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## The doctrine of the knowledge in English tradition

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### Abstract

The article deals with the evolution of empirical cognition in the history of British philosophy from Johannes Scotus Eriugena to George Berkeley. The author identifies the fundamental aspects of the development of empirical knowledge over many centuries of British thought. The purpose of this paper is characterization of a consistent line of one of the world tendencies of thought and its embodiment in the writings of G. Berkeley. The author concludes that the features of construction and content of the epistemology of George Berkeley, which has had a significant impact on the development of European philosophical thought, not least are determined by the heritage of the British philosophical tradition, which is characterized by a general tendency towards the experimental knowledge starting from the Middle Ages up to the flourishing of nominalist empiricism.

### Keywords

Epistemology, Berkeley, Bacon, Locke, Hume, empiricism, British philosophy, experimental knowledge.

### Introduction

The history of English thought is an example of a pronounced tendency

to streamline and simplify the cognition procedure, to derive its limits (literally *define*), as well to synthesize the most prominent schools of thought of its time.

Such iconic names as Ockham, Newton, Bacon, Locke, Berkeley and Hume can adequately define the limits of tradition, which was based on saving cognitive efforts and relying on experimental data typical of the English philosophical tradition.

George Berkeley being a brilliant representative of the empirical tradition, combines in his teaching trends manifested in the entire previous history of English thought. Epistemology of Berkeley is often presented in terms of his ideas' subsequent development (as in the widely cited work of Lenin, "Materialism and Empiriocriticism"), but their originality and pattern of the philosopher's view development are more apparent by analyzing the latter in the framework of the previous tradition specific for English philosophy, which governs not only the principles of Berkeley's teaching, but also the further development of English empiricism.

### **Epistemology of medieval British philosophers**

Within the medieval scholastic tradition the concept of empiricism has its own peculiarities and is irreducible to the classical forms, manifested in England nowadays. But the epistemological

orientation of the British (then it used to be latin) philosophy, previous strengthening of the role specific for early experimental ways of cognition allow to distinguish empiricism as one of the defining features of the English philosophy development.

John Scotus Eriugena was the first prominent British philosopher. He became "the most prestigious figure in terms of the grand philosophical and theological synthesis"<sup>1</sup>. It was he to be the author of the famous scheme for "separation of nature" (according to the principle of creation act's being achieved and endured) in terms of binary oppositions "created – uncreated " and "creative – non-creative". According to Eriugena, sensual and multiple aspect of created world is an expression of original sin. "The body is ours, but we are not the body"<sup>2</sup> says the philosopher, predicting the orientation on the true existence of spirit by Berkeley. Staying realistic (in the scholastic sense of the word), Eriugena determines a cognitive power of human reason, truth of dialectics as the path from one to many and from many to

1 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day*, Vol. 2, *The Middle Ages* [*Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e*], St. Petersburg, p. 93.

2 Ibid. P. 95.

one, for "a human being is a reasonable substance able to perceive wisdom"<sup>3</sup>. He is first to assert the unity of philosophical and theological knowledge: "No one ascends into heaven otherways but through philosophy"<sup>4</sup>.

Oxford medieval naturalism is represented by two prominent figures, the founders of the empirical philosophy basis – Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon.

Robert Grosseteste was the author of the unique cosmology system, the "philosophy of the light". He explains the formation of celestial spheres and terrestrial elements with diffusion of light and compound decomposition of its rays. "The light which is the first form created in the first matter, multiplies endlessly itself by itself and stretches in all directions uniformly, spread in early times the matter he could not leave stretching it together with itself to the size of the universe"<sup>5</sup>. All information known at that time about the refraction of light on the mirrors and lenses is systematized in

3 *Reader in philosophy [Khrestomatiya po filosofii]*, Rostov-on-Don, 2002, p. 98.

4 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e]*, St. Petersburg, p. 97.

5 *Reader in philosophy [Khrestomatiya po filosofii]*, Rostov-on-Don, 2002, p. 127.

the works of this medieval philosopher. His observation that without studying the lines, angles and shapes with similar properties in the entire universe, "we are not able to understand anything in natural philosophy"<sup>6</sup> anticipates theoretical foundations of modern physics.

Roger Bacon, a student of Grosseteste predicts the theory of idols by his famous namesake, through establishing the scheme of obstacles on the way to truth: trust to dubious authority; habit; vulgar stupidity, ignorance under the guise of omniscience. The attention paid to Bacon's experimental way of cognizing the truth corresponds to the further tradition of epistemological criticism's being anticipated. External experience gained by sensuous way, complements the internal experience of the supernatural knowledge and cannot be replaced by the latter.

John Duns Scotus, another great person of the English Middle Ages studied at Oxford as well. Continuing the trend developed by Bacon Duns Scotus sees his main task in clarifying the boundaries of knowledge.

Unlike Eriugena, he separates philosophy from theology by defining an

6 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e]*, St. Petersburg, p. 163.

object for each field of knowledge: the being, *ens*, for philosophy and the matters of faith – for theology. Doctrine for separation of the real, formal and modal, advocated by the philosopher serves the same purpose of understanding the complex object of our knowledge. The concept of simple matter becomes a limit available for the mind. To specify and cognize more complex, structurally subordinated fields the philosopher admits the need for autonomous science, as well as theology. While individual sciences' separating from a single syncretic stream of knowledge, theology becomes less strictly provable, outlining the full demarcation of these areas on the basis of a rational approach.

"We find even more radical empiricism in the works of William Ockham, the greatest Franciscan scholar"<sup>7</sup>. For him, reality is a being of particular thing, with only the latter becoming the object of experience, the source of knowledge. That turn of thoughts is especially indicative for Occam as metaphysicist, being, unlike Roger Bacon, unrelated to experimental natural philosophy. Occam sharply separates the plural and the one, the God and the world, on different sides of cognition. The principle known as

<sup>7</sup> Russell, B. (1998), *Wisdom of the West* [*Mudrost' Zapada*], Moscow, p. 249.

"Occam's Razor" – "one should not multiply entities beyond necessity"<sup>8</sup> – becomes the basis of the principle for saving cognitive efforts in modern science. The philosopher rejects hierarchy of forms, substances, causes – metaphysical intermediaries between the world of the One and the plural. The primacy of the individual – a sharp rejection of the universal as a subject of true knowledge, determinism, and hence of the rational proofs on God's existence. Ockham says: "None of that beyond the soul, actual or reasonably comprehensible, neither by itself nor the other, as can be seen, is not a universal ... as it is impossible for a human being to be in whatever aspect considered a donkey"<sup>9</sup>. This radical breaking of metaphysical structure led to the primacy of experience in knowledge. Obviously, Occam is the first consistent nominalist of English philosophy. Verbal forms for him are only means of expressing logical relations and naming, but not a reflection of the essence of things.

Thus, the history of English medieval thought confirms the thesis about the empirical basis of its development.

<sup>8</sup> Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages* [*Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e*], St. Petersburg, p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The way from Eriugena's scholastic realism to nominalism of Ockham predicts epistemology orientation of British modern philosophy as well.

### **Cognition theory of industrial era philosophy**

Trends in the development of medieval English thought in new times get a logical continuation in the works of Newton and Bacon – the founders of modern structure and ethics of scientific knowledge. Emphasis on rational evidences, rejection of knowledge's mediation and practical application of the philosophy statements (already gravitating to the modern scientific fields) are the main ideas of the industrial era philosophy<sup>10</sup>.

Significant personage in the world of thought, who marks a new era of knowledge is Isaac Newton. He completes the scientific revolution; his system of the world makes the foundation for classical physics, "without a proper understanding of Newton's ideas, we cannot quite understand any significant part

of British empiricism and the Enlightenment, especially the French one, as well as the Kant's doctrine"<sup>11</sup>. It is interesting to note that Newton is the spokesman and the author of typically national picture of the world, as A. Maurois writes: "Reading works of Locke gives information on philosophy, reading Swift – on model, reading Newton – on scientific doctrine"<sup>12</sup>.

Methodological bases of Newton's philosophy are several provisions relevant to the traditional saving-cognition-efforts – thought being typical of British. The first of these "rules on philosophical discourse" becomes the analogue of the "Occam's Razor" for physics: "There should be no more reasons but sufficient enough to explain the apparent natural phenomena", the second and third ones lay the methodological basis of consistent system for scientific knowledge: "Same phenomenon should be, as far as possible, explained by using the same reasons ... Properties of bodies negating a gradual increase or decrease and being manifested in all bodies within our experiments should be considered as uni-

10 Nugaev, R.M. (2012), "The formation of modern science: intertheoretical context" ["Stanovlenie nauki novogo vremeni: interteoreticheskii kontekst"], *Kontekst i refleksiya: filosofiya o mire i cheloveke*, No. 1, pp. 39-65.

11 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e]*, St. Petersburg, p. 135.

12 Ibid.

versal". The last of the rules is justifying the only exact method to establish credible hypotheses: "... judgments derived by general induction should be regarded as true or very close to the truth ... until other phenomena would be found to correct these judgments or to refer to them as to exceptions"<sup>13</sup>.

For a subject one cannot clearly determine and prove Newton offers a concise solution: "... hypotheses, metaphysical, physical, mechanical, hidden properties should have no place in experimental philosophy"<sup>14</sup>. His proof on the existence of God based on the cosmic order becomes a justification of deism. Self establishment of the world system according to single rules becomes the turning point of thought, which had been gradually prepared by teachings of Roger Bacon and Occam.

The "philosopher of the industrial age"<sup>15</sup> Francis Bacon continues to move the English thought, but adopts a new look for that time stating that knowledge should not be based only on practice, but rather bear fruits in practice, and science should serve the development of the industry. Due to the "futility" of Aristotle's "Organon" method Bacon contrasts his

13 Ibid. P. 140.

14 Ibid. P. 144.

15 Ibid. P. 161.

"New Organon" to the latter. From the same point of view, the philosopher criticizes the thinkers of the past for the lack of respect for nature, condemns magicians and alchemists for their concealing knowledge outcomes, and logical tradition – for impotence in understanding the point of natural phenomena.

Bacon offers a way of interpreting nature, inductive ascent from the catalog of the observed phenomena to their consistent explanation derived from the experience in the long run: "God gave you a strong and durable feeling ... to comprehend heaven and earth – the God's creations"<sup>16</sup>. And to achieve this ideal of cognition a human being only needs to abandon the "idols and false notions", "habits of consciousness justified by nothing except errors of a learning process. Classical system of "idols", which was developed by the philosopher contains *idols of the tribe*, errors of human nature itself, *the idols of the cave*, personal delusions, *idols of square (market)* due to language differences, and *the idols of theater* – the habits of consciousness caused by the adoption of common philosophical doctrines.

The philosopher's testament was his assertion on cognitive power and practical potency of reason: "if we at-

16 Ibid. P. 168.

tentively, seriously and sincerely turn to action and practice, as results of research we may easily achieve something that constitutes those forms, the knowledge of which would miraculously enrich and benefit humanity"<sup>17</sup>.

### **British Empiricism of the XVII century**

Achievements of Bacon and Newton became the logical basis for further development of British empiricism, getting its classical forms in the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.

Thomas Hobbes, a major figure of English empiricism, was a secretary of Bacon. The Hobbes' logic is based on the late-scholastic tradition of nominalism: words are only conventional signs, whose actions (arguments) correlate with mathematical ones. Following Duns Scotus and Ockham Hobbes encourages delineating the area of rules, i.e. prerequisites of knowledge, religion and philosophy. The main area of interest for the philosopher becomes philosophy of society and the state, a new line of thought, which is able to be as useful as physics: Ideally philosophy can preserve peace,

<sup>17</sup> *Reader in philosophy* [Khrestomatiya po filosofii], Rostov-on-Don, 2002, p. 188.

ending civil wars and cataclysms<sup>18</sup>. Like Bacon, Hobbes is wedded to a utilitarian conception of cognition, but he brings rationalism to it: he defines philosophy as the science of bodies – both natural and artificial (nature, people, state). These premises proceed to relativism (in sociology – egoism of the "state of nature" and conventionality of Leviathan State) and the idea of bodies' bondage: within the materialistic determinism there is no random, and therefore, there is no choice. Mechanically removing the spiritual domain (turning all objects of knowledge in the "body"), Hobbes paves the way to atheism, and the application of mathematical methods to the logic leads to the "rise of a number of aporia"<sup>19</sup>.

Empiricism was an essential part of the Bacon and Hobbes teachings, though by the first author it is limited with a theme of scientific experience, and the second one is intertwined with rationalism. The largest figure of British philosophy John Locke develops epistemology as a special area of philosophy, justifies the sensationalist theory of knowledge. Francis Bacon wrote that it was necessary

<sup>18</sup> Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages* [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e], St. Petersburg, p. 305.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 320.

to achieve a "better and more perfect use of mind"<sup>20</sup>. For Locke, knowledge of the cognition laws and restriction of its capabilities becomes a target; he explores not the object of knowledge but the subject itself outlining the limits of mind's cognitive capability: "it is very useful for a sailor to know the length of his lead's line, although he cannot measure with it all the depths of the ocean"<sup>21</sup>. As the philosopher says, "knowing one's cognitive abilities prevents us from skepticism and mental inactivity"<sup>22</sup>.

Analyzing the limits, conditions and real possibilities of human knowledge, as noted by Nicola Abbagnano "is ingrained by the old empirical tradition of English philosophy, which travelled its way from Roger Bacon, Ockham and philosophers on a smaller scale to Bacon and Hobbes"<sup>23</sup>. According to Locke, ideas (mental images, but not prototypes of things) originate only and always in experience: "This is *the only way* I was able to discover, *the way* ideas of things

*get into the mind*"<sup>24</sup>; later Berkeley not without reason criticized the philosopher for being unable to explain interaction between the two worlds – spirit and things.

From criticism of idols, consciousness habits, the English philosophy in the name of Locke switches to criticism of innate ideas, using the old idea of soul as "tabula rasa": Where does all the *material* of mind and knowledge come from? The answer is in one word: EXPERIENCE. It is the latter being basis for all our knowledge and it is the place it starts"<sup>25</sup>.

It is significant that the "empiricist" Locke believes the existence of God is more certain and reliable than any sensory perception, "we learn about the existence of God with greater confidence than we understand the existence of some other things outside of us"<sup>26</sup>. That is why the authority of Scripture is determining for Locke: "As soon as I will be shown that my teaching is contrary to at least one position of the Scriptures, I immediately give up any of my theory"<sup>27</sup>.

20 Ibid. P. 324.

21 Ibid. P. 325.

22 *Reader in philosophy [Khrestomatiya po filosofii]*, Rostov-on-Don, 2002, p. 225.

23 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e]*, St. Petersburg, p. 326.

24 *Reader in philosophy [Khrestomatiya po filosofii]*, Rostov-on-Don, 2002, p. 224.

25 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e]*, St. Petersburg, p. 329.

26 Ibid. P. 338.

27 Ibid. P. 343.



The history of English thought in XVII century shows the development of the empiricism principle which determines the direction of British philosophy. Bertrand Russell says: "British ... philosophy in general follows the method of empirical research in science ... .. Empirical... philosophy based on observations will not fail even if we find errors in some its aspects"<sup>28</sup>. This remark applies to doctrine of George Berkeley as well, with the latter having marked the history of philosophy in the direction to be still vital.

### George Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge

John Locke, the author of sensualistic epistemology, takes the first steps to the destruction of realistic (in the medieval sense) epistemological traditions. Thereafter it is the turn of Berkeley to strike another blow to the traditional metaphysics.

The main philosophical work of Berkeley being not inferior to wit and skill of reasoning specific for his prominent masterpieces with a more pronounced literary orientation became "*A treatise concerning the principles of hu-*

*man knowledge wherein the chief causes of error and difficulty in the sciences, with the grounds of scepticism, atheism and irreligion, are inquired into*".

The aim of the treatise, as noted in the introduction, is the impact on those "who are infected with skepticism or have no evidence of the existence and immateriality of God, as well as the natural immortality of the soul"<sup>29</sup>. Thus, epistemology of Berkeley's nominalism tending at first glance to a peculiar agnosticism becomes an "updated apologetics"<sup>30</sup>. To achieve the goal Berkeley has set the following objective: "to discover the principles causing the ambiguity, infidelity, absurdities and contradictions in the various schools of philosophy to an extent that the wisest people have to found our ignorance incurable, believing that it depends on the natural weakness and the limitations of our abilities"<sup>31</sup>.

The point of view selected by Berkeley is deliberately naive, epistemologically referred to the habits of ordinary knowledge. Position of the phi-

28 Russell, B. (1998), *Wisdom of the West* [*Mudrost' Zapada*], Moscow, pp. 333-334.

29 Berkeley, G. (2000), *Works* [*Sochineniya*], Moscow, p. 118.

30 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1997), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 2, The Middle Ages* [*Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 2, Srednevekov'e*], St. Petersburg, p. 345.

31 Berkeley, G. (2000), *Works* [*Sochineniya*], Moscow, p. 120.

philosopher and researcher becomes the position of questioner preferring charges of myopia in terms of unproven beliefs latitude: "the most extensive views are not always the most clear ones and that someone who is nearsighted, have to observe objects closer and be able to, maybe at a close study, discern what eluded the best eyes"<sup>32</sup>.

To prove and visualize his ideas Berkeley uses sophisticated metaphors: for example, difficulties that arose prior to the process of consciousness during the development of human thought, "we owe entirely to themselves; ... we first raised a cloud of dust, and then complain that it prevents us seeing"<sup>33</sup>. This image wanders through the pages of the "Treatise": Berkeley further complains that "many scientific dust risen"<sup>34</sup> by disputes about abstractions.

One of the major and dangerous misconceptions of philosophy as a developed system of human knowledge in the world for Berkeley becomes the "belief that the mind is capable of forming abstract ideas or notions of things"<sup>35</sup>. This idea relates not only to the concept of matter criticized by philosopher, but

atheism itself. The danger of this misconception is that it got into all areas of knowledge, so that both in metaphysics and logic there is hardly "a question, interpreted in a manner that wouldn't assume that abstract ideas exist in the mind and the mind is familiar with them"<sup>36</sup>. Meanwhile a bedding of abstracted qualities itself complicates thinking: "time, place and motion, taken particularly and specifically, is actually known by everyone, but through the hands of metaphysics, they become too abstract and subtle to be understood by people with normal abilities"<sup>37</sup>.

Berkeley agrees with Locke that "by thinking of the general ideas carefully we find out that they are fictions of the mind, which encompass the difficulty and appear not as easy as we tend to think"<sup>38</sup>. But it contradicts to the thought that the general idea of a triangle can be fabricated: "this triangle is neither skew-angular nor rectangle, neither equilateral nor isosceles or scalene, but it is both each one and no one"<sup>39</sup>. An appeal to ordinary consciousness becomes for Berkeley not only an appeal to tradition, but also an appeal to the very reason.

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32 Ibid. P. 121.

33 Ibid. P. 120.

34 Ibid. P. 130.

35 Ibid. P. 121.

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36 Ibid.

37 Ibid. P. 181.

38 Ibid. P. 127.

39 Ibid.

Berkeley explains his idea: "I absolutely deny the existence of non-general ideas, but only abstract general ideas"<sup>40</sup>. This general idea which really stimulates thinking, for Berkeley is established as follows: "things, names or concepts being *particular* by their own nature, are becoming *common*"<sup>41</sup>. The philosopher offers his point of view for infrequent idea constructing: it does not become a distraction from other, contributed to it in terms of perception, but merely an example for which some of the features are not so important, although it is impossible for Berkeley to completely eliminate them. The already mentioned triangle will then be not elusive and unthinkable triangle of Locke; in thinking there is a "particular triangle ... indifferent whether it would be of one kind or another, equally replace or represent all straight triangles of every kind and in this sense would be common"<sup>42</sup>.

Berkeley uses a critical cutter of experiential knowledge by considering the concept of number as well. Having observed that it was like lettering in algebra or words of a language – relative, extensible by value and therefore of sign-oriented, directional nature, he strongly

40 Ibid. P. 126.

41 Ibid. P. 128.

42 Ibid. Pp. 128-129.

objected the Locke's thought that a "figure of one is a simple or not complicated idea that accompanies all other ideas in our spirit": it is obvious for Berkeley that "one means a particular combination of ideas, established by spirit randomly"<sup>43</sup>. So, not only all the other numbers, but also figure of one is abstract, and therefore a meaningless, unthinkable idea.

Berkeley founds the language guilty of a common misconception of abstraction: "language is subject to the prevailing opinions not always being the most faithful ones"<sup>44</sup>. It is important means of communication where abstraction takes place, the development of universals, which is then metaphorically transferred to the process of thinking itself, "if there was no such a subject as language or common signs, there would never be thoughts of abstraction"<sup>45</sup>. The "common name" is guilty, as it has potency to denote the large number of indifferent particular ideas. Berkeley concludes that the names should be actually read not as direct compliances to entities, but as signs: "while reading and speaking the names are used for the most part as letters in algebra"<sup>46</sup>. Denoting the

43 Ibid. P. 142.

44 Ibid. P. 160.

45 Ibid. P. 131.

46 Ibid. P. 132.

sign-oriented nature of linguistic units, the philosopher justifies nominalism of his epistemology. Ironically concluding his thought, Berkeley makes a sly remark in the spirit of the English satirical novel (philosopher was well acquainted with Swift), "as the words are capable of misleading mind in such extend, I decided to use them minimally for my researches"<sup>47</sup>.

Nevertheless, Berkeley sees his merit as a linguist in demarcation of these "common words" and the ideas they stand for. The main reason for Berkeley "that those who so strongly advised to eliminate any use of words while thinking and consider only their ideas, failed to fulfill it themselves"<sup>48</sup> are undifferentiated fields of the signified and non signified. The absurdity of these two areas' connection is expressed by the philosopher by oxymoronic phrase "a certain abstract idea" (meaning "of each of the common name")<sup>49</sup>.

### **Esse est percipi: central tenet of Berkeley's teachings**

Berkeley represents two cognitive areas correlated with the object and

47 Ibid. P. 134.

48 Ibid. P. 135.

49 Ibid.

subject of knowledge. The latter may be equally called "*mind, spirit, soul, or oneself*"<sup>50</sup> and encompasses the first one: "with these words I refer not to one of my ideas, but to the thing that is completely different from them, in which they exist, or that is the same, which they perceived, as the existence of the idea lies in its being perceived"<sup>51</sup>.

Berkeley develops this postulate of his epistemological theory expressed more concisely as *esse est percipi*, in the following sections of the "Treatise": "various sensations or ideas ... cannot exist otherwise than in a spirit that perceives them"<sup>52</sup>. He illustrates this point, as before, by an empirical example: "When I say that the table on which I write, does exist, it means that I can see and feel it"<sup>53</sup>.

Denoting one of the idols of the theater according to Bacon, Berkeley refers to an absurd, in his view, habit of thinking caused by centuries-old strata of metaphysics experience: "in a strange way an opinion prevails among people that houses, mountains, rivers, in a word all sensible objects have an existence, natural or real, distinct from this be-

50 Ibid. P. 137.

51 Ibid. P. 137-138.

52 Ibid. P. 138.

53 Ibid.

ing perceived by the mind"<sup>54</sup>. Berkeley says about the peculiar epistemological excesses of abstraction: "can there be a thinner thread of abstraction than distinguishing the existence of sensible objects from their being perceived so that to present them as existing unperceived ones?"<sup>55</sup>.

Berkeley leads argument irrefutable in its simplicity, against which even the Johnson's stone is powerless: "What do we perceive if not our own ideas or sensations?"<sup>56</sup>. Hence the famous conclusion: "In fact, the object and the feeling are the same and therefore cannot be abstracted one from another"<sup>57</sup>. Berkeley ridicules the very suggestion that his theory denies the reality, it is simply a permutation of accents: "The fact that everything that I see, hear and touch, exists, i.e., is perceived by me, I have as little doubt in it as in my own existence"<sup>58</sup>.

It is interesting to note that for Berkeley this conclusion doesn't lead to agnosticism. Anglican priest binds the world together in order to not let it fall into the particles of perceptions, unit-

ed by forever perceiving spirit – God. Heavenly choir and furniture of earth are anyway objects of perception for him, because "all things that make up the universe have no existence without the mind"<sup>59</sup>.

### **Matter and spirit in Berkeley's system**

One of the main objects of Berkeley's criticisms becomes the concept of matter or corporeal substance, (also a kind of Theatre idol) as an "inert, insensitive substance in which there is extension, shape and movement"<sup>60</sup> – "this outdated and repeatedly derided notion of *materia prima*, which can be met in works of Aristotle and his followers"<sup>61</sup>. This concept is not only useless, but also dangerous, for it leads to a denial of the spirit role: "atheist ... needs this spectre of empty name to support his impiety"<sup>62</sup>.

Continuing to argue with Locke, Berkeley criticizes the idea of primary and secondary qualities. What are the criteria for distinguishing real qualities from the apparent ones? Already from the very fact of their perception it is clear

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54 Ibid.

55 Ibid. P. 139.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid. P. 154.

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59 Ibid. P. 139.

60 Ibid. P. 141.

61 Ibid. P. 142.

62 Ibid. P. 152.

that "the extension and motion are just ideas existing in spirit"<sup>63</sup>.

Having found that neither vision data nor touch data can be considered objective, Berkeley concluded that "matter whose existence is asserted by philosophers is something unknowable, without any of those particular qualities, by which the bodies are differentiated among each other perceived by our bodily sensations"<sup>64</sup>. Having deprived the matter of primary qualities as inherent, the philosopher asks about very advisability of concepts for this imperceptible, but the actual substance: "... the notion of matter seems too strange to merit refutation"<sup>65</sup>.

Here the question arises about the bodies and knowledge of them (essential part of Hobbesian philosophy): "If we admit the possibility of real, shaped and movable substances' existing beyond the spirit, with their being relevant to our ideas about bodies, how would it be possible for us to know about them?"<sup>66</sup> Berkeley notes that this idea is comfortable for the human being: "it is easier to imagine and explain the method of ideas' occurrence under the assumption that

63 Ibid. P. 141.

64 Ibid. P. 157.

65 Ibid. P. 170.

66 Ibid. P. 144.

there exist external bodies, similar to them rather than opposite; and so in the end it may seem to be at least possible that there are things such as the body, stimulating ideas about them in the spirit"<sup>67</sup>. But this is unlikely, as even supporters of the idea of matter's being independent from spirit cannot explain "how the body may influence upon spirit, or how it is possible that the idea is imprinted in the spirit"<sup>68</sup>, according to Berkeley "neither single perceived body nor anything like that can exist beyond the spirit"<sup>69</sup>.

Berkeley's answer to the question of knowledge becomes the concept of the spirit: "Spirit is a simple, undivided, active being, in terms of perceiving ideas, it is referred to the mind, in terms of producing them, or otherwise influencing on them it is called the will"<sup>70</sup>. Our spirit in function of will is able to produce ideas (in imagination, memory, dreams). But the ideas produced by sensations, "are more definite, livelier and more clear than the ideas of imagination, the former have the constancy as well, order and connection and occur not accidentally ... and in the correct sequence or series"<sup>71</sup>.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid. P. 145.

69 Ibid. P. 158.

70 Ibid. P. 149.

71 Ibid. P. 150.

This order of ideas is the immutable laws of nature and the laws of physics, giving a human being constancy, "gives us a sort of foresight, which enables us to control our actions for the good life"<sup>72</sup>.

So, there is another will producing them: "surprising connection... which characterizes the phenomenon... gives enough evidence on the wisdom and goodness of their creator"<sup>73</sup>. The ideas and phenomenon "show the action of the mind, more powerful and wise than the human mind"<sup>74</sup>. In the glory of God, the creator of the great laws, not giving us to lose the sense of reality, Berkeley after Newton remains true to the idea of the creator, the Almighty, the organizer of the world order on the basis of which the same XVIII century deism flourishes. Unlike Locke and Hume, Berkeley has to empower his global spirit with another quality: omniperception (semantic parallel to traditional omniscience, and by Berkeley to omnipotence as well). Indeed, if the knowledge and existence of objects outside the knowing subject is created by perception, the continuity, stability and orderliness of the world can be explained only by a constant and uniform perception, "there may be some

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72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid. P. 153.

other spirit that perceives them at a time when we do not do this"<sup>75</sup>.

Berkeley is not only a great philosopher of his time, challenging the method of Newton, the founder of modern scientific system as a way of cognizing the essence of bodies; he anticipates the ideas of Mach critical performances. Probably, in this connection it is appropriate to quote the famous saying of Lenin (in the work "Materialism and Empiriocriticism"), which is used, interestingly, not only by Soviet historians of literature, but by the Italian authors as well: "latest" Machists did not bring against the materialists literally any single method, which would not be used by bishop Berkeley"<sup>76</sup>.

## Conclusion

Peculiarities of the development and concept specific for the epistemology of George Berkeley, which had a serious influence on the development of European philosophical thought, not least determined by the heritage of English philosophical tradition coming from the Middle Ages

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75 Ibid. P. 158.

76 Reale, G., Antiseri, D. (1996), *Western philosophy from its origins to the present day, Vol. 3, New time [Zapadnaya filosofiya ot istokov do nashikh dnei, Tom 3, Novoe vremya]*, St. Petersburg, p. 369.

to the heyday of nominalistic empiricism, are characterized by a general tendency towards experimental knowledge.

Within the medieval scholastic tradition the concept of empiricism has its own peculiarities and is irreducible to the classical forms, manifested in England nowadays. But the epistemological orientation of the British (then it used to be latin) philosophy, previous strengthening of the role specific for early experimental ways of cognition allow to distinguish empiricism as one of the defining features of the English philosophy development. The way from Eriugena's scholastic realism to nominalism of Ockham predicts epistemology orientation of British modern philosophy as well

Trends in the development of medieval English thought in new times get a logical continuation in the works

of Newton and Bacon – the founders of modern structure and ethics of scientific knowledge. Emphasis on rational evidences, rejection of mediation of knowledge and practical application of the philosophy statements (already gravitating to the modern scientific fields) are the main ideas of the industrial era philosophy. Achievements of Bacon and Newton were the logical basis for further development of British empiricism, getting its classical form in the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.

The history of English thought in XVII century shows the development of the empiricism principle determining the direction of British philosophy. This remark applies to doctrine of George Berkeley that denoted a new line of thought in the history of philosophy, with this line being still vital.

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## Учение о познании в английской традиции

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#### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается эволюция эмпирического познания в британской философии начиная с эпохи средневековья и вплоть до учения Дж. Беркли. Особенности построения и содержания гносеологии Джорджа Беркли, оказавшей немалое влияние на развитие европейской философской мысли, не в последнюю очередь определяется наследием английской философской традиции, которая от средневековья до расцвета номиналистического эмпиризма характеризуется общим тяготением к экспериментальному познанию.

**Ключевые слова**

Гносеология, Беркли, Бэкон, Локк, Юм, эмпиризм, британская философия, экспериментальное познание.

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