

EDITORIAL

“... but they are like chaff that the wind drives away”

The academic cooperation among scholars devoted to researching the legacy of the Danish thinker, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) has been intensified recently. It takes place on several levels: (1) international projects, such as Acta Kierkegaardiana (Kierkegaard Circle, Trinity Colleague, University of Toronto, Canada), Kierkegaard and the Crisis of the Contemporary World (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany) and Søren Kierkegaard’s Legacy for a Continuing Conversation between Religion, Philosophy, and Society in the Czech and Slovak Context (Roanoke College, USA); (2) common international conferences: Kierkegaard Year (CERI-SK, Ljubljana, Slovenia), Physics and Ethics (University of Constantine the Philosophers, Nitra, Slovakia), which morphed into Physics, Technology and Ethics (University of Žilina, Slovakia) in 2016; (3) lectures and conferences (Faculty of Sociology, Universidad de Granada, Spain) and the International Symposiums of Miklavž Ocepek in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Since 2015, this cooperation has come to include the collaborative academic efforts with Dr. Iulian Rusu, from the ‘Gheorghe Asachi’ Technical University of Iași, Romania. The European Journal of Science and Theology has published a wide array of scientific studies some of which had previously been presented and discussed at the above mentioned scientific international conferences.

We now find ourselves at the beginning of a new year and new challenges. We each have our own concepts and expectations. All of us are influenced by the current crises in the world – not just the ones related to economic difficulties but also political crises, crises of the European Union and, above all, crises of human values.

Allow me to reflect on our contemporary situation and share with you my perspective on it. Humans have stopped trusting not only their institutions, politicians, and authorities in general but also the people in their inner circle. They have lost their faith in Church, in God, their very hope for a better tomorrow. What causes human being to be filled with fear and anxiety? Individuals, overwhelmed by apathy, if they manage to summon last vestiges of hope, they place them in radical political parties either on the right or the left side of the spectrum. People thus place their future into the hands of politicians hoping that something will change.

Humans, however, have ceased to be critically reflecting individuals and have instead become amorphous members of the crowd that is led by leaders who keep promising changes and remedies. Disappointed people identify

themselves with these leaders who, in turn, become their hope in a volatile world permeated by constant shifts and changes. They are convinced that this is the only viable way to overcome the current crises. People expect quick and radical decisions from their leaders, decisions that will produce tangible solutions to their problems. Human individuals have forsaken their communities, forgotten their own history, and plunged themselves into a chaotic discourse that lacks any authentic moral dialogue [1].

What will be the final outcome of this? The outcome will entail nothing else but further failures, disappointments, loss of illusions about humans, the world, (etc.)... The human individual will continue to feel lost in the world full of changes, chaos and tragedy [2].

Soren Kierkegaard, the renowned Danish intellectual and theologian, anticipated, observed and wrote about some of these phenomena. He was concerned about the crowds that will swallow up human individuals. The individual will cease to make deliberate decisions and instead will be consumed by the crowd [3]. Kierkegaard felt uneasy about the media which he anticipated to influence public opinion to the extent that even the most fundamental choices will fall under its spell. He was concerned that people desiring wealth would get into the leadership of the Church, which would result in the Church's loss of credibility. He was also afraid that humans would not merely lose their freedom but also the desire for freedom, thus becoming mindless part of the mass society without individual, original thinking. In such society, a desire to have, to own, to indulge oneself would dominate over a desire to live and make free, autonomous choices. "Human individuals thus end up trapped in unsatisfying, mediocre lives of narrow horizons and an acute lack of depth, experiencing their existence as mere numbers in a mindless crowd." [4]

We live in a world where one knows what is going on in the other end of the world but where one has lost touch with what is going on around him. One ceases to make authentic decisions that are inevitable [5]. Kierkegaard was concerned that humans would become indifferent to others and even to themselves. They would overlook the importance of interpersonal relationships and future outcomes of their actions, putting up, instead, with mere survival tactics. "Anxiety, uncertainty, aloneness are the main attributes of contemporary human civilization." [6] Kierkegaard's prophetic anticipation regarding the inability of the scientific-technological development to bring human individuals to contentment and fulfilment has thus been fulfilled. What we saw instead in the past century were two world wars, countless conflicts and immeasurable human tragedy. Kierkegaard's anticipation came true [7].

Hence, our sense of safety has all but been lost. This is not only due to the unpredictability of terrorist threats. What has been the humans' reaction to this? They experience fear and anxiety and, in spite of all kinds of technological inventions and a surplus of global information, are lost in the midst of the crowd. Information, technology, global connectedness – none of these realities have been able to bring the kind of happiness that humans were hoping for.

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Psalm 1 brings interesting ideas to this account. It begins with the following words “אֲשֶׁרֵי הָאִישׁ” - (ashre ha-ish; literal translation: happy man). The word אֲשֶׁרֵי happy, blessed – is always connected solely with a human individual who abides by certain rules and principles. This reminds me of Kierkegaard’s work *Purity of Heart* where the author writes about ‘double-mindedness of man’. Effort of this man is split in different directions, without a goal and unstable, desiring primarily one’s own benefit. The result is that the human being is unhappy and akin to a “chaff that the wind blows away” (Psalm 1.4). We live in world where ‘a mighty wind blows from all directions’. Therefore, let me, in this regard, wish you – the readers of EJST – happiness and prudent decisions for the New Year of 2017.

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References

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