

ФИЛОСОФИЯ НАУКИ И ТЕХНИКИ

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SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF PRACTICE

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Abstract

Aim. Based on philosophical methodology, the content and functions of practice are disclosed in detail, and the category of “practice” is defined in a modern edition.

Methodology. The work was carried out based on a systematic approach using methods of classification and comparative analysis.

Results. The functionality of practice has been identified, which is represented by a number of essential positions, without which not only development, but also the very existence of society is impossible. The presented functions are, of course, organically connected with each other, they complement each other, thereby forming a complex, multi-level system of functions of practice. The functions considered, to one degree or another, encourage us to realize the practical (and praxeological) nature of philosophy, as well as the practical possibilities of the philosophical (general scientific) algorithm of cognition, which, unfortunately, remain underestimated at the present time.

Research implications. The results of the study can be used to improve the methodological competencies of both teachers of philosophical disciplines and students.

Keywords: activity, methodology, science, practice, function

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СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ФУНКЦИИ ПРАКТИКИ

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Аннотация

Цель. На основе философской методологии детально раскрыть содержание и функции практики, дать определение категории «практика» в современной редакции.

Процедура и методы. Работа выполнена на основе системного подхода с использованием методов классификации и сравнительного анализа.

Результаты. Выявлен функционал практики, который представлен рядом существенных позиций, без которых невозможны не только развитие, но и само существование общества. Представленные функции, безусловно, органично связаны друг с другом, они дополняют друг друга, составляя тем самым образуя сложную, многоуровневую систему функций практики. Рассмотренные функции в той или иной степени подвигают нас к осознанию практической (и праксиологической) природы философии, а также практических возможностей философского (общенаучного) алгоритма познания, которые на сегодняшний момент, к сожалению, остаются недооценёнными.

Теоретическая и/или практическая значимость. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы в совершенствовании методологических компетенций как у преподавателей философских дисциплин, так и у обучающихся.

Ключевые слова: деятельность, методология, наука, практика, функция

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Introduction

Without disclosing the content and functions of practice in this article, it would be impossible to talk about the practical possibilities of philosophy. This study is devoted to clarifying the essence of such a complex phenomenon as practice. The role of practice in the life of an individual and society as a whole cannot be denied. Based on this axiomatic premise, we can assume that practice is one of the most studied and strictly defined phenomena. However, an analysis of the literature shows that the content and essence of practice is interpreted in a variety of ways and very contradictorily. Let us provide illustrations on this account.

Let's start with the simplest thing – practice as an objective physical activity. Here, almost insurmountable problems initially arise related to:

- the idea of implementation as an exclusively material and physical activity;
- positioning, in which practice is not connected with the intellectual and social sphere;
- a position in which many practitioners (analyst, teacher, scientist, politician, economist, mathematician, lawyer, theoretical physicist, philosopher, etc.) are not studied

among representatives of specialties included in the practical field.

It is obvious that the tasks of physical actions, physical change of the world, first of all, are born in people's heads, and only after that are they realized in real life. The practical process cannot be meaningless, unconscious, purely physical. If this were so, humanity would not have emerged from a primitive or animal state.

Content and essence of practice

The definition of practice as a process not connected with theory and knowledge is surprising¹. It follows from this that scientific and theoretical activity is a non-practical sphere. Unfortunately, the authors of other works also insist on the opposition of practice and theory². It is also impossible to agree that practice is an exclusively material activity. We often read: "... practice, i.e. material, sensory-objective activity of people"³.

¹ См.: Новейший философский словарь. Минск: В. М. Скакун, 1998. С. 542–543.

² См.: Философский энциклопедический словарь. М.: ИНФРА-М, 2011. С. 361.

³ Философия: учебное пособие / под ред. проф. В. Н. Лавриненко, проф. В. П. Ратникова. М.: ЮНИТИ, 2001. С. 470.

As can be seen, here practice is again reduced exclusively to material activity. This point of view is quite widely represented in scientific literature. Some authors speak of practice as a total system of material activity of mankind. In particular, we read: "Practice is a holistic organic system of total material activity of mankind in its entire historical development, always carried out in a certain socio-cultural context"¹.

Often practice is presented not only as a sensory-objective activity, but also as a process of transforming precisely and exclusively material systems. Thus, one can find the following interpretation of practice: "Practice is defined as a person's sensory-objective activity of transforming material systems"².

This approach to practice raises a number of questions: a) why is practice associated only with human activity, since humans are not the only subject of social practice; b) "why is practice aimed at transforming only material systems, since practical activity clearly ensures the transformation of not only material but also spiritual and ideological phenomena" [1].

A large number of researchers consider practice as an activity for the development and transformation of natural and social objects. In particular, this point of view is presented in the following editions: "Practice is a material, sensory-objective, goal-oriented human activity, the content of which is the development and transformation of natural and social objects..."³. We find a similar approach to practice in another source: "Practice is a purposeful, sensory-objective activity of the subject, in the process of which the transformation of natural and social phenomena, objects, connections, and relationships is carried out"⁴. This position regarding the content and essence of practice is shared and replicated by other authors: «Practice is an aspect of objec-

tive activity, characterized by the change and transformation of nature and society»⁵. It is obvious that with such an understanding of practice, the intellectual and spiritual components, the sphere of knowledge, are excluded from it.

This shortcoming is overcome to a certain extent by another position: "Practice (Greek "praktikos" – active) is a material, sensory-objective, purposeful human activity, the main content of which consists in the development and transformation of natural and social objects. Practice is the universal basis, the driving force of the development of human society and knowledge"⁶. More precisely, in our opinion, look the authors who interpret practice as "material, goal-oriented activity of people; development and transformation of objective reality; the universal basis for the development of human society and knowledge"⁷.

Even more precise are those researchers who believe that practice encompasses not only material, but all purposeful, objective activity. This point of view is presented in several sources. In this context, we note: "Practice is a category that can be attributed to the entire sphere of human activity and thinking"⁸.

It should be agreed that practice goes beyond the limits of purely material activity. In our opinion, this is an important breakthrough in understanding the content and essence of practice. We concretize the content and essence of practice in our reasoning about it as soon as we begin to break out of the trap of exclusively material understanding of it, moving towards the integration of both material and social and intellectual elements. We think that this understanding of practice is more justified than the previous ones. However, in modern literature, practice also receives more adequate definitions [2].

¹ Философия: учебное пособие / отв. ред. В. П. Кохановский; 16-е изд. Ростов н/Д.: Феникс, 2007. С. 395.

² Стрельник О. Н. Философия: конспект лекций. М.: Юрайт, 2010. С. 109.

³ Философский энциклопедический словарь. М.: ИНФРА, 2011. С. 522.

⁴ Философия: учебное пособие / под. ред. З. Т. Фокиной. М.: Вузовская книга, 2012. С. 350.

⁵ Моисеева Н. А., Сорокикова В. А. Философия: краткий курс; 2-е изд., доп. СПб.: Питер, 2010. С. 155.

⁶ Данильян О. Г., Тараненко В. М. Философия: учебное пособие. М.: Эксмо, 2005. С. 499.

⁷ Советский энциклопедический словарь; 4-е изд. М.: Советская энциклопедия, 1987. С. 1052.

⁸ Новейший философский словарь. Минск: В. М. Скакун, 1998. С. 542.

Those authors who define practice by introducing the concept of experience are closer to the truth: "By practice, first of all, we mean the combined activity of mankind, the experience of all mankind in its historical development"¹. "The multifaceted, complex and multi-level nature of practice, which includes various processes, such as empirical life experience and the most rigorous scientific experiment"², is revealed by a number of authors [3].

One must agree with those authors for whom the "close dialectical connection between practice and experience is obvious, which, in turn, forms an environment for understanding practice through experience, and experience through practice. Here experience acts, on the one hand, as the final result of people's practical actions, and on the other, as their basis" [4]. Therefore, we can allow the definition of practice through experience, but this will be acceptable and productive only if we extract the substantive and essential features of the experience itself as strictly as possible. Unfortunately, in scientific literature the category of "experience" is interpreted vaguely and contradictorily, in a multifaceted way. Considering that practice is often defined as experience, a shallow, non-essential understanding of experience leads us to an incorrect understanding of practice.

Thus, one of the sources reveals practice as "experience, the very thing, experience in practice, the thing on experience"³. It is obvious that the interpretation of practice through experience requires a strict definition of the essence of the latter. Let us turn to sources that offer characteristics of experience as a specific phenomenon. In particular: "In philosophy, experience is the basis of all non-conceptual knowledge about reality"⁴.

This interpretation of experience gives rise to objections: there is no reason to assert that

conceptual, that is, scientific knowledge of reality is divorced from experience, moreover, experience underlies the definition of scientific concepts, performs an indicative function in determining their truth. To summarize, experience can be interpreted as a necessary element of practice, which plays a key role in its formation, but at the same time does not fully exhaust its content.

In addition, we will not be able to adequately and fully comprehend the essence of practice without identifying the essence of such a category as "activity". It is not surprising that in modern literature practice is often interpreted through activity. So what is it? Many opinions have been expressed on this matter in scientific literature. Let us pay attention to the most interesting and specific of them.

In particular, O. G. Danilyan writes: "Thus, activity can be defined as a human form of active attitude to the surrounding world, the content of which is its expedient transformation in the interests of people"⁵. And further: "...activity is the essential certainty of a person's way of being in the world, his ability to introduce changes into reality, mediated by the ideal"⁶. The author identifies the following essential features of activity: a) activity is presented as a human form of active attitude to the surrounding world; b) as its expedient transformation in the interests of people; c) as an essential certainty of the way of human existence; d) as the ability of a person to make changes in reality, mediated by his ideal aspirations.

Obviously, the main substantive and essential features of activity are named here. At the same time, the legitimacy of considering activity as exclusively positively directed actions of people raises doubts. In real life, we see both positive and negative components of human activity, humanity.

Unfortunately, an exclusively positively directed understanding of activity can be found in other works: "Activity is a person's attitude to the surrounding world, existing in the form of its transformation and subordination; pur-

¹ Философский энциклопедический словарь. М.: Советская энциклопедия, 1998. С. 523.

² Философия / под ред. В. П. Кохановского. Ростов н/Д.: Феникс, 2001. С. 430.

³ Даль В. И. Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка: в 4 т. Т. 2: Н–О. М.: ОЛМА-ПРЕСС, 2003. С. 310.

⁴ Философский энциклопедический словарь. М.: ИНФРА-М, 2011. С. 320.

⁵ Данильян О. Г., Тараненко В. М. Философия: учебное пособие. М.: Эксмо, 2005. С. 328.

⁶ Там же. С. 353.

purposeful meaningful activity, during which the development of both man and human society occurs”¹. We must agree with the thesis about activity, which always performs (not always, however, to the same degree) the function of transforming the world and is “purposeful meaningful activity of people” [5]. However, let us note that not every human activity entails the subordination of the world to man, and not every activity necessarily leads to the development of man and human society. It is necessary to state the fact that not every activity leads to the development of human society.

An unambiguously optimistic progressive approach to the essence of activity is also professed by other authors: “... activity is a specifically human way of relating to the world, consisting in the creative transformation of nature by man, as well as in the production and reproduction of social relations, the human essence itself”².

Activity, indeed, is precisely the human way of relating to the world, through it social relations are produced and reproduced.

However, even here there are hidden some very controversial judgments, which consist in the fact that: “a) that activity is always a creative process; b) that human activity is a transformation of nature only; c) that any activity produces and reproduces the essence of man” [6, c. 109]. There are also many types of activity that destroy, ruin the human essence.

In most sources, activity is rightly interpreted through the concept of goal-setting, namely, as a set of purposeful, meaningful actions to transform reality. The moment of goal-setting is characteristic exclusively of representatives of the animal world endowed with reason, namely, of humans. Although this does not look like a contemptuous chauvinistic attitude towards the rest of the animal world, it is activity that has nothing to do with it. For example, beavers do not engage in activity, since this set of actions is not meaningful and purposeful. These actions are controlled by instincts, not reason, and that is why it is

necessary to introduce an element into the definition of activity that characterizes it as an “exclusively human” social practice. Sociality is another characteristic of activity.

Thus, progressive activity and regressive activity really exist. The first, indeed, is characterized by the above-mentioned features. The second – only some of them. In other words, if you steadily follow the object of study (in our case, this is activity), then with a high degree of probability you can determine some of its essential features:

- a social phenomenon as a product of social existence;
- a system of human actions;
- actions are conscious and purposeful;
- activity is a source of changes not only in the world of things (nature), but also in the world of ideas (society and consciousness).

Here, in our opinion, the essential features of activity are quite adequately presented. We have specifically highlighted them in order to characterize practice, which is essentially an activity [7].

Let us try to summarize what has been said earlier and positionally present the content and essence of practice as a complex social phenomenon.

1. Practice is the activity of people, social activity, formed in the course of social existence.
2. Practice is always consciously and purposefully consciously carried out by people.
3. Practice (unlike activity as such, which can be both constructive and destructive) is always aimed at progressive changes in human existence.
4. Practice causes changes in nature, in society and in the consciousness of people.
5. In practice, he finds an organic connection between material and spiritual-intellectual activity.

6. On the platform of practice, a positive experience of people’s social life is formed, which, in turn, is both a direct product of practice and the basis for its development.

Thus, practice is a purposeful, conscious material and spiritual activity of people based on social experience, ensuring progressive so-

¹ Гуревич П. С. Основы философии: учебное пособие. М.: КноРус, 2013. С. 345.

² Философия: учебное пособие / под. ред. З. Т. Фокиной. М.: Вузовская книга, 2012. С. 506.

cial development and performing a number of important functions in the life of society.

Social functions of practice

In some cases, modern scientific literature significantly expands the functional field of practice, defining it as “the source, basis, goal of knowledge and the decisive criterion of truth”¹. We have no doubt that in relation to cognition, practice fully performs these functions.

Recently, one can come across authors who see in practice a certain starting point of cognition, its driving force, the basis of cognition, the criterion of its truth, the ultimate goal of cognition. In many cases, the main function of practice is called its criterion essence in relation to knowledge. However, in no way belittling the role of practice in the system of cognition, we note that its functions as a complex social phenomenon are much deeper and broader. We systematize them, taking as a basis such criteria as the basis of practice, its content, essence and quality, which, to a greater or lesser extent, manifest themselves in a stable form in social life.

1. The production and creative function, the most important, stable and meaningful. Here, practice is interpreted as an activity for the “production of both material and spiritual products” [5].

2. The historical function, defining practice as a carrier of the “historical experience of development of all spheres of society” [5].

3. The epistemological function, bringing practice into the sphere of knowledge, where it plays a special organizational role. Here, practice “has a direct influence on the formation of theoretical, logical, methodological and methodical foundations of people’s activities” [5].

4. The ideological and worldview function, designating practice as a purposeful activity of people. Here, it “directly influences both the process of forming people’s worldviews and the process of constituting their ideological preferences” [5].

5. The goal-setting function (teleological function), representing practice as forming the goals of human life in the process of activity.

6. The organizational function, revealing such aspects of practice as mobilization, unification and coordination of people to achieve certain goals.

7. Information function, where practice is impossible without a certain amount of information and its subsequent increase.

8. Prognostic-heuristic function, introducing practical processes into the sphere of forecasts of the future, without which new conclusions and positions, promising horizons of social development are impossible.

9. Selective function, revealing in practice the side of careful selection of everything positive that can benefit social being.

10. Culturological function, highlighting practice from the point of view of the formation of culture as a kind of result of human activity.

11. Propaganda and agitation function, presenting practice as the most effective “means of propaganda and agitation of people for certain actions” [8].

12. Communicative function reveals practice as a field for uniting various areas of human activity in order to solve challenges and tasks on the agenda.

13. Integration function, where practice integrates people into a certain integrity for a more effective solution to the problem of joint survival.

14. The humanistic function, where practice works to create comfortable conditions for people to coexist. We have already noted that “practice is a progressive human activity that gives them the opportunity to live better, therefore, its essence is to improve the conditions of people’s existence” [8].

15. The function of accumulating people’s experiential activity (experience is described above and its definitions are given).

16. The indicative function, where practice is presented as the main criterion for the truth of knowledge and actions. “It is this that sums up how correctly people have done, are doing, and will do something in the future” [9].

¹ Философия / отв. ред. В. П. Кохановский; 16-е изд. Ростов н/Д.: Феникс, 2007. С. 399.

17. The methodological and methodical functions, which contain and constitute “certain techniques, methods, approaches, methods, methodologies for solving problems of a certain class, and also form and consolidate the rules (methods) for solving them” [9].

Of course, we have not listed all the functions of practice, since this small study aimed to establish the main positions of researchers on the definition of practice as such. Based on the fact that practice is not only multifunctional, but also acquires more and more new functions in the complex process of development of nature, society and consciousness in the dynamics of their development, as well as the development of cognitive, methodological and methodological tools adopted to solve current problems and challenges facing human society.

Conclusion

Thus, the functionality of practice is represented by a number of essential positions, without which not only development, but also the very existence of society is impossible [10]. The listed functions are certainly organically connected with each other; they complement each other, thereby forming a complex, multi-level system of functions of practice. We have outlined them in this article with one important goal – to draw attention to the fact that all these functions, to one degree or another, move us to an awareness of the practical (and praxeological) nature of philosophy, as well as the practical possibilities of the philosophical (general scientific) algorithm of cognition, which, unfortunately, remain underestimated at the present time.

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