

Lecture 4.

Epistemology - the doctrine of cognition

The main issues of the lecture:

1. The general concept of cognition and epistemology.
2. The structure of cognition.

1. The general concept of cognition and epistemology.

- **Epistemology** or **gnoseology** (from Latin “gnosis” - knowledge, “logos” - teaching) is a branch of philosophy in which the problems of the cognizability of the world, the boundaries of human cognition, ways of obtaining knowledge and criteria for its reliability are studied.
- In the course of cognition, various facets of being, the external and the essence of things, the phenomena of the surrounding world are explored and revealed, and also the subject of cognition - a human being - are explored, i.e. (which is to say), a man cognizes himself.

- **What is cognition?** Cognition is the spiritual activity of people, aimed at producing new knowledge based on the achievements of past generations.
- In the course of history, two philosophical approaches to the problem of reliable knowledge of existence have developed: gnosticism and agnosticism.

A) proponents of **Gnosticism** believe that the world is known in a credible way, and a person has potentially unlimited possibilities of cognition.

B) proponents of **agnosticism** consider it impossible to fully and reliably cognize the essence of being, the laws of nature and society.

- Modern scientific cognition adheres to the position of Gnosticism.

2. The structure of cognition:

- In cognition, the following elements are distinguished:

A) Subject, object of cognition and the subject matter.

B) Ways and means of cognition

C) Types (forms) and levels of cognition

D) The result of cognition or knowledge (truth).

A). Subject, object of cognition and the subject matter.

The subject of cognition is a human being from whom cognitive interest comes and which carries out cognitive activity.

- The subject of cognition possesses 1) reason and 2) an arsenal of cognitive means accumulated by mankind. The cognizant subject is also humanity as a whole or a collective.

- The object of knowledge is that part of the surrounding world, to which the cognitive interest of the subject is directed. Fourth areas of cognition attract the attention of man: the world of nature, the world of society, the inner world of man and idea of God.
- The subject matter is part of the object to which the "point" of cognition is directly directed.

B). Ways and means of cognition, or by what means does man know the world? The methods of cognition are determined by the characteristics of the cognizing subject, the available knowledge and historically formed cognitive traditions. In the course of human development, the following ways of comprehending being (reality) have developed:

1. **Everyday cognition** is everyday knowledge, which consists of the collective and individual experience of the practical and practical mastery of the world.
2. **Mythological cognition** is the cognition and explanation of natural phenomena and human existence through myth-making (through symbols, images and beliefs).

3. **Religious cognition** is a way of cognizing being through a religious worldview and religious doctrines. In religious cognition, special methods of cognition of the world and man have developed: revelation and meditation.

4. Artistic cognition is the cognition of being through artistic creativity and the language of art. A feature of artistic cognition is the unity of cognition and self- cognition, the object and subject of cognition merge. Means of artistic cognition are: in literature - the word, in painting - color, in music - sound, in sculpture - three-dimensional forms.

5. Philosophical cognition forms a general idea of the world as a whole on the basis of operating with abstract concepts of the ultimate (higher) order. Philosophy also defines the system of principles, views, values and ideals of a person, his attitude to the world and to himself. Means of philosophical cognition: reflexion, dialectics, metaphysics.

6. Scientific cognition - this cognition, aimed at the formation of objective reliable knowledge of the surrounding reality. The most important means of scientific knowledge is the language of science (thesaurus).

C). Types and levels of cognition.

In terms of cognition, sensual and rational cognition are distinguished.

I. Sensual cognition or sensualism (from Latin sense - feeling, sensation, perception) is the direct acquisition of information through the sense organs and the activity of the nervous system, the preservation and processing of knowledge in reality in the form of visual images. The main levels of sensory cognition are sensations, perception, representation.

(1) Sensation is the initial form of cognition, which carries out a direct connection with the world, the transformation of the physiological process into the psychic process, into the fact of consciousness and the origin of the ideal image of the reflected object. Sensations (touch, smell, sight, hearing, taste) reflect only the individual sides of the object and do not give a complete view of it.

(2) Perception is the complex of several sensations; the process of constructing holistic images of objects and their interrelations, acting at the given moment on the sense organs.

(3) Representation is the reproduction by means of memory and imagination of the perceptions already existing in the past personal and social experience.
Representation serves as a link between sensory and rational cognition.

II. Rational knowledge (from the Latin “ratio” - mind) or abstract-logical thinking is the comprehension of reality by generalized symbolic means. The characteristics of human cognitive activity are mainly related to the ability to rational cognition. Rationality i.e. the ability of thinking to work with ideal objects was first described by Plato. European civilization was originally called the rational civilization.

Levels of rational knowledge:

- (1) Notion** is the thought about an object that reproduces in an abstract form a certain object, a phenomenon, a property, a relationship.
- (2) Reasoning** is the thought in which one affirms or denies something about objects or phenomena.
- (3) Conclusion** is the form of thinking that allows us to derive new reasoning from several interrelated reasoning.

C) The result of cognition is knowledge or truth. **Truth** is the correspondence of the human knowledge of reality, the coincidence of human thought and the object. The classical definition of truth was given by Aristotle. He defined truth as the correspondence of thought and subject, knowledge and reality. Modern philosophy calls the classical concept a correspondent theory of truth.

- The goal of scientific cognition is the achievement of objective truth. Under the notion of **objective truth** is understood knowledge, the content of which does not depend on either man or humanity. Objective truth consists of absolute and relative truth.

- **Absolute truth** is the objective truth that contains a complete and comprehensive knowledge of the essence of objects and phenomena of the material world. Absolute truth can never be refuted, because it is proved by science and confirmed by practice, and it falls out of the process of cognition, because it contains complete knowledge. For example, the sphericity of the Earth.

- **Relative truth** is the objective truth that contains an incomplete, relative knowledge of the essence of objects and phenomena of the material world. Relative truth is incomplete, inconclusive, included in the process of cognition, because it is not complete and requires scientific research, proof and confirmation of practice.

- To find out the truth is to compare the representation (knowledge) with the object, and not with the very same knowledge. Such a comparison is possible only in the course of objective activity, i.e. **practice**. Therefore, practice is considered the main criterion of the truth of knowledge. **Practice** is an active sensory-objective activity of people, aimed at changing the surrounding reality.
- Main types of practice: material production, management activity, scientific experiment.

- **Aberration** is knowledge that does not correspond to its subject (inadequate, unreliable, distorted) that does not coincide with it. The aberrations, of course, make it difficult to find the truth, but they are inevitable, they are the necessary moment of the movement of knowledge to it.
- Aberrations should be distinguished from falsehood. **Falsehood** is a deliberate distortion of truth in someone's selfish interests. The transfer of knowingly false knowledge is called misinformation.

Thank you for attention!