Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Politics and Communication in an Ever-changing World

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This article is an overview and introduction of the current issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija*, thematically divided into five chapters. The topics cover various aspects of contemporary world: from the challenges related to technology and democracy to researches on youth values and worldview. What seems to unite all these articles (in spite of their plurality of themes, views and approaches) is the idea of an ever-changing world in which philosophy is interconnected with other sciences and disciplines, in order to provide more consistent and perhaps universal interpretations to the challenges that human beings must face in the contemporary world.

Keywords: semiotics, hermeneutics, technology, virtue, discourse, media reality, philosophy of medicine, ontology, Lithuanian history, democracy

INTRODUCTION

This article offers a general view of the twelve articles that form this new issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija*. Thematically divided into five chapters, this issue brings together contributions from authors who differ in their origin (mainly from Lithuania but also from China, Spain, the USA, Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic), research fields and scientific approaches. Trying to give a thematic order, to find a common ground, to such a plurality may result in a rather complex task. Despite this, what seems to unite all these articles is the conception of the world that is subject to constant and rapid changes: changes in our habits due to the proliferation of technologies; political and economical changes; changes in our perception of reality due to the influence of media; changes in youth's value system. In such an unstable world, dominated by technology and speed, where knowledge becomes increasingly fragmented and specialised, the philosophical approach, interconnected to other sciences and disciplines, helps to provide more consistent and perhaps universal interpretations to the challenges that human beings must face in the contemporary world.

Further I provide a general overview of the twelve articles contained in this current issue of the journal *Filosofija. Sociologija* by shortly introducing each of them.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES: TECHNOLOGY, DEMOCRACY

The first chapter focuses on some of the challenges facing contemporary societies: the proliferation of technologies, affecting roughly every aspect of human existence, and the crisis of democracy.

Egidijus Mardosas (Lithuania) discusses the contribution of virtue ethics approach to the broader field of the philosophy of technology. The author affirms that the question of human flourishing and well-being in contemporary technological societies can be analysed through two different perspectives: *the production approach that focuses on the roles technologies could and do play in production for the elimination of various forms of labour and the consumption approach that focuses on the role of technology in everyday social settings and interactions outside the workplace* (2023: 6). Nonetheless, Mardosas notices that the consumption approach still remains predominant in technological virtue theory and suggests that resources to unify both perspectives can be found in the Aristotelian tradition.

The next article, by **Žilvinas Svigaris** (Lithuania), focuses on the crisis that affects liberal democracies in Western capitalist societies, where a hegemony of the economical power over the political one can be observed. The author suggests to analyse the causes of China's economical development, where *authorities not only understood the importance of sharing and transferring ideas well, but also highly valued the importance of education, creativity, and innovation for the country's well-being in general* (2023: 18). As Svigaris points out, it seems that China has reached a balance between economical and political aspects by making a vast distribution of richness, *liberating nearly 800 million people out of poverty and creating the world's largest middle class* (ibid.: 15). In spite of this economical growth and material well-being we cannot but underline that still much has to be done in terms of civic and political freedoms in China.

ONTOLOGY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The second chapter consists of two articles dealing, although in different ways and through different approaches, with two of the most influential 20th century philosophers: Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Nerijus Stasiulis (Lithuania) discusses the way in which German Idealism, in particular authors such as Hegel and Schelling, influenced Heidegger's conception of the historicity of Being as well as that of the ecstatic four-dimensional time. As Stasiulis affirms, *the authors of German Idealism began to think about the Absolute in temporal and historical terms, and <…> this set the stage for Heidegger's historical and temporal understanding of Being* (2023: 24).

The last article in this chapter is by **Leonard Stone** (Lithuania) who explores the Jewish Ghetto situated in the Old Town of Vilnius employing Sartre's concept of the 'look', which was elaborated by the French philosopher in his work 'Being and Nothingness'. Walking along the streets that surround the Ghetto, the author searches for traces of historical consciousness as a way to contribute to *the historical documentation of atrocities committed against Jews, just as the first-person testimony has been vital from those Jewish survivors of holocaust* (2023: 41).

LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE

The third chapter consists of three articles focusing on the power of language and discourse, and on the issues behind media construction of reality.

Algis Mickūnas (the USA) presents the second (and apparently last) part of his essay on discursive power in postmodernity, whose first part was published in *Filosofija. Sociologija*

33(3). The author affirms that discourses, whatever discipline they belong to, are intrinsically power laden. In other words, discourses possess the power to reshape the environment according to the values and rules that they transmit, and this may possibly bring to forms of arbitrariness and autocracy. As he points out, *[t]he modern subject became subjected to its own inventions. As a saying in India goes: scholars in their silly pride, made a lion – then they died* (2023: 49).

Ivan Chornomordenko and **Oleksandra Rubanets** (Ukraine) introduce the issue of the metaphysics of cognitive processes within media reality. Starting from the assumption that verbal processes should be considered as cognitive processes in the formation of media reality, the authors seek to investigate how this may bring to various transformations in democratic societies. According to them, the main aspect of media reality is its power to influence users' perception in establishing whether something is considered being or nothingness, whether something is perceived to exist or not. As the authors affirm, in a society where people live *under conditions of constant continuity of information flows* and *of detail redundancy and unnecessary information* (2023: 56), it is of a fundamental importance to investigate the metaphysical effects of media reality on the conception of being as it *touches the deepest value foundations of human and society being* (ibid.: 56).

The last paper of this chapter, by **Bingzhuan Peng** (China), aims at discussing subjectivity in language from a philosophic perspective. In this study, subjectivity is mainly understood as *the speaker's subjective components, including the speaker's views, ideas and attitudes, in discourse concerning social situations or events* (2023: 58). The author formulates an analytical framework of subjectivity in discourse consisting of three models: *the experience model reflected by the speaker's social repositories, the mental model represented in the speaker's mental cognition and the communicative model shown in the speaker's communicative situations* (ibid.: 61). In order to apply this framework he decides to take in consideration and analyse some of the speeches pronounced by the current US President Biden concerning the COVID-19 topic. We should recognise that this study is fairly accurate, although some explanations may sound obvious: *the repetition 'please, please, and please' highlighted the urgency of vaccination* (ibid.: 64) or *first-person expressions, such as 'I know' and 'I encourage', bring the speaker closer to the participants* (ibid.: 64).

MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY

The pursuit of a philosophical approach to medicine is the theme that brings together the two articles of the fourth chapter.

Juan R. Coca together with **Juan Antonio Rodríguez-Sánchez** and **Juan A. Roche Cárcel** (Spain) aim at developing a theoretical framework for investigating the so-called 'undiagnosed rare diseases' (URD) through a semiotical and hermeneutical approach. The authors produce an overview of the existing scientific literature over this topic, underlining the absence of philosophical papers in this field. According to them, *URD could be considered as a sociotype with a set of conditioning factors related to the interrelation between its biosemiosis and sociosemiosis* (2023: 75). This paper demonstrates that the notion of sociotype, if properly challenged by philosophy, is indeed crucial for a wide understanding of the social factors conditioning people affected by URD.

Maira Shurshitbay together with **Faiina Kabdrakhmanova, Ermek Seitembetov** and **Aigul Zhirenova** (Kazakhstan) deal with the philosophical aspects that underlie Kazakh ethnomedicine. In this study (2023: 79–87), particular attention is paid to people's connection towards nature, shamanic practices and exogamy. The authors underline the potential

contribution of Kazakh worldview (that is continuously handed down from generation to generation) in raising awareness on the preservation of diversities, ecological issues and healthy lifestyle.

YOUTH VALUES AND WORLDVIEW

The fifth and last chapter presents two researches conducted with young people in Lithuania and the Czech Republic.

Vaida Nedzinskaitė-Mitkė together with **Nerijus Stasiulis** (both from Lithuania) illustrate and discuss the results of a focus groups research (2023: p. 88–93) conducted in the years 2021–2022, whose aim was to measure Lithuanian young students' attitude towards their own nation and state and, in addition, identify whether comics, especially graphic novels of historical genre, can be used as an educational instrument for the transmission of values.

Tereza Michalova and **Kateřina Maršíková** (both from the Czech Republic) aim at building *a theoretical framework for knowledge sharing from the perspective of selected factors such as altruism and social exchange theory (SET)* (2023: p. 94). In order to achieve this objective, authors review and present the existing scientific literature on knowledge-sharing in the educational context (as a way to build a theoretical background for the empirical research), and then illustrate the results of a semi-structured focus groups research conducted among Czech university students.

CHRONICLE

This current issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija* is concluded by the section 'Chronicle' in which **Edvardas Rimkus** (Lithuania) offers an overview of the scientific conference '(Post)truth and Knowledge from a Philosophical, Sociological and Communicative Point of View' held at the Lithuanian Academy of Science on 2 February 2023.

CONCLUSIONS

This new issue of *Filosofija. Sociologija* is here to testify the need for interconnecting the philosophical approach to other disciplines in interpreting the plurality of challenges, phenomena and problems that nowadays affect human beings, by properly interrogating, in all its aspects, the reality that we live in. Hopefully, these articles will inspire new researches and new philosophical reflections in this ever-changing world.

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Filosofiniai apmąstymai apie technologiją, politiką ir komunikaciją nuolat besikeičiančiame pasaulyje

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiamas ir pristatomas naujausias žurnalo *Filosofija. Sociologija* numeris, kuris tematiškai suskirstytas į penkis skyrius. Temos apima įvairius šiuolaikinio pasaulio aspektus: nuo iššūkių, susijusių su technologijomis ir demokratija, iki tyrimų apie jaunimo vertybes ir pasaulėžiūrą. Atrodo, kad visus šiuos straipsnius (nepaisant jų temų, požiūrių ir prieigų įvairovės) vienija mintis apie nuolat besikeičiantį pasaulį, kuriame filosofija yra susieta su kitais mokslais ir disciplinomis, siekiant pateikti nuoseklesnes ir galbūt universalesnes šiuolaikinio pasaulio iššūkių interpretacijas.

Raktažodžiai: semiotika, hermeneutika, technologija, dorybė, diskursas, žiniasklaidos realybė, medicinos filosofija, ontologija, Lietuvos istorija, demokratija