

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE ROLE
OF PHENOMENOLOGY IN THE ORGANIZATION
OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCHES*

Contemporary interdisciplinary researches are now based upon modern information technologies. The core of the studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences is the program of artificial intelligence. The research program of artificial intelligence represents an attempt to unite a conglomerate of different disciplines connected by a common task – to create a theoretical model of “natural” intelligence and to develop, if possible, the way (or “technology”) to manufacture it in order to apply it in different areas of human activity where “natural” intelligence is now used. However, such a program, in a strict sense of the term, still hardly exists – rather it is a “vague” ideology of complex research, which would be able to solve the set of various tasks by means of modern engineering and various “cognitive sciences”. Nevertheless, the Learned Council on the problem of artificial intelligence, which is focused on elaborating the program of interdisciplinary research of human reason with a special reference to artificial intelligence, was established at the beginning of 2006 under the guidance of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Let me remark, by the way, that not only leading Russian scientists but also the students of the corresponding institutes have been involved in the research work. The Council organized the conference entitled “Artificial Intelligence As the Subject of Interdisciplinary Research” (January, 2005) to which not only philosophers but also computer scientists, mathematicians, logicians etc. greatly contributed. The conference gave rise to a permanent seminar. It works with enormous success under the guidance of the vice-president of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Nevertheless, very few people pose the question whether such a subject exists at all – even in the sense in which mathematicians speak about the “existence” of the solution of this or that problem (even though it still has not been found). In general, the progress of scientific knowledge, not only in mathematics but also in “empirical” sciences, often originates from the effort to solve such a problem, which has no scientific solutions or does not

make sense at all (attempts to create the so-called eternal engine both of “the first order” and then of “the second” may serve as the best example). So being able to answer the question whether it is possible at all to create “artificial intelligence” (as a “double” of human reason or as its analogue), on the basis of another substance or with the use of other principles, should not be regarded as the necessary precondition of scientific research. Let me give just two instructive examples: the community of the most outstanding scientists incorporated in the French Academy of Sciences, at the time of Napoleon, refused to examine Fulton’s project of a steamship as “impossible in principle”. And for the same reason, French academicians have adopted a special decision according to which any messages about meteorites should not be considered by the Academy because of the conviction that “celestial stones do not exist”. And even M. Planck, an outstanding physicist and the founder of quantum mechanics, hesitates to recognize the real existence (in the ontological sense) of quanta for a long time!

What attitude it has to phenomenology? On the one hand, everyone knows that scientists can make a mistake. But on the other hand, such a mistake in science, rather than fear of being mistaken in putting forward a striking hypothesis, promotes scientific discovery, and paves the way to the truth. However, phenomenology as the philosophical program makes similar facts important and arrives at the conclusion (F. Brentano) which is formulated as intentionality of consciousness. If intentionality of consciousness is treated as a constructive, universal principle, as a way of constituting any *Gegenstand*, the way which is inherent to the consciousness itself (rather than the way of coping with something which exists before any cognitive activity), – then the question about the modes of existence of an intentional object, irrespective of whether it is real or ideal, whether it is a thing or event, imaginative or even impossible in general, does not concern a theme of the basic characteristics of pure thinking as such. It is the latter which phenomenology states as one of its basic principles.

As the discussion at the conferences and seminars dealing with this theme reveals, at first their participants could hardly find commonly shared language available for interdisciplinary research of artificial intelligence, just because it is extremely specific to each science involved in interdisciplinary research. The language relevant to interdisciplinary research originates and improves in the process of constitution of the interdisciplinary subject; it is at first a vague subject of discourse, and then becomes the subject of research. To this particular case, the phrase, “the language is a home in which [human] being dwells”, attributed to M. Heidegger, is certainly applicable. But it seems obvious to the phenomenologist that it is not the matter of shared language, rather it is the question of shared meaningful structure, as the framework