



## Introduction:

### *Embodied cognition and Existential philosophy for times of change and crisis*

The current issue of *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal* (2021, vol. 11, no. 1) covers two themes. The first group of eight articles relates to the ongoing debate in philosophy of the mind on the selected problems of “Embodied cognition”. The following group of seven papers discusses “Existential philosophy for times of change and crisis”. Since both leading themes partly overlap and interestingly make up two predominant philosophical traditions, that is analytical and the so-called continental one, the editors have decided to combine these two groups of articles together in a single issue.

Andrzej Dąbrowski, the author of the article entitled *Ucieleśnione poznanie — założenia, tezy i wyzwania* [Embodied cognition: assumptions, theses and challenges], reconstructs the origin of the idea of embodied cognition and the basic theses of the working programme labelled as 4E cognition, that is embodied, embedded, enactive, and expanded. The author aims at reconstructing the key concepts and assumptions. He also gives a brief evaluation of the presented positions, and argues that the current characteristics of this trend is incomplete and heterogeneous because the perspective includes at least a few related, partially overlapping and partially contradictory views on cognition, which, however, does not prevent interesting research on the nature of cognition and its determinants. Witold Wachowski’s paper *Ekologia poznawcza jako tradycja badawcza w kognitywistyce* [Cognitive ecology as a research tradition in cognitive science] presents cognitive ecology as a research tradition which embraces both embodied cognition and various forms of situated cognition. The article traces the history of the term “cognitive ecology” and recaps the historical views preceding this research tradition. Wachowski also outlines the contemporary research related to cognitive ecology. The author reviews ecological heuristics and discusses its foundations as well as its relationship with methodological individualism. Mateusz Tofilski and Filip Stawski, the authors of the next paper, *Podmiot ucieleśniony w zaprojektowanym środowisku. Analiza*

*wykorzystania koncepcji afordancji w architekturze* [The subject embodied in the designed environment. Analysis of the use of the affordance concept in architecture], show how affordances can play an important role within the embodied view of architecture. First, they present the concept of affordance, coined by James J. Gibson, as a fundamental category within the stream of embodied cognition. Affordance, that is what the environment offers the individual, is discussed in the context of design practice. Various positive and negative consequences of such a move are explained. Finally, the authors make an attempt to apply the concept of affordance to embodied architecture. Michał Piekarski in his paper entitled *Spór o ciągłość życia i umysłu. Argumenty na rzecz kognitywizmu* [The dispute over the continuity of life and mind. Arguments for cognitivism], focuses on the problem of continuity/discontinuity of life and mind. Non-cognitivists believe that there is a life-mind continuity that can be justified by referring to Claude E. Shannon's notion of syntactic information. Whereas, cognitivists argue that to explain cognition we need other tools than those we have used when explaining life. They claim that we should refer to the concept of semantic information, rejected by non-cognitivists. Piekarski advocates the cognitive solution, emphasizing the inevitability of semantic information. The next author, Marek Hetmański, in his paper *Cognitive-methodological functions of metaphors*, analyses the cognitive functions of metaphors (heuristic and methodological) present both in colloquial and scientific discourse, mainly in physics and psychology. On this basis Hetmański proposes a general model of the cognitive functions of metaphors, which includes the cognitive communicative functions as well as the pragmatic aspects of metaphorical thinking. *Embodied cognition and the problem of abstract concepts* is the title of Paweł Balcerak's article. He aims at elucidating the linguistic aspect of cognitive processes, especially the role of abstract concepts in embodied language theories. The author reviews selected concepts, pointing to their strengths and weaknesses. In his opinion the solution to the problem of abstract concepts in an embodied perspective should be sought in a hybrid approach that embraces the affective component. The subsequent paper discusses two dogmatic assumptions of cognitive semantics, which are rarely noticed and discussed. The author, Witold Marzęda, when referring to the first dogmatic assumption of cognitive semantics claims that the concept of folk psychology and common sense physics precede other concepts and categories. The second assumption he explains presupposes the existence of a fundamental and universal theory that could explain the basic concepts and origin of all human cognition and explain how fundamental and primary conceptualizations appear, how they are reflected in language and why some of them precede others. In this sense, it seems to be a universal theory, a theory of all possible knowledge. The paper by Andrzej Krawiec, *Na tropach współczesnej estetyki fenomenologicznej* [On the trail of contemporary phenomenological aesthetics], concludes the

group of eight articles addressing embodied cognition. The author focuses on contemporary phenomenological aesthetics. He claims that phenomenological aesthetics has the broadest cognitive horizon and at the same time argues for limiting its validity for individual actualizations of the potentiality of given phenomena. According to the author the basic cognitive procedure within phenomenological aesthetics is reductive reasoning, which goes in the opposite direction to logical entailment.

The second theme for this issue, “Existential philosophy for times of change and crisis”, brings to the fore research on the ways in which existential thinkers — including Søren Kierkegaard, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Lev Shestov, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger — can provide perspectives on the current challenges facing our societies in times of coronavirus and economic and social crises. Existential philosophy, with its focus on concrete, singular individuals, and the ambiguity of human life, was seen as especially pertinent in inter- and post-war Europe, in times of uncertainty where, in Beauvoir’s terms, “crushed by present events, [one] loses one’s way before the darkness of a future haunted by frightening spectres: war, illness, revolution, fascism”. Contributions in this group of seven research papers demonstrate that existential thought retains its relevance today. The first paper addressing this theme presents Rollo May’s phenomenology of love as a response to the twentieth-century cultural crisis. Jan Kutnik, in his *Fenomenologia miłości Rollo Maya: odpowiedź na dwudziestowieczny kryzys kultury* [Rollo May’s phenomenology of love: a response to the twentieth-century cultural crisis], discusses the relationship of will and love in terms of May who considered the Freudian take as anti-voluntary. Kutnik claims that love, belonging to the domain of affections, and will, which rarely appears in the discourse of empirical psychology, both are deeply involved in motivation processes. Therefore, the interaction of these two drives explains the process of directing the primary energy of life. The author claims that May in identifying modern times as times of an alienation of love and a domination of apathy, proposed a specific dialectic of love and will to be a remedy for this crisis. Kutnik concludes his paper with evaluation of the validity of May’s phenomenology and critical reflection on its placement in the context of psychoanalytic tradition. René Rosfort’s article explores how Kierkegaard’s critique of the establishment can help understand the dynamics of populism today, and provide a fresh understanding of this fuzzy concept. While populism presents real dangers (such as antidemocratic tendencies), it is also according to Rosfort an integral part of liberalism that we ought not to blatantly dismiss, and a reflection of the underlying inequalities produced by modern societies and elitist Enlightenment ideals. Kierkegaard’s critique of reason and the establishment offer a path for understanding how these ideals may fail to take into account the individual differences and variability of human experience and capacities, which are what make us human.

Populism discloses the paradox of the liberal ideals of reason, diversity and equality which can produce oppressive cultural and economic hierarchies. It reveals a need for the respect of our differences and ambiguities, and of our “deep humanity” despite our varying conditions and situations. The next article by Tomasz Kupś, *Lev Shestov on Søren Kierkegaard’s Christianity*, presents an original and inspiring interpretation of Kierkegaard offered by this renowned Russian thinker. Kupś reviews a full chronology of Shestov’s publications on the author of *Athens and Jerusalem*. He puts forward a thesis on “Kierkegaard’s Christianity”, which Shestov understands as a system of the self-justification of his own life. Besides, he reconstructs Shestov’s position and reflects on the comparative studies on the relations of Kierkegaard vs. Shestov by McLachan, Novotny, and Neto. William C. Pamerleau’s article focuses on Beauvoir’s use of disclosure and narrative and their applicability with regard to understanding racism today. Pamerleau draws on theories of narrative identity (notably Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Paul Ricœur) in order to complement Beauvoir’s view on human freedom in order to offer a more complete account of oppression, and the ways in which it emerges through social pressures and cultural perceptions. Beauvoir’s ethics and theories of narrative identity both insist on the fact that we make the world present to ourselves through the ways in which we disclose it, thereby establishing what is meaningful and significant. Whereas Beauvoir focuses on individual freedom in her *Ethics of ambiguity*, however, she seems to neglect the importance of the ways in which culture determines the types of narratives upon which identity is constructed. In situations of oppression, these narratives may undermine any positive relation to one’s identity and affect individuals’ and groups’ ability to positively appropriate their identity through narrative. Rather than merely insisting on individual freedom and resistance to oppression, Pamerleau suggests that effective resistance also must originate in non-oppressed groups and their willingness to hear the narratives of others and critically reflect on the ways in which our collective narratives deny or impose meaning on others. The author of the next essay on Camus’ *The plague*, Maciej Kałuża, offers an original attempt to re-read Camus’ text in light of the coronavirus pandemic and the socio-political contexts of our times. While the situation in Camus’ novel in many ways evokes our current predicament, Kałuża invites us to reflect on the ways in which this repetition is marked by differences — for example the fact that Camus’ silence about colonial oppression has been replaced by a concern for social justice, and a recognition of the fact that all lives matter. An active re-reading, or re-appropriation, of Camus’ existential novel can, however, provide us with guidance in understanding how to navigate the challenges the future holds, and to resist the temptation to return to a pseudo-normality. Jakub Gomułka’s article turns on questions of the possibility for rational debate between two competing sets of moral beliefs. In a world that appears deeply divided with regard to basic moral

or political beliefs, Gomulka maintains that such discussion is nevertheless possible. Drawing on Wittgenstein's "hinge epistemology" in *On certainty*, he demonstrates how this makes room for extra-systemic argumentation by differentiating hinge propositions (i.e. basic certainties that regulate our standard ways of reasoning) from criteria of meaning. He argues that this allows for an understanding of other systems of moral and epistemic belief, and opens to the possibility of re-evaluating our basic worldviews. The seventh paper addressing "Existential philosophy for times of change and crisis" by Mateusz Waško, entitled *Fenomen rzucenia we wczesnej filozofii Martina Heideggera* [The phenomenon of thrownness in the Martin Heidegger early philosophy], aims at analysing thrownness (*Geworfenheit*). The author offers his own interpretation discussing this well-known Heideggerian phenomenon within three contexts: (1) thrownness into the openness of being, (2) thrownness into the world, (3) thrownness into entity. In conclusion, he states that thrownness turns out to be this character of *Dasein* which describes her as basically handed over to the openness of being, to the world, and to entity. However, it does not release *Dasein* from her responsibility, but instead burdens her with it.

In the subsequent column, "Polemics & debates", Prasasti Pandit reviews Richard Schusterman's latest book entitled *Ars erotica: sex and someaesthetics in the classical arts of love* (2021), and Ryszard Mirek argues with some claims of Roman Tuziak on the relevant paraconsistent logic presented in his book, *Logika sprzeczności. Uwagi o logice parakonsystentnej* (2019). The column "Teaching philosophy" contains the report on the *Original pilot programme of philosophical education "Philosophy makes sense"*, co-authored by Marzenna Jakubczak, Kazimierz Mrówka, Paweł Sznajder, Paweł Wójs. The programme was implemented in selected high-schools in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship in 2018-2020 with significant success resulting in an enhancement of comprehensive skills in heuristics and critical thinking. And finally, in the section "Obituaries and memories", Beata Polanowska-Sygulska recalls Professor Zbigniew Pełczyński in a recollection entitled *Od Hegla do Szkoły Liderów* [From Hegel to the School for Leaders].

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