

## **Topic 4. Dialectics as a theory and as a method**

1. Dialectics and metaphysics as the universal methods of cognition. Dialectics and metaphysics in the history of philosophy.
2. Basic principles of dialectics.
3. Dialectics categories.

1. In Antics philosophy dialectics was understood as a way of discussion where the truth is achieved through the conflict of the opposite opinions.

It is considered that the first who used the concept “dialectics” was Socrates. Aristotle considered that dialectics was the science about probable opinions; he called that part of his doctrine “the first philosophy” or “the wisdom”.

In the Middle Ages and in the New Time the formal logic was called dialectics. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hegel created the universal cognition theory and the being doctrine. After this dialectics became the universal cognition method which considered all the things and phenomena as developing and interactive; the being doctrine was also based on this method.

Like the dialectics, metaphysics is also the universal cognition method which has the same old history.

**Dialectics is the cognition way considering all the things and phenomena in universal connection and in development.**

**Metaphysics is the cognition way considering all the things and**

## **phenomena out of universal connection and out of development.**

So metaphysics and dialectics as the cognition methods appeared in Antiquity and passed a long history. First Heraclites suggested the appearance of all the world processes from the conflict of opposites. Conflict is the way to achieve harmony, the way of existing of everything. Movement, change and conflict don't stop even for a moment. The famous Heraclites' expressions are: "You can't enter the same river twice" and "Everything is flowing, everything is changing". After Heraclites, his supporters in philosophy were called "the flowing philosophers" and his opponents were called "the immobile philosophers". Later these two positions formed correspondently the dialectical and the metaphysical cognition methods.

The concept of "metaphysics" has two basic meanings: 1) the type of philosophy studying the supersensitive, inaccessible for experience principles of being; 2) cognition method considering all the things and phenomena as static and isolated from each other. This concept appeared in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B. C. when Andronicus from Rodoss united into one Aristotle's works "about the first kinds of being" (namely the works on the philosophic problems) and located them after the treatise "Physics". "Meta-" means "after", so metaphysics itself means "after physics". In such a way metaphysics became the synonym of philosophy and was used up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Already in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries when natural sciences became the

opposition to philosophy (generally in methodology), the term “metaphysics” received the meaning of speculative knowledge out of concrete and empirical one. After Hegel’s system metaphysics obtained the meaning of old pre-dialectical philosophy. In Marxism it received a more narrow sense: “anti-dialectical method of cognition”.

As we see metaphysics creates static immobile world picture whose parts don’t depend on each other and can be considered as isolated.

Dialectics creates the dynamic and developing world picture all the parts of which are connected and determined by each other.

The golden age of metaphysics as a scientific cognition method falls on the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries; the same period of dialectics is observed in the 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Metaphysical method lied in the basis of the rapid growth of natural sciences in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Due to it the science of that period made a great break-through in comparison with the previous epochs. Metaphysical approach included into science such methods as analysis, the systematisation of things and phenomena. The greatest achievement of metaphysical methodology was the discovery of mechanical movement laws that is the change of bodies’ location in space without consideration of their inner characteristics.

With the help of dialectics the main progress of the social sciences in the 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries was made. The development of dialectical problems is the greatest achievement of Hegel. He created the doctrine of dialectical development as the qualitative change, as the transition

of the old into the new, as the movement of the lowest forms to the highest ones. He revealed the interconnection between all the world processes. Hegel created the unsurpassed system of dialectical categories and discovered the connections between them. All the categories are inherently turned into each other.

The essence of Hegel's dialectical method is expressed in the scheme which he called the triad (composed of three elements): thesis – antithesis – synthesis. The Logic, the Nature and the Spirit constituted the stages of the Idea's development. The Idea begins its development from the Logic (thesis), then it is denied by the second level – by the Nature (antithesis); at last the Idea passes onto the third level of development – it turns into the Spirit (synthesis) which unites all the levels. At the same time the development is realized according to three basic dialectical laws: 1) the qualitative and quantitative changes mutual transition law; 2) the oppositions unity and conflict law; 3) the negation of negation law.

Later dialectics was transformed into dialectical materialism by Hegel's youngest disciples Marx and Engels. In their philosophy the being determines the consciousness. The latter is understood not as an independent essence but as the material's ability to reflect itself. Material is always moves and develops. There is no God; he is the product of fantasy. Material is eternal and endless, it permanently accepts new forms. The most important development factor is practice. Development is realised according to dialectics laws. Marx

and Engels extended their dialectical-materialistic philosophy onto the society. Great attention was paid to the producing forces and the productive relations, the unity of which constitutes the way of production.

2. The dialectics content is uncovered through its basic categories, principles and laws. It can be said that the human thinking is dialectical by its nature. Truly, the levels of dialectical thinking on different stages of mankind's development are different but all of them subordinate to the basic principles of dialectics: the principle of universal connection and the principle of development.

The principle of universal connection is the reflection of the organised and ordered world in which everything is coupled. The connection means the dependence between the phenomena, between their existence and development. However connection does not exist without interaction. Just on account of interaction generality the mutual connection between all the structural being levels is realised. It provides the material unity of the world.

Interaction opens the influence process of different objects on each other as well as their mutual conditionality and the brood of one object by another. Interaction has the objective, universal and active character. No qualities, no structure or laws of reality can be understood without studying interaction. Without studying different kinds of connection and interaction forms and content it would be

impossible to solve the development problem which is the second fundamental principle of dialectics.

The principle of development is the result of application of the universal connection and interaction principles. There is nothing finally perfect in the world; everything is in the process of creating and changing.

The principle of universal connection with the principle of movement gives us the principle of development of the world.

The development is the irreversible, regular and definitely directed change of material and ideal objects leading to the birth of a new quality.

Here a natural question is: what is the source of development? All the opinions may be reduced to the basic ones – the metaphysical and the dialectical. The first considers that the source of development is the external influence. The second insists on the conflict of opposite forces and tendencies as the sources of development, namely on contradiction.

Contradiction is the interaction of opposition sides of things and phenomena.

Contradiction is a philosophical problem. Some philosophers believe the character of contradictions to be natural that is concerning the nature and the society as well as thinking. We have some ancient examples of contradictions use: in China these were the couple concepts of Yin-Yang, in Ancient Greece – the logical contradictions

of Zeno.

3. The most important and regular connections and relations of reality and cognition are reflected in philosophical categories.

For the first time the doctrine of categories was systematically stated in Aristotle's treatise "Categories" where the most general concepts were revealed.

According to Kant categories are the a-priory (pre-experience) forms of reason which characterise the thinking structure of the subject of cognition.

But the biggest part of the most important dialectical categories got their substantiation in Hegel's philosophical system, in the idealistic interpretation.

In the dialectical materialism theory categories were considered to be the result of social experience generalisation and cognition development.

Understanding and interpretation of categories are different in different theories. There are some directions in modern philosophy (positivism, existentialism) which aren't occupied the problems of categories at all.

**Categories are general concepts reflecting the most substantial interactions between the phenomena which are developing.**

The basic categories are: the essence and the phenomenon; the content and the form; the system, the element and the structure; the

whole and the part; the single, the particular and the universal; the cause and the consequence; the possibility and the reality; the necessity and the fortuity; the freedom and the necessity; the interruption and the continuity; the quality and the quantity.

**The essence and the phenomenon** are the most important dialectical categories which characterise the basic features of all the world objects. The essence and the phenomenon are always interactive.

**The essence** is internal and inaccessible to the feelings content of the thing, its sense.

**The phenomenon** is the revealing of the thing's essence particular features available to the feelings.

So the phenomenon is the external characteristics of the thing which man cognises by experience; the essence can be comprehended only with the help of reason.

**The content** is something that a thing or a phenomenon consists of. **The form** is the order in which all the component parts exist, the way of content's external expression. The content is changeable, mobile and the form keeps it in stable equilibrium. In every thing the conflict between the content and the form is taking place. On a certain stage the content throws down the previous form which was an obstacle in its development and receives a new form.

In modern science the category "form" is close to the category "structure".

**The system** is the ordered sum total of the interactive elements. **The element** is the indivisible component part in a certain system. The element is not only the indivisible but also the necessary component part of the system. If only one element of the system is absent it will be another system already. The elements quantity, the order of their location and the connections between them characterise the system's structure.

**The structure** is the sum total of the connections between the system elements. The elements constitute the content of the system; the structure constitutes its form.

The single, the particular and the universal are the categories reflecting features of the objective world as well as the stages of its cognition. **The single** is something separate, limited in time and space, isolated of others. When a separate thing is revealed the subject marks some repeating features in the number of things. General features inhered in the number of some class objects constitute the content of **the particular**. The features inhered in all the things of some class constitute **the universal**.

Dialectics insists that there are no isolated phenomena. Every phenomenon is conditioned by some other previous phenomenon. Moreover, every phenomenon defines and conditions some subsequent phenomena. In this situation we can define the cause and the consequence categories.

**The cause** is the phenomenon conditioning another one.

**The consequence** is the phenomenon generated by another one.

So in dialectics there is a point of view on the causality as the connection between the phenomena when one phenomenon (the cause) always produces another phenomenon (the consequence). Here we can formulate the concept of determinism.

**Determinism is the doctrine of the objective interaction and mutual condition of the material and spiritual world phenomena.**

**Indeterminism is the doctrine denying the objectivity of the causal connection.**

The necessity and the fortuity are the categories reflecting the type of connection between the phenomena. The necessary connection causes what is to be; and the accidental connection causes what may not be. **The necessity** is the type of connection between the phenomena defined by the basic, essential causes.

**The fortuity** is the type of connection defined by the incidental, irrelevant factors.

In general, categories are closely connected with the theme of consciousness. The categories are the universal and necessary thinking forms which organise the process of thinking and cognition.