

From the “logic of paradoxes” to dialectical logic (historical transformation of Spinozist methodology)

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The article deals with the features of the transformation of the philosophical cognitive methodology in the heritage of B. Spinoza. The central concept of Spinozism is the concept of “substance”, which plays not only a meaningful, but also a formal role in his philosophy. An analysis of the interpretation of the term “substance” by Spinoza reveals its paradoxical nature. The paradox arises in the context of operating with extremely abstract and universal concepts, therefore, thinkers always try to give these concepts a natural-philosophical character, make them more meaningful and thereby reduce the level of their inconsistency. Spinoza’s idea of substantiality as a criterion of the absolute essence of God clearly proves this. Referring to God as an absolute and universal criterion, Spinoza tried to restore in rights the religious status of ontology and metaphysics, which was questioned by the theory of innate ideas of Descartes and achieved the exact opposite result. On the one hand, the substantiality of God appeared to be consistent and universal; on the other hand, His substantial character was the basis for the denial of His absoluteness, because infinite substance seeks to self-determination and self-restraint. Thus, Spinoza became the author of the concept of an absolutely contradictory substantial God as the absolute foundation of a contradictory world and the contradictory nature of human knowledge. In this sense, the paradox manifests itself not only as an obstacle to objective historical knowledge, but also as a way of transforming philosophical ideas in the history of mankind. This is the only way to understand the essence of the transformation of the ideas of Spinozism in the philosophy of Hegelianism and Marxism: the adoption of the formal features of the metaphysical concept of “substance” became the basis for the transformation of the metaphysical logic of paradox to dialectical logic.

Keywords: paradox, substance, God, foundation, contradiction, logic, dialectics, method.

The problem of the paradox determination

The source of disagreement in the solution of general methodological problems is the inevitable ambiguity of the interpretation of key concepts and categories, and, consequently, the inability of accurate reflection of their epistemological functions. The term *Substance* was intended to solve the problem of reflection of being in a logical field. But in reality, it led to the entanglement of general meanings: the idea of Being started to be substituted by the notion of Existence, and in some cases Being and Existence used to be identical. For example, in Ancient Greece *Ὀυσία* was initially interpreted as “property”, “capital”, “status”, and much later as “existence”, “being”, “essence”, “general basis”. This can be explained in the following way: existence of a human as a free and full Being is

possible only upon the condition of private property. Only in this case a man will not depend on external circumstances. In Latin the term *Substance* had the same interpretation. As M. Heidegger said, referring to Descartes' opinion: "By substance we can understand nothing else than an entity which is in such a way that it needs no other entity in order to be". Being of a "substance" is characterized by not needing anything. That whose Being is such that it has no need at all for any other entity satisfies the idea of substance in the authentic sense; this entity is the *ens perfectissimum* [1, p. 125]¹. Now *Substance* is determined as an objective and constant reality, which exists by itself and is considered by its inner unity, which has no relation to all of the diverse modifications of its Being [3, p. 151]. Therefore, all the objects of distinct Substance exist independently of each other.

A detailed analysis of the interpretation and use of the term *Substance* reveals its *paradoxical nature*.

A Paradox situation as a rule is wrongly considered as synonymous of perpetual contradiction. But Paradox is not synonymous with contradiction; it is an exceptional phenomenon in which the contradiction of cognition reaches the ultimate level of commonality, becoming universal. This means that objectively existing Paradox ceases to be perceived itself, the situation appears to be consistent, and vice versa — in the case of a real absence of dialectical contradiction (as in Russell's paradox, see: [4, p. 239–242]), it arises as a pseudo-contradiction. Paradox is the situation of the initial absence of a contradiction, and not *Aufhebung* of it as a way of its resolving, since each of the sides of the Paradox is a full-fledged consistent statement of truth or false (as in the situation with antinomies of reason in Kant), or each of them contains an independent, a closed contradiction. Then, in relation to each other, the sides of the Paradox are absolutely indifferent, possessing mutual self-sufficiency, semantic completeness and thoroughness.

There is a logical tendency in Paradox's manifestations in the history of cognition. It is in fact that the thinkers interpret formal-logical, external contradictions which occur in the process of the reflection of non-contradiction phenomena, as dialectical, internal contradictions of the phenomena themselves, which are adequately reflected by the consciousness. This manner of interpretation firstly appeared in Aristotle's doctrine of Substance.

The feature of Aristotle's interpretation of the phenomenon of Substance is that the philosopher brought together very different characteristics of substantiality — integrity, completeness and individuality. A paradox of this concept is in the fact, that the "integrity" and "completeness" belong to distinct, not universal, things because they don't exist as a reality, but only as notions representating different individual things and objects.

Thus, a paradoxical idea of a Substance corresponds to its paradoxical nature: the Substance completely manifests itself in individual things, and only partially in the universal things. Substantiality consistently combines the principles of unity and multiplicity: it is plural as an absolute basis of being, and it is single as sufficient (= logical) epistemological foundation. It is an infinity of manifestations of itself and it is identical to its manifestations contrary to any logical arguments. That's why, according to B. Russell, "the conception of "substance", like that of "essence", is a transference of metaphysics what is only linguistic convenience. <...> "Substance", when taken seriously, is a concept impos-

¹ By the way, there is a deeper connection with the traditions of High Scholasticism in this aspect. Spinoza's geometric method of logical arguments, in fact, was formed on the basis of the idea of "Occam's Razor" (see: [2, p. 129–142]). But it is a topic for a separate research.

sible to free from difficulties. A substance is supposed to be the subject of properties, and to be something distinct from all its properties. But when we take away the properties, and try to imagine the substance by itself, we find that there is nothing left. To put the matter in another way: What distinguishes one substance from another? Not difference of properties, for, according to the logic of substance, difference of properties presupposes numerical diversity between the substances concerned. Two substances, therefore, must be just two, without being, in themselves, in any way distinguishable. How, then, are we ever to find out, that they are two? <...> “Substance”, in a word, is a metaphysical mistake, due to transference to the world-structure of the structure of sentences composed of a subject and a predicate” [5, p. 224, 225].

Spinoza’s doctrine of the Substance

This doctrine was one of three attempts to correct the situation that arose around Christianity in 16th–17th centuries. The first attempt to restore the authority of the Church came from the Church itself and it resulted in the so-called “Counter-Reformation” and the establishment of new Christian orders. The second attempt was to review and improve the basic metaphysical concepts under the control of new theological trends, one of its results was Descartes’ theory of “innate ideas”. The third attempt was realized through the interpretation of the basic religious principles, with the help of new philosophical and scientific doctrines. It resulted in Spinoza’s concept of substantiality as the criterion of absolute essence of God.

Referring to God as an absolute and universal substantial criterion, Spinoza tried to restore the rights of religious status of ontology and metaphysics. But by this he reached the opposite, proving a pair of antinomies. On the one hand, God’s Being was non-contradictional and universal; on the other hand, the substantiality of God was the basis of the rejection of His absoluteness, because the infinite Substance tends to locality and conceptual clarity.

This is a paradoxical situation, the cause of which is in recognition of the substantial matter of God’s Being. As we know, Descartes didn’t consider the essence of God as substantial; *God is a main “innate idea”*, here’s why Substances coexist without contradiction. Spinoza could not agree with this interpretation of God’s Being, because he had got the traditional Judaic education. But personal interest is not a sufficient reason for the reform of a philosophical or religious system. It became possible only because the Dutch philosopher unwittingly reflected the vulnerability and weakness of Cartesian rationalism.

The cause of Spinoza’s “revisionism” of Descartes’ philosophy was not limited to reconsideration of the concept of Substance, because his own position concerning the substance did not contradict to the notion of Descartes. Spinoza criticized Descartes’ analytical method, because he considered it abstract and irrelevant to the study of God’s Being. Spinoza argued that the consistency of the analytical method is supposed and artificial, because it doesn’t reflect the objective existing contradictions. According to the traditional Jewish doctrine, Spinoza proposed a *geometrical* method. It was the method of a visual demonstration, based on a synthesis of abstract and sensual understanding of the principles of the idea of Fathers’ God, Who sometimes reveals Himself through the world of objective phenomena. This replacement of methods became possible because the analytical method has a unique feature: it cannot be consistently defined either as a formal-logical,

or as a dialectical one. Therefore, using this method it is possible to solve internal contradictions regarding the content of each Substance, but external, dialectical contradictions of Substances remain unchanged. According to Spinoza, God as an “innate idea” is not the basis of the unity of Substances, because the idea of God can be interpreted as an accidental manifestation of the human thought attribute, as a reflection on the infinity of God.

But it was a direct way to the atheism, that is why the thought of Descartes had to be necessarily revised.

According to Spinoza, the formal relation to God was the cause of *the dialectic* of Substance’s attributes — the thought and the extension, because they were equally open to the cognition. But a Paradox appears there as well, because if there are any unsubstantial structures (created individual things), the substantiality is impossible as a principle, and above all the Substance of God is impossible as the foundation of the world of phenomena.

Spinoza had to introduce an additional the principle of modality and attribution to determine peace in respect of God and not to fall into an epistemological heresy; otherwise he would have had to recognize the rightness of Cartesian’s substantial dualism. Spinoza believed that certain things are related not to the Substance itself, but to its attributes and modes. Therefore, *the real dialectic is the dialectic of absolute reason, the dialectic of the divine Substantiality manifestation*. And if it is true, then any single manifestation of the divine Substantiality is the absolute criterion of God Being. Thus, *the dialectic of God’s Being and the dialectic of the world are identical*.

It means that the way of Spinoza’s criticism was paradoxical, not dialectical. In his effort to justify the absoluteness and the consistency of God’s Substance Spinoza reached a very different result: once again he proved controversial manifestation of the Substance in the world and, accordingly, the absolute contradictoriness of logical cognition of God’s Being.

A Paradox became more evident: if some things don’t have substantial properties, they are random; but God’s Being cannot be the basis of a chance. Consequently, the individual phenomena are also manifest their substantiality as “*causa sui*”.

Thus, Spinoza was the first and the only one who created the concept of absolutely contradictory God. According to Spinoza, this discrepant essence of God was the absolute foundation of the world and the cognition of human contradictions.

The basis of historical transformation of Spinoza’s methodology

It was the concept of “Substance” that was supposed to solve the problem of reflecting being in the logic of concepts. However, in reality, its appearance led only to a confusion of universal meanings: ideas about being as such have steadily begun to be replaced by ideas about existence of things, or they have been consciously identified with them. After all, “to be an attribute of Substance” can mean “to be an attribute of *material* or *spiritual* Substances”. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hegel and Marx were partly the adherents of Spinoza. Hegel regards as a reason of such an ambivalency the abstract principle which lays at the base of Spinozism: “...Absolute substance is the truth, but it is not the whole truth; in order to be this it must also be thought of as in itself active and living, and by that very means it must determine itself as mind. But substance with Spinoza is only the universal and consequently the abstract determination of mind; it may undoubtedly be said that this thought is the foundation of all true views — not, however, as their absolutely

fixed and permanent basis, but as the abstract unity which mind is in itself. It is therefore worthy of note that thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy. For as we saw above, when man begins to philosophize, the soul must commence by bathing in this ether of the One Substance, in which all that man has held as true has disappeared; this negation of all that is particular, to which every philosopher must have come, is the liberation of the mind and its absolute foundation” [6, p. 257–258].

Marxists at the beginning of the 20th century made completely different claims to the concept of “Substance”. So, A. M. Deborin thought that Spinoza’s use of this term was obliged, that is, an accident, behind which a certain necessity was hidden. The term “Substance” acquired a theological connotation in the Middle Ages, and therefore “Spinoza could consciously use the theological terminology of his time, knowing that with the help of this terminology he would be heard by his contemporaries” [7, p. 73]. That is why “what Spinoza in his own language calls a substance, translated into ordinary language is called *Matter*” [7, p. 83].

A vulnerable aspect of Spinoza’s philosophy is that he used the logic as a cognitive tool, not as its purpose (universal methodology). Thus, Spinoza did not set itself the task to know God, as in the Middle Ages, but he proposed the principle of complete dependence of the thought on God’s Being. This thesis was the basis of the evidence that individual thinking depends on the human body-subject. This idea was readily interpreted in the tradition of dialectical materialism. For example: “He, who possesses a body capable of the greatest number of activities, is least agitated by those emotions which are evil — that is, by those emotions which are contrary to our nature; therefore, he possesses the power of arranging and associating the modifications of the body according to the intellectual order, and, consequently, of bringing it about, that all the modifications of the body should be referred to the idea of God; whence it will come to pass that he will be affected with love towards God, which must occupy or constitute the chief part of the mind; therefore, such a man will possess a mind whereof the chief part is eternal” [8, p. 267]. Based on this thesis, we can conclude that Spinoza advocated the principle of material and practical causality of human thought. However, this interpretation distorts the meaning of the substantial nature of God’s Being. Because a thought is an attribute of God Substance, it has a foundation there. But for the same reason (it is a Paradox!) the thought can have a basis in itself. Spinoza speaks about it: “We must observe that <...> assertion would be false, if it were not associated with the conception of a sphere, or of a cause determining a motion of the kind, or absolutely, if the assertion were isolated. The mind would then only tend to the affirmation of the sole motion of a semicircle which is not contained in the conception of a semicircle, and does not arise from the conception of any cause capable of producing such motion” [9, p. 27].

The logic of this Paradox did not disappear either in Hegel’s philosophy, or in Marxism. It manifested itself as an implicit metaphysical aspect of dialectical logic, whose essence is that a formal cognitive contradiction as a contradiction between subject and object is possible and fruitful only as a consequence of the lack of inner contradiction as an incoordination between the known things and things that are still unknown. The term *Substance* is very appropriate here, because the substantial character of the world enables things to be known, but not completely. Thus, Paradox of the idea of Substance is expressed, on the one hand, as the acknowledgement of the impossibility of absolute knowledge of the world and, on the other hand, as the recognition of the impossibility to know it.

Conclusion

As we can see, the paradox is not only a way to reflect the non-contradiction and general things, but also a way of the transformation of the philosophical and scientific ideas in human history: *the main problem is not which way Spinoza understood the absolute substance but how adequately we perceive his argument*. This problem is also very relevant because Spinoza's doctrine is a rare example of its unanimous misunderstanding and extraneous rejection in the history of philosophy. "In addition, a writer should distinguish between what an author really gives and what he gives only in his own imagination. This is true even of philosophical systems; thus, what Spinoza considered the cornerstone of his system and what actually constitutes that cornerstone are two entirely different things" [10, p. 452].

These Marx's words are involuntarily puzzling: what is the absolute criterion of any thinker's "actual intent"? Obviously, this situation is due to the fact that the possibility of understanding is always realized by imposing our judgments on someone. Thus, we can undermine historical reputation of thinkers of the past. However, Marx insisted only on the recognition of the difference between real and subjective intentions. At the same time, we cannot know the true motives of creative work of philosophers, but adequate attitude to the past will be manifested in the recognition that "the true inner structure of the system is quite unlike the form in which it was consciously presented by him (Spinoza. — M. S.)" [11, p. 321].

Consequently, we have no choice: a partial distortion of the concept of historical personalities is inevitable. The history of philosophy is meaningful only to the extent that it can be included in a modern context, and we who live now are able to travel back in time in thought. Only thus, we can find the *equality* of meanings of philosophical positions by Spinoza, Marx and other later thinkers. All of them implement in different ways the main philosophical purpose — they are justified by the opportunity of the adequate knowledge of the absolute existence. If we try to keep the philosophical heritage as sacred, we will destroy it. Distortion of the history of philosophy transforms the ideas in their personal experiences and understanding. In addition, in order to maintain the historical accuracy of thinking it is necessary to determine the continuity through the various stages of the history of philosophy. Otherwise, the history loses its meaning. It is appropriate to remember the opinion of M. Heidegger: "...Weil unser Verhältnis zum Nahen ist für uns Menschen jedeszeit der weiteste und darum der schwerste" [...Because our relationship with the Intelligible is for us, humans, every time the longest and therefore the most difficult] [12, p. 5].

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От логики парадокса к диалектической логике (историческая трансформация методологии спинозизма)

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В статье рассматриваются особенности исторической трансформации философской методологии познания в творческом наследии Б. Спинозы. Центральным понятием спинозизма, как известно, является понятие субстанции, которое играет не только содержательную (системообразующую), но и формальную (методологическую) роль в его философии. Анализ толкования и употребления Спинозой термина «субстанция» раскрывает его парадоксальный характер. Ситуация парадокса, как правило, ошибочно трактуется как синоним бесконечного противоречия. Однако, напротив, это состояние полного отсутствия противоречий, потому что уровень гносеологического противоречия неограниченно возрастает, и оно, становясь всеобщим и бесконечным, перестает восприниматься. Парадокс возникает при оперировании предельно абстрактными и всеобщими понятиями, поэтому мыслители всегда стремились придать этим понятиям натурфилософский характер, сделать их более предметными, и тем самым снизить степень их противоречивости. Спинозовская концепция субстанциальности как

критерия абсолютной сущности Бога наглядно это доказывает. Ссылаясь на Бога как на абсолютный и универсальный субстанциальный критерий, Спиноза пытался восстановить в правах религиозный статус онтологии и метафизики, поставленный под сомнение теорией врожденных идей Декарта. Но этим он достиг прямо противоположного. С одной стороны, субстанциальность Бога представлялась непротиворечивой и универсальной; с другой стороны, Его субстанциальный характер был основанием отрицания Его абсолютности, потому что бесконечная субстанция стремится к самоопределению и самоограничению. Таким образом, Спиноза стал создателем концепции абсолютно противоречивого субстанциального Бога как абсолютного основания противоречивого мира и противоречивости человеческого познания. В этом смысле парадокс манифестирует себя не только как препятствие исторического познания, но и как способ трансформации философских идей в истории человечества. Только так можно понять сущность трансформации идей спинозизма в философии гегельянства и марксизма: взятие на вооружение формальных особенностей метафизического понятия «субстанция» стало основанием трансформации метафизической логики парадокса в диалектическую логику.

Ключевые слова: парадокс, субстанция, Бог, основание, противоречие, логика, диалектика, метод.

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