a subjective rationality that takes the form of a virtue (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 53). Such rationality assumes the naturalness of one's starting point, kindness based on friendship, and making it possible for rational opinions to take part in the discourse (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 53-55). And this is the kind of rationality that ensures the unity of philosophy as a discourse.

The object of cognition, the object of discourse

In Spaemann's thought, the problem of the object of cognition appears many times when he discusses various detailed issues. It is particularly worth focusing on ethical considerations in which the philosopher supports metaphysical realism in analyzing and solving the basic problems. He acknowledges the existence of an objective reality, which he understands as the common-sense approach to the world present in colloquial cognition. According to the classical approach, he makes this reality a basis and standard for human cognition and action. He extends the object of natural cognition by what justifies (conditions) the natural order of things and by what (in history) has become the object of philosophical reflection, in order to make the cognition of reality even more complete and universal.

According to Półtawski, for Spaemann, "the original field of any experience is the world in which a person lives; the world as it is, not reduced to any abstractions that are secondary and incomplete" (PÓŁTAWSKI, 2012, p. XII-XIII). Just like the representatives of the Lublin School, Spaemann refers to colloquial cognition, which provides the most direct access to reality as such access precedes any intellectual operations. Despite the imperfection of colloquial cognition, the facts it captures become the object of philosophical cognition (description and interpretation). This is clearly noticeable in Spaemann's considerations on morality in which the basic role is played by the attitude toward reality. "Right living ... means dealing fairly with reality. In other words, we should be objective about our own interests and allow them to be formed by the value content of reality" (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 35). Also, living in accordance with reality is "seeing and loving the world of values" (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 47). In the aspect of justice, which, for Spaemann, is to be the basis for action, the philosopher challenges us to "do justice to a person and to reality" (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 53), and he claims that "a good deed is a deed that matches the reality" (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 77). Taking the shaping of a person into account, Spaemann suggests that we should objectify and subject individual goals to the "general criteria". And the requirement to distinguish the general/detailed or important/unimportant criteria with reference to the reality of human action indicates that a person is able to do this based on their natural cognition (not supported by science) and – even more importantly – that people acknowledge the existence of such aspects of things (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 48).

The specific identification of human acts with reality as what shows their value is a reflection of a broader approach to philosophy. For Spaemann, reality perceived as the common-sense image of the world is the sufficient foundation and criterion of philosophical cognition, as well as the standard of human acts [6] . Common-sense cognition oriented at reality plays an important role, and not just at the starting point of philosophy. Such a cognition also facilitates the assessment of

different philosophical concepts with their claims to truthfulness. This is because if everything that is spoken by philosophers is questioned by other philosophers, "the decision on who is right ultimately remains a matter of common sense" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 36). Thus, metaphysical realism is the basis not only for a person's practical life, but also for the whole philosophy.

There is no doubt that, according to Spaemann, the first object of philosophical cognition is reality. Problems arise when one has to indicate the aspect in which philosophy is to deal with this reality. The German philosopher discusses this issue by comparing philosophical cognition with cognition in natural sciences. As emphasized by Półtawski, for Spaemann, "the difference between philosophy and natural sciences consists in the fact that philosophy deals with the world in its entirety and cannot start from arbitrary nominal definitions" (PÓŁTAWSKI, 2012, p. XII-XIII). Philosophy is to describe reality in the same aspects in which the exact sciences deal with it. Philosophy should go beyond the cognition of particular aspects of things toward learning about reality in a complete and all-encompassing manner. On the one hand, in philosophical cognition we should not remain on the level of phenomena and dependencies among various phenomena. This is expressed in the postulate of the question of what a given thing is and not in which conditions it starts to exist, as suggested by the exact sciences (SPAEMANN, 2005, p. 620). On the other hand, however, Spaemann believes that, while learning about reality, we should ask about the entirety of reality, including what is "outside the cave". And although such entirety is not only being (understood in a classical manner) but also consciousness (thought) or language, this question basically concerns the causes for particular phenomena. Thus, Spaemann is against the worldview based on science, according to which the world has no basis. In his opinion, noticing that reality has a basis is an integral element of learning about the entirety. In this way, reality becomes clear and understandable. Also, Spaemann extends the scope of philosophical cognition by those aspects of reality which can be contained neither in the narrowly perceived scientific empiricism nor in the most broadly understood experience of mankind. Thus, what becomes the subject of scientific interest is what justifies the existence and nature of the entire natural order, i.e. its necessary reason: God (SPAEMANN, 2005, p. 622). On this basis he acknowledges that religious faith in God is not a sign of irrationality, but rationality of beliefs (SOKOLOWSKI, 2010, p. 55-56).

The difference between philosophy and the exact sciences consists not only in the fact that in the former everything is controversial. What makes philosophy different is the fact that it does not use the cognitive results of the exact sciences because it has its own independent access to reality, and it describes it in the aspects (in terms of essence and entirety) with which the exact sciences do not deal. Thus, philosophy is a type of independent knowledge that has its own object of cognition, i.e. the common-sense view of reality provided in the common cognition. Apart from this main object of interest of philosophy (reality), it is interested in the views of

philosophers. The knowledge of the views of particular philosophers and the whole discourse carried out from the beginning of philosophy is, according to Spaemann, an important element of learning about reality. The crucial object of the "talks" carried out in the history of philosophy is the "entirety". In this history we can talk about the three great "attempts to think about the entirety" (paradigms): the metaphysical attempt (classical thought), the critical attempt (transcendental philosophy), and the linguistic attempt (the philosophy of language). Their "entirety" was, respectively, a being, consciousness, and language. The change of the paradigm of philosophizing is related to discovering the new horizon of thinking treated as common (including the others), ultimate, and unquestionable. Only if these conditions are fulfilled may a given theory or paradigm aspire to be called philosophy. Although particular paradigms occurred one after another, the newer ones did not eliminate the old ones but forced the achievement of new levels of reflection (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 73-74). This means that philosophical thought aiming at encompassing the "entirety" also refers to a discourse. The entire discourse requires knowledge of the whole history of philosophy and a variety of views and paradigms that constitute that history. And even if philosophy cannot ultimately solve its problems, this does not mean that it should be transformed into a discourse (talk) about historical or formal issues. Spaemann neither resigns nor postulates a resignation from the objective of philosophy that includes investigating the "entirety" in the objective aspect.

The method of cognition, the method of discourse

The issue of the method of philosophizing is not specified by Spaemann in such a detailed manner as it is determined in the classical (metaphysical) tradition or in phenomenology. It is also rooted in a different conviction than the cognitive opportunities of philosophy as science. Spaemann's concept of philosophy as a certain type of cognition and a form of rational discourse assumes a complex method of practicing philosophy that includes the ability to investigate philosophical problems and to carry out a rational discourse – talking with previous philosophers. The way of conducting the discourse is different to the way of replying to ultimate questions, although such replies are given in light of the discourse.

Spaemann shares the view of Heidegger that philosophy is not a science in the same sense as the exact sciences, which is why it is not subject to the methods in which such sciences are practiced (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 33). Although philosophies use various methods of cognition, none of them has a universalist nature. Philosophy does not have a method of cognition which provides unquestionable knowledge that enables philosophy to systematically improve itself and ultimately solve its problems. At the same time, it deals with the problem of central human questions "methodically and systematically" (SPAEMANN, 2005, p. 629). The way of philosophizing and reflections on philosophizing have the features of scientific cognition. The methodical and systematic nature of considerations is the criterion of their being philosophical. Thus, even

if philosophy, as the entirety of the discourse, is not a science in the same sense as other sciences, understanding philosophy requires a reference to science. It is a kind of an analyzed, methodical, and systematic way to learn about reality and to consider problems related to understanding reality.

According to Spaemann, philosophy in the historical aspect is a discourse. Despite the philosophers' claims to indicate objective and unquestionable foundations for philosophizing, philosophy is a field in which different views and opinions constantly clash. Practicing it consists in discourse and investigation (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 28). It is of an aporetic-narrative nature and it aims at showing possibly the most complete image of the addressed problem. Spaemann does not mean reaching an unquestionable truth or searching for unquestionable arguments to support that truth, but rather aims at not overlooking a certain truth (present in the history of philosophy) or not forgetting it in contemporary discourse. "There is no philosophy without an attempt to acquire its own history in an understandable manner or – as Heidegger said – without an attempt to destroy it. However, such an acquisition itself is also a form of philosophy, a specific paradigm" (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 71). The acquisition of one's own history is carried out in philosophy through remembering, which is the key to the method of philosophizing suggested by Spaemann. His philosophy is not characterized by "invention, not even the discovery of how reality works, but in the remembering, recollection, or rediscovery of what reality essentially is" (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 41). Remembering refers both to the systematic aspect and the historical aspect. That is why the German philosopher speaks about remembering nature and remembering obvious things that have been learned and later forgotten (SPAEMANN, 1991, VII-VIII; ZABOROWSKI 2010, p. 45). The objective is not to return to historical views and methods of philosophizing. However, knowledge of the philosophical tradition is necessary for carrying out, developing, and assessing the modern way of philosophizing. Also, reflection is a way to obtain a critical distance from one's own way of philosophizing (SPAEMANN 2010, p. 68).

According to Spaemann, the way of practicing philosophy is influenced not only by what can be achieved, but also by what can be lost. That is why, in his considerations, he has been carrying out a Socratic dialogue with modern times, reminding us about what has already been known or understood within philosophical culture, and what has been reflected in the creative contribution to the present. This is not an accidental or useless dialogue. It involves remembering important truths that belong to philosophical culture. The omission of these truths makes contemporary reflections on reality and mankind poorer. Within this dialogue, as Zaborowski points out, Spaemann uses two ways of reaching the reality called mankind:

"First, the path of the destruction, as it were, of the representation of Being as process, not only by means of a close historical analysis of how this representation of Being developed but also by shedding light on its implications, which are counter-intuitive in so far as they

contradict the way human beings always already understand themselves; second, the path of the reconstruction of a realistic understanding of Being by means of a recollection of what Spaemann considers self-evident—that is, the experience that reality is ultimately not an endless stream of becoming, but a *mixtum compositum* of substantial Being and becoming" (ZABOROWSKI, 2010, p. 42).

This kind of approach obviously refers to the method of the Socratic dialogue in which, on the one hand, a person refutes false convictions, showing their contradiction with the experience, and, on the other, the person forms true convictions based on the experience. In both cases the person aims at achieving such a level of obviousness that it makes it possible to reject the erroneous idea (the elenctic aspect) or form the correct idea (the maieutic aspect) [7] . The success of this method depends on how close a given view is to the experience in a positive manner (compliance) or a negative manner (incompliance). It is not about constructing a proof for or against a given thesis, but about comparing a certain view or opinion with the actual state of things. This kind of cognition, based on obviousness provided through intellectual intuition, goes beyond the frames of discourse. It leads to systematic conclusions, such as the metaphysical issue of the purposefulness of nature, the anthropological issue of the person's personal status, or the ethical issue of the existence of natural law.

Spaemann opts for metaphysical realism, but, basically, he does not practice philosophy using the metaphysical method which comprises in searching for the necessary reasons and sufficient beings and being states. Nevertheless, at least in some cases, Spaemann refers to this method. A good example is his considerations concerning God. Contrary to the worldview based on science, the German philosopher believes that the world has a basis, which is God. He acknowledges that reality has no reason for being in itself, and he believes that it is necessary to refer to the world's sufficient reason that justifies its existence. Thus, he acknowledges the order of necessary reasoning and, in a way, the possibility to learn about reality from the point of view of such reasoning. Therefore, it is a partial but consistent reference to the metaphysical method, if not in the cognition, then at least in explaining reality (in making it non-contradictory). Thus, it means that Spaemann goes beyond the narrowly understood describing or remembering obviousness in order to provide an adequate reply to reality, the understanding of which requires opening the cognition to what exists "outside the cave".

Conclusions

Spaemann proclaims metaphysical realism in approaching and learning about reality. Although he believes it is impossible to practice philosophy as scientific cognition due to its controversial nature, he considers philosophy as a type of cognition that is independent of the exact sciences, truthful (claiming the right to the truthfulness of ideas), speculative (oriented at the truth about reality and mankind, and not

about pragmatic objectives), rational (in terms of the basis and objective of philosophizing), methodical and systematic (although not having one, commonly approved method), oriented in a maximalist manner (i.e. at describing the "entirety"), aporetic (describing problems in light of previously proclaimed ideas), and paradigmatically conditioned. Supporting universalism and moral normativism based on common sense, he defends the objectivism of philosophical cognition against relativism and scepticism (SPAEMANN, 1991, p. 13).

Most of these features prove that, in the systematic aspect, Spaemann is a representative of a classical, though not metaphysical, manner of philosophizing. He supports the necessity to take into account the relations between philosophy perceived systematically as a special type of cognition and philosophy perceived historically as a discourse. Although these aspects cannot be reduced to each other, we cannot speak about them as two entirely separate issues either. In his works, Spaemann shows the perfect knowledge of metaphysical, anthropological, ethical, and social views worked out within the classical paradigm. He interprets them in a creative way, treating them not only as historical knowledge. At the same time, in his philosophy, he is not limited to such knowledge or to the way of philosophizing, and he uses the experience and output of the whole history of philosophy. He encourages his readers to take into account the heritage of classical thought in philosophical cognition and, despite the harsh criticism of modernism, he does not reject anything that has been worked out in modern times to improve the self-understanding of philosophy.

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Notes

[2] In one of the interviews, Spaemann said: "If I knew what kind of philosophy I practiced, I would stop philosophizing" (MERECKI, 2001, VIII). In Spaemann's philosophy we can see the influences of different ways of philosophizing: pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, as well as classical thought. Pragmatism can be noticed in emphasizing the role of consensus in scientific cognition; hermeneutics – in the way of analyzing and interpreting texts; phenomenology – in emphasizing the role of obviousness in cognition and the approach to experience; and classical thought – in the opinions on the main philosophical problems.

[3] According to Krąpiec, in terms of time, classical thought means ancient Greek and Roman philosophy; in terms of the subject, it means the type of philosophizing specified by the object and form of cognition; in terms of the problems, it means the basic questions or aporias raised against the reality, which require rational answers. Classical philosophy is a way of approaching reality and a way of philosophizing which, with all the

changes and varied tendencies, maintains a continuity from the ancient to modern times (KRĄPIEC, 1997, p. 156). This way of understanding classical philosophy is a convenient point of reference for the analysis of Spaemann's concept (KAMIŃSKI, 2019, p. 37-67).

[**4**] "Socrates did not classify the responses he obtained during his talks, but he aimed at reaching the truth. From that time on, philosophers have been carrying out a constant, critical, i.e. influenced by reflections, talk about the existing views. This talk is what we call 'philosophy', and, in particular, 'philosophical ethics'" (SPAEMANN, 2001, p. 16).

[**5**] In another place, Spaemann says that practicing philosophy that consists in asking the question about legitimization ("why?") is naive, because it requires justification in front of the individual subject of the universe, human action, or social system. Such naivety results from the fact that 1) this justification is direct and fails to reach the method; 2) the lack of method makes it impossible to share cognitive efforts and requires individual attempts to learn everything anew; and 3) such a justification takes the form of "a child's seriousness" [Kindheit] (SPAEMANN, 2010, p. 31-33). Spaemann perceives the lack of method as the lack of any commonly accepted method of the whole philosophy, and not the lack of any methods of philosophical cognition.

[**6**] What is also clear is the assumed validity of the classical definition of truth as the cognitive (judgmental) agreement with the reality. This is because it is impossible to agree with the reality in action if someone does not agree with it in the theoretical order (cognition).

[7] Both of these methods are used in metaphysics as direct or indirect cognition where, apart from the reference to the contents provided in common-sense cognition, some decisions are made through proving that the opposing thesis is ridiculous.