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## THE PROBLEM OF METHOD: FROM ANCIENT ETHICS TO MODERN GNOSEOLOGY

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*The article analyzes the ancient philosophical tradition that laid the foundation for European philosophical and scientific thought and methodological culture, outlining the main ways of achieving truth in connection with the formation of philosophical and scientific thought in the modern era. The article attempts to trace the evolution of the problem of method in the philosophical tradition from pre-Socratic natural philosophy (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus) through Socrates' dialectic, Plato's hypothetical-deductive approach, and Aristotle's systematic logic to the philosophy of the modern era. It shows how the empirical observations of the Miletus school and inductive generalization were combined with the rationalistic methods of Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotelian syllogistics. It is noted that in ancient philosophical thought, ontological-logical considerations were inextricably linked to ethics and way of life (eudaimonia). In the modern era, the problem of method comes to the fore among other philosophical problems, which determines the interest in ancient philosophy. Francis Bacon develops the inductive method as the "New Organon," aimed at overcoming scholastic stereotypes, René Descartes substantiates the hypothetical-deductive approach based on clear and obvious principles and Cartesian doubt, and G. Leibniz complements the rationalist tradition with the law of sufficient reason, attempting to synthesize empirical and a priori knowledge. The analysis confirms the continuity of the philosophical tradition: ancient ideas of empiricism, dialectics, logic, and deduction not only do not disappear but acquire new systematicity and methodological acuity in the era of the formation of modern science. Thus, the problem of method appears as a key element of continuity between antiquity and the modern era, emphasizing the universality of the philosophical search for reliable knowledge.*

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**Keywords:** method of cognition, logic, ontology, dialectics, empiricism, rationalism.

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## **ПРОБЛЕМА МЕТОДУ: ВІД АНТИЧНОГО ЕТИЗМУ ДО ГНОСЕОЛОГІЇ НОВОГО ЧАСУ**

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*У статті аналізується антична філософська традиція, яка заклала фундамент європейської філософсько-наукової думки та методологічної культури, окресливши основні шляхи досягнення істини, у її зв'язку з формуванням філософсько-наукової думки Нового часу. Простежено еволюцію проблеми методу у філософській традиції від досократівської натурфілософії (Талес, Анаксимандр, Анаксімен, Геракліт) через діалектику Сократа, гіпотетико-дедуктивний підхід Платона та систематичну логіку Аристотеля до філософії Нового часу. Продемонстровано, як емпіричне спостереження Мілетської школи та індуктивне узагальнення поєднувалися з раціоналістичними методами Парменіда, Платона та аристотелівською силогістикою. Зазначено, що в античній філософській думці питання онтологічно-логічні розмисли були нерозривно пов'язані з етикою та способом життя (eudaimonia). У Новий час проблема методу виходить на перший план серед інших філософських проблем, що зумовлює інтерес до античної філософської. Ф. Бекон розвиває індуктивний метод як "Новий Органон", спрямований на подолання схоластичних стереотипів, Р. Декарт обґрунтовує гіпотетико-дедуктивний підхід на основі ясних і очевидних принципів та картезіанського сумніву, а Г. Ляйбніц доповнює раціоналістичну традицію законом достатньої підстави, намагаючись синтезувати емпіричне та апріорне знання. Проведений аналіз підтверджує безперервність філософської традиції: античні ідеї емпіризму, діалектики, логіки та дедукції не лише не зникають, а набувають нової систематичності й методологічної гостроти в епоху становлення сучасної науки. Таким чином, проблема методу виступає як ключовий елемент спадковості між античністю та Новим часом, що підкреслює універсальність філософського пошуку достовірного знання.*

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**Ключові слова:** метод пізнання, логіка, онтологія, діалектика, емпіризм, раціоналізм.

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**Formulation of the problem.** Ancient philosophical thought is the source of the European philosophical and scientific tradition, with a pronounced desire to know the truth. It manifested a desire for a rational explanation of reality based on reason, without resorting to the supernatural, as in mythological or religious traditions. It was antiquity that laid the foundations for the fundamental philosophical problems – the world, man, truth, and the cognitive process – which remain relevant today. It was the philosophers of the Milesian school who used a method of understanding the world through the relationship between the individual and the universal, which formed the basis for the formulation of the basic scientific methods of cognition – induction and deduction. Euclid made the deductive method the main means of proof in mathematics. In ancient times, dialectics emerged as a way of seeking truth through dialogue – a tradition started by Socrates, which became known as Socratic dialogue. However, ancient

epistemology is characterized by ethicalism. Along with questions of rational explanation of the world, ancient thinkers considered the question of human happiness, beginning in the 6th century BC. Croesus asked Solon a question about true happiness [1: 24]. The very concept of Sophos means both someone who "knows and has seen many things, has traveled extensively, and has encyclopedic knowledge" and a person who "knows how to behave well in life and is in a happy state" [1: 26].

The problem of method became relevant with the separation of philosophy from science into an independent branch of knowledge in the Modern Era. Philosophers began to turn to the ancient philosophical heritage, in particular to pre-Socratic natural philosophy: Francis Bacon developed induction as the "New Organon" René Descartes developed the hypothetical-deductive method and Cartesian doubt, and G. Leibniz drew on the natural philosophical heritage of the atomists and supplemented the

rationalist tradition with the logical law of sufficient reason.

Today, the issues outlined above are of interest to a wide range of researchers, both domestic and foreign. For example, Pierre Hadot actively explores issues of ancient philosophical thought ("What is Ancient Philosophy?", "Philosophy as a Way of Life"), where he emphasizes that ancient philosophy was not only a theory, but above all a way of life aimed at eudaimonia through spiritual exercises. The ancient heritage is of scientific interest to researchers such as R. Robinson, G. Santas, I. Bespalov, V. Mulyar, S. Davidchuk, A. Tykholaz, E. Berti, and others. Among those interested in the problem of method in the Modern era are researchers such as V. Gusev, Yu. Vilchinsky, M. Gritsishina, M. Miles, O. Khoma, P. Bartusiak, and others.

**The purpose** of this article is to highlight the problem of method in ancient philosophical thought and modern philosophy, and to show the continuity of the philosophical tradition in the development of ways of achieving truth.

Thales of Miletus is considered the first philosopher of antiquity. He was a mathematician and, therefore, the founder of European scientific thought. It is known that he predicted the eclipse of May 28, 585, using the method of observing the recurrence of phenomena and performing astronomical calculations [2: 104]. Based on the empirical method of observation, Thales finds a way to explain the world through the existence of a fundamental principle from which everything arises and into which everything is then transformed: for him, this is water, which is capable of changing its aggregate states from solid to liquid and gaseous [2: 103]. Anaximander, who was a student of Thales, rejected the primacy of one of the elements, since none of them is dominant. For him, the primary element – apeiron – is a boundless, eternal beginning from which pairs of opposites (dry-wet, cold-hot, etc.) emerge and conflict with each other. [2: 105]. Russell B. says that for Anaximander, worlds arise not as a result of creation, but of development [3: 36]. Thus, ancient

natural philosophy is characterized by a dialectical understanding of nature as something that develops according to certain laws, in particular justice: things arise and transform into what they arise from, "for wrongs committed at a certain time" [3: 36]. Anaximenes explores opposites – cold and hot as sources of motion – and concludes that the primary substance is the most insubstantial one: air. Air can rarefy and become fire, condense and become wind, and with further condensation become moisture, earth, stone, from which everything else arises [2: 107; 3: 36–37]. As a meteorologist, Anaximenes observed natural phenomena and gave rational explanations for such phenomena as rainbows caused by the refraction of light, the position of the Moon, Sun, and stars in relation to the Earth, and the change of seasons caused by the distance from the Sun to the Earth.

Anaximenes is characterized by his understanding of the cognitive process as infinite and eternal, since he is one of those who are credited with understanding the realm of the unknown that lies beyond the circle of human knowledge: the larger the circle of the known, the greater the realm of the unknown [2: 107].

The deductive method of ancient philosophical tradition is associated with the name of Pythagoras. His views are characterized by intellectual mysticism, and Pythagoras' path to understanding truth is "passionate and compassionate contemplation" (theory), which is akin to an ecstatic revelation from the source of mathematical knowledge [3: 41]. For Pythagoras, the cosmos (the structure of the universe) was ordered by numbers. At the same time, one of the key aspects of understanding the structure of the universe according to Pythagoras is ethical: the fundamental principle of being is harmony, which is present in everything, especially in numbers. [4: 79–82].

The dialectical way of thinking was mainly shaped by the ideas of Heraclitus of Ephesus. He believed that humans had "two means of knowing the truth: sensory perception and reason" the first being

'unreliable' and the second "fundamental" The criterion of truth is the divine logos; humans become intelligent through their connection to it [5: 16]. He considered fire to be the foundation of the world: "everything is like a flame burning" [3: 47], thereby affirming existence in continuous motion, as well as the result of the action of opposites: "everything arises from opposites and flows with complete integrity, like a river" [5: 15]. He affirms the unity that arises from the combination of opposites [3: 47]. As with Anaximander, for Heraclitus the process of (re)creation is subject to justice: it is eternal and infinite, since neither of the opposites can ultimately prevail [3: 50].

The creation of metaphysics based on logic is attributed to Parmenides. In his poem "On Nature," he acknowledges the divine origin of the method by which he himself can acquire knowledge, presenting the "tool" for comprehending truth as a gift from the goddess [6]. He contrasts sensory cognition as deceptive, providing unreliable knowledge, with the true path of cognition [3: 54]. Parmenides marks a sharp distinction between being (what-is and must be) and becoming, and between knowledge and perception-based belief or opinion [6]. Thus, he contrasts Heraclitus' empiricism with a rationalistic way of cognition – reason. On the other hand, he offers a logic of concepts that are identical to being as such: the presence of something in the concept by which we name it already implies its being, and moreover, its immutable being.

Zeno attempted to prove the truth and immutability of being by means of *reductio ad absurdum* (reduction to absurdity). He applied this method in his *aporias* (paradoxes), attempting not to confirm Parmenides' ideas, but to debunk opposing views. He uses proof by contradiction as a logical argument to refute his opponents' assumptions, as "a demonstration that a contradiction or absurd consequence follows from apparently reasonable assumptions" [7]. His *aporias* significantly influenced the formation of philosophical and logical thought in antiquity and mathematics.

A defining figure in ancient philosophy is Socrates, both historical and "mythological" whose views we know not from his own works, but from Xenophon's "Memoirs" Plato's dialogues, and the Socratic philosophical schools (the Cynics and the Cyrenaic school). Plato gives Socrates a voice in his dialogues, thereby conveying his views on the one hand and interpreting them on the other, representing his own understanding of them. The historical Socrates demonstrates the life of a sage whose wisdom is based on his own philosophical principles. For Socrates, philosophy is a way of life, and the Socratic method of dialogue is a way to gain access to knowledge.

Socrates uses the dialectical method, implementing it by asking questions and receiving answers. American philosopher G. Vlastos examines in detail the Socratic method of question and answer – *elenchus* (refutation) in a collection of articles *The Philosophy of Socrates* [8]. Yes, Richard Robinson analyzes *elenchus* as a refutation of his opponent's thesis [9: 78-93]. In his dialogue "The Symposium" Plato asserts that "the philosopher knows nothing, but he is aware of his ignorance" [1: 35]. By asking questions, Socrates encourages people to realize their ignorance. In such conversations, as mentioned by both Aristotle and Cicero, Socrates uses irony, "belittling himself" "thinking one thing and saying another" "masking" himself in front of his interlocutors [1: 36]. In this way, he seemed to help the truth come to light, which is why this method was also called *maieutics*. As P. Ado notes, "knowledge can be found in one's soul" [1: 38], which may already indicate Plato's interpretation of Socrates' ideas. Socrates pushes people toward self-analysis and, as a result, toward caring for themselves: "to become as good and wise as possible" [1: 41]. Socrates' ethical teaching is based on knowledge: knowledge of good and evil is a necessary and sufficient condition for honesty, and vice comes from ignorance. A person does not consciously do evil, knowing what is good [10].

Under the influence of Socrates, from whom he adopted "the method of dialogue, irony, and interest in lifestyle issues" [1: 73], Plato's dialectic was formed. From Socrates' ironic subjective dialectic, Plato moves on to objective dialectic, considering things "according to their own nature" and tracing "the finite nature of all lasting definitions of reason" [11: 31–32]. Plato considers man in the context of his ontological teaching, according to which every material object in this world has its idea, which exists in the world of things. Accordingly, humans consist of a body that exists in the visible world of things and a soul that, before entering the body, also existed in the world of ideas. It is the soul that is the bearer of human reason and has "three abilities: ideal-intellectual, expedient-volitional, and instinctive-affective" Plato's method does not deny the sensory stage of cognition, at which a person "through communication with these things" which are only "pale shadows of the world of ideas" can reach the essence of things "through memories": the soul "must strain and remember" them [12].

As with Socrates, Plato's epistemology is closely linked to ethics. He proposes a "philosophical" way of life that philosophers should strive for. This way of life distinguishes those "who truly philosophize" from those "who have only the outward glamour of superficial thoughts". It consists of "a greater inclination toward virtue than toward pleasure", and by practicing it, a person strives to "become more and more the master of himself" [1, p. 84–85]. Ultimately, all the practices developed by Plato for the students of the Academy involved a kind of "training" of the rational part of the soul. Plato also developed a hypothetical-deductive method, which found application not only in the development of philosophical thought, but also in scientific thought.

For Aristotle, philosophy becomes not a way of life, but theoretical philosophy and ethics, the ethics of "disinterest and objectivity", characterized by "the desire for knowledge for its own sake, without any other or selfish interest" [1: 104]. In

the context of the topic under study, Aristotle's contribution to the development of epistemological and logical issues is of greatest interest.

In his school (Lyceum), Aristotle introduced the practice of empirical research: collecting facts from various areas of public life, from the biological world to social phenomena. Inferences are reliable only "when they agree with observed facts" [1: 105]. Thus, Aristotle recognizes sensory perception as the initial stage of knowledge, at which the senses receive "material" for the processes of abstraction and generalization. As a result, we obtain conclusions based on induction, which are the starting point for general knowledge, on the basis of which individual inferences can be made [13]. It is Aristotle who is in the history of philosophy the founder of logic – the science of the laws of thought. In his treatise *Órganon* (tool), he describes his understanding of its principles.

Aristotle provides the world's first classification of everything that exists – entities he calls substances – into primary and secondary (accidents). He divided substances into nine (sometimes ten) categories: quantity, quality, relation, place, time, state, property, action, and undergoing (accepting changes under the influence of another object) [14: 158]. He raises the question of language – symbols of concepts that describe the state of things, whether real or not – and formulates the laws of logic: non-contradiction and the excluded middle. He describes the concept of syllogism, or inference. In it, the conclusion follows from two universal judgments – premises. He distinguishes between scientific syllogism and dialectical syllogism [14: 160–161].

The problem of method came to the forefront of philosophical thought under the influence of the institutionalization of science in the modern era. If philosophy has found a "competitor" in science in explaining the world, science at the same time stimulates the development of the methodological function of philosophy. Philosophy strives to develop a method for science that is adequate for discovering scientific truths. In fact, it is on the basis

of an understanding of the problem of method that the two main philosophical trends of the Modern era are formed: empiricism and rationalism. In his study "Essays on the History of Modern Philosophy", V. Gusev reflects on the significance of the method of the founders of empiricism and rationalism. F. Bacon compares method to a compass: method "levels the intellectual abilities of people", just as a compass levels artistic abilities, raising them to "the highest level of perfection" [15: 157–158]. And R. Descartes negates knowledge without method: "it is better not to think about the search for the truth of something at all than to do so without method" [15: 158]. B. Russell calls F. Bacon "a philosopher converted to science" and notes that Bacon primarily wanted to use method to separate philosophy from theology, hence Bacon's certain disregard for Aristotle and his syllogistic logic, dogmatized in scholasticism [3: 454–455]. F. Bacon says that Aristotle "only pointed out the problem, but did not provide a method for solving it" [16: 34]. He postulated the inductive method as the basis for scientific discoveries, as a "New Organon" capable of overcoming scholastic stereotypes [17: 120].

Francis Bacon develops his theory of induction based on an understanding of what it "should not be", since complete induction "does not reveal the essence of things". Only a thorough study of negative cases that occur when it is applied can provide new knowledge: "The basis of true induction lies in exceptions" [17: 120].

In contrast to the inductive method developed by empiricists, the founder of rationalism, R. Descartes, rethinks the role of deduction in scientific knowledge. While for Aristotle deduction is a form of progressing from general principles to conclusions, Descartes develops a hypothetical-deductive method of organizing knowledge "based on reason and clear, self-evident principles" [18].

B. Russell notes that Descartes' method was called "Cartesian doubt": to doubt everything except the very fact that I doubt (think) [3: 471]. Murray M. examines Descartes' deductive method in

contrast to Aristotle's classical syllogism [19]. He emphasizes that Descartes, with the basic judgment of his philosophical system, "I think, therefore I am", has already rejected the classical syllogism, in which a general rule is the basis of logical conclusion. In *Cogito, ergo sum*, we first recognize the fact of our own existence, and from it we derive a general truth. Thus, for Descartes, deduction is more of a process of intuitive direct comprehension, an intellectual intuition of the universal in the particular.

In a review of *Dika, T. (2023). Descartes's Method. The Formation of the Subject of Science. Oxford: Oxford UP.* Ukrainian researcher O. Khoma highlights the distinctive features of Descartes' method, which differ from its stereotypical understanding. Thus, constant practice in it "creates a cognitive mindset, or 'habitus', which exists in the human mind". And this is precisely the prerequisite for the "uniqueness" of the method's application in each individual situation [20].

Descartes identifies three basic operations of the mind: intuition ("pure contemplation"), deduction, and enumeration (the continuous movement of thought so that nothing is overlooked), as well as four rules of method: evidence, analysis, synthesis, and verification [21], striving to achieve the fundamental goal of attaining truth as a scientific process. On the one hand, he appears as a philosopher who substantiates the importance of the methodological function of philosophy, and on the other, as a scientist interested in solving the problem of scientific truth.

R. Descartes' opponent in his approach to the problem of cognition was G. Leibniz, author of an original epistemological and ontological concept of explaining the world, which became known as monadology. In his work *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis* (Meditations on the Method of Cognition, Truth, and Ideas) (1684), he expounds his own epistemological concept. He considers Descartes' principle of clarity and evidentiary sufficiency to be insufficient [22]. Leibniz

recognizes the existence of both empirical knowledge and truths of reason, which are "intuitive-deductive in nature" [23: 180]. To justify the truths necessary for the existence of "empirical" sciences (history, biology, geography, etc.) that are related to the "sphere of hypothetical necessity", he formulates, in addition to the logical laws of identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle, the law of sufficient reason – "the logical equivalent of the principle of causality" [23: 180–181].

**Conclusions.** The analysis shows the deep continuity of the philosophical tradition in the development of methods for achieving truth from antiquity to modern era. Ancient thinkers laid the foundations for both empirical (Milesian school, Aristotle) and rationalistic (Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle) approaches to cognition, formulated key logical laws (identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle), developed dialectics as the art of dialogue and refutation (Socrates, Plato), as well as hypothetical-deductive techniques.

In modern philosophy, these ideas were given new life and systematization: Bacon radicalized induction by criticizing Aristotelian syllogistics, Descartes transformed deduction into an intuitive methodological tool based on clear and obvious principles, and Leibniz supplements rationalism with the law of sufficient reason, attempting to combine empirical and a priori knowledge.

Thus, the problem of method in ancient and modern philosophy is not a confrontation, but a continuous dialogue between traditions. Antiquity gave us not only individual methods, but also the very understanding of philosophy as a rational search for truth, closely linked to lifestyle and virtue. This continuity emphasizes the universality of the philosophical pursuit of reliable knowledge and serves as an important argument in favor of studying the history of philosophy as a necessary prerequisite for modern scientific and methodological culture.

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