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# LAKUNARUMAS KAIP FILOSOFINĖ IR KOGNITYVINĖ KATEGORIJA

Lacunarity as a Philosophical and Cognitive Category

## SUMMARY

The article represents the status of lacunarity as a philosophical and cognitive category. The characteristic features of members of certain categories is analyzed through the prism of the classical Aristotelian categorization theory, and the assumption is made that those sets of members resulted from deep active cognitive processes. The issue of how the classical system of categories is enlarged by new sets of members, objects and scientific phenomena and suchlike is defined, and the issue of how new members are added is addressed. It is suggested to recognize as a philosophical and cognitive category the scientific notion of lacunarity. There are scientific arguments given to recognize the categorical status of lacunarity, whose members in one or another way adhere to the philosophical categories of “non-being” and “nothing”. The particular attention is given to validating these categories by their identifier label of “absence” in the context of understanding the “existence / non-existence” of absolute emptiness. The new compelling arguments of scientists about the possibility / inability to extract energy from vacuum are mustered. A preliminary conclusion is that lacunarity is a philosophical and at the same time cognitive category of binary nature. Its members are defined by contrasting existence / absence from the positions of “abstract non-being” and “more concrete nothing”, but in both cases as “non-absolute emptiness”.

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje apibūdinamas lakunarumas kaip filosofinė ir kognityvinė kategorija. Remiantis Aristotelio kategorizacijos teorija, nagrinėjamos tam tikrų kategorijų charakteristikos. Daroma prielaida, kad kategorijų grupės atsirado vykstant giliems kognityviniams procesams. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas klausimas, kaip klasiikinę kategorijų sistemą išplėtė naujos grupės, objektai, moksliniai reiškiniai ir pan. ir kaip šis procesas vyksta šiuo metu. Siūloma įdiegti naują filosofinę ir kognityvinę mokslinę sąvoką – lakunarumas. Mokslinėje literatūroje pateikiami svarstymai apie lakunarumo kategoriją tapatinant ją su filosofinėmis „nebūties“

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: lakunarumo kategorija, nebuvimo sąvoka, kategorizacijos procesas, nebūtis, niekis.

KEY WORDS: category of lacunarity, the concept of absence, the process of categorization, non-being, nothing.

ir „niekio“ sąvokomis. Itin daug dėmesio skiriama jų validumo identifikatoriui, kurį nusako kategorija „nebuvimas“ kaip visiška tuštuma „egzistencijos“ ir „ne-egzistencijos“ sąvokų kontekste. Nagrinėjami nauji įtikinami mokslininkų argumentai apie galėjamą ir negalėjamą išgauti energiją iš vakuumo. Straipsnyje teikiama preliminari išvada, kad lakunarumas yra ir filosofinė, ir kognityvinė kategorija. Tai kategorija, kuriai būdinga dvejopa prigimtis, šią kategoriją apibūdina kontrastas tarp „buvimo“ ir „nebuvimas“ iš „abstrakčios nebūties“ ir „konkretesnio niekio“ pozicijų. Vis dėlto abiem atvejais tai „neabsoliuti tuštuma“.

## INTRODUCTION

The high-profile notion of “category” has always been an important issue being in focus of philosophers, starting from the classical works of Plato and Aristotle, who initiated the entire scientific tradition of the modern categorization theory. Currently, there are several approaches to the determination of categories as definitively stated set of subjects, objects, phenomena and the other outward things. Among many ways there are the basic three approaches left in use with a greater or less degree of skepticism: 1) classical approach; 2) logical approach and 3) cognitive approach. The notion of “category” has always been an important issue being in focus of thinkers, who viewed categories phenomenon in various philosophical, social, cognitive and communicative aspects, namely, comprising such new categories as repetition (Pacholok 2019: 106) and multimodality (Darginavičienė 2019: 147), tracing cooperativity (Korolyov 2019: 89) and politeness (Vasko 2019: 86) as cognitive and communicative categories, by rethinking philosophical categories in the new light as “categories for life” (Stančienė 2019: 46). Without maintaining familiarity with numerous widely known and declared successions of these approaches, it must be noted that we view “the categoriza-

tion both as process and result, it is also seen as the way of taking the world allowing to systemize reality and permitting to see similarity of the studied phenomena and to identify differences between them” (Kubryakova 2004: 85).

Carrying out the categorization of the outside world, human consciousness “organizes the endless diversity of its sensations and the outer variety of forms of matter and modes of motion putting them into certain rubrics, in other words, classifies and draws them together under associations criteria: classes, categories, groupings, sets, categories” (Kubryakova 1997: 45–46). According to E. L. Boyarskaya, we learn the outside world by establishing common characteristics comparing the gained experience to the new one (Boyarskaya 2011: 18–28). The new experience is being classified as new consciousness pattern and correlates with one or more cognitive structures formed earlier. The result of the action of deep cognitive processes is the formation of a system of categories (ibid 2011: 18).

It should be emphasized that when it comes to the new cognitive experience, we speak of the system of the already selected categories as an open system, in connection with which the question naturally arises regarding how the new

categories should be added. One of such new categories is lacunarity (Anokhina 2018: 12), the status of which is discussed through the prism of the process of categorization of “non-being” closely connected consequentially to the category of “nothing” (Anokhina, Derevianchenko, Naumenko 2017: 71–76). However, this assumption requires the search for scientific arguments concerning, first of all, the status of lacunarity as a category. Such an articulation of issue has proved the urgency of the research of the pro-

posed article and its prospects for the humanities in general.

However, this assumption requires the search for scientific arguments concerning, first of all, the status of lacunarity as a category. This statement of the problem testifies to the relevance of the topic of the proposed article and its prospects for the humanities in the whole.

The purpose of the article is to present scientific arguments to substantiate the status of the concept of lacunarity as a philosophical and cognitive category.

## LACUNARITY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORY

Conceptual categories started to be formed from ancient times, when the very concept of “category” arose (from Greek. *Κατηγορίαί*, lat. *Categoriae* or *Praedicamenta*). According to Aristotle (Aristotle 1978: 687), categories are homogeneous formations with well-defined boundaries. Membership in this category is determined by the limited number of necessary and sufficient sensory and perceptual attributes that are binary in nature. It is beyond doubt that when trying to formulate the assumption of the categorical status of lacunarity it is necessary to begin its consideration, as already noted above, from the standpoint of the philosophical origins of the abstract category of “non-being” and the more concrete category of “nothing”.

In General, if we delineate the range of problems directly related to the category of nothing, they somehow relate to such binary oppositions as chaos / space, non-existence / being, complete emptiness / something, vacuum / matter, and the like.

Firstly, if we refer to the Greek philosophical thought, we might disclose the ontology of the category of “non-being” from the point of its correlation to the origin of the category of lacunarity where the primary category of lacunarity bore the notion “non-existence/absence”.

A brief excursion into the philosophical long gone past of categories of “non-being / absence / lacunarity” should begin with the Eleian school (Zeno of Elea, Meliss, Parmenides, etc.), where the idea of “non-being” was completely rejected and instead of that the idea of “being” was absolutized. To illustrate this point let us refer to Parmenides’ (Mourelatos, Vlastos 2008: 358–360) philosophy where there was discovered the way to treat things by opposition, in particular, by such oppositions as “existing / not existing”. If it “exists”, it is something that can be, it is a “being”. On the contrary, “non-being” is something that cannot exist. “Being” is something that truly exists. “Non-being” is something that does not exist.

However, the subsequent philosophy of the atomists (Leucippus, Democritus, Lucretius) renewed interest in the problem of “non-being” and considered it in connection with the existence of physical emptiness. And these works gave impetus to a new vector in the study of “non-being”.

In this context, we should also consider the category of “nothingness” and, above all, referring to Plato, who generally investigated the question of the foundations of being and development of knowledge (Solovyov 1894: 837–851). Plato and his followers recognized “nothingness” as a key category of ontology.

So, if we start to reconsider the question of what is the process of categorization of “non-being” and how to interpret “nothing” of it, then the arguments of Aristotle must be mentioned, who argued with the eliates about their statement that “nothing arises from nothing”. The philosopher claimed that inanimate matter can start life. He considered the emptiness (from Greek Κενόν) and chaos as types of locus (from Greek Τόπος). However, as for the emptiness, Aristotle did not consider it to really exist: nature does not allow emptiness (lat. *natura abhorret a vacuo*).

In his treatise “Categories”, which consists of 15 Chapters, Aristotel (2017) gradually described the nature (ontology) of “being”. The first Chapter reveals the essence of things, where the philosopher describes the concept of logos (essence) and the concept of dzoon (being). The second Chapter describes the possibility of certain entities to amalgamate with one other. The third Chapter introduces such concepts as genus and species

(type and variety) and interprets their categorical relationship. The fourth Chapter brings to the light the original representation of Aristotle’s categories, which are used for the description of entities. The philosopher asks: how much? how? / in relation to what? / where? / when? / in what position? / in which way to own? / how to act? and the like. Reaching the essence of things, Aristotle in principle begins the first attempt to explain the process of categorization of reality. The fifth Chapter describes [essence], the sixth Chapter describes [quantity], the seventh Chapter describes [relation]. In the eighth Chapter the philosopher interprets [quality]. These primary categories he treated by the term *symptomata* [phenomena] (Aristotle 2017: 41). In the ninth Chapter we find a list of the last six categories [action, possession, time (when?), space (where?), etc.]. And as of the next tenth Chapter gives description of the four kinds of oppositions with special attention paid to the opposition existence / absence as a lack of something...] (ibid 2017: 63).

It is this Aristotelian understanding of the “absence of being” that is the philosophical basis for determining the origin of the categorical status of lacunarity.

Ontologically, the absence of being is considered not as an absolute emptiness, but, above all, as a process of negation of being, which represents the transition to another existence. In late Buddhism, it is believed that in reality there is only emptiness, identical with nirvana. An attempt to analyze the category of “non-being” is found in Indian philosophy where they distinguished between 1) relative non-being (*samsarga-abhava*) – the

absence of anything in some kind of thing (S is not in P) and 2) absolute non-being – the difference between one thing and another (S is not P). Relative non-being appears as non-existence before emergence (prag-abhava), non-existence after annihilation (dhvansa-abhava) and the absence of connection between two things (athyanta-abhava). This is most thoroughly interpreted by the ancient Eastern philosophy, for which the world is a constant cycle of transformation of being into non-being.

In the philosophy of modern times Bergson viewed the category of “non-being” bearing in mind something that might not happen: “*Me, not being, nothing would be*” (Vial: 157–165). F. Nietzsche described being as the way of man at a time when “*God is dead*” (Mozhejko 2002: 987–988). Meanwhile J. P. Sartre (2001) invited the absolutely new idea singling out the philosophical category “being for oneself”.

In the most consistent way during the modern times this problem was outlined in the work of A. M. Chanyshv's “*Treatise on nothingness*” (1962), which was published in 1990 and where the thinker interpreted the category of “non-being” as the starting point. In our view, both the way of philosophizing and great diversity of arguments being quite persuasive made that work outstanding and motivating to the really lively discussion in the modern philosophy circles where there is currently a shift regarding the relations between the basic categories of ontology where nothingness becomes the main issue of this dispute. A. M. Chanyshv noted that philosophy begins with the absolutization of being, with the

invention of a timeless beginning, a substantial link turning into “the water of Thales, the Apeiron of Anaximander, the air of Anaximenes, the fire-logos of Heraclitus” (Chanyshv 1990).

The philosopher distinguishes “consciousness of being” and “consciousness of “non-being”. The philosophy of “non-being” suggests that it exists and moreover it must be seen as primary and absolute, whereas in contrast, “being” is relative and secondary – that is the main ultimate message of the science of nihilology (ibid 1990: 158–165). This assumption made by A. M. Chanyshv is the fundamental premise for determining the status of lacunarity as a philosophical category, which is based on the awareness of the essence of non-being, but not as an absolute emptiness, but as absence of something or as negation of something abstract.

As for the correlation between the category of “lacunarity” and the category of “nothingness”, I. Kant (1998: 78) also connects the latter with the absence of something already more concrete and presents categorization of nothing as *nihil originarium* (actually nothing), as *nihil negativum* (negative nothing), as *nihil privativum* (private nothing) (Kant 2004: 240).

M. Heidegger (2013: 277) similarly considered the nature of the philosophical category of “nothingness” (Chytanka z filosofiyi 2013: 83) because of the awareness of absence. Reflecting on the metaphysics of being in his philosophic tractate, M. Heidegger asks: “Let us try to ask a question about “nothing”. What is “nothing”? Already the first approach to this question reveals something unusual. In asking such a question, we imagine “nothing” in advance as some-

thing that somehow “exists” – as if it were something existent. But things in existence are absolutely different from nothing” (ibid 2013: 28).

Indeed, in today’s world it seems problematic to prove or disprove the existence of emptiness. From the scientific point of view, “nothing” correlates with the concepts of vacuum and absolute emptiness which are adherent to it. Pure vacuum, like the concept of pure nothingness are abstractions. Let us turn to M. Kaku (2008) who provided his arguments in the work “Physics of the impossible”:

A tantalizing question is: Is it possible to extract energy from nothing? Physicists have only recently realized that the “nothing” of the vacuum is not empty at all, but teeming with activity. One of the proponents of this idea was the eccentric genius of the twentieth century Nikola Tesla, a worthy rival to Thomas Edison. He was also one of the proponents of zero-point energy, that is, the idea that the vacuum may possess untold quantities of energy. If true, the vacuum would be the ultimate “free lunch,” capable of providing unlimited energy literally from thin air. The vacuum, instead of being considered empty and devoid of any matter, would be the ultimate storehouse of energy (Kaku 2008: 269).

At this particular moment, it is not technically possible to actually reproduce a vacuum, because in the evacu-

ated environment, which should be described as vacuum, there is a certain number of particles (atoms, ions, electrons), and there are both electromagnetic and gravitational fields. This implies that the concept of pure nothing does not even technically exist.

Some modern discoveries connect the category of “nothing” with other achievements of science. In fact, in 1928, the Briton Paul Dirac, one of the greatest physicists, discovered and experimentally proved the existence of a positive electron, which was previously considered just a fragment of emptiness. Even Paul Dirac mathematically proved that the emptiness of vacuum void the density of nuclear matter (Rutkovskaja 2012: 158).

It has also been proven by Stephen Hawking that a black hole is not emptiness, but the high-energy matter, “a region of space-time from which nothing, not even light, can escape, because gravity is so strong” (Hawking, Mlodinov 2018: 159).

These condensed generalized views of different times give grounds to consider lacunarity as a philosophical category of binary nature, which is defined through the opposition of existence/absence from the standpoint of its “abstract non-being” and more “concrete nothing”, but in both cases we view it as non-absolute emptiness.

## LACUNARITY AS A COGNITIVE CATEGORY

As for the definition of lacunarity as a cognitive category, its origins should be sought in the Phenomenology of E. Husserl (1998), where we are talking, among

other things, about the need to study the relations between things and phenomena.

E. Husserl, the theorist of “physical idealism”, who turned philosophy into

a kind of scientific research activity that can improve itself. Reflecting on the “first principle of being”, the philosopher created phenomenology, according to the postulates of which, belief in the existence of the world should be considered the greatest prejudice of modern scientific thought (Zotov 2005: 98). Husserl’s phenomenology has its own theoretical framework and its methodological principles, similar to mathematics (ibid 2005: 169). According to E. Husserl in the beginning the mathematical zero is not a number, but only represents “no”; or, more precisely “pre-something”, something undetermined (ibid: 328).

Besides of that, the cognitive essence of the category of lacunarity may be possible to explore through the prism of K. G. Popper’s (2005) conception. In his acclaimed work “the logic of scientific discovery” (1959), the scientist operates with philosophical, mathematical and physical terms (for example, “zero probability”, “zero degree”, “absolute zero”, “zero moment”) (Popper 2005).

“Zero probability” in K. Popper’s terms is closely connected to the precise structures of probability and meaning which are “limitless and everlasting in number containing objects or spatiotemporal areas of the endless universe, the probability of any (non-tautological) universal law is zero (possibility)”. “Absolute zero” is a logical and mathematical term that is used to denote the basic elements of the Boolean set  $\{1, 0\}$  and the logical operations “true” / “false”. And for the concept of “zero moment”, it is the very term scientist use to define to the reference point from which time can be measured (Popper 2005: 344).

K. Popper supported the Aristotelian idea “*dictum de omni et nullo*” (Commens 2019) which is read as follows: *Dictum de omni: Dogs are mammals. Mammals have livers. Therefore dogs have livers. Dictum de nullo: Dogs are mammals. Mammals do not have gills. Therefore dogs do not have gills* and gave his own addition to the classical syllogism based on the principle of “*nota-notae*”, considering it to be the main principle of indirect predication (*the sign of a sign of anything, X, is itself a sign of the very same X*) (Popper 2005: 114).

From the cognitive-semiotic perspective, the concept of absence began to be considered in connection with such a concept as simulacrum, the most vividly discussed by poststructuralists (J. Derrida, J. Baudrillard et al.), who also, like other thinkers (Cauchi 2019: 15–32), for many millennia sought ontological and epistemological prerequisites for the existence of all things (Being), proposed their own concepts of signs of non-existent reality.

The reality of the simulacrum conceals the absence of “not real” reality, but any reality at all. But this does not mean that we are talking about a distorted world. Simulacra reproduce the reality that is accessible and available for perception. There is no other reality; no other world of life (peculiar to the senses and consciousness). The world becomes a simulation that means being completely imaginary (Baudrillard 1983: 1–30).

Taking this into consideration, the cognitive nature of the category of lacunarity should be understood in connection with the reflection in the human mind of the so-called “absent” reality. And it is the phenomenon of the simu-

lacrum that is here the bearer of a certain specific force, which in its social manifestation denies everything that has to do with the actual state of things. In modern life, this phenomenon is a concentrated embodiment of social simulation processes (one of the parties to the category of “nothing”) and the guarantor of their implementation, which, in turn, plays a key role in ensuring the dynamic balance and progressive development of modern life.

Based on the philosophical and cognitive essence of the categorical status of lacunarity, there is every reason to declare that this status was formed on the

basis of various concepts and traditions, in which scientists tried to explain the phenomenon of abstract absence through the prism of the category of non-being, as well as the absence of something in it (the category of nothing).

Referring to philosophic and cognitive essence of the categorical status of lacunarity, there are all grounds to claim that this status has been formed by different conceptions and traditions within the scope of which they tried to explain the phenomenon of abstract absence through the prism of the category of non-being, and the absence of something in it (the category of nothing).

## CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing this problem as complicated challenge concerning principles of enlarging of the classical system of categories with new sets of members; it should be pointed out lacunarity as a new member. The ontology of lacunarity is based on the philosophical categories of “non-being” and “nothing” clinging to the adherent concept of “absolute absence”. The latter was considered by various scientific schools from the standpoint of explanation it as “existence / non-existence” of absolute emptiness. The discussions on

this issue concluded in new hypothesis that the vacuum, which was previously considered empty and devoid of any substance, is in fact an inexhaustible source of energy. In view of this preliminary conclusion, scientists-physicists interpreted lacunarity as a philosophical and at the same time cognitive category of binary nature, whose members join it by contrasting existence / absence from the standpoint of “abstract non-being” and “more concrete nothing”, but in both cases as “non-absolute emptiness”.

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