

I do Believe in Science

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This article is an outline of the current issue of *Filosofija.Sociologija*, thematically divided into five sections. Starting from the most abstract thematically one and going down to reflections on actualities. Here I try to give it a meaningful structure and a flavour of a general *Zeitgeist* residing now in our contemporary academia.

Keywords: art, cognition, communication, embodied philosophy, pandemics, politics, social capital, social simulation

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory outline paper, I represent the current issue of our journal: what is its structure (created by me) and the logic behind it, what topics unite different authors from different fields, and how all this accidental plurality could be put together in a meaningful way.

The chapters are five, starting from traditionally more abstract themes and going ‘down’ to ‘practical philosophy’ (in the Aristotelian sense), and then to indeed very practical (ordinarily understood) concerns (such as pandemics and climate change). On many of them I am not impartial (and do not believe in the possibility or value of impartiality), therefore I do not pretend to be. My aim here is to provide a general view of ‘what is going on’, while doing it in a readable, interesting and, I hope, useful manner (yes, I do know how boring introductory articles are, and how difficult it is not to provide such one).

COGNITION AND COMMUNICATION

The first and biggest chapter consists of five articles, focused on cognition and communication, starting from the most ambitious one.

Zoya Stezhko and **Nataliia Shalimova** from Ukraine promise us a general methodology of knowledge. What they have in mind, however, is rather the urge for social engineering (verbalised modestly as ‘understanding society’) than epistemology. Or, to be more precise, the need to legitimise and encourage the already existing engineering, imagining themselves as advise-givers to actual politicians. Equipped by the concepts of Georg Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche’s, the new brave philosophers work to help the state to *optimise the development of society in the future* (Stezhko, Shalimova, 2022: 202). If not, if state institutions fail in this task, ‘[...] the choice of human behaviour is going always to be selfish. But the possibilities of personality formation are big today – theoretical studies of political philosophy, philosophy of morality and success in the implementation of the methods of modern spiritual practices of democratic countries evidence about that. [...] Actions in favour of an acceptable choice (the choice of the optimal is not possible) of

the individual's behaviour should be carried out by politicians through the vertical of state institutions, where the system of education and upbringing occupies a leading position (ibid.: 203–204). Or so the authors conclude.

The next article, by **Arto Mutanen** from Finland, provides a logico-conceptual approach to philosophy of communication, discovering that [...] *it is possible to share knowledge, information and ideas*, because *Communication is a phenomenon which takes place in every human society* (Mutanen, 2022: 206, 213). Indeed, humanity does so, and even with the help of metaphors, which, as the author rightly observes, make the communication more complicated! I do believe that the logico-conceptual approach that he has presented in this paper [...] *could also be applied to the communication of animal societies* (ibid.: 213).

Bing Zhuan Peng from China tries to propose a framework to analyse linguistic subjectivity by means of embodied philosophy, aiming [...] *to discover the speaker's subjective factors hidden behind language, dig the existence of speakers as subjects of consciousness and embodied experience, and understand the communicative function of language* (Peng 2022: 217). And he indeed discovers great things, e.g. that *Linguistic subjectivity (LS) is characterised by the speaker as subject of consciousness, speaker's embodiment, speaker's self-centrality, and speaker's interaction and perception of the SCC [the social communication context]*. Or that *Linguistic subjectivity (LS) exists in the speaker's real experience of the world [...]*. Or that *The realisation paths of philosophical and cognitive existence of linguistic subjectivity (LS) include the speaker's self-expressions, the speaker's meaning assignment to social communication context (SCC), and the speaker's meaning interpretation of social communication context (SCC)** (ibid.: 223).

Mariano Navarro and **Mindaugas Briedis** from México also investigate the embodied communication and subjective experience, constituting a noble counterexample: a real well-done research into a specific topic, namely, the role of the body in religious media, the case of subaltern Latino counter publics. Their paper [...] *explores the body-schematic and body-imaginative processes that underlie individuals' participation in the public sphere via religious media ecologies when indwellers of the subaltern [...] make use of the body to enact micro-oppositions to mainstream discourses*, to overcome their marginalisation, having some higher objectivities (identity, sense of togetherness, justice, plausibility, opposition and openness) at the same time as well (Navarro, Briedis 2022: 226).

The last paper ends this chapter by focusing on social simulation understood as a prognostic tool for communication. Its authors, **Jovilė Barevičiūtė** and **Vaida Asakavičiūtė** (both from Lithuania), mainly lie on the authority of Jean Baudrillard, from whom they borrow the very concept of 'simulation' – and use it, however, as if having a usual meaning: *Social simulation is a set of computational methods and/or strategies or a set of strategies for researching, cognising, analysing, and predicting communication and other processes that are taking place and can occur in social environments* (Barevičiūtė, Asakavičiūtė 2022: 242). That is why they can criticise him for insisting that nowadays virtual reality functions not as a prolongation, but rather as a substitute of empirical social reality, when the latter tends to become impercievable without the former. According to them, simply [...] *this author does not reflect the difference between ontological and epistemological simulation* (ibid.: 242).

* I like his laborious use of abbreviations together with the full phrases that they abbreviate from the first page to the last.

POLITICS AND THE POWER OF SPEECH

Language is powerful in politics, and politics is always obsessed with simulation. The second chapter opens by **Lina Vidauskytė's** (also from Lithuania) paper *Sophistry, Rhetoric and Politics*. Starting from our alarming situation (especially during the pandemic of COVID-19) when freedom of speech, although postulated, is weakly guaranteed, she tries [...] *to shed light on the connection between rhetoric and politics, and its dissemination in the sophistic and philosophical tradition* (2022: 245). Her argument is based on the conceptions of two contemporary philosophers – Barbara Cassin and Hans Blumenberg, reconsidering the level of sophistry in contemporary politics and paying attention to the *sometimes-unclear borderline between tyranny and democracy* (ibid.: 246). As she rightly points out, *Modern political correctness and 'cancel culture' have revealed unexpected parallels with the history of the rivalry between sophistic and philosophical discourses* (ibid.: 251).

Her fellow-citizens **Vaida Nedzinskaitė-Mitkė** and **Nerijus Stasiulis** examine the national identity and the nature of patriotic attitudes of individuals with respect to their nation-state. Namely, *The problem discussed in this article is how and why individuals identify or fail to identify with their modern nation and nation-state, or [...] the (un)willingness of individuals to go to war to defend the interest of their nation-state and possibly sacrifice their lives for it* (Mitkė, Stasiulis, 2022: 253). Personally, I fail to grasp why this problem is rather a philosophical, than an administrative or political one, or that of public relations, and take this blurring as an example of the state of mind so many in this academic issue and elsewhere testify by themselves. Namely, the extent of involvement of philosophy specialists in the current policies at least spiritually. They do their best trying to understand a very strange thing: why some individuals do not want to die for their fatherland?

Finally, an essay by **Algis Mickūnas** (the USA) deals with discursive power, accepting the postmodern zeal to find hidden power games in any layer of reality, no matter how innocent from the first sight, and looking for conceptually necessary rudiments of modernity in the postmodern world, taken as a construct of discourses and their power. His main question is [...] *how must the modern subject access such reality when it is assumed that such reality is not accessible to direct, perceptual intuition* (2022: 261). By constructing [...] *methodological and theoretical discourses which do not represent, but 'make' modern reality* (ibid.: 261), he (maybe preliminary) answers 'Maybe' because this essay is only the first part of something bigger.

MORAL ISSUES

From politics to morals. **Seungbae Park** (the Republic of Korea) works on a nobly ancient and abstract topic – the true nature of moral statements – fiercely defending moral subjectivism against moral objectivism. In a quite puzzling way, because what he defines as 'moral subjectivism' (*Moral subjectivism holds that moral statements express emotions, and that moral properties and moral facts do not exist in the world, i.e. they are not part of the physical universe* (2022: 269) in the history of philosophy has another, much narrower name: emotivism. 'Being subjective' is not the same as 'being just an expression of emotions', but the author seems not to be informed about that. The paper, however, stands proudly guilty for a clear structure, zeal for arguments, promises fulfilled and quite exact language: rare academic qualities nowadays.

The next and last article in this small chapter, *Technoscience and Artificial Evil: Ethical Aspect*, belongs to **Oksana Chursinova** and **Maria Sinelnikova** (Ukraine). It dwells upon *the problem of the applicability of the categories of 'good' and 'evil' to the functioning of new technologies*, enumerating various aspects of evil caused by scientific progress (2022: 277). The authors conclude [...] *that*

overcoming artificial evil is possible via a transition from a man-made to an anthropogenic (intellectual and humanistic) form of civilisation in which the achievements of technoscience serve not the self-destruction of mankind but the discovery of essential human forces (ibid.: 277), without the explication what this 'anthropogenic civilisation' means and how it is different from a 'man-made' one. In other words, simply: we will conquer evil if we stop being evil; we will not destroy humankind if we stop destroying it. They find the main danger nowhere else than in human selfishness accelerated by technologies: not in a growing excessive political and social control, not in human labour (and then lifes) becoming unneeded, not in the media and schooling process ruled by artificial intelligence. As if they consulted their fellow citizens who wrote the first paper published (and already discussed) in this issue.

ART AND CREATIVITY

The fourth chapter also consists of only two papers.

Edvardas Rimkus (Lithuania) critically observes aesthetic formalism in contemporary art. According to him, the narrow understanding of formalism has significant flaws, therefore it should be expanded: *In a narrow sense, the formalistic conception of art cannot range and explain the wide variety of contemporary art phenomena. In a wide sense, formalism – rejecting the reductionist definition of the essence of art, involving the conceptual dimension of the artwork, and expanding the dimension of sensibility – becomes a productive philosophical art theory allowing one to explain and investigate some part of the contemporary art (modern and postmodern) phenomena* (2022: 294). That it is indeed so, he illustrates discussing abstractionism and surrealism as two different types of contemporary formalistic visual art.

Karolina Lacytė (Lithuania) examines interconnections of creative and social capital (the problem is that some authors consider them as complementarities, while others held them to be mutually exclusive and incomparable). She somehow takes for granted the slogans of 'creative people', 'creative cities', 'creative society' and 'creative economy', as terms with clear and unconditionally positive meanings, as something that future, science and progress just bring to us, and goes on operating in this field. She favours the thesis of complementarity and argues that *The combination of social and creative capital is important for the economic and social well-being of the region* (2022: 296). Too much of both is, however, dangerous, let me quote her: *It is true that an excessive amount of social and creative capital can also have a negative influence – too much capital leads to the formation of gangs, small communities of people who behave immorally and criminally* (ibid.: 301). The substantiation (why, for whom 'It is true that...') is absent, so I can only guess: Is it self-evident that very creative and socially important people tend to become criminals, or rather being indeed creative and having a big social capital means to position yourself at the margins of our respectable society of creative mediocrities, which should defend itself by cancelling you?

REFLECTIONS ON PANDEMICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The last chapter is focused on 'actualities' from newspapers' headlines. And here the real moral issues begin.

An essay by **Basia Nikiforova** (Lithuania) dealing with visual images could belong as well to the chapter above, but 'hot topics' of pandemics, migration, and even the war in Ukraine here are more primary. It is a sensitive lamentation of the alarming events and wounded human condition, at the same time taking for granted their 'natural' course: alas, it just so happens... She treats pandemic restrictions and the new immobility as borders of visibility: *The mass*

migration and the pandemic return us to the reality of the human world with his non-freedom and illness. In the migration case, Europe has dealt with an 'alien body', and in the pandemic, with an 'infected or sick body'. The relationship between the image and the viewer is an important starting point in the representation of mass migration and pandemic. [...] Nowadays the development, materialisation, and embodiment of European borders are the stable visual symbol of our existence (2022: 303). Her silent hopes are invested in street art: The street art becomes a platform of the public opinion about the pandemic. Its advantage is the absence of any control and permission to be expressed. The source for street artists is mostly not only artistic fantasy but information and real stories. [...] Street artists often show something that potentially might be excluded from the official narrative (ibid.: 308).

Ilyas Supena (Indonesia) hopes for very different things, applying the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer to what he calls religious language related to COVID-19. He means public resistance of various religious communities to COVID-19 restrictions (inhibiting them to practice their traditional rituals) in Indonesia. And finds a philosophical problem: the resistance must be dispersed. In order to achieve this, to overcome the resistance, [...] *contextual understanding of religious texts is crucial. That is, [...] a solid methodological framework is needed to understand religious texts relevant to pandemic health protocols (2022: 311). That is, philosophers run to help governments, looking for concrete religious texts, which could be used as state propaganda tools legitimising pandemic restrictions to religious people from 'within'. Literally: This study wants to show that the application of pandemic health protocols has theological arguments in religious texts, such as the Koran and the sunnah (behaviour of the prophet) in the context of Islam (ibid.: 311). And even: Today, the interpreter can preventively interpret these religious text messages, giving birth to the COVID-19 health protocol (ibid.: 315).* I can only admire his straightforwardness.

Alfredas Buiko together with **Julita Slipkauskaitė** (Lithuania) contribute to the same task dealing with the so-called conspiracy theories, in particular those related with COVID-19 (Do they constitute a special case among other health-related conspiracies with regard to health concerns?). The authors do their best defending governmental policies from 'those uneducated fools', who cannot understand more complicated ideas (e.g. 'Put on your mask, or else go out!' or 'Put on your mask, or else you will die!') and still live in ancient primitive fairy tales fighting with imaginary villains: *Only folk tales and literary texts can compete with conspiracy theories in sense and clarity. From Beowulf and Epic of Gilgamesh to cheap romance novels sold at airports, where the world filled with heroes, villains, conflicts and goals is presented in a structurally coherent order, the same kind of tropes and cliches can be discovered in conspiracy narratives (2022: 318–319).* Here I do congratulate the authors' sincerity in confessing the way they treat worlds classics: as cheap romance novels.

The last paper by **Žilvinas Vareikis** (Lithuania) promises to analyse the *problem of climate change by comparing the philosophical ideas of the leading figure of Chinese Daoism Laozi and the German philosopher Norbert Bolz (2022: 325).* Interestingly enough, he manages to see the problem of climate change 'as a conflict of different interpretations' (i.e. not as 'real'), or so his tongue slips. Even more challenging (however in a different sense) is his bold courage to compare in this respect two civilisational paradigms – the 'Western' and the 'Eastern' one – unproblematically summarised, manifested and represented by those two philosophers (as if China is still and just Laozi; while the West evolved to the great Norbert Bolz).

The whole issue of the current *Filosofija. Sociologija* is finished conventionally, by Chronicle, filled, in this case, by **Tautvydas Vėželis'** *Politics, Ideology and Freedom of Speech in the Ontological State of the Global World.* Here he reflects a recent local academic event in Vilnius (Lithuania), namely, the conference with a similar title, where some of the authors of the issue and me myself have participated.

CONCLUSIONS

I hope I managed to form a meaningful whole of initially thematically not oriented articles, coming from all over the world. In other words, to create a framework, where everyone's impact is somehow related to those of the rest, and falls in place. Also, I hope you see what I see. Let me be ancient: *sapienti sat*.

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Aš tikrai tikiu mokslu

Santrauka

Tai apžvalginis šio žurnalo numerio sudarytojos straipsnis, kuriame glaustai pristatomi kiti jame skelbiami tekstai ir aptariama numerio struktūros logika. Tikslas – padėti pamatyti žurnalo straipsnius kaip visumą ir susidaryti bendrą naudingos informacijos suteikiantį vaizdą, o aptariant kiekvieną tekstą atskirai – išryškinti charakteringiausias vietas (nebūtinai sutampančias su autorių deklaruota intencija). Ir, žinoma, visa tai pateikti taip, kad skaitytojui būtų įdomu.

Raktažodžiai: įkūnyta filosofija, komunikacija, menas, pandemija, pažinimas, politika, socialinė simuliacija, socialinis kapitalas