



## EDITORIAL

# The Order of Concepts and/or the Order of Things as Triggers for Social Transformations

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In his famous book *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* [The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences] (1966), French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that, in every historical period, knowledge is based on underlying conceptual assumptions or specific ways of thinking (epistemes) that determine an acceptable discourse about a particular subject and affirm what is supposed to be true. Such a discourse is constantly evolving, which requires social researchers not only to develop concepts, which somehow reflect the order of things, but also to recognize the origin of these concepts and to duly reflect their transformations. Michel Foucault distinguished between the Renaissance, Classical era, and Modern era epistemes. However, today's epistemes are changing at an unprecedented rate; as a result, social researchers face the problem of replacing the existing, but yet developing, way of thinking with a new one.

The current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* provides a number of evidences that justify the evolution of epistemes in close conjunction with social reality. The authors search for ways of conceptualizing such ambivalent cases, as anti-vaxxer's referring to sacrifice for the sake of personal freedom; the validity and types of social support for young families and their reproductive behavior; the danger of becoming a "lost" media generation due to digital divide; the influence of self-based and group-based emotions on collective actions; the counteraction of humor and official narrative in the political sphere; and—last but not least—echoing the ideas of cooperation and collaboration, ability for self-improvement, and meaningful participation in social life between classical Persian literature and European philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The opening ESSAY *The American Anti-Vaxxer COVID Dead: A Dynamic Chronicle of Failed Sacrifices* by Ivan Strenski aims to analyze the usage of the idea of "sacrifice" by anti-vaxxers (especially those who support the Republican

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Party) during the COVID-19 pandemic in the USA. Such a usage may seem paradoxical, since sacrificing is normally referred to public good, in this case, to healthcare. As Strenski admits, his intention to analyze sacrificial rhetoric in anti-vaxxer refusal to be vaccinated was caused by its conjunction with the idea of personal liberty. Nevertheless, “just because someone says they ‘sacrificed’ does not make that claim meaningful or true”. In interpreting the anti-vaxxer concept of “sacrifice”, Strenski compared it with popular theories like René Girard’s theory of sacrifice as scapegoating, or Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant’s focus on sacrificial “cuisine”, and concludes that it fits none of them. The author concludes that the question whether vaccine resistance leading to Red-COVID deaths does, in fact, enhance personal liberty for Americans, is neither answered nor even addressed. On the contrary, some Red-COVID deaths should be better classified as “social murders”, which have resulted “from culpable neglect or even deliberate exploitation” of victims by powerful elites.

Danijela Vuković-Čalasan in the ARTICLE *Ethnocultural Pluralism and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Montenegro: Lessons to Learn*, notes that Montenegro, as one of the oldest Balkans states that gained its statehood in 1878, has had a highly turbulent history due to its location at the crossroads between the East and the West. Historically, various invaders in the Balkans brought along new identities, that were further incorporated within the Balkan peoples in different ways. This is why “the Balkans is usually referred to as a region rich in ethnocultural pluralism in demographic terms, and a region that has historically been marked by a highly pronounced dynamic in terms of identity stratification and politics”. Montenegro belongs to the so-called multinational states where the dominant type of ethnocultural communities are national minorities, and ethnocultural pluralism varies in degrees and forms. Therefore, the issue of successful management of ethnocultural pluralism is indeed one of the most significant. Danijela Vuković-Čalasan stresses that “theorists and researchers focus, to a great degree, on legal-political measures and mechanisms that the state envisages and introduces for ethnocultural communities and their members, in accordance with the unique characteristics of their position”. In the article, she analyzes not just the nation-state level of management in Montenegro, but also two additional levels which are often overlooked by theorists: the level of ethnocultural communities, and the level of individual identities. The author is fully aware that these three levels could not be separated in practice.

As Natalia D. Blednova and Anna P. Bagirova argue in the ARTICLE *Leave Policy System in Russia: Is It Time to Change?*, childcare leave in Russia (analogous to parental leave in other countries) needs more flexibility in order to positively affect the demographic situation in the country. Their study “aims to evaluate the state regulation of the parental leave policy in Russia and public attitudes to the policy pursued”. The authors consider the parental leave system as a multi-faceted phenomenon related to different spheres of social and economic reality, and figure out different perspectives for the three key stakeholders of the leave system: mothers (including potential), fathers (including potential), and employers, whose interests are directly influenced by the parental leave system. At the first stage of the study, the authors investigated men’s opinion concerning taking parental leave (506 men aged 18 to 49

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with and without children were surveyed). At the second stage, the authors evaluated public opinion on the flexibility of the Russian parental leave system (265 women were surveyed in the Sverdlovsk Region). At the third stage, barriers in the parental leave state regulation were analyzed (for which purpose, 2012–2021 cases of breaching parental leave regulations were extracted from popular Russian mass media). The results show opposing views on various aspects of the leave system in Russia.

In the ARTICLE *Factors Shaping the Reproductive Behavior of Young Families in Russia: Data Triangulation*, Tamara K. Rostovskaya, Ekaterina N. Vasilieva, and Veronika N. Kholina seek to address the following question: “How does social support for young families affect their reproductive behavior, and which policy responses and interventions can be used to stimulate childbearing more effectively?” This problem is particularly relevant to Russia because of the low fertility level. The authors consider several factors that influence the reproductive behavior of young two-person families with and without children: marital behavior; marital and reproductive attitudes of young spouses’ parents; material, psychological, and legal support for young families. The data for the research was collected in 10 regions in the European part of Russia. At the first stage, a survey of 893 members of young families under the age of 35 years in their first registered marriage was conducted. At the second stage, 50 respondents from young families were interviewed (20 childless and 30 with children). During in-depth interviews, the following questions were asked: How did the decision to register marriage was made? How did the future couple meet? Did the future couple live together before getting married? The conducted study identified a number of problems in the Russian social support system for young families that future research should address.

Anna S. Sumskeya in the ARTICLE *“Lost” Russian Media Generations in a Changing Social and Digital Environment* studies a fairly new phenomenon—the digital personality, which has emerged as a result of the growing amount of online personal data reflecting Internet users’ individual traits and habits. The digital lifestyle of young people “means not only digitalized media behavior, globalized streaming media use, interactive cultural digital practices, and symbols of communication, but also new vulnerabilities, traumatic communication experiences, and exposure to potentially traumatic media content, all of which can affect the subjective well-being of Internet users”. Apparently, in the author’s opinion, the disruption of sustainable generational media patterns and further exacerbation of the digital divide for “digital natives”—the generations of people whose formative period coincided with the development of the Internet and digitalization—may result in becoming “lost” media generations.

In the ARTICLE *The Impact of Digital Divide on Household Participation in Risky Financial Investments: Evidence From China*, Yuan Kefeng, Zhang Xiaoxia and Olga P. Nedospasova examine the impact of Internet information technologies on the financial industry in China. The authors note that despite the rapid increase in the number of Internet users in China in recent years, there is still a large digital divide between urban and rural areas associated with different access to digital infrastructure, Internet access rate, and Internet usage frequency. The authors apply empirical instruments to elucidate the impact of digital divide on the participation probability of Chinese households in risky schemes of financial investment. The authors formulate the following research

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hypotheses: the digital access, use, and inequality divides significantly affect households' participation in risky financial investment schemes; the digital divide between urban and rural areas, as well as family burden differences, leads to a different probability of households participating in such investments. The authors turned to the database of the Chinese General Social Survey, Renmin University of China, in order to gain access to comprehensive micro-survey data.

Ahmad Helmi Nugraha, Raehan Kautsar Julian, Rudy Adiguna, Veronica Lioni Hartono, Donna Kusuma, Muhammad Abdan Shadiqi, and Rusdi Rusli in the ARTICLE *The Dark Triad and Non-Normative Collective Action in The Save KPK Movement in Indonesia: The Mediation Effect of Contempt* focus on the cases of violent collective action that occurred in relation to the Save KPK movement (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* [Corruption Eradication Commission]), which was stirring social tension within the society for a number of years. The authors are particularly interested in self-based and group-based emotions in collective actions, which they differentiate into two categories: normative (peaceful, without violence) and non-normative (non-peaceful, with violence). Another important factor to observe are personality traits, namely those forming the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy) and related to acts of violence. The article is aimed at explaining the involvement of group-based contempt and the Dark Triad of personality traits in predicting the intention of non-normative collective action in the Save KPK movement-related issues. The authors suppose that group-based contempt plays a role in non-normative collective action, and that some Dark Triad traits are mediated by group-based contempt.

In the ARTICLE *Markers of Sensory Well-Being in the Learning Environment for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders*, Lyudmila V. Tokarskaya and Tatyana Yu. Bystrova underline that the environment can have a strong influence on people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). This influence can be either positive or negative, because such people may exhibit a variety of atypical sensory characteristics. Hence, the hypothesis that the authors seek to test is as follows: "In order to create a more autism-friendly environment or in order to assess the 'autism-friendliness' of the already existing environment, it is necessary to apply a system of markers that measure its potential effects on ASD individuals' sensory well-being". The study of sensory issues is based on an interdisciplinary approach, namely the synthesis of psychological and architectural discourses. The authors critically analyze the key technical requirements regarding the sensory parameters of the educational environment, which are reflected in the official governmental documents in Russia, and promote "a more holistic approach to this problem, based on the understanding that the human body and psyche are not only interconnected, but also dynamic". For the purpose of developing a personalized set of markers, Lyudmila Tokarskaya and Tatyana Bystrova analyze the learning environment in a Russian school catering for children with ASD and mental retardation, as well as an expert assessment of the sensory profile of a 14-year-old ASD student.

Tatiana G. Skorokhodova in the ARTICLE *"Discovery of Hinduism" in Religious Thought of the Bengal Renaissance* mentions three challenges of the religious life in India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: firstly, Christian missionaries' criticism of Indian indigenous religious beliefs and practices; secondly, their designation by the term

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“Hinduism”; and, thirdly, European theologians and orientalist’s attempts to study Indian religions. Those challenges required a creative response from educated intellectuals. The Bengal Renaissance was the epoch of national-cultural awakening in the most developed province of India, which had become a meeting space for Indian and Western dialogue of cultures. Tatiana Skorokhodova stresses that the significant part of that dialogue was the comprehension of the native Indian religious tradition, and proposes a term “Discovery of Hinduism” by analogy with Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous term “Discovery of India”. For Indian intellectuals, “Discovery of Hinduism” could be seen as an integral part of their own self-understanding in dialogue with the West, its society and culture. The author divides “Discovery of Hinduism” in Bengal religious thought into two phases and analyzes the views of Rammohun Roy, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (Chatterjee), Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, and others.

In the ARTICLE *Humorous Portrayals of Celebrities in the Mass Media During the 2021 Papal Visit to Slovakia*, Petra Polievková, Terézia Rončáková, and Hedviga Tkáčová note that the significance of the Papal visit in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic “went far beyond the borders of Slovakia itself and served as an important event in the wider region of Central Europe, with the event serving to emphasize the contemporary regional challenge of migration and the varying approaches taken to the issue by different states”. The authors pay particular attention to the study of celebrities and analyze popular mass media responses to the visit of the Pope to Slovakia as reflected in the viral humor in both Internet memes and caricatures published in the most-read Slovak daily newspapers. The research aimed to identify the main features and differences in the depiction of the Pope and that of selected Slovak political celebrities emphasized in the memes, as well as to contribute to the academic discussion “of the social and political aspects of humor and their potential to develop a discourse which counteracts the official narrative and pushes against the rigid boundaries of the political sphere”. The research sample consisted of a series of 43 memes and eight caricatures, which were sourced from social networking sites and online media platforms. As a result, the authors discovered a considerable overlap between the topic of the Papal visit and contemporary political issues.

In the RESEARCH NOTE *Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychology in Light of Classical Persian Literature*, Fayruza S. Ismagilova and Nazyar Khamenehei compare Alfred Adler’s humanistic philosophy of living and his holistic approach to human personality with questions discussed in classical Persian literature, more specifically, in the writings by Abu Saeed Abu al-Khair, Jami, Saadi, and Rumi. According to Adler, the most important period in the child’s development is before the age of six or seven; that is why the authors of the article selected the abovementioned writers’ poems and anecdotes focused on the same age range. In Adlerian philosophy, a human being has the capacity for cooperation and collaboration, as well as the ability for self-improvement, growth, self-realization, and meaningful participation in social life. At the same time, as Fayruza Ismagilova and Nazyar Khamenehei stress, “Persian literature is a treasure of narratives seeking to engage their readers with a variety of ethical and philosophical questions such as destiny and human effort, the objectives of

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human life, guilt, virtue, justice, striving for perfection, and so on". In addition, Persian authors attached great importance to literature's function as a medium of education and enlightenment. The authors are particularly interested in Adler's three ideas that most resonate with moral and educational philosophy found in the classical Persian texts: the feeling of inferiority and striving for recognition; the influence of the social environment on the child's early development; and the parental influence and the influence of education.

The BOOK REVIEW section consists of a review by Swapna Gopinath of Amitav Ghosh's book "The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis", 2021. The author characterizes the book under review as "a tale of the hegemonic human agency seeking control over nature, where violence, aggression, greed, and the desire for power define the trajectory of colonialism, capitalism, and Western modernity".

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections, or book reviews.

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