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Comments on the Tom Rockmore’s article “Some consequences of Kant’s Copernican turn”

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The “remarks” assess the consistency of T. Rockmore’s assertion that Kant’s philosophy creates the possibility of further development of anti-representationalist and constructivist ideas. They criticize the reduction of the turn to the statement that phenomena are only representations, not things-in-themselves. Rockmore’s interpretation of the turn is opposed to a more traditional position whereby I. Kant changed a ratio of theoretical and practical in the hierarchy of knowledge, which caused a “revolutionary” and “turnable” revision of the whole idea of mind, its structure and content.

Keywords: turn, representationalism, anti-representationalism, constructivism, pure reason, practical reason

One may certainly agree with Tom Rockmore that the Kantian philosophy provides the potential for further development of anti-representationalist and constructivist ideas, and that the quotation used as an epigraph confirms this idea. However, when answering the question of what the Copernican revolution of Immanuel Kant really was (when determining its essence), different points of view are possible. Rockmore focuses on Kant’s statement that phenomena are just re-presentations, whereas they are mistaken for things as such. But is this really the thing that is “at the center of the composition” of the turn and serves as the basis for the four truly significant consequences (effects) which are mentioned in the article? Perhaps the text of Kant’s discourse should be examined to the very end of the paragraph in order to find some ideas therein which are not less important, especially from the point of view of the future known to us.

Meanwhile, after indicating the cause of the transcendental illusion, Kant goes on to state that “that appearance, as long as it is used in experience, brings forth truth, but as soon as it passes beyond the boundaries of experience and becomes transcendent, brings forth nothing but sheer illusion” [Kant, 2004, p. 44]

In my opinion, this statement is of a more fundamental nature to the entire transcendental idealism developed by Kant. And it clearly demonstrates the philosopher’s desire to preserve the most important advantages of representationalism. With that in mind, the system of relations between the theoretical and the empirical knowledge is radically reformed. The fact that Kant placed the “practical” reason over the “pure” one was, voluntarily or involuntarily, interpreted as “revolutionary” and “groundbreaking” rethinking of the whole idea of reason, i.e., Reason as such (*Ratio quod Ratio*). Isn’t this the essence of the Copernican revolution of Kant? Isn’t this the central message supporting the development of constructivism?

Rockmore’s article mentions Kant’s rethinking of the role of the theory. “Though there has never been progress toward knowing the real, this Parmenidean criterion remains as popular now as in ancient times as the gold standard even if in practice it has always turned out to be fool’s gold. The reason for this continued popularity is the priority accorded to theory. Philosophers who talk about practice are apparently unable to learn from it. Here as in many other ways, the author of the critical philosophy is a counter example. Kant, an a priori thinker, is paradoxically concerned to draw the lesson of experience”. [Rockmore, 2019, p. 52–53]. However, at the same time, the author believes that the central aspect of Kant’s intellectual initiative is renunciation of representationalism, while all his discourse about a thing-in-itself and its cognizability is more of an explanatory nature and is due to the inability of his critics and counterparts to accept the system put forward by him. All his efforts are aimed at preserving transcendentalism, in spite of a clear awareness of the perniciousness of the transcendental illusion. Kant seems to foresee himself being assessed in the “Procrustean bed” of the conceptual opposition of representationalism and anti-representationalism, and tries to avoid it as best he can. Kant’s active subject certainly creates the world, but does so in action, rather than by thought alone. In my opinion, this is a significant addition to Rockmore’s discourse.

References

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Комментарии к статье Тома Рокмора «Некоторые следствия коперниканского поворота Канта»

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В «Комментариях» оценивается состоятельность утверждения Т. Рокмора о том, что кантовская философия создает возможность дальнейшего развития антирепрезентационистских и конструктивистских идей. Подвергается критике редукция поворота к утверждению о том, что явления – это всего лишь репрезентации, а не вещи сами по себе. Рокморовскому истолкованию поворота противопоставляется более традиционная позиция, согласно которой И. Кант изменил соотношение теоретического и практического в иерархии знания, что спровоцировало «революционный» и «поворотный» пересмотр всей идеи разума, его структуры и содержания.

Ключевые слова: поворот, репрезентационизм, антирепрезентационизм, конструктивизм, чистый разум, практический разум