

# Society, Man and Knowledge

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This paper overviews the articles, published in this issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija*. The articles are arranged in three topics – social and political philosophy, philosophical anthropology and epistemology. In developing these topics the authors get in touch with each other. They are worried about the present condition of society and its future, troubles of human existence and prospects of human knowledge.

**Keywords:** social and political philosophy, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of mathematics

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## INTRODUCTION

The authors of the papers published in this issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija* develop three themes – namely, social and political philosophy, philosophical anthropology and epistemology. To deal with these themes the authors are inspired by their deep concern with the present complicated situation in society, human existence and knowledge sphere and with ways out of it.

## CAPITALISM AND ITS FUTURES

Nuria Sanchez Madrid inquires into the peculiarities of political action of the Alt-Right. She argues that in order to win over the economically and socially vulnerable groups of people to its side the Alt-Right leads cultural fight. Far-right politicians point to the strangers as a source of all troubles being experienced by socially insecure people and urge to build border walls in order to protect themselves against foreign intruders. Madrid is assured that left-wing political parties have to win over their former electorate against the Alt-Right anew. According to her, they could do that by emphasizing not difference between one's people and strangers and not protection of borders, but mutual interdependence at national and international levels.

Not all were convinced by the collapse of the System of State Socialism lead by the USSR that the end of history has come and that liberal democracy and capitalism will prevail for ages, as was professed by Francis Fukuyama (1992). The accelerationists were among the unbelievers (MacKay, Avanesian 2014). In their turn, they profess another faith. They believe that rapid advancement of technology finishes off capitalism in the future.

The questions related with the Accelerationism and the main stages of its development are discussed by Ljubisha Petrushevski. He argues that the origins of the Accelerationism

lie in Karl Marx's philosophy. Petrushevski then draws a line of development of the Accelerationism from Marx through the Avant-garde Art of the first half of 20th century (Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism), Guy Debord and Situationism, the British Culture Studies to Sadie Plant and Nick Land. According to him, Plant and Land embody a split of the present Accelerationism into the Left-Wing and Right-Wing. Plant and other left-wing accelerationists are obligated to emancipatory politics. They aim at revealing the true nature of abstractions of the present capitalism to contribute in this way to the emancipation of social relations. Whereas Land and his right-wing followers are ready to destabilize the present situation for the sake of future post humanist revolution. As Petrushevski points out, 'strangely enough, Land's philosophical investigation, that started as a critical research of the capital's inherent contradictions and its tendency for posthumanism, ended as the core alt-right textbook, representing the homophobic, and in some instances, even racist and fascist political ideology; in the process, it unintentionally supported Trump's rise to power and created the chaos called Brexit, influencing political upstarts like Dominic Cummings' (Petrushevski 2020: 21).

For some critics, capitalism is problematical not only from the social or political point of view, but as well from the gender perspective. Feminists point to the patriarchal nature of the capitalist system and its disadvantages to women. Socialist Feminists argue that women's place in the capitalist system is similar to that of workers (Eisenstein 1979). Women and workers are exploited in this system. Radical Feminists (Hélène Cixous) suppose that capitalism, as other main social and cultural structures, is created by men and therefore it expresses their experience (world-view). Men's experience is alien to women's one. So women can function successfully in the capitalist economy only betraying their true nature and becoming men in the figurative sense.

The collective of men authors, Jintao Lu, Licheng Ren, Chong Zhang, Mengshang Liang, Nerijus Stasiulis and Justas Streimikis, carried out the research aimed at establishing what role gender plays in the implementation of practices of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in firms. They paid an exclusive attention to the top level of management – senior executive officers (CEOs) and boards of directors (BODs). The choice is explained by the fact that the success of the implementation of practices of CSR depends heavily on decisions of top management. Summarizing the studies done in this research field by other scientists, the collective of the authors assert that participation of women in top management influences positively the implementation of practices of CSR. They say: '<...> The main drivers of CSR at enterprise level are linked to executive characteristics including gender which is also related to attitudes, values and leadership styles as earlier studies indicated the higher moral orientations of women compared to man and higher sensitivity of women to unethical behaviors and other important organizational issues linked to human resources management. The women CEOs tend to accept CSR issues more earnestly than their male colleagues not only because of their higher morality but also because they are forced to do so owing to the reputational reasons' (Stasiulis et al. 2020: 29).

The conclusions of Stasiulis et al. research are significant not only in the context of Management Studies, but as well in the field of women's studies. On the one hand, they corroborate the idea about peculiar women's morality advocated by some Feminists (Gilligan 1982). On the other hand, the paper by Stasiulis et al. invites to consider relations of women and capitalism anew. The fact, that entering the economic sphere dominated by men for a long time women do not lose their peculiarity and do not become men in the figurative sense, suggests

two opposite ideas: either capitalism loses its patriarchal nature in piecemeal fashion, or admitting of different approaches is a cunning maneuver of capitalism in order to preserve main patriarchal structures untouched. Which of these ideas would appear convincing depends, probably, on a degree of radicalism of a particular Feminist.

Society can be tormented not only by problems of the present or by care for the future, but as well as by relationship to the past. Over the past 20 years in post-communist countries passions are burning over the evaluation of their Soviet past. Some people look to the Soviet times as the period of the total evil brought by the alien power (the Soviet Union or *bolsheviks*), of physical and ideological terror and of everlasting shortage of goods and services. Others perceive the Soviet period as nearly the Golden Age. In their mind, in that times there were social stability, order and efflorescence of culture. The debates over the past in post-communist societies induced historians to pay more attention to the Soviet period of their societies. Notwithstanding large work done by historians, there are a lot of unanswered questions left.

In order to contribute to the Soviet Studies, Žygintas Pečiulis examines peculiarities of functioning of TV media in the Soviet Lithuania, which was forcefully incorporated into the USSR in that period. The author discusses ideological functions of TV media, its censorship and TV workers' relationships with the prevailing Soviet ideology. In the last case, Pečiulis points to three main types of relationships: self-censorship, non-conformism and 'we worked for the benefit of Lithuania' position (based on the alleged western character of Soviet Lithuanian television as well as fostering of Lithuanian national identity)' (Pečiulis 2020 : 40).

In many cases, the debates over the Soviet past are saturated with the practical realities of the present political life. On the one hand, the struggle goes between the *ex-nomenklatura* (former Soviet elite) and their political opponents. On the other hand, the debates are fanned by growing revanchism of Russia, which uses Soviet Nostalgia for its goals, and by efforts of the elites of former Soviet satellite countries to oppose it.

Studies of the Soviet past have not only a historical or practical-political meaning, but also a theoretical significance. These studies and their results are used widely by the right thinkers to substantiate the thesis about impossibility of the socialist alternative to capitalism. Whereas the left thinkers neglect historical studies of the Soviet past. But they could be useful for the Left in seeking critically to rethink its main theoretical presuppositions and to find ways out of a blind alley, into which the Left got after the fall of State Socialism in 1989.

## COSMOS AND EXISTENCE

Halyna Berehova is worried about the present environmental crisis. She argues that to fight this crisis successfully we need to form 'a new, modern, planetary and cosmic worldview of the personality' and to teach it students in philosophy courses of higher education. In her opinion, such world-view can be theoretically grounded on the philosophical trend called *cosmism*. Cosmism is nothing but scientifically oriented Hegelianism. Its main proponents (Mykola Umov, Mykola Kholodnyi, Kostiantyn Tsiolkovskyi, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Volodymyr Vernadskyi) take the shared position that man is a part of Universe and its evolution. Besides, they suppose that man takes an exceptional place in Universe and its processes. 'The cosmists' believe that man is the highest peak of evolution of Universe. Man's exceptionality in Universe is guaranteed by his mind. Mind enables man to know himself, Universe and his place in it.

Vaida Asakevičiūtė and Vytis Valatka focused their attention to the ongoing communication revolution and its consequences to human relations. Contrary to the aforementioned accelerationists, the researchers are worried about this revolution. In their mind, the present

communication technologies cause the mediated communication between people. Asakevičiūtė and Valatka believe that this type of communication cannot take place of the immediate communication, which is of significant importance for human existence. They ground their preference for the immediate communication on Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue (Buber 1958). Asakevičiūtė and Valatka argue that the direct contact creates conditions for the dialogic communication, or, in Buber's words, for the *I–Thou* relation, and that the dialogic communication forms the basis of authentic existence. Whereas the mediated relation causes only the monologic communication, or, in Buber's words, the *I–It* relation. Accordingly, the monologic communication is a feature of inauthentic existence. So man can exist authentically in the world only being in the direct relation with the other.

The questions concerning human existence are also discussed in the paper written by Liudmila Mockienė, Lora Tamošiūnienė and Marija Vabalaitė. The authors inquire into philosophical ideas of Juozapas Čepėnas (1880–1976), poorly known Lithuanian thinker. Čepėnas should be interesting for the local philosophical audience and international one, but for different reasons. The local audience should be intrigued by Vabalaitė et al. presupposition that Čepėnas deserves to be numbered among the Founding Fathers of Lithuanian philosophy, written in Lithuanian. (Till the second part of 19th century Lithuanian philosophy was written mainly in Latin and Polish.) Besides, the local audience should be attracted by the authors' statement that, in examining creative works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche, Čepėnas stands at the origins of the Existentialist philosophy in Lithuania. As regards international philosophical audience, Čepėnas should be interesting in the context of reception of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche in East-Central Europe at the first part of 20th century. In this case it is interesting that Čepėnas noticed the polyphonic character of Dostoyevsky's ideas prior to Mikhail Bakhtin (1984). Vabalaitė et al. says: 'The most significant is Čepėnas' conclusion of the complexity of Dostoevsky's inner existence and interior coexistence of irrevocable contradicting convictions about the unity of the universe and the place of the individual in that space revealed in his novels. This conclusion makes it possible for Čepėnas to identify the diversity of Dostoevsky's characters' world outlooks that resist reduction to a single truth, to use a term of Michail Bachtin, a certain heteroglossia of characters' (Vabalaitė et al. 2020: 65).

## PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

In spite of the fact that philosophers bravely diagnose problems of modern life and look for their solutions, as is the case with the introduced authors, trust in philosophy is diminished in society significantly. Doubts about the fate of their discipline are also raised by philosophers themselves. Some of them proclaim dethronization of philosophy or even its death (Heidegger 2003; Quine 1969; Rorty 1980).

Philosophy encounters with distrust not for the first time in the course of history. Already in Antiquity a negative approach to philosophy was expressed in the form of anecdote about the first philosopher Thales and his handmaiden. It is told that Thales started to stargaze and fell into the well. After seeing that, the handmaiden started laughing. Her laugh meant the triumph of everyday wisdom over philosophical thinking. It was supposed in this way that instead of being interested into lying close and useful things Thales is interested into lying far and useless ones.

Following Hans Blumenberg's metaphorology, Lina Vidauskytė chooses the anecdote about Thales and handmaiden to analyse the self-conception of Western philosophy. She cares to find out the moment when philosophers were troubled by handmaiden's laugh and, instead

of 'starry heaven' (pure theoretical thinking), they opt 'seeing not fall into the well' (practically oriented thinking). According to VIDAUSKYTĖ, such decisive turn occurred in philosophies and life histories of two German philosophers, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach. If VIDAUSKYTĖ's approach to Feuerbach is consistent with the common opinion of historians of philosophy, the same cannot be said for her position with regard to Hegel. Hegel's speculative philosophy is regarded by many historians of ideas as lying far away from everyday life. But VIDAUSKYTĖ convincingly demonstrates that Hegel's abstract concepts and theoretical constructs are grown up from the German philosopher's observations of daily life.

Philosophy is regarded as lying far and useless not only for everyday life, but as well for scientific activities. The attitude that science will solve all meaningful problems of knowledge itself, without the aid of philosophy, prevails among scientists and hyper-positivistically disposed philosophers. But the papers of Alexander Muss and Vladimir Drekalović show clearly that it is too early to write down philosophy.

From the times of La Mettrie (1996) there have been repeated attempts to reduce consciousness to the body. Whether this is in principle possible is also discussed in the contemporary philosophy of mind. Some philosophers of the mind hold that not only is it possible to reduce consciousness to the body, but that it has already been done by means of the neurocognitive sciences. Other philosophers of mind take the view that the neurocognitive interpretation of consciousness is limited and with serious shortcomings. But attempts to explain consciousness differently, according to Muss, were unsuccessful. He therefore considers it necessary to develop a theory that would allow the mind to be analysed from both a strictly scientific point of view and a philosophical one. According to Muss, Immanuel Kant's transcendental-idealist theory of mind and knowledge must form the basis of the philosophical approach. This theory both allows one to preserve the subjective perception of consciousness (self-consciousness) and justifies the construction of various theories of consciousness. In the mind of Muss, the subjective perception belongs to the transcendental level, and the construction of theories operates at the empirical level.

In his time, Alan Sokal raised the issue of the misuse of science in postmodern philosophy (Sokal, Bricmont 1998). Among the abuses he discussed was the misuse of mathematics. Sokal's considerations give the impression that mathematical mystifications are specific to postmodern philosophy only. Such a position can hardly be accepted. As Drekalović points out, the temptation to give own claims greater credibility through the authority of mathematics also exists in science. It is therefore necessary to have clear criteria to distinguish between the cases when use of mathematics ensures a genuine and unquestionable scientific explanation and the cases when mathematics provides an alleged reliability only. Drekalović proposes that the degree of mathematization of phenomena may serve for such purposes. If a phenomenon can be fully mathematically expressed and explained solely by mathematical means, without any additional non-mathematical assumptions, then mathematics truly and non-misleadingly ensures the reliability of scientific explanation. And if a phenomenon cannot be fully mathematically expressed and in order to explain it fully, it is necessary to use additional non-mathematical assumptions, then mathematics gives to scientific explanation an alleged reliability only.

The issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija* ends with the sections *Chronicle* and *In Memoriam*. The first section gives an overview of the scientific conference 'Ethics in the Environment of Media and Technologies' held at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences on 22 January 2019. The participants of the conference discussed various ethical aspects of technology, media

and creative industries. The second section is dedicated to the memory of Arvydas Šliogeris (1944–2019), the most renowned Lithuanian philosopher during the last decades.

## CONCLUSIONS

Concluding this review, it is necessary to state that philosophy shows no signs of full exhaustion of ideas. The reviewed authors demonstrate clearly that, as before, so now philosophers have something interesting to say not only about their discipline but also about society, human existence, and the powers and limits of human cognition. This suggests that philosophy suffers not so much from an internal crisis as from an external, institutional one.

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## Visuomenė, žmogus ir žinojimas

### Santrauka

Įvardiname šio „Filosofijos. Sociologijos“ numerio straipsnyje glaustai apžvelgiami publikuojami tekstai ir atskleidžiamas jų ryšys su nūdienos aktualijomis. Moksliniai straipsniai pagal temas suskirstyti į tris grupes: vienuose nagrinėjami socialinės ir politinės filosofijos klausimai, kituose gilinamasi į filosofinės antropologijos subtilybes, o trečiuose gvildenamos pažinimo problemos.

**Raktažodžiai:** socialinė ir politinė filosofija, filosofinė antropologija, proto filosofija, matematikos filosofija