

## **Topic 5. Cognition and practice**

1. The world cognition problem.
2. The subject and the object of cognition. The perceptible and the rational levels of cognition.
3. The truth concept.
4. The practice and its meaning in cognition.

1. **Cognition** is the activity aimed at receiving knowledge.

It is studied by the theory of cognition, by gnoseology. **Gnoseology is the philosophical doctrine of cognition.**

This part of philosophical knowledge is occupied with such problems as: levels, stages and forms of cognition, relations between the subject and the object of cognition, the truth, cognition and practice correlation problem, etc.

The basic question is the cognition limits: how much is the world cognitive? Which of the real things and processes can we cognise for sure?

When solving this fundamental question two philosophical directions were formed: Gnosticism and Agnosticism.

**Gnosticism is the philosophical doctrine insisting that the world is perceived.**

**Agnosticism is the philosophical doctrine insisting that the world is not perceived.**

Agnostics are the philosophers considering the cognition of the

world possible only within certain limits. This is the gnoseological pessimism position. The fullest agnostic thought exists in the Kant system. He used special concepts to name the thing as it is (“the thing in itself” – nomenon) and as it is perceived by man (“the thing for us” – phenomenon). So a human can cognise only the phenomenon; but the real thing is not perceived.

Gnostics are the philosophers insisting that the world is perceived exhaustively and absolutely. It is the gnoseological optimism position.

Gnosticism is peculiar both to the objective idealism and to materialism. The latter considers that there is no difference between the phenomenon and “the thing in itself”. In the cognition process and practical activity a human is able to cognise the world more widely and more exactly.

The disagreement between the pessimistic and optimisticgnoseological positions can't be solved theoretically.

2. Cognition as the process of obtaining knowledge includes a number of components: the subject, the object, the levels, the stages and the truth as the purpose of cognition.

The basic components are the subject and the object.

**The subject is these one who cognises namely a definite bearer of cognitive activity** (separate people, groups of people, the society in general).

**The object is the one cognition is directed at namely what is cognised** (every thing or being).

For a long time these two components opposed each other. These discussions lead on to the dispute about the priority of the perceptible or the rational cognition.

**Rationalism is the philosophical direction considering reason to be the basis of cognition and human behaviour.** Here the true knowledge is accessible only by reason. The latter is the source and the criterion of truth.

**Empiricism is the direction in the cognition theory admitting perceptible experience as the source of cognition.**

So one of the cognition forms becomes absolute, that is their meanings are overstated.

The social nature of cognition (general recognition of the society as the subject) was revealed by the German classical philosophy: in Kant's "transcendental subject" and Hegel's "objective spirit".

Later Marx insisted that being defined consciousness so the way man perceived of the world depended on the forms of his social and economic life.

In 20<sup>th</sup> century the study of objective forms of thinking lead to their understanding through the language.

Traditionally there are two cognition(al) levels: the perceptible (empirical, sensitive) and the rational (logical) levels.

**Perceptible cognition is realised with the help of the external**

## **sense organs.**

It includes three stages: the feeling, the perception and the notion.

**The feeling** appears as a result of external influence on the human sense organs. Feelings reproduce only separate characteristics of the thing.

**The perception** creates the united image of the thing from the feelings sum total.

**The notion** is the image that appears in human memory on the basis of past feelings and perceptions. The notion appears without the thing when it doesn't influence on the human sense organs.

All this is the external information about the world. To realize the essences, to explain the regularity also to generalisation the rational cognition is necessary.

**The rational cognition is the process of abstract, generalising thinking.**

It also includes three stages: the concept, the judgment and the conclusion.

**The concept** is the elementary unit of the rational thinking; reasoning is built of them. The concept reflects the general essential characteristics of the things. The concept is expressed by the words and phrases.

**The judgment** is the sum total of the concepts reflecting the connections and the relations between the things and their features. The judgment affirms or negates something. It is expressed by the

sentence.

**The conclusion** is a process of receiving a new judgment from two or several judgments on the basis of logical laws. The conclusions do not depend on the sensitive experience; they are the highest form of abstract thinking. The latter is inseparably connected with the language.

New knowledge is always connected with creative work.

**Creative work** is the highest form of human perceiving relation to the world. Due to creative work cultural values are created, laws are formed; methods of cognition and transformation of reality are worked out. Creative work is revealed in all human life spheres.

Intuition plays an important role in creation, it allows to cognise the truth immediately, without logical reasoning. Intuition is based on the unity of the sensitive and the rational knowledge.

3. The result of cognition is knowledge. Usually knowledge corresponding to reality is called the truth.

By the content the truth is always **objective** because it is independent of the perceived subject.

By the form the truth is always **subjective** because it does not exist out of consciousness.

The first definition of the truth was given by Aristotle. He said that cognition is true when it corresponds to the things and their connections existing out of consciousness.

Kant revealed inconsistency of the truth. Hegel proved that the

truth is not the stiffen system where the whole knowledge about the thing was achieved. According to Hegel the truth is the process within which the thing and the concept reflecting it coincide more and more. Moreover the truth presupposes the changes of the thing in the cognition process.

The truth can be relative and absolute. **The relative truth** is not whole, approximate knowledge which is added in the process of the further cognition. **The absolute truth** is the knowledge which can't be changed during further cognition. As the absolute truths there are the truths of facts, the physical absolute symbols, "the eternal truths", etc. The relative truth and the absolute truth concepts are connected with understanding of cognition as the process which has place at certain time and under certain historical conditions.

In the cognition theory the question of correlation between the truth and the error is also important. These ideas which have been denied during the science development are called **errors**. Therefore the truth is always **concrete**; there is no abstract truth. The truth is always connected with definite conditions and always belongs to the definite place, time, position and circumstances.

For human activity it is necessary to have objective truth and proved knowledge. Validity presupposes the presence of the criterion which allows to reveal the objective verity of knowledge. In the history of philosophy there were different decision variants of the criterion problem. In modern philosophy of science there are three

basic ones: the accordance, the coherent and the pragmatic.

1. **The accordance theory** means that the statements are true when they correspond to reality.

2. **The coherent approach** means that the statements are true when there are consistent and it can be proved.

3. **The pragmatic understanding** presupposes verification of true or false judgments by practice.

All these positions are mutually complementary.

4. Practice often becomes the most important criterion of the truth.

**Practice is the teleological objective human activity directed at creating material and spiritual-cultural values which are important for the society functioning.**

Practice has a social character.

The main kinds of social practice are: 1) material and productive; 2) social and political; 3) the scientific experiment.

Also there are specific kinds of practice: family and domestic, artistic, pedagogical, educational, etc.

Like the truth, the practice may be absolute and relative because it is historically concrete. This practice character makes hypotheses possible. Practice is always limited by the objective possibilities; their overcoming is closely connected not with hypothesis but with fantasy.