What is the vision of Robert Nozick about the philosophical task? Which is, in his opinion, its object of knowledge? Which is the philosophical method that this thinker proposes?


If we want to answer these questions we should study in detail his vast work, task that exceeds the limits of this work. Here we will only try to start the path towards a possible answer. For this purpose, we will mainly take into account the introductions and some fragments of two of his -qualified by the author himself- most important works - along with “Anarchy..”-, such as: Philosophical Explanations and Invariances.

Promptly, we find that Nozick does not offer us a simple answer to these questions. On the contrary, we observe that the main notions proposed by the author in the introductions of both works and some of the concepts poured in them seem to delineate, with twenty years of difference, two different models of the philosopher and of the philosophical method. We will outline these positions in order to offer, then, two explanatory hypothesis of this apparent change in Nozick’s conception of philosophy.

I.- The philosophy and the philosophers in Philosophical Explanations

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1 These reflections arose thanks to the debates of the Liberty Fund Colloquium “Liberty in Nozick´s Odd-Coercive Philosophy”, directed by the Dean of the University Francisco Marroquin, Ing. Giancarlo Ibárgüen S., that took place in Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, between the 11th and March 14th, 2004. I thank Professor Ibárgüen for the invitation and to all the participants for the enriching experience, and in relation to the point that I work in this paper, especially, to Professors Nicholas Capaldi and Horacio Spector by their enlightening comments. Of course, the responsibility for any mistake is only mine.


3 In an interview to Nozick after publishing “Invariances”, carried out by Julián Sanchez for Laissez Faire Books, (also a participant of the colloquium referred before), where asked which were his most important works, Nozick declares his predilection to “Anarchy, State and Utopia”, “Philosophical Explanations” and “Invariances”. The complete interview can be found in: http://www.juliansanchez.com/nozick.html


Nozick begins this work presenting a series of “familiar” philosophical questions such as: Does Life have meaning?, Are there objective ethical truths?, Do we have free will?, What is the nature of our identity as selves? Must our knowledge and understanding stay within fixed limits? All these questions, as the author indicates, stem from a first fundamental question: How are we valuable and precious?

Since the first page Nozick is delimiting, then, what will be the field of his philosophical reflections in this work. His concern about free will, among others subjects, also indicates which are the philosophical questions by excellence for Nozick: Value and Meaning.

Once done this presentation, Nozick faces the task to explain which is going to be the philosophical method that he proposes for this work and he begins by declaring his opposition to the “traditional philosophical method”.

He thus identifies the traditional task of the philosopher as the systematic construction of a theory. Nozick explains that philosophers have tried to support their “total” visions in a few basic principles, showing how theirs constructions follows from some intuitive axioms. In replacement of these systematic buildings, he proposes for his theory the figure of the Parthenon. This building, supported by different looks or separated “columns” united or unified by a ceiling of general principles, permits that, if some of the columns “are removed” or “collapse”, something of interest and beauty will remain standing.

On the other hand, he not only criticizes the coercive terms used in the traditional philosophical arguments but also attacks the position of the philosopher that tries “to force” others to believe in what he believes. Therefore, he suggests a non-coercive philosophical method that consists on an exploration shared by the author and the reader and that does not avoid to return over and over again on a subject or to leave it unfinished.

This method that, to ours understand, is of a “problematic” character (versus the critised systematic view) of course will not have the power to persuade everyone, but to offer illuminating points of view on the road towards the search of the truth about value and meaning.

In this intelligence, and given that Nozick refers to other schools of contemporary philosophical thought, it would be able to say that he approaches and moves away from them simultaneously. For example, he approaches to the position of the “French Critique” -that propose the fall of the author from his “pedestal” of giver of “proof” of the truth-, outlining a philosophical method that consists on a dialogue or a questionnaire of the reader to the author more than a “exposition” of the latter. But, at the same time, he moves away explicitly from the extreme position of the “death of the author” when he explains that in spite of the fact that the author and the reader are “even”, the ideas of the author are the only ones that will be discussed in this dialog, maintaining thus still a position of pre-eminence.

Moreover he would seem to approach, in some points, to the Pragmatic school when he says: “I do not impose an extreme obligation of attention to my readers; I expect, on the contrary, for those that read as I do it, seeking that of what they can learn, to make use and

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6 Nozick, “Philosophical Explanations”, p. 1
7 Nozick, “Philosophical Explanations”, p. 3
8 Ibid., p. 7 y 8
transform for its own end” 9 This proposal approaches Nozick to the position, perhaps more extreme, of Richard Rorty when he explains that, for the pragmatist, we “use” texts as any another object.10

It is not our intention to ascribe Nozick in these schools but simply to highlight two aspects of his philosophical attitude: on the one hand, the important place that he gives to the reader of the philosophical theory. The reader does not only have an active participation in the result of the philosophical production but also he is considered into account by the philosopher at the moment he proposes his explanation of a phenomenon. On the other hand, his intention is to join in a dialogue with other schools of thought, establishing his coincidences and divergences. We will see further that this attitude is related to his “philosophical pluralism”, that understands that the final product of philosophy is conformed by diverse theories and positions and that valuable elements can be extracted from many of them for the comprehension of a phenomenon.

At the same time, these comments are meaningful if we consider how Nozick is trying to show the differences between his vision of the philosophy as explanation and the traditional look that considers that philosophy should provide arguments and proofs.

**Explanation and Comprehension**

Nozick thinks that the purpose of philosophy is to provide explanations about how a phenomenon is or can be possible. The form of the question would be then: How is possible a thing, given (or supposing) certain other things? That is to say, wanting to explain a statement $p$, a series of statements $r_1, \ldots, r_n$ appear as assumptions that seem to contradict the truth of $p$. Facing the apparition of these “apparent excluders” or exclusive contradictory statements, the formulation of the question would be: How is possible $p$, given his “apparent excluders”?

In this situation, we have two options to continue maintaining the possibility of $p$: we deny some of its “apparent excluders” or the conjunction of them with $p$, or we explain how the apparent incompatibility between the apparent excluders and $p$ can be removed in terms of a more extensive theory or context. In this way, we move away from the idea that philosophy should only prove the truth of $p$, but to permit us to understand how $p$ can be true (in spite of its apparent contradictors).

What type of hypothesis we would be able to include in the philosophical explanation? Firstly, Nozick offers a distinction between the explanation and the understanding or comprehension of a phenomenon. The explanation locates the phenomenon or object inside the present time and shows its connections with other present things. The comprehension, on the other hand, locates the object in a network of possibilities, showing the connections that would have with other non-present things or processes.

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9 Ibid, p. 8
10 Rorty, Richard, “The Progress of the Pragmatist” in Eco, Umberto “Interpretación y Sobreinterpretación” (“Interpretation and Overinterpretacion”), (Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 109. Rorty says: “In our opinion, everything that one does with any thing is to use it. Interpreting something, to know it, to penetrate in its essence, etc., are only diverse ways of describing some process of putting it in operation”. (our translation from Spanish)
In consequence, a false hypothesis cannot increase our ability to explain a phenomenon but can increase our ability to understand it.

Now, if besides understanding the phenomenon, we want to explain it and if we have already known that the hypothesis is not known as false, should we guarantee that it is plausible? Nozick proposes that is not necessary to establish beforehand the plausibility of the hypothesis. On the contrary, he accepts the introduction of hypothesis that, although they seem not acceptable at first, they can be illuminating in relation to the explanation of the possibility of $p$. He also adds that this attitude opens the door to new and unexpected looks or truths.

These concepts permit us now to delineate two points: the differences among philosophy as explanation and philosophy as proof and the bordering line between science and philosophy.

**Explanation and Proof**

The first question is related to the difference between explanation and proof already anticipated. In the first place, Nozick thinks that the purpose to explain, more than that to prove, is not only morally superior, but also more adequate to the philosophical motivations. But, fundamentally, he is impelled to show that, in spite of the fact that these two methodologies can be seen as similar in relation to their abstract deductive structures, their praxis—that of the explanation and that of the proof—are very different.

In both cases we go from the known (or believed) thing to the unknown one (or to what do not yet believe). But, in the case of the explanation, one begins with something ($p$) that one knows or believes that is true and from it one proposes—attempting and revisable—explanatory hypothesis, in which one still does not believe, to explain (or deduce) $p$. If one is successful with the explanation, this will involve a greater acceptance of the hypothesis that was introduced to explain $p$. We must remember that is not to explain the truth of $p$, but how $p$ can be true given a group of apparent excluders.

On the other hand, the methodology of the proof begins without the knowledge or believe in $p$. On the other hand, it starts from $q$, a true premise in which we have already had certainty (or belief), and we will deduce from it the truth of $p$. In this manner—as the author explains in a footnote—, the search of the proof of $p$, would be seeking necessary conditions for $p$, while the methodology of the explanation would be pleased with finding sufficient conditions.

It is worth here to bring again a point already treated, which is the “dialogue” between the philosopher and his readers or audience. If the philosopher intends his audience to “follows” him through his explanation he should—instead of trying “to force” them through arguments to believe in the truth of his theory—try to start from the point in which the author and the reader already believe, in order then to explore the possible explanations that the philosopher proposes.

**Philosophy and Science**

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11 Ibid, p. 13
The second question is referred to the difference between Philosophy and Science. Nozick clarifies that Philosophy offers potential explanations so as to try to understand how $p$ is possible, distinguishing from science that offers arguments and proofs to explain the reasons why $p$ is true. We can see so that what the author identifies as the “traditional look” of philosophy seems very similar to his conception of science. Thus he adds, on the end of the introduction of this work, that many philosophers have dreamt of carrying philosophy by the sure path of science, but that he does not share this dream. Therefore, here he would be drawing a first demarcatory line.

But, for the author, between the philosophical explanation and the scientific one there is some kind of continuity: while the philosophy offers hypothesis on facts or processes that satisfy certain structural conditions but that are not testable or falsable, -given that they are expressed in existential statements, the science should embark upon the empirical work to specify the details of these processes.

**Philosophical pluralism**

Having presented the position of Nozick with respect to the philosophical method, it is appropriate now to introduce some comments in relation to his philosophical pluralism. The author comments, on the end of the introduction to Philosophical Explanations, that one can find in philosophy not only different positions in relation to the purpose of it (explanation or proof) but also that inside each school a great variety of theories are discussed.

In this manner he observes that philosophy is composed by different sets of questions, each one with its own associated set of theories and possible answers. Many of these philosophical conceptions are mutually incompatible and it is impossible the establishment of “neutral” point from which one can evaluate them or reject them.

But, for not to fall into a deep relativism, by which all the theories would have equal value, Nozick proposes a pluralist vision through which we would observe the product of the philosophy as all this set of theories, questions and answers. From this “global” vision we would be able then to order or “rank” the theories based on its adaptation and merit, locating some over the other, but always trying to extract its particular contribution from each one.

Nozick understands that to conceive the philosophical task from a pluralistic perspective implies that each person will elaborate their own explanations of how a determined phenomenon are possible, but keeping in mind all the universe of different conceptions that are given simultaneously and can have their own virtues.

**The philosophy as part of humanities**

Here we will approach to some notions that the author offers in the chapter titled “Philosophy as Part of the Humanities” of “Philosophical Explanations”.

In the first place, Nozick distinguishes which are the purposes of science, on one hand, and of the arts and the literature, on the other hand. The former one proposes to offer
explanations and truths. Through the formulation of laws, the scientist intends to be recognized and followed by future generations. His truths or explanations will be able to transcend reformulations and reinterpretations in the future years. On the contrary, arts and letters transcend through the “direct experience”, this means that the “truths” that they offer cannot be reformulated or extracted without losing value, but they only can be lived directly.

Where do we locate then philosophy, like part of the sciences or of the arts? It is here that Nozick offers a very interesting reflection\(^\text{13}\): philosophy shares both searches. It can be seen -in philosophical writings- at the same time a search of explanations and truth and texts that can only be “experienced” in a “direct” way, -as if they were like literature-. He offers a series of examples such as the texts of the political philosophy, the social philosophy, the moral theory, the religious thought, etc. In conclusion, these writings share with the science the purpose to produce explanations and truths and with the arts the intention to be directly experienced.

In second place, he refers to humanities and indicates that they are “marked” by the nature of their incumbencies: value and meaning. For Nozick humanities respond specifically to the questions of value qua value and meaning qua meaning.

To delineate these ideas Nozick uses the distinction elaborated by H. L. A. Hart in relation to the external point of view and with the internal point of view\(^\text{14}\). The theories that incorporate the external point of view study a phenomenon (for example, the law, the values, or any another) from the look of an alien observer that only analyse regularity on the phenomenon and describes it. On the other hand, those disciplines or theories that incorporate the internal point of view study the phenomenon from the look of a person that has internalised the norm or, in this case, the value. In other words, although several disciplines study the question of the value –for example, the anthropology can study the values in different cultures- many do it without assuming the position of the person that values, while: “A work of the humanities responds to value as value, to meaning as meaning, and it is concerned with these in relation to humanity, as they guide or inspire human affairs; so, the humanities also are concerned with originate value and meaning, the value and meaning we bring into the world and exhibit through our free choices”\(^\text{15}\).

Moreover, Nozick offers a series of examples -like that of the poet, the painter or the critic- that respond to value qua value and to meaning qua meaning. They, through the object of art they produce or the activity they develop, are keeping in mind the possible “answer” or sensibility of the audience that would respond to these values and meanings.

And it is here where we can find the proximity of the philosophical activity with the one developed by the humanities, given that the philosophy can also work keeping in mind this degree of sensibility on the part of the “audience” that will be able to respond in different degrees to value qua value and to meaning qua meaning that is exposed in the philosophical work.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 620
\(^{15}\) p.621
In this manner, we see how the philosophical activity is related to that of arts and humanities: the philosophy is in charge of value and meaning from an internal perspective, keeping in mind for the exposition of its work the degree of answer to those proposals of value and meaning could have in the audience through a “direct experience”.

**The philosophy as an Art Form**

Here Nozick invites us again to understand Philosophy now related with the arts and humanities, like a not coercive activity, based on the explanation and the comprehension and not in the proof and the conviction. Here he also returns Nozick to separate the waters between Science and Philosophy remarking that sciences, at least the present conception of it, do not give place to the consideration of value and meaning, considering its North the objectivity and impartiality, moving away thus of the conception of the Philosophy as part of the Humanities. In this way, he is also outlining a clear distinction between Philosophy and the social sciences, especially the empirical ones.

Inside the chapter that we are commenting Nozick strongly criticises many of the present philosophical conceptions grouped in which he calls “The Age of the Reductionism”.

Represented by logical positivism as one of its most important expressions but with great influence in the present economic, political, and social thought, this group of theories try to explain the human actions not on the basis of their creative values but as the result of external forces that control or determine them. In this sense, a non-reductionist human philosophy would imply a presentation of the human characteristics (as to be oneself, to seek value and to freely choose) in its own integrity, not only as the consequence of exogenous influences. Again, he reinforces its vision of Philosophy as that discipline that studies value qua value and meaning qua meaning. These seem to be the axial notions of the philosophical reflection and its method, one that guides us through interesting hypothesis that can offer illuminating perspectives regarding these subjects.

But, beyond these discussions and to complete the vision of Philosophy that Nozick offers to us in this work, we will refer to the last part of this chapter in which the author proposes to understand Philosophy as an Art Form.

Proposing an analogy with different forms of Art (music, painting, literature, etc.) Nozick understands that the key to understand Philosophy as an Art Form consist in the degree of conscious choice by the creator regarding the nature and details of the work created. As well as the painter plays with the colours, the forms, the objects represented, the philosopher plays with the ideas, the questions, the tensions and the concepts moulding them, revising them and developing them, establishing the relations and juxtapositions among them. The philosopher then carves his point of view taking the ideas as means.¹⁶

Nozick outlines a series of literary creations that are proposed as artistic-intellectual synthesis. Among them, he wonders if Philosophy could be understood as a “Glass Beads Game” in terms of Hermann Hesse. A synthesis of Music, Theology, Science, Philosophy and a social institution that serves it. It fits here to bring the figure of the Glass Beads Game in the words of its creator, Hermann Hesse¹⁷:

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¹⁶ Ibid., p. 645

“The norms, the alphabet and the grammar of the game represent a species of a very
developed secret language, in which several sciences and arts participate, Math and Music
above all (the musical science, respectively) and that express the contents and results of
almost all the sciences and can place them in mutual correlation. The Glass Beads Game
is, therefore, a play with all the contents and values of our culture; it plays with them as
perhaps, in the flourishing epochs of the arts, the painter could have played with the
colours of his palette. What the humanity produced in high concepts and works of art in its
creative periods, what the following periods of wise contemplation added in ideas and that
became intellectual patrimony, all this enormous material of spiritual values is used for the
player of glass beads as an organ is executed for the organist; this organ is of a barely
imaginable perfection, their keys and pedals touch all the spiritual cosmos, its registers are
almost infinite; theoretically, with this instrument it would be able to reproduce in the
game all the spiritual content of the world.” In the same work the author affirms that the
players of glass beads “aspired to enclose the spiritual universe in concentric circles”.

The resemblance with the philosophical activity described by Nozick is surprising and
carries him to wonder, then, how is a Philosophy related with the Art and the Humanities
but without losing the course of the search of the truth in light of value and meaning.

Nozick concludes so that “The philosopher aimed at truth states a theory that presents a
possible truth and so a way of understanding the actual world (including its value) in its
matrix of possible neighbours”. In this way, he should be truthful with the world but, al
same time, he will intend to transcend it, carving ideas, value and meaning in a new
constellation that permit us to understand and to experience the value and the meaning and
to reach it again.

II.- The philosophy and the philosophers in Invariances

Nozick begins the Introduction of Invariances, in the same way he did in the work we have
already commented, with a group of familiar philosophical questions: “How much of our
view of the world is objective, how much is subjective? How much of what (we think) is
true holds absolutely, how much is relative to our situation? Are the truths only local or do
some hold everywhere and always? Does ethics have an objective basis? Why are we
conscious? What is the function of felt experiences in an objective world?”

In spite of the fact that he presents these philosophical questions in the same way that he
does in “Philosophical Explanations”, we can promptly appreciate that the object of his
reflections in this book is other. Only a question is almost literally repeated and it is the
one that refers to the objective basis of ethics. The others seem to be quite far away from
the questions of value qua value and meaning qua meaning that he proposed as the axial
philosophical questions in his previous work. Here Nozick begins with the worry about
objectivity, a problem that he almost does not touch in the introduction of “Philosophical…”
and that he only referred to in relation to science.

Philosophical method: the paths of exploration

He begins then this book criticizing again the traditional look of philosophy. In this case
he indicates that philosophers have tried to find their permanent truths in a likewise
invariable theoretical framework, supposing that these truths were absolute, objective and universal.

Unlike Sciences - for example Math that understands that in every transformation a fixed point always remains still but that it is not the same one in all the transformations - philosophy has tried to maintain its theories on the basis of principles that maintain unalterable through all kinds of transformations. These fixed or unalterable principles must be sufficiently fertile so as to bear the weight of all our knowledge and values.

In this sense, Nozick presents his opposition to this pretension of traditional philosophy. For him there do not exist fixed points neither fixed metapoints (metatheories). And facing the pretension to establish Reason as that permanent principle, he thinks that reason would only remain unalterable but not in the sense of a particular subject matter but as a descending deductive chain.

Therefore, since a philosophical perspective, everything is open to transformation, nothing is maintained fixed. The fact that a private theory has set a fixed point set does not mean that the same point is or must be established as fixed for every possible theory. It does neither show that the theory under consideration is incapable to be self-transformed using its own standards, in a way that that point and those standards would be modified.

In coincidence with the position “Philosophical..” -that we have already reviewed- Nozick’s disposition is that of being open to different possibilities for its consideration. To be open and to explore new visions, without looking for the “proofs” that these visions can provide, is a particularly adequate attitude to expand philosophical knowledge.

So we see that in the first pages of “Invariances” he exposes again what will be the philosophical method that he will propose. In the first place, he returns to criticize the conception of the philosophical method as that that, through arguments based on principles or axioms considered true, presents “proofs” about the truth of its object of study.

The alternative method that he proposes for this work consists on a series of philosophical forays. The forays would start from a present position (P) in order, then, to consider what is acceptable, illuminating, intellectually interesting and supported by the reason. These reasons should have weighty but they should not be necessarily conclusive. Afterwards, other questions that are supposed as true and interesting will be considered, acceptable and enlightening reasons will be proposed again and so on.

In this manner, Nozick suggests a conception of the philosophical task that – he openly admits- does not show just one path of exploration. Many possible incursions can fulfil the requirements of plausibility, enlightenment, etc., and these can not only not be identical but not even compatible between themselves.19

We observe here that Nozick has changed the figure of the “Parthenon” for that of the “paths of exploration” but he is coherent in his search of explanations based on hypothesis. And he introduces again the idea about the possible utilization of hypothesis that, in principle, seem not to be acceptable but that, after continuing a chain of reasoning, can

19 Ibid., p. 4
contribute with something illuminating and interesting. In conclusion, these requirements would imply the limit to the possible incursions.

The philosophical progress

These diverse explorations are able, then, to provide us new and interesting visions of a phenomenon. But, like we have seen, not all of them are similar and many times they would be mutually excluding. In this introduction, Nozick does not appeal to the “pluralist” attitude exposed in his previous work (moreover, a fast revision of the index confirms us that the term is not used in the entire work) by which the total product of the philosophy would be conformed by all the diverse conceptions ranked by the theoretician according to his own values and beliefs.

When, then, the philosophical progress would happen? Nozick considers that the significant philosophical progress happens when some of the visions reached in these forays achieve to combine, or integrate themselves to produce a new, illuminating and interesting new structure. Nozick takes then Lakato’s notion and says that this series of combined philosophical incursions would be able to constitute a “progressive research program”. This program would not be able to offer us a guarantee that we are in the correct path, but it would make it more probable.

Once more Nozick reiterates his invitation to a form of non-coercive philosophy, that is to say, a philosophy that will not force us to believe in its results. The conviction will come from the fact that these incursions result in an acceptable vision that explain the phenomenon in a better way. The fact that a philosophical theory would not lead us to conviction does not make it less interesting - as Nozick indicates, the fact that Plato results to be interesting two thousand five hundred years later is not due to his results -.

So does Nozick passes here from the analysis of the principles to analysis of the concepts or philosophical categories and thinks that as there is not fixed philosophical points, there is not fixed philosophical concepts as well.

In this sense, the author proposes that the fact that an evolutionist vision of philosophy lead us to see that certain categories of understanding have been delineating and utilizing from Aristotle to our days - such as form, content, substance, property, causality, object, belief, desire, space, time, objectivity and truth - does not prove that these notions are necessarily indispensable or adequate to explain the world. Philosophy should be open to radically different conceptual possibilities. At the same time, given that philosophy – with not fixed principles or concepts – does not work as an (entirely) a priori discipline, it would be able receive the influence of new data or scientific theories. While investigating the notions of truth (true belief), objectivity, ethics and conscience, the philosopher will have the occasion to be alert for the relevant scientific theories.

So Nozick exposes what will be his road in this adventure: to seek, to identify and to separate the empirical substratum of the philosophical questions, and, if possible, to transform the scientific questions in factual or empirical ones. Therefore, it will be seen that the questions about the relativity or objectivity of truth will be seen transformed into questions about the objectivity, that is to say, about under what rank of transformations

20 Ibid., p. 6
21 Ibid., p. 7
something is invariable. It admits, at the same time, that the transformation of the philosophical questions in testable factual hypothesis is not the only method of philosophy but that the fact to give form to these questions is a new way to open new avenues of philosophical progress. Another way is to make new questions.

**Similarities and differences**

Once we have shown the way Nozick presents each of these two philosophical works and the methods that he proposes for the processing of the subjects in each of them, it is worth to do a reflection.

In the first place, it is clear that one of the intentions of the author is to maintain an attitude about the philosophical task that, despite its diverse shades, coincides in identifying as non-coercive. For him philosophy will not have as goal to force anybody to believe something or to show irrefutable proofs about the truth of a phenomenon or an assertion regarding that phenomenon. On the contrary, the search will be based in the intention to find enriching explanations that will interest the reader only if he shares, in principle, the belief in the truth of the analysed phenomenon and if he finds interesting the explanation that the philosopher offers to him.

It is then that in both cases we see in Nozick a clear intention to separate philosophy from the thought as objective and impersonal “demonstration”. On the contrary, these expeditions will depend, in great measure, of the intersubjective interaction for their success.

Nozick also is accepting in both works a great spectrum of hypothesis as starting points for reflection, not limiting the hypothesis to that that can prove to be true but accepting those that seem improbable (and even false) if they can illuminate us the road for the comprehension –although, at times, not for the explanation – of the phenomenon.

In conclusion, we can observe that the author maintains an open and anti-positivist position about the task of philosophy. But, in spite of these similarities, there is an important difference of shades that it is worth to indicate.

In “Philosophical..” the central point of his incursions was centred in value and meaning, and the individual – his value as “self”, his free will, and the sense of his life - seems to have a central place in his reflections. On the other hand, in “Invariances”, the main notions that will be discussed are objectivity and truth and the possibility of knowledge, displacing thus the questions of value and meaning. In this manner, he seems to be proposing another look about philosophy, a vision more close to the task of the scientists that to that of the humanist or the artist.

Only to bring an example, we observe that in “Invariances” Nozick brings again the distinction of H. L. A. Hart with respect to the external and internal look that we have already referred\(^\text{22}\). But this time, he does it not to identify the philosophical look and to approach it to that of the humanist, but for treat the question of the evolution of ethics and the internalization of the norms.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 270
In conclusion, although these visions may not be necessarily contradictory or excluding, the change of shade seems important. We understand that in “Philosophical Explanations” when Nozick speaks about philosophy, he would be referring more to metaphysics, ontology and ethics, while in “Invariances” his vision of philosophy approaches to the theory of knowledge, epistemology and again to the ethics but from an objective view. The philosophical problems seem not to be connected anymore to meaning and value but to objectivity, knowledge and the possibility to maintain the objective heart of the ethical and normative evolution.

**Two explanatory hypotheses**

Set against this panorama, we will intend to propose two interpretative theses – attempting and, we expect, interesting - of this apparent difference.

The first one would be quite simple and proposes that Nozick, although coherent with his own idea of a non-coercive philosophy, was changing his course along the years. Interpreting his work in his own terms, we would be able to say that the hypothesis that he offered in his first work with respect to the idea of understanding philosophy as part of humanities and close to the arts, did not turn out to be an illuminating and interesting explanation for certain phenomena and, therefore, he tried other roads in “Invariances”.

This would explain us why, in spite of the fact that in “Philosophical...” he marks repeatedly the separation between philosophy and science, in “Invariances” he presents the transformation of the philosophical questions into empirical ones, as the philosophical method; approaching the work of the philosopher to that of the scientist (and moving it away finally from that of the artist). Or why he seems to put aside in “Invariances” every consideration about the personal and “direct experience” that the arts and the philosophy require in comparison with the theories of scientific cut.

A second interpretation, conciliatory of both visions, would propose that the second work represents, actually, the epistemology or theory of knowledge of the metaphysics proposed in the first one. That all his manifesto about how an open and non-coercive philosophy would work is not only maintained but also is “actualized” in “Invariances”, where he will test different explanations about diverse subjects without trying to create a deductive and total philosophical system and neither “to prove” finally the truth of his beliefs -. In conclusion, we would be able, in these terms, to interpret that when he refers to value in his first work he is referring to truth and when he does it in the second work he is referring to objectivity.

In consequence, this second explanatory hypothesis would say that there are no important contradictions between the two works but simply that the author focused on different questions in each one of them. And that, if some points appear to be inconsistent, this would not imply very serious consequences given that, to continue maintaining the figure of the Parthenon, the fact that a column or more collapses, the remaining columns will continue to offer illuminating explanations on the subject matters. Finally, we could think Nozick’s work as “a progressive research program”, where a series of philosophical incursions of the author were knitted together and that, although not all perfectly consistent, they offer us a good structure for the explanation of the phenomena. The value of such a structure will be evaluated once we have undertaken, along with the author, the task of exploring it.
Each reader will be able to find more interesting or illuminating one or other interpretative hypothesis with respect to the different proposals that Nozick presents in these two works. We hope that these reflections –following the guideline of the author- would have been interesting to initiate the road toward the comprehension of his philosophy.