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Introduction: Science and Thought

Martin Heidegger famously criticized science and scientific practice for being part of what he called *Ge-Stell*. *Ge-stell* was the name he gave to that which he saw to be at the very kernel of a structure that determined the metaphysical structure of the Occident. This metaphysical structure – *Grundstellung* as Heidegger called it – led in Heidegger’s view to complete obliviousness with regard to the most crucial question, the question of being. One of the motors behind this forgetting, if not the most essential, was science. And the nature of science in this account has to be understood as a very refined version of technology. It is technology that empowers human beings – namely as subjects – to put any thinkable *being* in front of themselves (this is the operation of *Vor-Stellung* typical of *Ge-Stell*) and force it to take the form and shape they desire. Via scientific technology, being has come to be at subjects’ disposal, and subjects themselves become, as already Protagoras contended, the measure of all things. But at the same time, these subjects, being also subjected to this procedure of a metaphysical tailoring of being, are also subjected to a radical forgetting – the forgetting of being qua being (which in the last instance even implies forgetting that one has forgotten). Science, which is, according to Heidegger, just a condensed embodiment of technology, is nothing more than one of the worst outcomes of this subjectivizing process that is essential for western metaphysical subjectivity and its peculiar obliviousness. The slogan Heidegger found for this analysis was: science does not think.

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The present issue of *Filozofski Vestnik* starts from a concatenation – science and thought – that at first sight is the radical opposite to Heidegger’s diagnosis. The title of this issue, “Science and Thought”, already suggests that there is or at least there can be such a relation. With regard to Heidegger, this implies two options here: either Heidegger was wrong in his criticism of metaphysics or he was wrong with his equation of *Ge-Stell* (as the essence of technology) and science. Simply put: either metaphysics still contains some sort of valuable thought (and hence there could be some sort of metaphysical science that thinks) or science

is simply not reducible to the metaphysics or to the being of a mere technology in the sense that Heidegger criticized. Then the (metaphysical) question of being could be separated from technology and metaphysics, but perhaps it still finds its locus rather within science. Heidegger's claim about metaphysics and technology then would find itself inverted through the suggested relation of science and thought. Such an inversion of Heidegger's critique of the very status of science is itself conditioned by the recent developments in philosophy that we take as the starting point for the present issue of *Filozosfki Vestnik*.

While for the analytic tradition of philosophy and specifically the philosophy of mind – a tradition which one might contend has developed in opposition to Heidegger's critique of technology – science has played an important role more or less throughout, the continental philosophy following Heidegger only rarely broke with his hostility towards the sciences. The sciences have been attacked under the name of positivism (even by self-proclaimed Anti-Heideggerians, such as Adorno) for presenting simple state-of-affairs accounts of things as they are and thereby (even worse) politically served any conservative apologetics (by diminishing practical freedom, as well as freedom of thought). In recent developments, though, science has taken a step forward into the focus of continental streams of philosophy. Philosophy therein seeks to understand science as a proper means of its reasoning, an adequate resource for actualizing its own structures and tools or even (again) as the ideal discourse from which philosophy has to learn how to proceed. The sciences – not only mathematics (for example, in the case of Alain Badiou), but also quantum physics (for example, in the case of Slavoj Žižek) and other scientific disciplines – started again to play a crucial role in and for philosophy. Thus, either this marks a return of metaphysics to philosophy or things are different than what one might think according to Heidegger.

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From here on, two questions can be asked: if one does not want to understand philosophy as the sole explanation of the given, but rather as a thinking of the inexistent, potential, virtual, unseen – how can philosophy rely on science without giving in to its insistence on the factual? And does science necessarily refer to a factual and objective foundation on which it operates? Thus, the question of science and thought fundamentally appears as a question of philosophy and science, but not only this: it also becomes a question of what place philosophy has in its relation to science. One might even be tempted to ask if there is

something more in science than science alone that only philosophy is able to uncover.

All this offers three possible options: (1) Science does not think and thus has endorsed this obliviousness, perhaps even obstruction of thought. Science could therefore still become an object of thought, but will never be an active thought in itself. To think science, then, is to comprehend what interrupts thinking, what hinders or endangers thought as such (as Heidegger did); thus the question of science and thought finds itself reduced to the question of thought and its object. One of the objects of thought might be science, but science itself cannot think. (2) Science is thought and what needs to be explained is the how and why of its practice. This account entails that “science” is not just another word for “thought” in general, but rather that science is one specific way, one peculiar kind of thought. To think science, then, is to think a specific and particular manner of thinking. (3) This leads to the third option: Science is thought, but there are also other versions of thought and not only scientific ones (e.g. philosophical or political thoughts). This means that to think science is to think not only one specific manner of thinking, but also the *relationship* between different forms of thought. It implies having a more general concept of thought in which the specificity of scientific thought can be thought in its difference and compossibility with other forms. This third option may be expanded to a fourth, generalized option: (4) There is a science of thought. This then either implies (4.1) that science does not think but it has thought; thinking processes are its object (one might here refer to certain neurosciences, for example), or (4.2) that science does think and what it thinks is thought itself – in its generality. In this version the very model of scientific thought becomes the paradigm for thinking thought tout court, which is also why this option has been a widespread definition of philosophy; philosophy being the only form of practice of thought that is able to fulfill this very definition (recall, for example, Hegel’s *Science of Logic*). The articles collected in this issue will take very different paths through the aspects considered above. Nevertheless, they all share a common point of departure: There is a relation between science and thought that needs to be rethought.