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Book Reviews
Нови заглавия

**DOBRIN TODOROV. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
“WORLDVIEWS” AND THE CRISIS OF HUMANISM.
SOFIA, PARADIGMA, 2023, 208 P.**

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Dobrin Todorov’s new book is stated as a thematic and conceptual continuation of his previous monograph – “The Many-Faced Being and the New Worldview of Modern Man”, 2019. The general attitude with which they are written is the definite desire to counteract the tendency towards dehumanization found in the various *projects* of the present day for the improvement of man, i.e. in successive attempts to create a *new man*, this time based on today’s rapidly developing natural and technical sciences. Guided by the hard-to-dispute conviction that the problems he considers are too significant, respectively – their placement in the public debate – urgent, Dobrin Todorov has tried not only to carry out a precise diagnosis of the phenomena he considers, but also to offer his views on how to deal with them with the frightening dehumanization of the human. His searches are in the direction of affirming humanitarian studies as compensating for the damage caused by scientific and technical progress, in the direction of affirming the sciences of the spirit as the space in which basic human values are defined.

The book has three major sections in which the new teachings launched by the global scientific and technological elite, which have taken the place of the traditional creators of worldviews – the philosophers and religious thinkers – are presented and commented on.

In each of the specific analyzes proposed by Dobrin Todorov, one significant contemporary work is embedded. In my opinion, this is an ingenious way of illustrating the stated thesis, given the vast contemporary literature on the issues under consideration. For example, in the first section dealing with biologically based “worldviews” – *constructivist neovitalism* (as one of the worldviews that fits into this type of worldview) is examined and commented on based on Kevin Kelly’s introductory book “Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World”, 1992. After a detailed analysis of the various proposals for hybridization between natural and artificial, Dobrin Todorov concludes that the American author arbitrarily handles the concepts of *spirit* and *ideas*, due either to a

lack of philosophical education or to “a conscious opposition to the thousand-year-old thought tradition standing in the foundation of ,Western‘ civilization”.

The attempt to present neovitalism as overcoming the traditional divisions of worldviews along the axes monism – pluralism, holism – particularism, homogeneity – heterogeneity has been assessed as unrealizable, but the pathos of its rejection (which I fully share) here comes from the very perspective of biological tuning of man.

Genetic determinism is another popular present-day solution to the problem of the specificity of human beings compared to the rest of the biological world. The masterpiece of the English biologist and ethologist Richard Dawkins – “The Selfish Gene”, 1976, was chosen as a convincing example on the basis of which to examine this type of biological reductionism (as rightly judged by Dobrin Todorov). Dobrin Todorov shows how the genetic predestination, with which Dawkins explains the behavior of living beings, leads to the annulment of free will and turns people into hostages of their biological predestination.

Another variant of the world picture built on the basis of biology is the *quantum biological* one – here the author examines the research of Jim Al-Khalili and John Joe McFadden “Life on the Edge. The Coming of Age of Quantum Biology”, 2016. Dobrin Todorov problematizes the possibility that the theoretical models of quantum mechanics have a *universal* explanatory power, as is the claim of the “quantum spirit” specific to our time. The two authors‘ understanding of consciousness is defined as *naturalistic*, as far as according to it free will have no place in the deterministic universe created by quantum thinking. Today’s adventurous spirit – the taking of unwarranted risks – is tied to the “quantum zeitgeist” and is cited as one of the negative consequences of its dominance.

I would like to add that among the modern applications of quantum physics (very well described in Dobrin Todorov’s book) there are also attempts to reconcile it with various religious and philosophical concepts, for example with Eastern spirituality – this is the case with the work of Fritjof Capra. The Tao of Physics, 1975. Such use of quantum theory goes beyond the reductionist paradigm discussed in the book.

The second section is devoted to “worldviews” based on the development of technology – the so-called “technoreligions”, the description of which is in the context of the big theme of man and technique.

The technological expansion we are witnessing also changes the public image of the *technocrat* – a figure on which Todorov places special emphasis. From being an existentially and socially insensitive person, driven solely by considerations of efficiency and utility, the technocrat is now thought of as part of the new elite. Looking at the reverse side of technical progress, Dobrin Todorov is adamant that “Without falling into *technophobia*, modern people should give up the hypertrophied belief in the omnipotence of technology”.

Neo-intellectualism is the conditional name given by the author to the ideology whose highest value and starting point is *artificial intelligence*. This relatively new ideology is analyzed on the basis of the book presenting it – “How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed” by the American scientist Ray Kurzweil, 2012. It is analyzed in great detail before arriving at the qualification of the ideology embedded in it as a variant of *informational materialism*, nourishing the divine self-esteem of man. Insofar as it proceeds from a one-sided understanding of man – hypertrophying his intellect at the expense of everything else, this ersatz-religion is also judged as a threat to the humanist worldview.

Two other technoreligions – “technohumanism” and “dataism” (“religion of data”) – the fruit of the growing addiction to information and communication technologies, are presented based on Yuval Noah Harari’s book “Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow”, 2015. Their common ideological essence is called *informatism*, forming a simplified picture of the world and of man.

The core of the third section – “Ideological effects of technoscientific “worldviews” – is the precise philosophical analysis of the phenomena described so far. Dobrin Todorov is not the first time dealing with these characteristics of our time and not the first time he has highlighted the alarming consequences of them in relation to human existence – the loss of the meaning of life, the tendency towards dehumanization, social upheavals – exclusion and marginalization of large groups of people, etc. The study concludes with a call to the people of the spirit to continue to uphold the ideals of humanism, revealing the new problematic situations in which man has found himself and offering strategies to deal with them.

The credit for the elegant layout of Dobrin Todorov’s book goes to the humanitarian publishing house “Paradigma”.

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