

# Problems and Prospects for the Formation of a General Methodology of Knowledge. Philosophical Reflections

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The article analyses the problems and possibilities of forming a general methodological paradigm for the study, explanation and forecasting of social processes – in the context of the philosophical concepts of G. Hegel and F. Nietzsche. In particular, a fundamental possibility for forming a general methodological paradigm based on a dynamic balance of not optimal, but possible is analysed. The paper outlines the positive and negative aspects of the methodological paradigms of rationalism and irrationalism (postmodernism); points out the possibility of terminological discourse in determining the content of concepts and categories; emphasises the efficiency of the methodological paradigm of rationalism on the example of the analysis and implementation of the philosophical category ‘measure’; substantiates the need for improvement of the spiritual priorities of various groups of the population – with a special emphasis on the layer of politicians.

**Keywords:** methodology, rationalism, irrationalism, paradigm, essence, conviction, measure

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## INTRODUCTION

The enduring relevance of the search for a general philosophical methodology for cognising reality – both nature and society – is beyond doubt. Philosophers of different directions and schools expressed their confidence in its existence. We do support M. Heidegger’s statement that philosophy always ‘... thinks from beings back to beings with a glance in passing toward being. For every departure from beings and every return to them stands already in the light of being’ (Heidegger 1978: 252). To our opinion, this ‘moment’ is methodological and a main ‘external’ mission of philosophy is the methodological mission.

This idea has long been known and is being implemented. Works are published on the study of various aspects of the formation of a general methodology of knowledge. The ‘difficulties of conceptualisation’ in the formation of a network of beliefs (Baumberger 2019) and the conceptual structure of sensory diversity (Kozak 2018) are recognised; attempts are being made to implement epistemic provisions in science (Chursinova et al. 2021) and everyday life of society (Bai 2020). The doctrine of methodological paradigms deserves attention (Valatka 2019; Valatka 2021). Universities study Philosophy of Science as an academic discipline. Therefore, one can even assume that the general philosophical methodology as a system of

universal principles, categories and laws already exists. However, it is not. Mr. Ivin states: 'It is needed ... a general concept of the methodology of scientific learning. The concept should make a clear distinction between the natural sciences on the one hand and the social sciences and humanities on the other hand. And, at the same time, the concept must save the unity for the scientific method. There is no such concept yet' (Ivin 2017: 5). Representatives of specific sciences also emphasise the need to 'develop theoretical and methodological approaches to the whole range of problems and challenges facing scientists' (Orlyk et al. 2019: 5).

Today philosophy makes different and sometimes opposite demands on the social sciences and the humanities, what make the effectiveness of science researches lower and generate a kind of disrespect for philosophy as the methodology.\* Our article is to contribute to the definitions of approaches, and contexts to solve this issue. The purpose is to analyse the problems and possibilities of forming a general philosophical methodology for understanding society as a dynamic balance of opposite philosophical trends – rationalism and irrationalism (in the context of G. Hegel's and F. Nietzsche's philosophical concepts).

### DIFFICULTIES OF CONCEPTUALISATION: DIVERSITY OR UNITY?

The question of the existence of a common methodology for understanding the world is debatable, since the philosophy of the Modern era and postmodernism takes opposite positions. Therefore, to start philosophical reflections, we assume that the fundamental opportunity for the general methodology of the cognition of the social reality is in the belief that the diverse world by its nature is united, therefore, there must be a philosophical 'carcas', defining methodologically a general direction for research of different social processes.

The logic of the formation of philosophical methodology is known. It presupposes a certain 'cognitive vertical', namely, a consistent deepening of consciousness – from a multitude of primary diverse ideas about reality to the reflection of this reality at the conceptual, and then at the categorical level. Research and discussion about ways to solve this problem have been going on for a long time, but today there is not even a method for forming a methodological 'carcas'. Does modern social cognition have such a goal? Undoubtedly. 'Social cognition (SC) or, sociocognition if you like, is thus a kaleidoscope of research projects that has seen exponential growth over the past thirty or so years...' (Marsh et al. 2007: 1–2). But even a brief analysis of recent international philosophical discussions shows that there is no need to speak of a 'vertical' immanent inference from attributes' (Malinowski-Charles 2011: 134), since the attempts of European philosophers to jointly order subjective experience in accordance with its general principles lead so far to the emergence of new disagreements. 'The deep disagreements at the level of epistemic principles, ... subprinciples and ... the structures' are analysed (Smith et al. 2020: 1); 'the most common disagreements and determinations about the truth' are studied (d'Agostini 2019: 1); 'difficulties of conceptualization', in particular, disagreements in solving problems of 'conceptual content of perception' are explored (Kozak 2018: 88). Ch. Ranalli in the paper 'Deep Disagreement and Hinge Epistemology' declared: 'In this paper, I consider pessimism about deep disagreement, the thesis that such disagreements are rationally irresolvable...' (Ranalli 2018: 1). Therefore, perhaps, 'deep disagreements are characteristically resistant to rational resolution' (Aberdein 2019: 1).

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\* There is also an opinion that 'disrespect occurs... because of a certain confusion created by the extreme abstraction of philosophy, a large number of its schools and, as a consequence, the impossibility to achieve and fulfill all its requirements' (Stezhko et al.: 153).

We see that the persistent attempts of modern philosophers to pass the 'cognitive vertical' of formation of a general philosophical methodological apparatus is so far accompanied with pessimism. Diversity does not lead to unity.

Philosophers also explore 'a horizontal chain of causality of one finite thing on to another' (Malinowski-Charles 2011: 133), but there are elements of eclecticism. For example, A. Aberdein, believing 'which... it would make ease the way to mutually acceptable resolution of deep disagreements' (Aberdein 2019: 12), singles out 'a sense of duty..., justice..., common sense..., recognition of reliable authority..., intellectual humility..., honor..., due respect for public opinion..., recognition of important facts..., intellectual candor..., sincerity' (Aberdein 2019: 2). Also 'what is still problematic is the circulation of diverging ideas about the notion of truth...' (d'Agostini 2019: 3).

We make a preliminary conclusion. These researches are carried out within the framework of postmodernism the basis of which is irrationalism. Postmodernism does not set the task of a methodological conceptualisation of knowledge: it is based on the 'splitting' of reality (Derrida's 'deconstruction') and the total use of narrative as a method of 'ordering' discourse.

The cognitive value of postmodern studies is undoubtable, but it has sufficient reasons not in the sphere of epistemology, but in the sphere of philosophical anthropology. We agree with the opinion of P. Aleksandravicius that 'the process of democratization that came to post-communist countries and which today, historically matured in the West in the modern era, has become a part of postmodern thought, sets the official task of transforming the monologue form of consciousness into a dialogical one, as required the very nature of democracy' (Aleksandravicius 2016: 14). But this is a 'horizontal' dialogue. Therefore, it is necessary to permanently supplement political, ethical and psychological discourse with philosophical and methodological discourse, since it supposes increasing the role of rationalism in the conceptualisation of social reality. Rationalism as a way of comprehending reality permeates all philosophical schools to one degree or another. The constant need for the word 'why' makes necessity a search for the general cognition methodology of the social reality.

Thus there is a paradoxical situation – rationalism and irrationalism are opposite currents, but they are equally important for success in moving along the 'cognitive vertical'. This situation determines the next task – the studies analysis of leading representatives from rationalism and irrationalism in order to determine further direction to research. In philosophy of the world, an outstanding representative for the Modern Era Mr. Hegel is considered a prominent rationalist and a prominent irrationalist is Mr. Nietzsche, one from the founders of Postmodernism. Therefore, let us turn to their theories.

## IN SEARCH OF A GENERAL METHODOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE – FROM G. HEGEL TO F. NIETZSCHE

First, let us single out the general position of the rationalist G. Hegel, on the basis of which he proposes to form the laws of science. Since 'the different systems which the history of philosophy presents are not irreconcilable with unity' (Hegel 1830: 12), 'we may either say, that it is one philosophy at different degrees of maturity: or that the particular principle, which is the groundwork of each system, is but a branch of one and the same universe of thought' (ibid.). A starting point for the cognition of social and historical events lies in an initial scientific conceptualisation that has a clear hierarchical scheme:

'The empirical sciences do not stop short at the mere observation of the individual features of a phenomenon. By the aid of thought, they are able to meet philosophy with materials

prepared for it, in the shape of general uniformities, i.e. laws, and classifications of the phenomena. When this is done, the particular facts which they contain are ready to be received into philosophy' (Hegel 1830: 12).

Hegel notes that the common sense gets to know reality but not the mind at the empirical level ('Bearing in mind this first period of thought, the period of mere generality, we may safely say that experience is the real author of growth and advance in philosophy' (ibid.). But the common sense acts analytically – relying mainly on the method of induction, the common sense describes visibility, copies and dismembers; it is incapable to synthesis. The search for a paradigmatic social or humanitarian discipline, 'unity in rules', is also utopian – after all, this task does not belong to the common sense but to philosophical mind. Hegel determines the general channel in which the freedom of individual actions becomes the historical necessity.

Such is the logic of the reasoning of the rationalist Hegel.

Philosophy of Nietzsche is irrational. Believing that 'in man CREATURE and CREATOR are united: in man there is not only matter, shred, excess, clay, mire, folly, chaos; but there is also the creator, the sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divinity of the spectator, and the seventh day' (Nietzsche 2013: 225), Nietzsche puts first the sensory-emotional nature of man: 'It is WE alone who have devised cause, sequence, reciprocity, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose'. And we manage our life at the high of our emotions: 'Culture can by no means dispense with passions, vices, and malignities' (Nietzsche 1910: 349). Postmodernism has actually defined these statements of F. Nietzsche as the 'framework' of all social research, placing the person of 'common sense' and his freedom at the center of the methodology ('intellectual humility').

Nietzsche's attitude to the role of reason in cognition can be considered 'dual'. Let us illustrate his position with the example of the beliefs role in cognition. The formation of a network of beliefs in cognition by postmodernism is not only justified, it is an unconditional priority – '...there are strong intuitions that epistemic justification needs to be accessible to the agent and that it requires embedding individual convictions into a coherent web of beliefs' (Baumberger 2019: 368). Really, without the steps of 'convictions' it is impossible to advance on the path of cognition, and even 'there is a point in every philosophy at which the 'conviction' of the philosopher appears on the scene' (Nietzsche 2013: 8).

But Nietzsche – at the same time – warns of the inadmissibility of overestimating the role of beliefs in cognition: 'Conviction is belief in the possession of absolute truth on any matter of knowledge. This belief takes it for granted, therefore, that there are absolute truths; also, that perfect methods have been found for attaining to them; and finally, that every one who has convictions makes use of these perfect methods. All three notions show at once that the man of convictions is not the man of scientific thought; he seems to us still in the age of theoretical innocence, and is practically a child, however grown-up he may be' (Nietzsche 1910: 398).

The words of Nietzsche allow one to conclude that beliefs are effective only at an intermediate stage – and in case we postulate 'a net of beliefs' as a final (conceptual) stage of cognition, it is possible to appear for the emergence of a cognitive break 'between a single reality and the diversity of consciousness' (Malinowski-Charles 2011: 134) – and cognition will become the center of the cycle of only 'horizontal' causality.

We make a preliminary conclusion. The teachings similarity of the rationalist G. Hegel and the irrationalist F. Nietzsche becomes obvious. Cause, Mr. Nietzsche's point 'the man of scientific thinking' cannot limit a cognition with 'emotional intelligence' (Chursinova et al., 2021), 'a network of beliefs' (Baumberger, 2019) – in the end, it is mandatory to answer

the question 'WHY'. That is, at a certain stage of a hierarchical ladder of cognition an increase of the role of the mind rational is needed.

Here open new opportunities but also new problems. For example: there is a 'magic' word in cognition; the presence of this word, in the general opinion, allows you to immediately raise any set of information to the level of science. This word is 'law'. In society the law is the concentrated content of historical necessity (Hegel) and is the goal of the methodological conceptualisation of the cognition of social reality. 'Intellectual humility', 'intellectual frankness', 'sincerity' (Aberdein, 2019), etc. cannot achieve such a goal.

But here a 'strange' question arises: 'If history has laws why haven't they been discovered?' (Snooks 1998: 10). Moreover, 'the critical problem we face is how to devise a method – a method that has eluded us for millennia – for discovering ... laws' (Snooks 1998: 2). Causes such as '...the self-limitation of employing methods that are either deductive or, when inductive, are focused on events rather than underlying mechanisms; the lack of adequate preparation for a difficult task; the ferocity of the antihistoricist campaign' (Snooks 1998: 10) we leave outside the scope of the discussion but this question is really the key question. What methodological efficiency of the laws of history should speak if they still are not found? The question is rhetorical.

This grotesque result is interpreted by modern philosophers in different ways: (1) as 'the methodological uselessness' of philosophy; (2) as the intermediate stage in the reality cognition, which already demonstrates its requirements effectiveness and could be a stimulus for further researches.

In our opinion, such division is inappropriate. The 'methodological futility' of philosophy is an oxymoron. Let us look at the philosophical basis of the problem: 'It is the main and peculiar characteristic of philosophical consideration that any aspect of any phenomenon or process can get into the focus of this consideration becoming its object' (Valatka, 2019: 1). 'Consideration' can only be methodological and cannot be useless – humanity will never develop something useless 5000 years.

We believe that the problem requires further in-depth analysis (along with a practice of implementation) in line with paragraph (2) – in philosophical, political and psychological discourses.

We will illustrate the possibility of the formation of social laws using the example of history, primarily because history stands out in the 'kaleidoscope' of research projects in the field of social cognition. Although there is still a discussion if history is a science, if laws are there in history, and a conceptual generalisation of various social processes is constantly expected from history. Hegel admits the existence of the laws of history (as a standard of rationality), but at the same time he points to inevitability of a certain departure from objectivity ('the freedom of actions') in the content of definitions, to the fact that a full rationalisation of historical events is fundamentally impossible – it means that also impossible is an unambiguity of the laws of history. But – maybe – are possible many-valued laws, laws-tendencies that are being formed at the stage of transition from an induction of common sense to a deduction of philosophical reason?

This answer could be accepted but there is an issue – these laws are not to be enumerated.

But another conclusion can be drawn: the social law exists, but it contains a certain 'historical mobility of content': although historical events are separated, 'from within' they are based on a commonality and, thanks to their connections, they are one. The commonality constantly 'removes' the past, making events contemporary, and stretches the 'leading thread'

to the future event, and this ensures their *continuity* as *regularity*. We consider this option of understanding the social law today as most acceptable.

However, if the analysis of this problem is continued, other possibilities for researching the topic, other discourses, for example, terminological discourse, will appear. The possibilities of argumentation using terminological analysis are underestimated today. For example, the lexeme 'freedom' as a 'sweet' word, as a concept and as a category in practice manifests itself in different content, and this 'diversity' is one of the main reasons for people's indignation (Stezhko et al. 2021). The same situation is with the lexeme 'law'. Even in the philosophical environment there is some confusion – the same content, namely, 'internal, constant, stable, essential interconnection of elements', is called differently: stable structure, social law, social pattern, social regularity, historical necessity, principle, microsystem, concept, etc. Different interpretation of social events reduces the methodological capabilities of philosophy and makes the existence of the philosophical category 'social law' somewhat conditional.

Within these considerations, some 'mobility and mutual complementation of the content' can be noticed in many philosophical propositions, laws, principles and categories. For example, the concreteness of truth principle has the methodological power of a social law. Or: interrelation of the categories of 'quantity and quality' acquired from Hegel a holistic character in the form of the dialectics of the categories of quantity and quality; in marxism it is the law of qualitative and quantitative changes; in modern philosophy, this is the 'quantity–quality–measure' microsystem.

But not a single philosophical trend or school refutes the methodological effectiveness of the sustainable interaction of these categories!

Here we make a very important clarification. Measure, as a synthesis of quality and quantity, turns out to be the essence of things, and thus acquires a universal character. However, in practice nobody follows the line of measure. This is a huge problem and that leads to a total absolutisation of one's opinion, and we observe the destructive consequences of absolutisation always and everywhere. A furious onslaught of an 'absolutely correct' position (and in fact, of their own interests, but people often hide this fact) is capable to destroy even ingenious demands to optimise people's lives through adherence to the line of measure. Solving this problem is as difficult as necessary – a complex, coordinated research by philosophers, scientists and practitioners is needed. The ambivalence of the measure requires a balance of quality and quantity in the individual and social action. This is the main condition for success. It would be good to heed the words of Nietzsche, addressed to all people: 'PROPORTION-ATENESS is strange to us, let us confess it to ourselves; our itching is really the itching for the infinite, the immeasurable. Like the rider on his forward panting horse, we let the reins fall before the infinite, we modern men, we semi-barbarians – and are only in OUR highest bliss when we – ARE IN MOST DANGER' (Nietzsche 2013: 224). This is a methodological warning and extremely serious.

So, the context of the methodological reasoning of the rationalist Hegel and the irrationalist Nietzsche allows effective use of traditional methodological guidelines and simultaneously forming new ones that will help optimise the development of society in the future.

## FROM DIVERSITY TO UNITY: OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS

Social sciences and a diverse, dynamic social life certainly need a common methodological paradigm, within which social progress is possible. There are prerequisites in world philosophy that determine the need to address this topic today: rationality (the search for conceptual

unity) and irrationalism (the subjective 'deconstruction' of reality) have sufficient grounds. In practice, these concepts are opposite, and over the millennia, philosophy periodically absolutises the role of one of them. The logic of philosophical discourse is the following: is it possible to combine rationalism and irrationalism in a single methodological paradigm? The answer to this question is not necessarily negative. There are more details:

'Pendulum' of paradigm change will always be: it is impossible to build a paradigm of social research as a synergy of the logical and the extra-logical, which will optimally correspond to the depth and scale of the real problems of society. But a certain scheme of convergence of methodological paradigms is already visible today: radicalism in the content of the methodological paradigm of rational philosophy is gradually decreasing: the principle of objectivity is subjectivised; sensory, irrational experience of a person of everyday life is already episodically included in the general rational system; a narrow understanding of the principle of determinism is gradually replaced by systemic determinism; the degrees of freedom expand. In this context, the role of beliefs also changes: beliefs as the center of the methodological paradigm of postmodernism represent not only a powerful methodological resource of an irrational form of comprehending reality, but are also the basis for the formation of a methodological paradigm of rational philosophy.

A certain fantasy of this scheme of convergence of methodological paradigms through their fragility in front of the omnipotence of interests, often irrational, is visible in political discourse. But we offer the following reasoning for discussion. Indeed, the basis of democracy is dialogism. But if we do not lay a deep common foundation in dialogicity, after a while the state will cross the line of 'measure', it will face a dictatorship of disagreements, and then a dictatorship of power.

For searching of a solution of this situation, we get back to philosophical discourse. No doubt that the contradiction between rationalism and irrationalism is essential. The question is – is this contradiction antagonistic or not? Our answer is no. This answer 'removes' the red lines within the philosophical discourse and allows a complex of political measures, which French philosophers in the 18th century have developed: the only way to a fair society – it is the harmonisation of personal and public interests through a reasonable legislation, education and upbringing. For this, it is necessary that service to society becomes the highest personal interest of the authorities. In a democratic country, such a situation is possible.

We also pay attention to the psychological discourse. Each person by the fact of birth 'is, indeed, a project...' (Sartre 2011: 3); that project is always unfinished, constantly changing itself. If not to determine the methodological framework and direction of changes in the socialisation process of individual, the choice of human behaviour is going always to be selfish. But the possibilities of personality formation are big today – theoretical studies of political philosophy, philosophy of morality and success in the implementation of the methods of modern spiritual practices of democratic countries evidence about that.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a fundamental possibility for forming a general methodological paradigm based on a dynamic balance (with constant monitoring) of not optimal, but possible. The constant battle of schools and trends in world philosophy does not cancel the methodological role of the general deep provisions that must be guided always and everywhere. But, in general, this problem, of course, requires further deep analysis and discussion – primarily in the philosophical line (since each historical period is reflected by philosophical conceptualisation as

a methodology) and also in political, psychological and ethical discourses. Actions in favour of an acceptable choice (the choice of the optimal is not possible) of the individual's behaviour should be carried out by politicians through the vertical of state institutions, where the system of education and upbringing occupies a leading position. One of the state's success markers is depreciation of such a term as 'the absolutisation' of one's own or group position – in power and in society – and its replacement by the term 'argumentation.' And as long as we are fascinated by the phrase 'I am *absolutely* sure!' we think it will be very difficult to talk about compromises, tolerance, respect for the freedom of others and responsibility for free actions as the priorities of society.

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## Bendrosios žinių metodikos formavimo problemos ir perspektyvos. Filosofiniai apmąstymai

### *Santrauka*

Straipsnyje analizuojamos problemos ir galimybės, formuojant bendrą metodologinę paradigmą, socialiniams procesams tirti, aiškinti ir prognozuoti G. Hegelio ir F. Nietzsche's filosofinių sampratų kontekste. Konkrečiai analizuojama, ar iš esmės galima suformuoti bendrą metodologinę paradigmą, pagrįstą ne optimalia, bet galimai dinamine pusiausvyra. Autoriai nagrinėja teigiamus ir neigiamus racionalizmo ir iracionalizmo (postmodernizmo) metodologinių paradigmų aspektus; nurodo terminologinio diskurso galimybę nustatant sąvokų ir kategorijų turinį; pabrėžia metodologinės racionalizmo paradigmos efektyvumą analizuojant ir įgyvendinant filosofinės kategorijos „matą“; pagrindžia poreikį tobulinti įvairių gyventojų grupių dvasinius prioritetus ypatingą dėmesį skiriant politikų sluoksniui.

**Raktažodžiai:** metodologija, racionalizmas, iracionalizmas, paradigma, esmė, įsitikinimas, laisvė, savivalė, matas