

## 1.

What does the method of skepticism, asking questions and analyzing have in common? They are all very important tools in practicing philosophy. According to *Philosophical Investigations* a philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness: this is both an interesting attempt to define the position of question in philosophy, and an interesting analogy, but does the analogy really work well enough in defining the place of the most important tool of a philosopher? The claim equates the concept of question and the rather negative sounding concept of illness, and as questioning is one of the most important ways to practice philosophy, it is rather provoking to put these exact concepts side by side like that. So what is the exact position of the art of questioning in the field of philosophy? Is it an illness which we try to cure or perhaps something else?

Socrates practiced philosophy by asking questions and although Descartes' views on dualism and metaphysics are mostly dismissed nowadays, he had launched the famous method of skepticism, which is the very basis of modern epistemology. Question is something which has been in the very core of philosophy throughout the history of humankind. Sometimes they might be more irritating than the others and indeed the answering has an important part in the process of asking questions, but which of them is the more important one? *Philosophical Investigations* priorities the answer before the question by putting fairly negative 'illness' and neutral 'question' side by side. But the history of philosophy provides us a plenty of examples where questions are left without an answer – especially in the field of metaphysics – and questions to which philosophers have not been able to find any sort of agreement. Before answering the question of whether the answer should be put before the question, we should take a closer look how different branches of philosophy have approached to some questions and which sort of conclusions the processes of asking have had – in case any conclusion have been achieved.

One of the most well known arguments in the field of epistemology, the study of knowledge, is the argument between rationalism and empiricism. The both theories try to answer the question "Which is the best tool for gaining knowledge – sense experience or reasoning?" The argument could be considered to be one of the few kinds which have achieved an answer of some sort.

In order to be a rationalist, one has to agree in at least of one of the three rationalist theses. The Intuition-Deduction thesis is following: the only way we can gain knowledge of the world is our rational intuition. We absorb the knowledge the same way as we are able to see the mathematical or logical truths: if a mouse is smaller than a cat, and cat is smaller than a horse, then the mouse must be smaller than the horse; two plus three equals five; bachelor is an unmarried male etc. From these sorts of truths we can deduct conclusions through valid arguments. According to the second rationalist thesis, the Innate Knowledge thesis, there is knowledge which is provided to us in our birth, while according to the third thesis, the Innate Concept thesis, we're provided with some concepts from the very beginning of our lives. To become a rationalist one does not have to agree with all these theses, but at least with one of them. Empiricists on the other hand don't necessary agree that human beings would be able to gain knowledge in the first place, but in case there is a possibility for gaining knowledge, it can be achieved only through our sense experience.

Although the tension between empiricism and rationalism seems quite big, as they both deny the validity of the other, the two theories do not necessarily have to conflict: they do so only while they try to formulate in the same field of study. There are some fields of study in which rationalistic approach works better, like mathematics, while there are others in which the tradition empiricism works better. The history has shown that both of the methods work well in their own fields and have provided us with scientific information which has made the inventions such as computers, the pill or the mobile telephones possible.

The rationalism-empiricism contradiction was a good example of how different philosophers have tried to find an answer to a same question in entirely different ways; like sometimes there are cases, where two doctors suggest different medicines for the same illness. The rationalism-empiricism case is now considered to be little bit out-of-date as the both theories has provided us with infallible conclusions, but it is not the only contradiction to be found in the vast field of philosophy. Let's take a look in the ethics this time and the way how the different moral theories of normative ethics answer the question of the correct way to live a morally good human life.

The word normative refers to the concept of norm – norms are precepts which refer to our values – and normative ethics consists of theories, which are under the power of precepts and values. Each of them tries to find an answer to the questions of correct way to live and what morally good acting mean. The three major branches of the normative ethics are the Virtue Ethics, the Deontological Ethics and the Consequentialism.

The Virtue ethics represents the oldest view of normative ethics as it was the one which bloomed the best in the ancient Greece; Plato, Aristotle and Socrates were the most famous spokesmen of the theory. The Virtue ethics takes interest in the human life as a whole and is less interested in the small details and choices of life. The main aim is to live a good life and the only way to achieve it is to live as virtuously as possible.

The Deontological ethics explanation for our moral acting puts the duty behind our acting into the spotlight. Morals are something very interior and autonomous, and it is our duty to follow them. The important thing is to make the precepts behind our actions universal: according to deontologists, we cannot for example allow ourselves make white lies, because in case if we do that, it would mean that we should make the precept "Lie!" universal, and therefore say farewell to communication. Immanuel Kant expressed the rule of universalizing in his Categorical Imperative: according to it we have to make the precepts behind our actions universal laws and treat each other as a goal itself, not just as tool.

The Consequentialism opposes deontological ethics by taking interest of the moral actions' conclusions instead of the process itself. We need to achieve as much good consequences as possible – but it is the concept of good which makes the consequentialism problematic. Is it morally correct that the society including very many poor people and little amount of incredibly rich people can have the same 'amount of good' as the society where the same amount of capital is spread amongst

all the people? According to the purest consequentialism both of the societies would be equally good.

The theories of normative ethics are a great example of a philosophical question left without a *summa summarum* – each of the branches has its own views and they don't much agree with the other ones (this can be seen especially well in the contradiction between deontological ethics and consequentialism). The thing which we can observe from the way normative ethics try to answer the questions is that sometimes the branches of philosophy treat its "illness", the question, in an inconsiderate way. Normative ethics do not try to define what exactly the question it is – almost in the way as a doctor does not want to make the diagnosis as well as he could. The theories do not try to define the concept of morality, although the concept lies in the very core of its study. In the case of normative ethics we could picture an eager young doctor who is more enthusiastic about playing with the needles and the medicines than doing a proper scientific study of the disease, when in case of rationalism-empiricism we could picture two elder professionals pondering whether the medicine A or the medicine B would be the best one for the patient.

So after taking a closer look into these two examples of philosophers' trial to answer the same questions, can we say anything adequate about the order of question and answer? Which one should be primary? Our understanding of causal relations makes us want to put the question first, as the place of the answer is commonly after the question, but it is rather hard to say which one is more important. My personal view is that the order depends on the person himself – there are people who are more interested in seeking for the exact answers of questions and people who don't mind questions left without an answer – but instead enjoy the process of asking. Or in other words, is the reason for our asking just the fun of the process, or the conclusion, the answer?

The universe is a problematic thing full of paradoxes and without a doubt it does make us ask quite a lot of questions. If philosopher's treatment of a question is like treatment of an illness, who is the person suffering the disease? Is it the one we address the question to? We can ask questions without exactly expressing them to anyone specific, but there's also a type of questions which we ask from other people. Therefore there can see two types of philosophical asking: the type of questions "said aloud", without exactly thinking whom we are proposing them to (1), and the type of questions which we express to others (2). Is the treatment of the both questions the same? Are they both illnesses? The important thing separating them is the fact that the second kind of asking (2), the question asked from someone or shared with someone, has the important aspect of communication: we don't just want to get the answer, but also show to the other human being that we're confused by the subject in the first place - so confused that we want to say the question out loud. This is not the case with the questions asked without expressing them to a specific target (1). My claim is that for the questions of the second kind the idea of questions as 'illnesses' is not correct – but the answering process could be treatment indeed.

Emmanuel Levinas had put the other human being in the spotlight after for years it had been the home of the self. He claimed that being a self is always being in a relation to the Other, and this relation is knotted by responsibility. We are exposed to the Other's otherness especially well in the situations where the communication fails

– and in situations like these our absolute responsibility of the Other can be observed the best. In these sort of situations, when we're exposed to the Other's otherness, and we are not able to understand each other, the question has an enormous role. "What had happened?" "Who are you?" and "Why are acting like that?" are probably the most fundamental questions while being in relation with other person, and although in the first glimpse they might seem like hard questions, we should not approach them as illnesses – but the answering process could be treatment indeed. When we try to find a way to communicate with another human being, especially in the situations where we're exposed to the difference, the answering process does not just have the function of answering a question, but the process of asking has an exceptionally important part. By trying to answer the questions of the difference between us (or the question of who we are) we are communicating just by asking them out loud and showing that we are interested in the subject in the first place. The tie between the two Others is their shared Otherness, the fact that they really cannot fully understand each other, no matter how hard they try – but probably that is communication of the purest kind, a communication provided through the shared interruption. Perhaps we could see this activity as a process of trying to cure a trauma – a relationship between a therapist and a patient (although in the case of communicating by asking probably the both persons are therapists and patients at the same time). My claim is that the philosophers, who are more interested in getting rid of the question by neat answers are the ones who could address to the concept of question as an illness, but for those, who enjoy the process of asking and sometimes allow the questions be left without answers are the ones to whom the definition of a question as an illness does not seem enticing.

As showed before, the wonderful art of asking questions lies in the very core of philosophy. Probably the question is the way all philosophers start their careers – by tiring their parents with an infinite number of wonderings about the world surrounding when they were toddlers. Therefore philosophers should not think of the question as a wolf of some sort but instead love it as it is, at least for the childhood nostalgia! But it is important to remember that sometimes the answering process might lead us to situations where we are wounded by our opponents so badly, that we wouldn't mind a good doctor's treatments. Asking questions do not have to have the same possibility of harming anybody – it can be seen as challenge, or a form of communication, shared wondering.