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A FEW REMARKS ON THE SCIENTIFIC PROPOSITIONS FOR HUMAN SALVATION*

Kelios pastabos apie moksliską žmonijos išgelbėjimą

SUMMARY

The paper focuses on the issues of philosophical foundations of science policy theoreticians, experts and educators. These persons eagerly contain human prosperity within a (quasi)scientific agenda. The paper contends that this universal techno-scientific approach is not directly connected with and owes very little to the socio-political arrangements of certain governments or agencies. Therefore, the claim that societal challenges ought to be dealt with scientifically should be separated from the claim that the techno-scientific problem-solving is the only virtuous way to human enhancement. Consequently, the issues of scientific autonomy and representationist and nonrepresentationist paradigms of scientific knowledge are considered and their brief conceptual assessment is proposed.

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje analizuojama, kokiomis filosofinėmis prielaidomis vadovaujasi mokslo politikos teoretikai, ekspertai ir ugdytojai, aktyviai siejantys žmonijos gerovę su (pseudo)mokslinė darbotvarkė. Teigiama, kad visuotinis techno-mokslinis požiūris nėra tiesiogiai susijęs ir funkcionuoja atskirai nuo atitinkamų vyriausybių ar agentūrų socialinių ir politinių programų. Taigi teiginį, kad socialiniai iššūkiai turėtų būti sprendžiami moksliskai, derėtų atskirti nuo teiginio, kad techno-mokslinis problemų sprendimas yra vienintelis padorus kelias į žmonijos klestėjimą. Kartu nagrinėjami mokslinės autonomijos, reprezentacionistinių ir nereprezentacionistinių mokslinio žinojimo paradigmos klausimai bei pateikiamas trumpas konceptualus jų įvertinimas.

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RAKTAŽODŽIAI: politinė mokslo filosofija, transhumanizmas, posthumanizmas, defliacionizmas, mokslo praktikos.
KEY WORDS: political philosophy of science, transhumanism, posthumanism, deflationism, scientific practices.

INTRODUCTION

The European Commission's tripartite manifesto *Science with and for Society* under the *EU Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation* presupposes the integration of science and society as a precondition to human flourishing.

The preconditions to human prosperity in this sub-programme are fairly elaborated. The first part of the manifesto (2014–2015) invites to “help build effective cooperation between science and society, recruit new talent for science and pair scientific excellence with social awareness and responsibility” without “reprioritising” the preceding aims and initiatives; to implement “a crucial issue”, i.e. the elaboration of “more responsible science” and “policies more relevant to citizens”, merged with an educated “social and political constituency” capable of “sharing the values of science”; to reaffirm science’s “contributions to knowledge, society and economic progress”, etc.

However, in effect, what the manifesto lacks throughout its entire framework (including the following parts for years 2016–2017 and 2018–2020) is the clarity of the exercised philosophical attitude. What are the values of science and how do they converge with civic values? What does scientific and social responsibility consist of? How to define *effective cooperation, relevant policies, economic progress, contributions to knowledge?*

The essay does not aim to directly address these issues, which are too broad and complex. To narrow down the research focus, I aim to articulate what sort of intellectual instinct may drive science policy theoreticians, experts and educators to contain human well-being with (quasi)scientific agenda. That is, I investigate the fundamental philosophical elements or ideological building blocks that validate the so-called “happiness industry” and supposedly provide the citizens of the Western world with the brightest prospects for their future.

SCIENCE AND THE EU POLICY

The official EU position¹ proclaims that the Europe's future depends directly on a wise strategy of investments into “research and innovation”, i.e. on a) worldwide economic competitiveness, and b) political efficiency, otherwise called a “unique social model”. Ideologically, the EU postulates the inextricability of *free market* and *liberal democracy* as the key to solving “societal challenges”.

Note that free market and liberal democracy are basically socio-political structures that aren't “natural”, or self-sustainable entities. Quite the opposite: their own existence is designed by a certain human will. It is precisely the specificities of their arbitrary design that generate most of those societal challenges, which the EU – a socio-political entity in itself – endures and is determined to (dis)solve by implementing techno-

scientific instruments. *Research* and *innovation* are relatively “natural” or “organic” instruments on the account of their materiality and in the sense that they function as problem-solving agents of actual issues, whether or not these issues originate from the social sphere.

In other words, the challenges of climate change, clean energy, vaccination, healthy food etc. bear dual natural-social character, and must be addressed accordingly.

Yet precisely for that reason one must suspect that the universal techno-scientific approach is not directly connected and owns very little to the socio-political

arrangement the EU sees as a prerequisite to human prosperity. The political ideology of the EU takes its own values for granted, and there is nothing initially wrong, or at least exceptional, with that. The issue is the assumed causal nexus between techno-scientific thinking (which is materially engaged) and freely trading liberal democracies (which are ideologically constructed). The claim that societal challenges ought to be dealt with scientifically (to “preserve our unique social model”), considerably differs from the claim that the techno-scientific problem-solving is the only virtuous way to human enhancement.

WHAT PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE IS FOR

Since the end of the XX century the philosophy of science has been increasingly focusing on more specific research subjects, disciplines and methods. Following the specialisation of science philosophy puts at risk its generality for the sake of more substantial knowledge of actual scientific practices. There are systematic arguments in favour of the strong focus on the distinct practices of the sciences. If science cannot be understood from an armchair position, one must (naturalistically) question the very division of philosophy and science. Concentrating upon scientific practices eventually leads to the postmodern criticism of all the general epistemologies of science, all universal theories of scientific rationality. Disunity of the sciences becomes their strength rather than their fiasco.

However, it doesn't mean that general philosophical topics are no longer

valid (cf. Radder 2012). The relation of the sciences with human values is one of them, and it cannot be resolved without invoking certain general para-scientific interpretations. To be sure, these interpretations are no longer *stricto sensu* scientific, but rather socio-political (broadly ideological). Steve Fuller accurately states that from now on, the political correctness contravenes, in its own right, not only “science”, but also the category of “human” as in any sound way unequivocal and privileged species definable by scientific enterprise (cf. Fuller 2012).

On the other hand, if we (like the EU strategists) require from science certain normative guidance, if we recognise “its political capacity to organise humanity into projects of universal concern” (Fuller 2012: 113), we must be prepared to also accept the consequences of “epis-

temic justice”, i.e. the ability to represent all of the humanity:

It must include people who can spontaneously adopt a sense of “critical distance” on the research topic by virtue of having no necessary stake in whatever conclusions might be reached. (ibid.: 118)

But what if your sense of duty, human instincts, political alliances, cultural loyalties unfold as epistemically unjust from the “critically distant” point of view? What kind of philosophical stance towards the development of society (environmental, conservative, leftist, transhumanist) would you prefer if the “universally projected concern” wouldn’t concern *you* or contradict *your* value-system?

Fuller, as a “conservative” social thinker, opposes the rejection of “the integral relationship between scientific unificationism, determinism, physics-mindedness and human-centredness” (ibid.: 114). What does he propose instead? The integral relationship between scientific unificationism, determinism, physics-mindedness and human-centeredness; but currently under the careful *scientific reconsideration of what it actually is to be human*, so his argument goes. Naturally, it is much easier said than done.

I tend to agree with Fuller that modern science governs its inquiries as proper tools for the “reconstitution of the life-world in the scientific image”. But

what follows from Fullerian sciento-theological vision makes neither scientific sense, nor philosophical honour. In his somewhat disturbing insight,

“[w]e literally share God’s spontaneous desire to understand everything as a unified rational whole, which drives us to see nature in terms of the laws by which the deity created.” (ibid.: 115)

And if you (we?) sincerely doubt this “scientific” endeavour (that’s what philosophy of science is for), Fuller reminds us that “at least for the time being we are *not* God” (his italics). Since we are not gods yet, hence the splendour and misery of philosophical mind: to “improve” the scientific image of “humaneness” for devout reasons we shouldn’t hesitate to employ a few tricks borrowed from weirdos of the scientific community.

“Scientifically” engaged, but enshrouded in a missionary calling to preserve what is still left from human dignity (whatever that is), Fullerian *scientific image* manifestly preaches a version of intelligent design as an alternative to economically motivated radical philosophies of posthumanism, new eugenics and transhumanism (driven by ecological, biomedical and cybernetic interests respectively). Apparently, the best option for Fuller to prevent the market forces to shape the scientific development is a quasi-theological, quasi-republican story of the human salvation.

SCIENTIFIC AUTONOMY

Arguably the most famous story of the servitude of science for the people comes from the populist Paul Feyerabend

(1978). His idea is very simple: if you pay taxes, any democratic regime must grant you the right to participate in scientific

activities funded by the government. Thus, it is in the peoples' power to legitimise or revoke science if they see it fit. (By the way, the only autonomy Feyrabend demanded for science was the autonomy from philosophy of science.)

Fortunately for scientists, as far as scientific practices are materially entangled with the world, science cannot entirely depend on ideas, aspirations, world-views or images. And that is the basic principle of Joseph Rouse's posthumanism (2015, 2002). To paraphrase Thomas Merton, Rousean *deflationism*—the denial of substantial scientific truths—encounters no science as an island. There is no definition or permanent topology of science, only its deflationary characteristics. If there is reliable scientific knowledge, then it emanates from and disseminates in scientific practices. Therefore, no human, nor even a scientific community can legitimise or delegitimise science. In effect, scientific practices cannot be true or false, they only demonstrate a certain level of conformity.

At first, it may sound as a post-Feyrabendian variation of scientific depravity and academic mess. In fact, Rouse sees it as the only option to grant the sciences the vital flexibility, multidimensionality and immunity to (sometimes even fanatic) *scientistic legalism*:

- Science legitimisation protocols, allegedly defending scientific autonomy or formulating scientific duties and responsibilities, or explaining its processes and principles, are ideologically and philosophically biased and harmful. Here Rouse agrees with Feyrabend.

- On the other hand, Rouse exposes no need to defend people from science. On the contrary: the banishment of artificially constituted autonomy of science dissolves expert–layman (or scientist–commoner, or establishment–the masses) stratification, pervasive institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of scientific activities; hence the betrayal of the very idea of scientific path towards human salvation.

Rouse's option is somewhat hypocritical trust in science as a *not unnatural kind*, insofar as the Nature itself is not reducible even to the most tolerant scientism. Scientific practices are undetermined, individually as well as collectively implemented (material, social and pragmatic simultaneously) *posthuman configurations*. "To what ends" is necessarily an open-ended question.

Fuller's "republican" science governance image (2000) is accompanied by his social eliminativist idea that cognitive scientific discourse is eliminable with social discourse, in a way that even though they both constitute scientific discourse, scientific knowledge is incomprehensible as isolated from society. It means that Fuller as well as Rouse deflate scientific knowledge by robbing it of uniformity, stability and representational power. Both deflationism and "republicanism" hold that science is irreducibly political and scientific practices are natural (causal) engagements with the world.

On the other hand, Fullerian "republicanism" plays the dialectical game of power–knowledge relation as if they

were mutually exclusive agents of scientific practices. However, Rousean deflationism zealously claims that even the idea is a remnant of the days long past. Politically loaded mindset of science governance, Rouse maintains, is obsolete, risky and deserves another round of deflation.

Consider “republican theory of science”. Fuller holds that since science nowadays involves every member of the society, and scientific knowledge applies to everyone, every Tom, Dick and Harry should be allowed to influence and direct scientific activities in a participatory political form. Moreover, a true republican, contrary to a liberal, takes various forms of civic activities, i.e. engagement in political and academic processes for that matter, as a duty rather than a right. Moralising responsibility consequently constitutes a type of *scientific political autonomy* that allegedly violates the immunity of scientific practices. Their irreversible entanglement with the worldly configurations, therefore proper ontological naturalisation (i.e. neither scientism, nor reductivism) and posthumanist self-sustainability is what Rousean deflationism is willing to protect.

Political autonomy of the “republican” sort means that naturalism is doomed and easily replaceable by *representationist*, i.e. epistemological (realist, empiricist, social constructivist etc.) accounts of science. That is, sanctioned by political autonomy, the epistemic autonomy also crawls back on the stage, and gives the warrant to demand certain

privileges. For example, the scientific community, by implementing the republican “right to be wrong” (cf. Fuller 2000: 12, 155), might demand to establish an upper social class of well-trained experts; or a mandate to cultivate poor societies’ patriotic feelings, democratic capacities, uncompromising loyalty, target its tastes, form their virtues and so on. By the same obligatory right, the populace might demand the right of the final word to decide what *is* right or wrong.

Rouse’s deflationist stance specifically highlights the power–knowledge interpenetration. He even coins the term *intraaction* (i.e. reciprocity and mutual constituting) to rule out dualist and seemingly regressive interpretations of *autonomy*. Fuller’s republicanism, conversely, revives *political* and *epistemic autonomy*. Precisely “democratic science policy” is what separates Rouse from his former intellectual ally. Because if one lets “social norms” (like the EU’s “effective cooperation”, “relevant policies”, “economic progress”, “contributions to knowledge”) provide one with the science development shaping tools, those norms become virtually independent and ontologically distant from scientific goals and means. Perhaps science becomes tenable without knowledge, likewise power. Contrary to “republicanism”, Rousean posthumanism constitutes a sort of “scientific culture”, where the life-world is permeated with concepts, materials and practices. Society as well as the scientific self is entangled in the natural world.

TRANSHUMANISM VS. POSTHUMANISM: REDEEMING PRACTICES OF THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD

If science is inseparable from society as Fuller himself proposed, the next consistent step is to adopt a nonrepresentationist worldview, where the search for truth is considered outdated, and properly naturalised “social” norms extrapolate the power–knowledge intricacy. These norms emanate from and within (scientific) practices that are causal patterns of intraactive posthuman nature (e.g. energy consumption and global warming, evolution and gene therapy, the spread of infectious diseases, social transformations and digitalisation, etc.).

The transhumanism of late Fuller corresponds with Rouse’s posthumanism to the extent that they both comprehend the risk of projecting human–nonhuman relations toward indeterminate future: “Better to give hostage to fortune than be captive to the past” (Fuller, Lipinska 2014: 3). In other words, both Rousean deflationary posthumanism and Fullerian transhumanism despise quasi-stable compositions “found” by representationist paradigms of knowledge in preference to the stratagem of “a future forming orientation” (Gergen 2014).

Non-representationist paradigm, or what Gergen calls *reflective pragmatism*, states that a) “whatever exists makes no necessary requirements on representation”; b) “whatever we take to be the world does not demand or require any particular form of representation (e.g. utterances, markings, movements, signals, or graphics)” (ibid.: 3). Again, what makes posthumanism and transhumanism akin is “a pragmatism with a social

conscience” (ibid.: 4). They both deeply care about the eventual contribution of scientific practices to the world (pace “understanding” or “illuminating” or “representing” inherent properties of the world). What determines their *difference* is exactly the category of *the world*.

Transhumanists, armed with the “proactionary principle”, “are not *primarily* interested in ensuring that every kind of being currently on the planet survives or enjoys the same standard of existence” (Fuller, Lipinska 2014: 3; their italics). Like the imaginary upper-class scientific experts or political advisors, they favour the world primarily as *their playground*. Hence Fullerian transhumanism grows my humane suspicion that it leaves an individual no choice but to transcend the world in a very scientifically contaminated manner: you ought to *science the hell out* of the current human state of affairs, so to speak. It could be the official EU framework for the salvation of our human dignity, officially—for the preservation of *our unique social model*.

Rousean posthumanism, contrarily, upholds certain constraints toward anthropocentric techno-biological expansion. The allegedly sovereign “transhumanity” unilaterally autonomises and institutionalises various human activities simulating techno-scientific solutions but ignores the fact that science does not represent humanity “as such”. Posthumanistically, there is no science “as such”. Though posthumanism connotes liberalist environmentalism, it in fact demands only ontologically sensitive mode

of enquiry, similar to Bruno Latour's call for "true" modernity, and what Fuller himself calls *precautionary principle* (2014: 25). It declares humans and nonhumans as ontologically equal in respect of the practice field.

Philosopher of science Dimitri Ginev shares with Fuller, Rouse and Gergen non-representationist future-forming view of scientific practices. Put briefly, Ginev's cognitive existentialism epitomises "scientific research as a mode of being-in-the-world based upon a specific "existential project"" (2006: 85). On the other hand, cognitive existentialism targets said forms of posthumanism and transhumanism on the grounds of their allegedly "illegitimate" imposition of external social or cultural aims upon the sciences' cognitive specificity. The only "rightful" way of the science-politics, or science-society, or scientists-citizen analysis is by consistently protecting "the demarcation line between the cognitive

self-organisation of scientific research and the socio-political contexts in which the research practices take place" (Ginev 2005: 198). I discussed Ginev's theory elsewhere (Juozelis 2015), so I will only highlight here the relevance of his worry to save "the genuine democratic process of contemporary societies". Intrinsically, it means that the autonomy of scientific thinking grants free people of the free world the best option of deliverance. At this point Ginev stands next to Stasis Psillos and the brave rational folk of the EU by announcing that "science in general is by far the best way we humans have invented to push back the frontiers of ignorance and error" (Psillos 2012: 102).

What the brave folk omits is rather helpless human inability to anticipate what true errors are, how deeply they are interconnected with ignorance, and hence how to fix them. Posthumanism and transhumanism at least bring some wider options and vibrant alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this paper was the issue of the involvement of non-scientists in scientific matters. I claim that these matters from now on are the future-forming practices that have social challenges set as their fundamental tasks.

In this context, populist, reflective pragmatist, cognitive existentialist, transhumanist or posthumanist interpretations of science policy affront naïve representationist models of social development of the EU sort, which overrate scientific problem-solving, truth-searching capacities and under-

rate dynamics and interpenetration of politics and science.

Conceptually, all the listed non-representationist paradigms operate the *science-democracy-individual* triplet. Their major differences lie in the hierarchical preferences. Fullerian transhumanism adopts *science-individual-democracy* sequence, where science functions as a "meta-politics of democracies". *Democracy-individual-science* sequence initiates Rousean posthuman condition, where society members effectively proliferate, decompose and reinstate knowledge as a part and parcel

of the reciprocative natural world. *Science-democracy-individual* sequence triggers the individual as a legal mediator of political and scientific domains, albeit scientific knowledge, despite being exclusively human capacity, nevertheless does not submit to human whim or will.

My guess is that the Big politics strategy and style also rests upon these preferences that determine what kind of science legitimation trajectory for the preservation of the status quo or the betterment of salvation prospects it would employ.

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Endnotes

¹ https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/research-innovation_en