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The Philosophy between the Field and the City

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The history of the philosophy oscillates between a useful knowledge and the speculation useless. This paper attempts to show a few consequences of this two perspectives named the technical interpretation of the knowledge and the essential interpretation of the knowledge. The proposal of this paper is to show that the philosophy is between the two frontiers delimiters: the border delimiters of the field and the city and the border between the useful and the useless, and indicate the relative importance of useful and useless for these perspectives.

Keywords: the utility of philosophy, the city and philosophy, field, useful, useless

1. Introduction

I think we should start with the statement of the problem, because the circular nature of the case can be shrouded in confusion. Let's start by formulating a question in the subject that we are dealing with and clarifying the meaning of the question. We can ask the question as follows: What is the usefulness of the philosophy in the city? It seems to me that the question makes sense only if we understand what the philosophers can do to resolve the challenges faced by cities but what they can be done as philosophers, not as citizens or as parents or brothers and sisters, children, neighbors, or colleagues at work. Avoiding the problem of how to separate the philosopher of the citizen and the other roles that carry out all individual, the question could not be resolved satisfactorily, if not possible to determine what a philosopher is, and, therefore, what the philosophy is. Put another way, any response that we provide to this ask, involves a notion of philosophy. Still more, the formulation of the question itself implies a notion of philosophy. If the latter is true, then, the circular nature of the questioning is blindingly obvious: The answer to the question "what is the usefulness of the philosophy in the city," requires that we first decide what is the philosophy, but the question has already decided for us, if it is true that the question implies a notion of philosophy to follow on, I shall try to clarify which is this notion of philosophy.

2. The Rural and the Philosophy and the Urban

History, in general, and the history of philosophy, in particular, are in agreement that, before the existence of the philosophy, techniques exist, that is to say activities responsible for providing the elements that satisfy the needs of food, clothing, and housing (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b 20-30), and it is a common opinion that the philosophy is based on the distinction between entities natural and man-made objects, namely the distinction between things that are a product of nature and things that are the product of techniques; in a word, natural things and artificial things. This distinction between the natural and the artificial shows already, on the

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one hand, the difference between rural and urban; and as a result, on the other hand, between the rustic and the cultivated, not to say, between the primitive and the civilized (Leo Strauss 1950, 81-120).

On the other hand, according to the most widely held view, the exercise of philosophy is necessary to have time for this exercise, that is, the otio (otiosity) is a conditio sine qua non of the philosophy. From this perspective, the city serves for the exercise of philosophy, since the philosopher must have satisfied the food, clothing, and shelter in order to perform their activity, if this is true, then, we can think that rural life is the support of the urban life which corresponds absolutely from the economic point of view. In addition, it also implies the distinction—and perhaps the hierarchy—between work manual and intellectual work, which also corresponds from the economic perspective. It is interesting to examine this distinction; it seems that the manual work supports, economically, the intellectual work and, however the distribution of the wealth inclined to side of manual work.

Now we ask if philosophy can serve in something to the city. On the other hand, the most common interpretation of the meaning of the thought of Socrates understands that with their thinking, the philosophy under of the heavens to earth, which means that it is no longer worried about and investigates the issues on the cosmos and is concentrated on the city and man, that is to say, begins to inquire about what man is and, therefore, on the ethics and politics, on the affairs of the city. This interpretation of the thought of Socrates seems to lead us to think that there is a usefulness of the philosophical argumentation for the city.

In addition, we must clarify what we mean by the word “city;” we must not forget that the word “city” derives from the Latin word “civitas” which is the Latin translation of the Greek word “polis.” A first and old sense, and perhaps the most general is a specifically human community; the city is a community of human beings, only human beings can have a city. That is to say, the communities of bees or any other entity living gregarious being are not a city. Secondly, derived from the above, it is the meaning of city that is distinguished from rural, the distinction between what we call town and country. The city, in this second sense, means civilization as opposed to rural, not civilized.

Since, the principle of philosophy has already shown a paradox between the philosophy and the city in the first sense mentioned. Remember that according to the Republic of Plato, the philosopher who is the one who manages to get out of the cave to return is segregated, because it attempts to convince the cavemen of the existence of another world that only he has seen and is in danger of being called crazy, or be beaten or until killed. In this way, the cavemen living in the appearance and the philosopher are ones who live in the reality. This difference between the two forms of Bios makes it impossible to exist the philosopher king, because one cannot be both at the same time, that is to say, we cannot live in the appearance and the reality at the same time (Plato, *Republic*, book VI and VII). The politician that keeps the cavemen in the appearance will always show as sane, while the philosopher always looks like a madman. As well, the philosopher does not only show you how even seem futile but dangerous; at least, the politician will always seem to philosopher dangerous to the city.

On the other hand, Aristotle says that knowledge while higher is when it is less useful (*Metaphysics*, 982a 10), which is a consequence of the distinction between means and ends which is present along the thought of Aristotle. In fact, agreed with the reasoning of Aristotle, all action is carried out according to certain purposes. In such a way that some sciences are made in view of other, science last is the supreme science, with a view to which all others will be performed. Thus, the supreme science is not done in view of any other but she is the ultimate goal. Philosophy as the supreme science is pursued by itself and not for anything (Aristotle,

Metaphysics, 982a 10-20). The philosophy is a virtue in itself, and is not something that will serve to… but all the other sciences are made to serve the philosophy, as well as the reason for this is the supreme value of human beings, because the thought is, by nature, what distinguishes human beings from the other living beings.

Perhaps, the questions immediately arise in this regard are: What is virtue? And why the philosophy is a virtue? With the modern words, what is a value? And why is that philosophy is a value? These questions are purely philosophical issues; no particular science can address these issues with their procedures and methods. Our task, now, would be whether question on that is virtue and that is knowledge which is useful and serves to resolve the problems of the city.

On another part, to address the second sense of the word city, it is probably prudent to start with the following markings. When we talk of east and west, we should be aware that these terms are completely relatives. At the time of Alexander the Great, for example, perhaps the west means the Hellenic world, the revolved around the Aegean sea, while the east probably means the world to the civilizations of the regions of Egypt and India's borders; then from the perspective of the Roman Empire east and west limits to acquire new distinctive and significant, the east includes the Hellenic world and Greece formed only a part and the east and west are the Latin part of the Roman Empire. Today, in modern times, the west is Europe and the rest is the east, which breaks this down into distant, medium, and next. Similarly the term city, in the second sense mentioned above, that is to say, is understood as city other than the field, and, therefore, both territorial and significantly delimited; it acquires its meaning in conjunction with the term rural, which does not have precise boundaries and contours.

These terms are also fully relatives. The limits and the meanings of city and countryside are very changeable over time. What in the fifth century before Christ was the Greek polis, today it is a province. According to Mosterín, thousand five hundred of the polis that exist in the Hélade, Athens, the cradle of western civilization, come to count with 250,000 inhabitants and the majority of these polis never came to the 5,000 inhabitants (Mosterín 2006, 17; 29). Athens is the cradle of culture and civilization, and therefore of philosophy; that is to say, Athens is the typical urban city of the maximum development of ancient Greece. However, currently, in the modern era, the communities in that amount of inhabitants are barely a town that lives on the field and, hardly, there will be a university. On the contrary, in Athens there are many "schools." In sum, the limits of the city are also limited and this limitation is closely related to the advance of civilization of mankind. As you want to delimit the borders between the field and the city, what does seem certain is that they refer to two forms of bios of the human being.

In relation to these two forms of life, the life in the province and the busy city life, I want to tell you an anecdote. At the beginning of the century, 2001, a thinker of the old continent (Peter Sloterdikj) recounts that walking through the campus of the Bard College, an institution that is very appreciated by the students of the upper middle class of the city of New York, finds, almost by chance, the tomb of Hannah Arendt. He says that what he has called the attention of the tomb of this philosopher is its unusual location, is located in the center of the university, 100 meters from the library and without wall or fence that separates the cement of the university; as if the dead lived with the living. What looks like very strange is this lack of demarcation between the world of the living and the world of the dead; this thinker puts into question if in the old continent is there any university that counts with cemetery in its interior and if some European teacher allowed him to be buried in this cemetery. Said that then understood that in the United States are outlined three limits of differently than in Europe: the boundaries between the field and the city, the boundaries between university and city, and the

boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Finally he points out that the cemetery of the university campus is not the cemetery of countryside but the graveyard of a city, a metropolis. The terms campus, academy, university, college are names of institutions or spaces that bear witness to the irruption of the cities of the world taken by the theory. It should be noted that despite the distinctions and the location of the tomb of Hannah Arendt, still speaks, this thinker and us, of campus to refer to the university buildings and field of study to determine the scope of a discipline. Exacerbating the paradoxes essential to philosophy; in contrast, as you know, the lover of Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger is not allowed to be buried in urban cemetery but in the Campo Santo of countryside, in a rural cemetery. In addition, as is also known, Heidegger decides to remain in the province and, perhaps, we can say that never moves to the city where he provides chair, Fribourg, because we all know of the famous hut where he makes so many activities (Sloterdikj, 1; 9-54).

In summary, it appears that the philosophy is shown as a paradox in itself, on the one hand, she is the daughter of the step from the rural to the urban, the distinction between natural and artificial; and, on the other hand, is a product of the city, is the highest result of culture and civilization; however, it seems that it moves off and on at the same time to the primitive. The philosophy is always located between town and countryside. It is sufficient to recall the platonic academy or Aristotelian the Lyceum or the Garden of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, of which we are a reminiscent in our campuses, an example of this paradox incarnate we can find in the figure of Heidegger, paradox whose symbolic image can be the tombs of Hannah Arendt and her lover.

3. The Useful and Philosophy and the Useless

In the previous paragraph, we note that according to Aristotle, the knowledge while higher is less useful than it is. The contrary position, that is, to perceive the philosophy as serve for… is as old as the first position. In this way, the philosophy has been interpreted the take care of oneself (epimeleia heautou) and knowing about oneself (gnothi seauton). In general, in the history of western thought, the reason has been understood or as an end in itself or as the maid of the passions.

On the other hand, Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, book X, ch. 9, 1179a-1179b) has questioned the utility of the reflection on the ethics, that is to say, has stated that the study on the virtues not long ago, the researcher of the virtues, a virtuous man, with this, apparently, is questioning what, then, studies the virtues. One hopes that knowing what the virtue is will serve to be a virtuous man, but this is very doubtful. In revenge, we might think, at least, to know that it is the virtue is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being a virtuous man. However, this is also doubtful unless it is proved that it is impossible to find virtuous man without that he knows what virtue is.

In addition, when the history of philosophy comes to oppose the contemplative life—the speculation—to the active life or when he opposes the practical aspect to the theoretical aspect, or when it is stated that what is not to interpret in different ways, the world but to transform it, again, has been called into question the usefulness of the principal activity of the philosophy, that is to say, has been questioned for serving thinking. From what is known as the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, there seems to be a philosophy lost, or at least is increasingly reducing their field of study. The philosophy loses by the reality that is his field of study. The particular sciences, by calling them in some way, are erected as competent to study the reality and covered or it seems that it covers the whole of that reality, leaving the philosophy without field of study. Since then, the philosophy is involved in the task of trying to find an object of study and/or invent a utility.

In this our age, perhaps nobody has stressed so frequently, so differently and so explicitly about the futility of philosophy such as Martin Heidegger. Like Aristotle, Heidegger (2008, 5) affirms that the philosophy is the knowledge immediately useless, but at the same time it is the sovereign knowledge. This paradox between the futility and the sovereignty of the philosophy, that seems to pass down the western thought (Guyau 1907), can mean the hierarchy that is established between the useless and the useful. In effect, to point out that the philosophy is the knowledge immediately useless but the sovereign knowledge or that the knowledge while higher less useful it is, we are affirming, tacitly, that the useless is more important that what is useful, hence and contrary to the foregoing, tacitly when we think that what is useful is more important than the useless, then, we believe that the useful knowledge is the sovereign one. So, it seems that the philosophy is not only between the field and the city, but also between what is useful and the useless. But apparently, there is nothing more useful than the technique. Probably because Heidegger argues that the position that assumes that what is useful is more important than the useless is the technical interpretation of the thinking.

At the beginning of this work, we pointed out that the prior knowledge to the emergence of philosophy is given by the techniques and we mentioned that the emergence of philosophy involves the distinction between the natural and the artificial or the unnatural, to put it another way, the difference between the things produced by nature and the things produced by man through the techniques. The techniques are presented as the means to produce the elements necessary for life as food, clothing, and shelter; the technique is developed in the area of what is useful, presented initially as an instrument; from this time dates the technical interpretation of the philosophy and is understood, tacitly, as an instrument. The technique as an instrument is understood as the procedures that lead to the production of artifacts carried out with the knowledge of the principles and causes. The knowledge of the causes and principles allows us to control the ordering of the materials with a purpose or end. The definition of the technical, or any other thing, as an instrument includes things such as dependent upon the will and activity human, on this principle of the understanding of knowledge as know-how and the know-how, how it to do, finally being able to make as knowledge is power.

According to Heidegger, defining the technique as a means for certain purposes and as a making of the man, no doubt, is a correct definition (1987, 45). But this instrumental and anthropological definition does not teach us the essence of the technique. According to this, then, the essence of the technique is not the same as the technique. The essence of the technique is not nothing technical. While the technique can be properly defined as a means for certain purposes and as a making of the human being, your essence can never be a means pro determined ends nor a produced thing for the human being. The essence of the technique, on the contrary, does not depend on the will and the activity human. Therefore, we can say that the truth about the essences of the technique cannot be instrumental or anthropological. In a word, we learn about the principles and causes of the techniques and, therefore, about the control of the production of artifacts, but that what perhaps we cannot control is the essence of the technique.

In the same way defining the language as a means of human beings to communicate with one another, it is a correct definition of the language (Heidegger 1987, 111-48), but this definition of the language, of the logos, is an instrumental and anthropological definition, which has taught us nothing on the essence of language. Because if the language is not the same as the essence of language, then language can be defined in a proper manner as a means and an activity human, but its essence is neither means nor a making of man. Again the essence of language does not depend on the will and the activity of the human being. Therefore, we can say that the truth about the essence of language cannot be instrumental or anthropological. In a nutshell, we learn about

the principles and the causes of language and, thus, controlling the development of various speeches linguistic, but perhaps what we cannot control is the essence of language.

For third instance, it is the science that similarly defines the science as a means and a cognitive activity of the human being, without doubt, which is a correct definition (Heidegger 1987, 149-79). But it is an instrumental and anthropological definition that does not teach us anything about the essence of science. Now, science is somewhat different from the essence of science, therefore, is correct define science as a means and a cognitive activity of man, but its essence is neither a means nor an activity human. Well, for the third time, the essence of science does not depend on the will or of human activity. Therefore, the truth about essence of science can neither be instrumental or anthropological.

A final and fourth case imagines what the true as a medium and as obtained through the cognitive activity of the human being, without doubt, is a correct conception. But it is also an instrumental and anthropological conception, which does not conceive the essence of what is true, this is the truth. But what is true is something different from the essence of what is true, the truth, therefore, even though it might be correct, conceive the true as a means and a result of the cognitive activity of the human being, the truth, the essence of what is true, is neither a means or a result of human activity. The truth is not dependent on the will and the human action and, therefore, the essence of the truth is neither a means nor a human activity.

According to what has been stated in the preceding paragraphs, the philosophy is located between the field and the city, first of all, because the differences between city and country are determined by the technical activities, which are the media that provide those elements that satisfy human needs. Once satisfied the human needs, it opens the possibility of the existence of the leisure, which is necessary, according to the most common opinion, to the emergence of philosophy. In addition, the field and the city are the representatives of the distinction in which is based on the emergence of philosophy: the difference between nature and convention, law and nature. Philosophy thus understood is conceived as a product of the city, the philosophy is developed in the more advanced communities, Miletus in the first instance and Athens later, because in these communities there is a greater possibility of leisure necessary for the exercise of philosophy, that is to say, the existence of the leisure and, therefore, the dedication of this leisure to the study, it is possible in the cities because the field has provided the satisfactions of the needs to live.

On the other hand, the philosophy as a product of the city is based on the distinction between the things produced by nature and the things produced by activity human, by the distinction between natural and artificial, which corresponds with the idea that philosophy has as its model and precedent the technical knowledge, in such a way that the philosophy begins to be seen as a more sophisticated technique that arts and crafts, but in the fund remains a technique. This idea leads us to the above discussion on the usefulness of the philosophy. As well as the philosophy is located between the field and the city, they are also found between the useful and the useless. It is likely that in the history of philosophy has oscillated between two understandings: the technical interpretation of the philosophy and the interpretation of the essential philosophy.

The technical interpretation conceives philosophy as a means to obtain certain purposes and as an activity that depends entirely on the human will, therefore, we can define the instrumental interpretation and anthropological. This interpretation gives more importance to what is useful to the useless, and opposed the contemplative life to the active life and looking for the conquest of nature for proficient obedience. This interpretation conceives, in general to reason as the slave of the passions; however, this interpretation projected the perspective through which the philosophy strives to seek a utility.

The essential interpretation for its part, she conceives the philosophy knowledge as the sovereign and, therefore, as an end but not as a medium. This distinguishes the technical interpretation of the essence of the technique, the language of the essence of language, the science of the essence of the science and what is true of the essence of what is true and gives more importance to the useless, that is, to what is essential to the tool or the media. In accordance with the interpretation, the essential essence of language, art, science, what is true and the essence of anything are not aspects that depended on the will and human actions, therefore, this perspective is not a technical interpretation or anthropological. However this interpretation says that the philosophy is useless.

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