

The Philosophical-Legal Aspect of the Methodology of Research on the Instruments of State Policy and Public Administration*

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Abstract.

In particular, the study has shown that each of the approaches under consideration—epistemological, ontological, axiological, and systemic (in combination with synergetics)—has its own substantive purpose, yet together they form a comprehensive methodological framework for the respective scientific inquiry. It has been established that the epistemological approach ensures the identification of the ways, boundaries, and means of acquiring knowledge about the instruments of public administration. Its significance lies in the development of methods for collecting, verifying, and interpreting information, which include dialectical analysis of contradictions, metaphysical fixation of stable elements, logical operations of induction and deduction, analytic-synthetic data processing, as well as hermeneutic interpretation of concepts and norms. Within this approach, instruments are studied through the prism of how exactly they can be known, described, and explained by scientific means. It is noted that, in contrast, the ontological approach focuses on the nature, essence, and structural characteristics of instruments as socio-legal phenomena. Its methods are oriented not so much towards the process of cognition, but rather towards the identification of the fundamental properties of the object of study and its place within the structure of public administration. It is emphasized that the axiological approach provides the value-based dimension of the research, in which the criteria for evaluating an instrument are the ideals enshrined in the legal system and social consciousness, namely justice, equality, freedom, human rights, and others. It has been revealed that the systemic approach, reinforced by the synergetic dimension, makes it possible to consider public administration instruments in interaction with all elements of the public governance mechanism as a whole, to identify internal and external connections, as well as the patterns of their dynamics, self-organization, and adaptation to changes in the external environment. It is underlined that such a multi-level methodological construct ensures the comprehensiveness of scientific description, the internal consistency of conceptual frameworks, and their resilience to changes in both the external and internal environment of the public authority system as a whole.

Keywords: Public Administration; Instruments of Public Administration; Research Methodology

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A. INTRODUCTION

Public administration, as a subject of scientific inquiry, stands at the crossroads of various social sciences. Being at the focus of research by scholars and experts from multiple fields of knowledge, public administration—primarily understood as the social activity of empowered public authorities—appears as a multidimensional sphere of activity that integrates legal, economic, managerial, and social instruments for the effective performance of public functions and the satisfaction of the needs of citizens and local communities (Zadyraka *et al.*, 2023).

Philosophy, in turn, provides the value-based foundation and the worldview framework for perceiving the idea of public authority in general and public administration in particular, defining the directions of their development and priorities. In this respect, it should be recalled that state power, governance, public order, and public administration (as a set of executive bodies) have long been studied by philosophy and other humanities (Kobrusieva *et al.*, 2021).

B. METHODS

The preparation of this article relied on the systemic method as the principal instrument of the philosophical and legal methodology for studying the instruments of public administration. In order to identify the constituent elements of the system and subsequently integrate them into a coherent model, the author applied logical techniques of analysis and synthesis, while induction and deduction were employed to formulate and verify generalizations regarding the patterns of functioning of these instruments. The dialectical method was used to reveal and conceptualize contradictions in their application; metaphysical techniques served to determine the invariant characteristics of the subject matter; and hermeneutic methods were applied to interpret the content of administrative and legal norms and to correlate them with the identified structural and functional parameters. Taken together, these methods ensured the comprehensiveness and multidimensionality of the research.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Without delving deeply into fundamental scientific knowledge, it should be noted that already in the twentieth century the development of philosophy and political theory added new dimensions to the understanding of

public authority. In particular, M. Foucault, through the concept of governmentality, demonstrated how power operates not only through institutions but also through discourses, knowledge, and techniques of governing population behavior (Burchell, et al., 1991). J. Habermas, in his works *The Theory of Communicative Action* and *Between Facts and Norms*, substantiated the importance of the public sphere as a space where the legitimacy of power is formed through communicative interaction and social consensus (Habermas, 1987).

At the same time, in the Anglo-American tradition of public administration, a shift occurred from the so-called "value-neutral" bureaucracy to an ethical and human-centered administration. Although D. Waldo, H. George Frederickson, D. Rosenbloom, and F. Mosher were not philosophers in the narrow academic sense, the philosophical component of their fundamental works became the conceptual foundation upon which the modern understanding of existing models of public administration was built. Thus, in *The Administrative State*, D. Waldo emphasized that administrative activity inevitably relies on values and therefore must be subject to democratic control (Waldo, 1948). H. George Frederickson, in his work *The Spirit of Public Administration*, stressed equality, ethical responsibility, and orientation toward the public interest as the core of public authority activity (Frederickson, 1997). In *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector*, D. Rosenbloom proposed an integrative model in which public administration is viewed through the prism of managerial, political, and legal components (Rosenbloom, et al., 2015). Finally, F. Mosher, in his well-known study *Democracy and the Public Service*, justified the necessity of harmonizing the efficiency of administrative structures with the requirements of democratic governance, emphasizing that without an appropriate value foundation, the sustainable functioning of the public sector is impossible (Mosher, 1982).

Thus, philosophy, as confirmed by the works cited above, has become the methodological foundation for the formation of both approaches aimed at the cognition and conceptualization of public administration (the epistemological dimension), and approaches that determine its essence, nature, and main characteristics as a social and legal phenomenon (the ontological dimension). This has laid the groundwork for its further interdisciplinary study in modern science, including legal scholarship. In other words, it is through the set of philosophical methods of cognition that public administration as a social phenomenon of societal activity, the public administration as a collective subject of social relations, and/or the official as the individualized embodiment of its will and authorized representative are most clearly objectified in social

reality as full-fledged objects of scientific inquiry in both epistemological and ontological dimensions.

Within the structure of the philosophical component of the research methodology, it is important to clearly distinguish between approaches and methods of cognition. An approach, in our understanding, is a conceptual, worldview, and value-based framework that determines from which positions the studied object will be considered, which aspects will be emphasized, and by which principles the interpretation of results will be guided. Methods, on the other hand, are specific tools and procedures of cognition that ensure the acquisition, analysis, and verification of knowledge about the object. Philosophy itself defines method (from the Greek μέθοδος – path of inquiry, theory, doctrine) as a systematized way of achieving a theoretical or practical result, solving problems, or obtaining new information based on certain regulative principles of cognition and action, and awareness of the specificity of the subject field under study and the laws governing the functioning of its objects. Philosophical encyclopedic literature notes that a method delineates and embodies the path to truth, the directions of effective activity leading to the achievement of established goals, and sets the regulative and normative guidelines of the cognitive process (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002).

We should begin by noting that, in our view, the most appropriate way to study the chosen subject is within the framework of interrelated philosophical approaches. The epistemological approach focuses on the ways, limits, and means of understanding the instruments of public administration; the ontological approach is directed toward identifying the nature, essence, and structural characteristics of these instruments as social and legal phenomena; the axiological approach is applied to examine the instruments of public administration through the prism of a system of values (in particular, legality, justice, efficiency, transparency, and others); while the systemic approach, taking into account the synergetic dimension, makes it possible to view these instruments as interconnected elements of the integral system of public administration tools (the internal level) and of the system of public administration as a whole (the external level). At the same time, such cognition must be carried out within each approach using a set of methods, among which particular emphasis should be placed on the dialectical, metaphysical, and logical methods (induction, deduction, analysis, and synthesis), as well as the hermeneutic method, which, although universal in nature, acquire their own specificity in the means of research depending on the chosen conceptual framework.

Thus, the diversity of philosophical approaches forms a broad methodological foundation for comprehending the instruments of public administration. At the same time, within the framework of this article, the emphasis is placed specifically on the epistemological dimension of the study, since it is this dimension that makes it possible to outline the ways, limits, and conditions of understanding the instruments of public administration, to analyze the logic and methods of their investigation, and to develop the criteria of truth and scientific validity of the knowledge obtained.

According to the Philosophical Encyclopedia, epistemology has the same meaning as the category “theory of knowledge,” which is a branch of philosophy that studies the problems of the nature and possibilities of cognition, the relationship between knowledge and reality, the general preconditions of cognition, and the conditions of its reliability and truth. Unlike psychology, the physiology of higher nervous activity, and other sciences, epistemology as a philosophical discipline does not analyze the character of individual mechanisms functioning within the psyche that allow a given subject to arrive at a certain cognitive result, but rather the general foundations that justify speaking of this result as knowledge—namely, as something that reflects the real and true state of affairs.

Any specialized theory of knowledge concerns a limited sphere of reality and proceeds from certain assumptions that are accepted as given and not analyzed (the results of other scientific theories, experimental material fixed in the categories of everyday language, particular notions of the applicability of scientific theories, etc.). In contrast, the theory of knowledge seeks to identify and critically examine the very conditions of truth of any knowledge, to reveal those ultimate and fundamental grounds that make it possible to judge with certainty the degree of justification and correspondence to reality of any particular type of knowledge. Since the theory of knowledge (at least ideally) cannot assume the existence of unanalyzed assumptions simply accepted as universally recognized, it cannot be constructed as an ordinary theory (Konstantinov (Ed., 1964).

The epistemological approach to the study of instruments of public administration provides the methodological basis for clarifying how and by what means the process of their cognition takes place. It is not limited to describing or recording existing knowledge about the instruments of public administration, but rather involves a critical analysis of the conditions of their application, the validity of the chosen means, and the correspondence of legislative prescriptions regulating their use to social reality. Within this

approach, researchers pay particular attention to the ways of acquiring knowledge about the instruments of public administration, the limits of applicability of certain knowledge (i.e., in which contexts, situations, and legal regimes it remains valid), and the means of verifying the reliability and truth of such knowledge.

It should be noted that the epistemological approach makes it possible to consider the instruments of public administration as objects of cognition that are the result of a combination of empirical observations, analytical interpretation, and conceptual generalization. This means that analysis within this approach touches upon both the substantive content of the category “instrument of public administration” and the ways of its cognition and verification. Within the epistemological approach, a wide range of methods are applied, as already mentioned above, the specificity of which is determined by the orientation of the epistemological inquiry. Before describing these particular features, it is worth paying more detailed attention to the general characteristics of the philosophical methods of scientific cognition.

Thus, the dialectical method is one of the philosophical methods, characterized by the specific nature of the relationship between philosophical categories—their duality and polarity (being and non-being, the one and the many, discontinuity and continuity, appearance and essence, necessity and contingency, necessity and freedom, thought and being, etc.). Since these categories mutually exclude one another, a number of questions arise regarding their interrelation. As emphasized in the scientific literature, these constitute the fundamental questions or problems of philosophy, and there are as many of them as there are such categorical pairs. The dialectical method represents a way and an art of resolving such problems—through the identification of opposites, their analysis and differentiation, their synthesis into a whole, and the disclosure of the movement and development of the corresponding structures, directions, and tendencies of their genesis (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002).

In the context of our study, the dialectical method within the epistemological approach not only makes it possible to identify and record changes in approaches to understanding the instruments of public administration depending on transformations in the legal, political, and social spheres, but also ensures the disclosure of internal contradictions that accompany this process. The application of this method allows us to explore how various concepts—ranging from state-centered to human-centered, from traditional norm-oriented to innovative, flexible management models—coexist

and interact in legal scholarship, in the practice of public administration, and in its normative-legal framework.

At the same time, owing to the principle of the unity and struggle of opposites within dialectics, it is possible to trace how new instruments of public administration arise on the basis of negating or modifying existing ones, combining elements of continuity and innovation. Such analysis allows not only to identify the objective patterns of the evolution of instruments but also to assess the extent to which changes in legal prescriptions and administrative practices correspond to the criteria of reliability and truth of the knowledge about them. Within the epistemological approach, the dialectical method also serves as a means of identifying the limits of applicability of the knowledge obtained, since it clearly makes it possible to determine under what conditions certain theoretical conclusions remain valid and under what conditions they lose their explanatory or predictive power. This is particularly important in the context of rapid changes in the regulatory environment, when instruments once considered effective require rethinking in light of new social challenges and the transformation of public authority in general or public administration in particular. Thus, it should be emphasized that the dialectical method within the epistemological approach is not reduced merely to the logical analysis of contradictions; it becomes a tool for identifying the dynamics of scientific knowledge about the instruments of public administration, assessing its validity, and adapting it to new realities of social development.

In turn, the metaphysical method is a philosophical method opposed to dialectics, one that proceeds from a quantitative understanding of development while denying self-development. As a mode of thought contrary to dialectics, metaphysics was first conceptualized at the time of the creation of modern dialectics—in its idealistic form by Hegel and in the form of the new dialectical-materialist philosophy by Marx and Engels. It was precisely within Marxism that the concept of “metaphysics” acquired the aforementioned meaning and corresponding terminological usage (Konstantinov (Ed.), 1970).

Within the epistemological approach to the study of the legal foundations of applying instruments of public administration, the metaphysical method serves as a means of fixing the stable, invariant characteristics of the object of cognition and abstracting from the unstable, changing factors of its functioning. Its use enables the researcher to identify those features of public administration instruments that remain unchanged regardless of political-legal transformations or special legal regimes, as well as to refine the definitions and conceptual boundaries of the corresponding legal categories.

In the context of epistemological analysis, this method ensures the stability of the conceptual apparatus, which is a prerequisite for the correct use of other methods of cognition—dialectical, inductive and deductive, hermeneutic, and others. The metaphysical approach, in this case, makes it possible not only to determine the necessary and sufficient characteristics of basic concepts (such as administrative act, administrative contract, act-action, private-law instrument), but also to distinguish them from related categories, establish the criteria by which the acquired knowledge is recognized as reliable and valid, and construct stable classifications of instruments that retain their relevance under different legal regimes.

It should be emphasized that within the epistemological approach the metaphysical method performs the function of a kind of “anchor” for the entire research system, since it prevents the blurring of the meaning of key concepts and preserves the conceptual integrity of the analysis. In other words, the metaphysical method balances the dynamic dimension set by the dialectical method and ensures the clarity, unambiguity, and logical consistency of scientific conclusions concerning the legal foundations of public administration instruments.

In turn, the logical methods of cognition are represented by a set of such methods as induction, deduction, analysis, and synthesis. Induction (from the Latin *inductio*—bringing in) is a form of inference in which, on the basis of knowledge about the particular, a conclusion is drawn about the general; it is a mode of reasoning through which the validity of a proposed assumption or hypothesis is established. A distinction is made between complete and incomplete induction. In complete induction, from the fact that each element of a given class has certain properties, it is concluded that all elements of that class possess these properties. In incomplete induction, from the fact that some elements (of a very large or even infinite class) have certain properties, it is concluded that all elements of this class have the same properties. Complete induction, given true premises, provides a reliable conclusion, while incomplete induction does not, in the sense that the truth of the premises does not guarantee the truth of the conclusion.

In philosophy, it is emphasized that it is more appropriate to speak not of inductive derivation of conclusions from premises, but of inductive reasoning, in which the validity of hypotheses determined on the basis of established knowledge is assessed. Thus, in actual cognition, induction always operates in unity with deduction and is inseparably connected to it. (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002).

Unlike the metaphysical method, which identifies invariant features primarily through logical-conceptual analysis, induction relies on factual data obtained through observation, the analysis of practice, and the study of concrete examples of the application of instruments in the activity of public administration. Its task is to identify recurring features and stable correlations between the characteristics of instruments and the results of their use in various organizational and legal contexts. Such an approach makes it possible to gradually move from isolated observations to the formation of conceptual models that explain the regularities of the functioning of public administration instruments.

It should be emphasized that the specificity of induction in our subject area lies in the fact that generalizations are carried out taking into account the variability of the socio-legal conditions under which the instruments of public administration operate. This means that the method not only records repetition but also reveals the conditions under which certain patterns retain their validity or, conversely, lose their explanatory power. An important characteristic of inductive analysis within the epistemological approach is its inseparable connection with deduction, since hypotheses formed based on empirical data are verified through logical derivation of consequences and their comparison with the norms of administrative law and established scientific concepts. This interaction ensures the integrity of the cognitive process and increases the validity of the obtained scientific results.

Deduction (from Latin *deductio*, from *deduco*—to lead down, to derive) in traditional logic is the transition from the general to the particular; it is a form of inference in which, based on a general rule, new true propositions are necessarily derived from other propositions assumed to be true. As a research method, deduction makes it possible to know the particular on the basis of knowledge of a general regularity. In fact, the deductive method acquired particular importance in the construction of scientific theories (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002).

Deduction makes it possible to derive specific conclusions regarding the characteristics of individual instruments on the basis of general concepts and definitions enshrined in scientific doctrine or normative acts. Within the epistemological approach, it performs the function of verifying and concretizing general provisions formed as a result of theoretical reflection or inductive generalizations. This method of cognition allows, on the basis of already established conceptual frameworks, doctrinal provisions, or norms of administrative law, to logically derive predictions about the specific features,

forms of implementation, or legal consequences of applying certain instruments of public administration. For example, starting from the normatively established definition of an administrative act, deduction makes it possible to logically substantiate its mandatory features in a particular situation, even when empirical observations regarding such a situation are insufficient. An important feature of deduction is its ability to ensure the internal logical consistency of the study. Thus, by comparing specific facts or situations with general principles and models, the researcher can verify whether they meet the established criteria of truth in knowledge about the instruments of public administration. In interaction with induction, deduction performs the role of a reverse movement of cognition. While induction moves from particular observations to general conclusions, deduction moves from the general to the particular, testing and clarifying hypotheses formulated as a result of inductive generalization. It is precisely the combination of these two methods that forms a balanced mechanism of epistemological analysis, in which the empirical base is constantly correlated with theoretical models, and theoretical constructs are, in turn, correlated with law enforcement practice regarding instruments of public administration.

Analysis and synthesis (from the Greek analysis—separation; synthesis—combination, composition) refer to the decomposition of a whole into parts and the recombination of parts into a whole in the process of practical or intellectual activity. Methodologically, analysis is a way of studying an object that consists in isolating its parts, properties, relationships, and so forth for their independent examination. As a result, partial, abstract, and incomplete knowledge is obtained, since the interconnections among the parts remain outside the scope of attention (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002).

In the study of instruments of public administration within the epistemological approach, analysis makes it possible to single out and examine individual elements of these instruments—the composition of subjects, the content of authoritative prescriptions, procedural forms, legal consequences, and so forth. Such an approach allows the functional purpose of each component to be clarified and internal dependencies to be revealed, which remain hidden when a particular instrument of public administration is considered as a holistic phenomenon.

Synthesis, in turn, integrates the results of the analytical stage into a coherent conceptual model of the legal institution of instruments of public administration, restoring the systemic interconnections among its elements and assessing their cumulative impact on the achievement of defined goals. This

sequence (from analysis to synthesis) ensures not only a deeper understanding of each component but also awareness of its place within the overall structure and application of the public administration toolkit in the framework of the entire public sphere. It should be emphasized that the interaction of analysis and synthesis in the epistemological approach has a dialectical character, since the results of synthesis may open up new aspects for further in-depth analysis, while subsequent analysis, in turn, enriches and adjusts the synthetic models. This creates a cyclical process of cognition in which knowledge is constantly refined, supplemented, and verified against the real conditions of functioning of instruments of public administration.

Philosophical hermeneutics arose and developed, on the one hand, in the mainstream of traditional hermeneutics as its offshoot, and, on the other hand, became a certain stage in the internal evolution of hermeneutics that substantially renews and modifies its subject field (Shynkaruk (Ed.), 2002). According to H.-G. Gadamer, the hermeneutic method presupposes a smooth transition from the transcendent to the immanent, and in the reverse direction as well. In this process, the meaning that arises during such movement proves to be perpendicular to the movement itself, and it is precisely in the situation of uncovering the “meaning” of a given tradition (or paradigm) that a point of rupture emerges. This rupture requires the individual who understands this tradition (even if the tradition itself is still in the process of formation) to turn to a reconsideration of the grounds of their own reflection, as well as the grounds that ensure the “linkage” of the substantive side of the object under study with the very mode of extracting such content—a mode that transforms this content into thought. At the same time, one must also take into account that between the reflected image and its mental copy fixed in thought there exists a gap (a complementary void between the micro- and macro-descriptions of the object), which constitutes the essence of the problem of finding a link that simultaneously connects and generates being and becoming, a link from which both the subject and the object of cognition could be derived (Shakhov, 2020).

In the context of the philosophy of law, H.-G. Gadamer emphasizes that a legal theorist and a practicing lawyer, in seeking to understand the law, address different tasks: the former engages in a speculative one, while the latter pursues a practical one. Nevertheless, their understanding of the legal meaning of the law may ultimately differ (Gadamer, 1988). The connection “subjectivity–reality” does not imply something like the “identity of being and thought,” but rather points to the existence of a certain “single active medium,” in which one (“subjectivity”) shapes the other (“reality”) and is simultaneously shaped by it. In other words, subjectivity, as noted by S.V. Shakhov with reference to Ya. I.

Svirsky, is constructed through the influence of reality and, at the same time, itself exerts influence upon this reality, including by means of cognitive acts (Shakhov, 2020).

In turn, T. I. Dudash notes that, according to ontological hermeneutics, it becomes possible to answer the question of why a particular phenomenon, and not another, is reflected by the concept of law if one “immerses oneself in the text itself.” In this case, one can: (a) attempt to clarify which phenomenon the author of the text sought to reflect through the concept of law; (b) take into account the socio-cultural, intralingual, and other factors that influence the legal understanding of both the author and, in fact, the subject of interpretation (the determinants of legal understanding at its various stages); and (c) bring one’s own individualized social experience into the process of legal understanding and into the meaning (that is, the reflection of the significance and value) of the legal phenomenon as the result of this process (Dudash, 2008).

In contrast, the context of our study requires clarification that the hermeneutic method within the epistemological approach is aimed at interpreting the terms, categories, and concepts that constitute the conceptual basis of research on the instruments of public administration, as well as at identifying the semantic connections among them. In the domain of studying the instruments of public administration, the hermeneutic method performs several key functions, among which: normative-legal interpretation consists in clarifying the content of normative provisions regulating the use of instruments, taking into account the socio-cultural and historical contexts of their creation; doctrinal harmonization ensures a unified understanding of categories within the scholarly community and eliminates semantic discrepancies in the use of terms; and the establishment of determinants of legal understanding consists in identifying the factors (socio-cultural, linguistic, institutional) that influence the formation of the content of the category “instrument of public administration” and related concepts. Thus, the epistemological approach provides a holistic and multidimensional vision of the process of cognizing the instruments of public administration, combining logical-philosophical and empirical methods aimed at identifying the ways, limits, and means of obtaining scientific knowledge about them. The application of dialectical, metaphysical, logical, and hermeneutic methods enables the researcher not only to accumulate factual material and build conceptual generalizations on its basis but also to maintain consistency, substantive precision, and unity of the terminological framework.

However, the cognition of instruments of public administration is not exhausted by the study of the ways of obtaining and verifying knowledge about them. Obviously, for a comprehensive understanding of these instruments, it is also necessary to turn to their nature, essence, and internal structure—that is, to move to another strategic level of philosophical methodology, namely, the ontological approach. Unlike the epistemological approach, which answers the question “How do we know?”, the ontological approach addresses the questions “What is the object of cognition?”, “What is its nature and its fundamental characteristics?”.

Ontology (from the Greek *ὄντος* — being, and *λόγος* — science) in its broadest sense refers to the philosophical doctrine of being as such, independent of the subject and its activity. Ontology presupposes the consideration of questions about the essence of all being, the abstract definition of essence, as well as the contemplation of fundamental metaphysical ideas. Thus, on the one hand, the status of ontology is determined by its generic connection with metaphysics, while on the other, it examines more specific functions of philosophy in clarifying the foundations of the existence of the material world. Contemporary ontology considers being not only in its general philosophical dimension but also through the prism of specific sciences, analyzing the structure and properties of particular spheres of reality (for example, social, legal, or political) (Konstantinov, 1967).

On this basis, the ontological approach in studying the legal foundations of instruments of public administration focuses on clarifying their nature, essence, and structural characteristics as social and legal phenomena, as well as identifying their fundamental properties and their place within the system of public administration and within the broader socio-legal environment in terms of both content and structure. Naturally, within this approach, philosophical methods acquire their own specific orientation, distinct from their meaning within the epistemological approach. Thus, the dialectical method is applied to reveal contradictions in the nature of instruments of public administration, as well as their capacity for development and transformation depending on changes in the legal framework, the socio-economic environment, and the needs of public governance. In this case, it allows instruments to be viewed not as static constructs but as dynamic elements that change their essence and functions in response to environmental challenges.

In turn, the metaphysical method within the ontological approach is used to fix the stable, unchanging characteristics of instruments that preserve their nature regardless of external conditions. This makes it possible to establish

the permanent attributes of such instruments (for example, the obligatoriness of an administrative act or the public interest as the goal of normative regulation), which determine their ontological identity.

Induction, by contrast, helps to form an understanding of the essence of an instrument based on the study of a large number of its manifestations in different contexts, revealing recurring features that may be attributed to its fundamental properties. Deduction, within this approach, is used to derive specific ontological characteristics of an instrument from already defined general categories and concepts (for example, from the general content of the category “administrative act” to the specificity of its material and procedural features).

Analysis, as a philosophical method of cognition, is aimed at distinguishing the constituent elements of the essence of an instrument of public administration—its purpose, legal nature, conditions and subjects of application, and forms of manifestation. Such an approach makes it possible to determine its internal structure and the connections between its elements. By contrast, synthesis allows the results of analysis to be combined into a holistic ontological model of the instrument of public administration, reflecting it as an element of a higher-level system and status (for example, as part of the system of public administration, the system of public authority, or the forms of its activity). Finally, the hermeneutic method within the ontological approach takes the form of a deep interpretation of the categorical content of such instruments, clarifying their legal nature through the interpretation of the norms of administrative law that establish them, as well as the socio-cultural and politico-legal contexts in which they function. Thus, the ontological approach makes it possible not only to describe a particular instrument of public administration (or their aggregate), but also to determine its so-called “ontological passport”—a system of fundamental characteristics without which it ceases to be what it is by nature. This level of analysis provides the foundation for subsequent axiological reflection and systemic modeling of the toolkit of public administration.

Axiology (from the Greek ἀξία — value, worth; λόγος — word, concept, doctrine) is the doctrine of values, a philosophical theory of values that examines the qualities and properties of objects, phenomena, and processes capable of satisfying human needs, interests, and desires. The theory of values was formed in the 19th–20th centuries. By introducing the concept of values, I. Kant contrasted the sphere of morality (freedom) with the sphere of nature

(necessity), thereby outlining the main axiological questions—meaning, choice, obligation, propriety, duty, evaluation, attitude, and so forth.

In the 20th century, systematic research on the problem of values was continued by N. Hartmann, who, in particular, reinforced the argument for the objective nature of values with the thesis of the intentionality of value relations. According to Hartmann, values cannot be comprehended through rational cognition and are manifested only in special feelings (love and hate), which compel a person to intuitively prefer a certain mode of behavior. C. Perry analyzed the meaning and basic principles of values through the concept of “interest,” while J. Dewey developed a naturalistic version of axiology (pragmatic instrumentalism). Today, the problem of values is central to philosophical anthropology (M. Scheler, H. Plessner, A. Gehlen) (Shynkaruk, (Ed.), 2002).

In turn, the axiology of law constitutes a structural branch of the philosophy of law, in which value is regarded as a defining characteristic of human existence and as a mode of being of values. It analyzes the fundamental legal values (justice, will, equality, human rights, etc.), their “hierarchy,” and the ways in which they are realized within the conditions of contemporary legal reality. The field of legal axiology sometimes also includes issues of the relationship of law with other forms of value-consciousness—morality, politics, religion—as well as questions concerning the legal ideal and the legal worldview (Danylyan et al., 2009). As P.V. Polishchuk rightly notes, the value-based approach to law can be found in various concepts of legal understanding. In particular, within the framework of legalist axiology, law and statute are identified with one another, while the objective determination of law is denied (H. Kelsen). The legalist “value” of law (positive law) is understood as its official general obligatoriness, authoritative imperative character, and so forth (Polishchuk, 2013) (Yurovska, 2018).

Narrowing the focus of this issue to our subject matter, it should be noted that the axiological approach in studying the instruments of public administration is concentrated on examining them through the prism of the system of values recognized by society and enshrined in legal doctrine and legislation. Its task lies in identifying the extent to which the structure, content, and practice of applying such instruments correspond to fundamental legal values (legality, justice, efficiency, transparency, accountability, etc.) and how they influence the attainment of the legal ideal.

Within this approach, the philosophical methods of cognition discussed above acquire their own specific “coloration.” In particular, the dialectical

method is applied to reveal contradictions between declared values and actual administrative practice, as well as to seek ways of reconciling them. For example, the metaphysical method in this context is used to fix stable, fundamental value orientations that retain their significance regardless of specific political or administrative changes.

Induction, by contrast, helps to generalize empirical examples of the realization or violation of values in the functioning of public administration, forming on their basis broader axiological conclusions, while deduction provides the possibility to logically derive specific value requirements for a particular instrument from the basic principles and standards of public administration. Analysis and synthesis, as integral parts of logical methods, are used within the axiological approach to break down the content of individual instruments in order to identify their value components and then to combine these components into a coherent model of value conformity.

The hermeneutic method, in turn, is aimed at interpreting normative acts and doctrinal provisions through the prism of the values enshrined in them, taking into account the socio-cultural and historical context of their formation. Thus, the axiological approach ensures not only the formal description of the instruments of public administration but also their profound value-based evaluation, allowing one to determine whether they serve to embody key legal and social ideals or whether the practice of their application and their normative consolidation require adjustment in order to bring these processes into conformity with such standards.

At the same time, understanding the instruments of public administration only in terms of the ways of their cognition, ontological nature, or value conformity does not provide an exhaustive picture of their functioning. For this, it is necessary to consider them in the context of interconnections and interactions with other elements of the mechanism of public governance, to identify the place of each instrument within the structure and dynamics of the entire system of public administration (Filatov *et al.*, 2025).. This task is addressed by the systemic approach, which, in our case, should be considered with due regard to the synergetic dimension. Such a dimension makes it possible to study not only the statics of the system but also the regularities of its development, self-organization, and adaptation to changes in the legal, political, and social environment.

The term “systemic approach,” as clarified by Yu. P. Surmin, substantively reflects a group of methods by which a real object is described as a set of interacting components. These methods are developed within

individual scientific disciplines and general scientific concepts, being the result of their interdisciplinary synthesis. The use of the systemic approach in science is also stimulated by the success of certain systems theories in other fields of knowledge, as well as by the development of cybernetics and the social sciences. The systemic approach, as emphasized by Yu. P. Surmin, is an effective mode of intellectual activity that ensured significant scientific discoveries, technical inventions, and achievements in production in the second half of the twentieth century (Surmin, 2003).

The systemic approach consists in considering any more or less complex object as a relatively autonomous system with its own features of functioning and development. Based on the ideas of integrity and relative independence of objects existing within the holistic world, the principle of systemacity presupposes presenting the studied object as a certain system characterized by: its set of elements; the structure as a form of interconnection between elements; the functions of both the elements and the whole; the unity of the system's internal and external environment; as well as the laws governing the development of the system and its components (Surmin, 2003).

Synergetics (from the Greek *συνεργός* – acting mutually, in concert) is a field and a general scientific program of interdisciplinary research that studies the processes of self-organization and the emergence of new ordered structures in open physical, biological, social, cognitive, informational, ecological, and other systems. The ideas of synergetics were proposed and developed by I. Prigogine (Belgium) and H. Haken (FRG) at the turn of the 1960s–1970s.

According to the synergetic approach, the self-organization of complex systems proceeds from chaos toward increasing order, based on certain order parameters and generalized synergetic information, in accordance with specific patterns (models). In the process of self-organization, a system generates and regenerates the meaning of its own development, manifesting a kind of tendency toward a future, remote state of order through the so-called attractor (Zadyraka *et al.*, 2023).

The material and energetic processes of the system are guided by its informational field; the system behaves in such a way that one may conclude: each element of the system carries information about the outcome of its future interaction with other elements (Leheza *et al.*, 2024). At certain critical points of system development—bifurcation points—it may choose a trajectory of development in one of several energetically equivalent directions. In philosophical literature, it is emphasized that the application of the synergetic approach is particularly productive in analyzing the self-organization of social

systems and the alignment of their driving forces—the motivational intentionalities of social actors—on the basis of certain spiritual and cultural values, in order to achieve ecological balance between the socio-anthroposphere and the biosphere of the planet, which together form an integral system, akin to public administration, and so forth (Shynkaruk, (Ed.), 2002).

As A. M. Averyanov notes, systemic cognition and transformation of the world presuppose: considering the object of activity (both theoretical and practical) as a system, that is, as a limited set of interacting elements; establishing the composition, structure, and organization of the elements and parts of the system, as well as identifying the main interactions between them; clarifying the external connections of the system and distinguishing the principal ones; determining the functions of the system and its role among other systems; analyzing the dialectics of the system's structure and functions; and, on this basis, identifying the regularities and developmental trends of the system (Averianov, 1985). Therefore, Yu. P. Surmin quite reasonably agrees with A. M. Averyanov that the principle of systemic cognition does not replace dialectics but rather represents a further elaboration and enrichment of such dialectical principles as universal interconnection and interaction, development, and so forth (Averianov, 1985).

As emphasized in the pages of legal scholarship, systemicity and synergy are two fundamental concepts of the philosophy of science (Kulinich *et al.*, 2023). The formation, structuring, and subsequent functioning of knowledge about a legal phenomenon presuppose that the researcher takes into account all of its essential elements, their internal hierarchy, and their embeddedness in the external world, as well as their correlation with it (Leheza *et al.*, 2023).. Having thus obtained a vision of the problem (and of possible ways to resolve it), the issue of the stability of truth remains open. The factors of variability in the content of social relations—particularly customs relations—the nature of legal subjects, and the subjectivized objective reality in the researcher's works reveal the relativity of the truth of acquired knowledge and its potential falsifiability as a hallmark of scientific character. Adding to this the structuring of time—for instance, into short-term, medium-term, and long-term perspectives—in which the interests of participants in customs relations change depending on political and foreign-economic conjunctures and the legal situations they provoke, we obtain an absolutely universal basis for the continuous scientific search for significant information which previously could not be discerned, either because it did not yet exist or because, for other reasons, it had not entered the researcher's field of interest. All these cognitive

and epistemological interrelations illustrate the functioning of a latent system, or synergetics, which becomes visible only gradually, partially, and/or under specific circumstances (Maslova, 2020).

At the same time, synergetics, by expanding the potential of the systemic method, marked the emergence of a new paradigm of scientific knowledge. Along with it, science acquired a new understanding of the ways of investigating an object and approaching a problem that is not directly observable but only internally, mentally conceived as information that remains hidden rather than externally expressed (*Chorna et al.*, 2023).

Each new structural instability of the research object may gradually lead the unbalanced system of customs regulation to states characterized by a higher production of entropy (a measure of chaos), thereby diminishing its functional effectiveness (Maslova, 2021).

Within the systemic approach, the logical methods of cognition (analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction) of public administration instruments should be considered collectively, as an integrated and interrelated sequence of cognitive tools. The starting operation of this process is systemic analysis, which disaggregates a public administration instrument into its constituent elements (e.g., purpose and designation, conditions of application, procedure, outcome, and legal consequences) and identifies systemic relationships among them. On this foundation, synthesis restores integrity by integrating the elements into a coherent model of the instrument's functioning; induction generalizes recurring observations into working hypotheses, while deduction, in turn, tests them by deriving specific legal consequences for particular cases and modes of application (Sinkevych *et al.*, 2024).

It is precisely systemic analysis that, so to speak, "triggers" the algorithms of other philosophical methods employed within the systemic approach. For instance, dialectics begins with the analytical fixation of opposing tendencies, thereby creating space for identifying and resolving contradictions (e.g., "efficiency ↔ human rights and freedoms," "discretion (administrative judgment) ↔ imperative obligations of public administration") and for tracing the "transitions" and "development" of a particular instrument in the course of its application. Similarly, the metaphysical method also relies on the results of analysis, since it enables the identification of invariants of the instrument—those essential features that persist regardless of contextual change—and their distinction from variable parameters. Without prior analytical work, such invariants remain imperceptible (Leheza *et al.*, 2025).

Hermeneutic techniques, by contrast, are applied after the analytical and metaphysical processing of the material, when the researcher already possesses a sufficiently clear understanding of the structure of a public administration instrument and its invariant characteristics. At this stage, hermeneutics focuses on interpreting the content of administrative law norms and the corresponding doctrinal provisions, correlating them with the identified invariants and variable parameters, and reconstructing the semantic connections that ensure the integrity and functional coherence of the public administration system as a whole.

It should be noted that the synergetic dimension is organically integrated into the logic of the systemic approach. Systemic analysis makes it possible to identify order parameters, key structural connections, and critical points of development (bifurcations). Thereafter, the dialectical method describes the dynamics of transitions between system states; the metaphysical method fixes the invariant “core” of an instrument or its set under changing conditions; the axiological method evaluates the identified structures and processes through the prism of their conformity to fundamental legal and social values; while the hermeneutic method ensures the coherent interpretation of concepts and norms across different legal regimes (both in periods of stable functioning and under conditions of administrative reform or martial law).

Thus, within the systemic approach, the described algorithm of systemic analysis serves as the basic logical method, forming the foundation for the subsequent application of dialectical, metaphysical, axiological, and hermeneutic techniques. The sequence of this cognitive and research process presupposes: first, the identification of the structure and interrelations of the system's elements, and only thereafter – their semantic alignment, the determination of invariants, the assessment of their value relevance, and the modeling of possible scenarios of development.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The study of instruments of public administration in the philosophical and methodological dimension has shown that each of the approaches considered – epistemological, ontological, axiological, and systemic (combined with synergetics) – has its own substantive purpose, but together they form a comprehensive methodological framework for the respective scientific inquiry. It has been established that the epistemological approach ensures the identification of the ways, limits, and means of acquiring knowledge about the instruments of public administration. The significance of this approach lies in

the development of methods for collecting, verifying, and interpreting information, which include dialectical analysis of contradictions, metaphysical fixation of stable elements, logical operations of induction and deduction, analytical and synthetic data processing, as well as hermeneutic interpretation of concepts and norms. Within this approach, instruments are studied through the prism of how they can be known, described, and explained by scientific means.

It is noted that the ontological approach, by contrast, focuses on the nature, essence, and structural characteristics of instruments as socio-legal phenomena. Its methods are oriented not so much toward the process of cognition as toward the identification of the fundamental properties of the research object and its place in the structure of public administration. In combination with the epistemological approach, ontology allows a transition from the question "how do we know?" to the question "what do we know?" and "what is the nature of this object?".

It is emphasized that the axiological approach provides the value dimension of research, in which the criteria for evaluating an instrument are the ideals enshrined in the legal system and public consciousness, namely justice, equality, freedom, human rights, etc. Dialectical, metaphysical, logical, and hermeneutical methods in this case acquire a value "coloration," since they are used to reveal the gaps between declared principles and actual administrative practice, to fix stable orientations, to interpret normative material through the prism of values, and to form integral models of their implementation.

It has been revealed that the systemic approach, reinforced by the synergetic dimension, makes it possible to consider the instruments of public administration in interaction with all elements of the mechanism of public governance as a whole, to identify internal and external connections, as well as the regularities of their dynamics, self-organization, and adaptation to changes in the external environment. It is noted that the key method within this approach is system analysis, which provides the basis for the application of other logical methods. The dialectical method describes the dynamics of transformations of the system, the metaphysical method maintains the invariant core of the instruments, the hermeneutical method ensures the unity of interpretation of concepts under different legal regimes, and the axiological method makes it possible to assess whether the identified connections and processes are consistent with the basic values of public administration.

The thesis is substantiated that the complementarity of these approaches lies in the fact that the epistemological approach sets the epistemic

framework of research, the ontological reveals its substantive content, the axiological forms the criteria of evaluation, and the systemic with the synergetic integrates the obtained knowledge into a holistic model capable of reflecting not only the statics but also the dynamics of the studied object. It is emphasized that such a multilevel methodological construction ensures the comprehensiveness of scientific description, the internal consistency of conceptual structures, and their resilience to changes in the external and internal environment of the public authority system as a whole.

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