

## FROM THE EDITOR

### REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN EXISTENCE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



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We hereby place the second, and this year's last, issue of *Deeds and Days* into our readers' hands. As usual, this 76<sup>th</sup> issue is threefold and offers scholarly articles, book reviews and an interview on a timely topic as well as articles not directly related to that topic but opportune in other ways.

Its monographic part features academic papers, an interview about the directions in which artificial intelligence (AI) is headed, and book reviews that are interdisciplinary texts analyzing ties between innovation policy and technologies of information and communication.

Masses of data and mixed digital and physical realities form the day-to-day conception of the world and directions for political activity. It is often emphasized that industries associated with AI can expect the greatest economic growth. Consequently governments including Lithuania's have hastened to create appropriate guidelines, plans, and AI strategies (we will find the acronym AI in practically every important document of strategic development). And even though signs of general AI, or a super intellect, are not yet on the horizon, smart devices are integrated into practically every system of digital space.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to notice what is happening in international media presenting technological news, namely, that hype and sometimes unfounded expectations from, and joy over, ever improving AI prospects, are being selectively replaced by worries concerning possible dystopian scenarios or unpredictable "partisan" algorithms and discriminatory managing systems. The difficult tension between creating progressive products and facing unexpected danger from AI (or unanticipated side effects) is augmented by geopolitical conflicts and the rising power of China. In the "AI arms" contest the European Union decided not to surrender to China and the United States but at the same time showed a concern for the safety of developments in AI and its "human dimension." These processes are methodically discussed by Dovilė Jakniūnaitė and Justinas Lingevičius who show how the geopolitical competition connected with the creation of AI and the mutual tensions of the great states reflect the differing governing models of the United States, China, and the European

Union and their aspirations to transform AI into their dominating power. Obviously modelling the universal and rational future of humanity is not a thankful task, especially when today the variously splintering digital world is crystalizing into digitally democratic and digitally autocratic regimes. The deepening global digital divisions come partially to the fore in Skaidra Trilupaitytė's text, which discloses how, with the help of AI tools, the global social network platforms intended for efficient communication not only enabled maximally democratic self-expression and communication but also provoked the mutual enmity of various countries' societies, distorted the field of information, and "hacked" the space of human interaction (Facebook's case). It wasn't the internet that created the tools of propaganda, manipulation, or disinformation; nevertheless, the most potent means of AI for the purpose of joining together human beings unveiled the toxic side of public communication.

The effectiveness of sophisticated linguistic tools; the abundance of means helping us to communicate with various systems; and the fact that they are (or aren't) really needed are linguistic topics that come up in the interview that Andrius Utka conducts with Darius Amilevičius and Saulius Keturakis on their use of AI tools in their academic and creative work.

This interview also reveals some of the doubts about the exaggerated expectations that some politicians and parts of society have with respect to AI. It also touches on issues important to students of the humanities and related not only to countable models and data but also to meaningful texts, criticism, and the participation of conscious human beings in a world ruled by algorithms. It is claimed perhaps with justification that a digital world does not understand the principles of a human world. But how are changing social attitudes toward technologies that allegedly surpass human beings formed and in what ways do we try to create satisfying relationships with non-human beings? This is one question among many others that Kęstutis Mosakas touches in a review of a book by Barbara Czarniawska and Bernward Joerges on timely issues of robotization in contemporary culture. In his analysis Mosakas also deftly weaves in images of AI and robots in popular culture, first of all the cinema. Aistis Žekevičius, reviewing a book by Ignas Kalpokas from a philosophical perspective, shows how we are affected by digital reality and by models of algorithmic control that continuously recreate that reality. No matter how we look at it, nowadays both politics and law inevitably collide with the realities and even the problems of AI models that bare eyes can't see. Technological leaps and the rhetoric and actions of giant technical companies and politicians provoke the academic world to engage not only in quick, but also in more logical, serious, and even tranquil reflection. Therefore it is pleasing to see that regimes of digital rationality and visions of a meaningful future are being contemplated not only in discussions carried on by engineers of information technologies but also in such humanities forums as the journal *Deeds and Days*.

Other authors appearing in this issue uniquely searched out territories of humanity. In a text intriguingly titled "Faustian Bargain and Cultural Policy" Gintautas

Mažeikis discusses the possibility of moral decision-making and the dialectics of sovereign and vassal, concord and contract, comparing such at first glance incompatible figures as Odysseus, Mephistopheles, and Petras Cvirka. Mažeikis presents cultural policy in a way that is different from what we are used to hear and see in our media discourse, i.e., not as a part of government policy but quite the opposite, as an essentially public struggle about meanings and values.

The role of the individual in a historical context and human existence as “permanent warfare against real or imaginary enemies” is the angle from which Ramūnas Čičelis looks at the last novel of Ričardas Gavelis entitled *The Life of Sun-Tzu's in the Holy City of Vilnius*. Applying approaches of postcolonialism and deconstruction as well as the theory of anti-topophilia not previously used in an analysis of Gavelis's works, Čičelis at the end of his article draws parallels between the writer and his post-Soviet character through whose lips “Ričardas Gavelis's last and final worldview and his answers to all of life's questions” are presented.

The context of biography is a point of reference also for Žilvinas Vareikis, who examines the special character of the philosopher Algis Mickūnas's views on interculturality, on his observed interactions between Eastern and Western civilizations, and on the relations of both taken together to phenomenology. The author of this article is obviously alive to the influence of other philosophers when he evaluates Mickūnas's reflections on heterogeneous cultures and civilizations as creatively balancing “between a Eurocentric and an intercultural discourse.”

Fiction is the subject of Džiuljeta Maskuliūnienės paper on the “depiction of a consciousness that experiences beauty” – indeed an important but hitherto rather poorly researched theme of literature for children and young people. The appreciation of the beauty of the external world and more broadly the depiction of a child's spiritual world – the analysis of these things as well as its object bestows many bright tones to this journal issue published at a dark time of the year.

The last part of this 76<sup>th</sup> issue is filled out by an index of issues 41 to 45 of *Deeds and Days* prepared by Danguolė Valančė, and a review, prepared by Dainius Genys and Neringa Gališanskytė, comprehensively presenting a conference taking place for the fourth time and devoted to the memory of Leonidas Donskis. These annual events at Vytautas Magnus University are correctly identified by the authors as realizing the “continuity of intellectual heritage” and as seeking to “preserve Leo's gesture in building bridges even in the face of ambiguity and tedious pessimism.”

Rūta Petrauskaitė  
*Deeds and Days*, Editor-in-chief

Skaidra Trilupaitytė  
Co-editor of issue no. 76