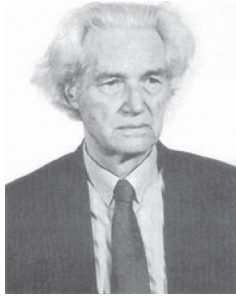


Ivan Supek (1915–2007)



After a long illness, Ivan Supek – academician, physicist, philosopher and writer – died in his home in Zagreb on March 5, 2007 at the age of 92. His death was publicly announced only after the funeral ceremony, which, according to his explicit wish, was attended only by the closest members of his family.

How should one approach Supek as a philosopher?

If one had to briefly explain how the figure of the philosopher has been understood in our Western tradition, i.e. if one had to give a concise answer to the question of who, in fact, is a philosopher and what are his basic characteristics, then it seems that the framework within which the figure of the philosopher has been understood in Western history can be defined by two fragments from Heraclitus. One of them states that “the learning of many things does not teach understanding” (πολυμαθίη νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει), while the other says that “men who love wisdom should acquaint themselves with a great many particulars” (χρὴ γὰρ εἶ μάλα πολλῶν ἱστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι). Although one should not think, especially when it comes to Heraclitus, that these two fragments exclude each other completely, one nevertheless could – by accepting them, at least for the moment, as mutually opposed – maintain that two “types” of philosophers have developed in Western history, conditioned precisely by these two different views of the philosopher, or two different answers to the question of who, in fact, a philosopher is. In these terms, it may be seen that Professor Supek clearly belonged to the latter group; and it is precisely through such an understanding of philosophy and the philosopher’s “work” that the reasons for the breadth and scope of his scholarly interests are to be sought.

Supek was primarily a philosopher, one of the few in Croatia who did not see any gap or opposition between scientific and philosophical work. Science and philosophy, according to Supek, do not exist in some kind of mutual antagonism, in the sense of excluding each other, or of our having to “decide” or “choose” between them and, consequently, prefer one to the other. Science and philosophy proceed “naturally” one from the other; they form a continuum and, being oriented towards each other, co-exist and strive for the same thing. And it is in this sense that Supek may be labeled a “scientific philosopher”. This is not to be confused with a “philosopher of science”, although Supek was that, too. Nor should one think that Supek’s philosophy can be reduced to a certain set of scientific “insights” or “truths”.

Precisely this conception or, one might say, preconception of the relationship between science and philosophy was at the heart of Supek’s decision to go to Zürich following his graduation from high school in 1934 in Zagreb. (Zagreb was also the city where he had been born on April 8, 1915.) During his first year there, he studied mathematics, the history of philosophy, logic, and experimental physics. Supek became increasingly aware of his inclination towards “theory” (theoretical physics and mathematics, as well as “pure” philosophy), while experimental physics consequently retreated into the background of his interest. Indeed, Supek used to joke about his clumsiness in the laboratory. Due to this increased awareness of his inclinations, and his youthful enthusiasm for Heisenberg’s uncertainty relations, he continued his studies in Leipzig, where the professor of theoretical physics was none other than Werner Heisenberg. The experience of Heisenberg’s Leipzig seminar was crucial for Supek in every respect, and left a permanent mark on his entire life. This was not only because it was in Leipzig that Supek “mastered” quantum physics – the theory that, in his own words, influenced our knowledge unlike any other scientific theory since Copernicus’ heliocentric system, to the extent that it entirely changed our conception of the world. Nor was it only because he had an opportunity to become familiar with the most important scientific knowledge of the time and discuss it in what one might call the most authoritative place in the world (seminar discussions were held on Wednesday afternoons). Rather, this was primarily because the man in whose presence Supek both mastered quantum physics and discussed and analyzed the latest scientific knowledge (primarily in physics) was Heisenberg himself, who in Supek’s eyes was the greatest physicist of the 20th century. And undoubtedly he was the greatest physicist, but also much more than that – a philosopher, a thinker. So if one had to identify who had the decisive influence on Supek in both a scientific and a philosophical sense – that is, who was Supek’s true teacher, then without a doubt one

would have to point to Heisenberg and his “revolution in the conception of the world” (to quote the title of Supek’s booklet from 1986, based on a lecture he gave at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, entitled *Heisenberg’s Revolution in the Conception of the World*). In carrying on Heisenberg’s approach to quantum physics (and again, not only to physics), Supek adopted its “Copenhagen interpretation” (the one developed by Bohr and Heisenberg, as opposed to Einstein), consistently advocated it in his own writings, and remained faithful to it till the end of his life.

While Supek’s relationship to Werner Heisenberg is quite well-known to the Croatian (philosophical) public, it is less known that Supek continued his work on “pure” philosophy during his Leipzig days, and had intended to write his doctoral thesis on Immanuel Kant. The topic had already been agreed on with Theodor Litt, a philosopher close to Paul Natorp and Marburg neo-Kantianism, but also to Hegel and different versions of the “philosophy of life” and philosophical anthropology. It is perhaps even less known that Supek was in touch with Litt’s successor to the chair of philosophy, Hans-Georg Gadamer (whose seminar on Rilke’s poetry Supek had attended), since Litt had been retired due to his opposition to the ruling politics and his general resistance to National Socialism. Finally, when speaking of the philosophical environment in Germany of the 1930s, one should mention Martin Heidegger, for whose philosophy Supek never felt a particular affinity, although he used to say that Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, by “abandoning the old ontology”, had expressed some “new aspirations in physics and art”. Presumably, Supek was never able to accept Heidegger’s “antagonistic” stance regarding (contemporary) science, due to which he regarded Heidegger as, to some degree, a mystic; and in particular he never “forgave” him his *Rektorsrede*.

Supek worked on several areas during Heisenberg’s Leipzig seminar, of which the electrical conductivity of metals deserves special mention, for it led to the formulation of the differential equation for conductivity under low temperatures. (In 1958 Supek published an article on this, entitled “Über die Differentialgleichung der elektrischen Leitfähigkeit der Metalle bei tiefen Temperaturen”, as part of a collection of essays dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Max Planck – the *Max Planck Festschrift*.) Moreover, this research in quantum electrodynamics was a significant forerunner to the theory of superconductivity. In March 1941, however, Supek had to abort his research when he was arrested by the Gestapo. Heisenberg managed to get him released from prison, but Supek did not return to Leipzig to continue his research. Rather, he went back to Zagreb.

In that same year, Supek published, at his own expense, a book entitled *Svijet atoma* (*The World of Atoms*), providing a popular account of

Einstein's theory of relativity and the quantum theory of Bohr and Heisenberg. As a young scientist (a doctor of theoretical physics), he regarded it as some sort of "duty" to transmit his knowledge to a wider circle of intellectuals (and not just intellectuals); particularly because he believed that an acquaintance with these theories could have a "positive" effect on people, that it could be an "effective means" against their acceptance of various ideologically "colored" positions (at that time, this meant above all the ideology of fascism).

This early book revealed one important characteristic of Supek's view of science and scientific research. Throughout his scientific work there is an evident desire to present a certain knowledge – in this case, scientific knowledge, usually written in an entirely "hermetic", mathematical language and understandable only to a small group of experts – in a "popular" way, i.e. to put it in ordinary, everyday language and so make it accessible to a significantly larger group of educated citizens. During his life Supek was to publish several more such "popular" books, for example *Od antičke filozofije do moderne nauke o atomima* (*From Ancient Philosophy to the Modern Science of Atoms*, 1946) or *Nova fizika* (*The New Physics*, 1966); and the three editions of his *Povijest fizike* (*History of Physics*, 1980, 1990 and 2004) could also partly be included in this group. These books not only call attention to the "duty" of the scientist, namely, the duty of one well-acquainted with some specific area to "communicate" the latest achievements in that area to intellectuals and to scientists in other areas; they also highlight a certain "responsibility" which scientists have towards other people and the entire social community. Two significant concepts that would continue to preoccupy Supek had thus already appeared in this early period: the concepts of duty and responsibility. As the years went by, these two concepts, and especially "the scientist's responsibility for the world he lives in", gradually assumed a central place in his thinking.

Supek's first strong, completely open manifestation of this awareness of moral responsibility came in June 1944, after he had already joined the Partisan movement, when he was invited to speak about science at the Congress of Croatian Cultural Workers in Topusko. Speaking 14 months before the great destruction that was to occur in Japan, Supek was probably the first person in the world to warn about the great danger threatening mankind if new discoveries in the fission of the uranium nucleus were to be used for military purposes. Moreover, in Topusko he appealed for complete world disarmament following the war. In those circumstances, of course, this appeal did not, and could not have, met with too much approval. Moreover, there were some who saw in it a hidden intention to disarm the "national army". Nevertheless, that June Supek launched one of the major and, one might say, even rather obsessive themes of his work

as a philosopher: the question of the “ethical aspect of science” or, as experts like to say, the relationship between science and ethics. (Supek wrote about this issue in a number of his books; one booklet, published in 1985 and based on a lecture held at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, was even entitled *Znanost i etika*, or *Science and Ethics*.) Finally, Supek’s preoccupation with the ethical aspects of science, with questions of the relationship between science and ethics and scientists’ moral responsibility, indicate the reasons for his ongoing involvement in the Pugwash Movement (he was a member of its Permanent Committee and president of the Yugoslav Pugwash Conference since its founding).

In 1947 Supek became professor of theoretical physics at the newly founded Faculty of Science at the University of Zagreb (in fact, he became the head of two departments: theoretical physics and mechanics, or applied mathematics). He sought to transfer the “spirit” of Heisenberg’s Leipzig seminar to Zagreb, and liked to say that his students’ degree essays and doctoral theses were written on the same topics that had been discussed in Leipzig, which made him very proud of many of his young associates. In 1949 Supek published *Teorijska fizika i struktura materije* (*Theoretical Physics and the Structure of Matter*), which became the basic textbook in theoretical physics for generations of scientists (subsequent editions were significantly expanded, with new appendices from the third edition onwards being written by Supek’s former students). Although Supek used to say that this book marked his “farewell to physics”, this “farewell” should nevertheless be postdated by some ten years. For in 1950 Supek founded the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb, devoted to fundamental research in physics, chemistry, electronics and biology. He remained head of the Institute until 1958, successfully resisting tendencies favoring the “nuclear energy project” as well as those seeking to limit the Institute’s activities to theoretical physics alone. (From the start Supek had demanded that its research be expanded to include the “physics of molecules”, as he sometimes liked to call chemistry.)

Somewhere around that time, in the second half of the 1950s, Supek gradually turned to literature (“the first love of his youth”, as he used to say), considering it “the fullest expression of all the unease and dilemmas of today”. Thus in 1959 he published the novel *Dvoje između ratnih linija* (*Two between the War Lines*), as well as *Na atomskim vulkanima* (*On the Atomic Volcanoes*), which included the drama *Na atomskom otoku* (*On Atomic Island*). From then until the end of his life, Supek never gave up his literary work, publishing a number of novels, plays and essays, as well as memoirs and other non-fiction. Several of his novels should be mentioned, such as *Proces stoljeća* (*Trial of the Century*, 1963), *U prvom licu* (*In the First Person*, 1965), *Heretik* (*Heretic*, 1968; a drama based on this

novel was staged at the Gavella Theatre in Zagreb in 1969, directed by Georgij Paro), *Extraordinarius* (1974), *Krunski svjedok protiv Hebranga* (*Crown Witness against Hebrang*, published abroad in 1983, and in 1990 in Croatia), *Otkriće u izgubljenom vremenu* (*Discovery in a Time Lost*, 1987), *Buna Janusa Pannoniusa* (*The Rebellion of Janus Pannonius*, 1992), *EPR-efekt* (*The EPR-Effect*, 1995), and *U opasnoj sjeni* (*In a Dangerous Shadow*, 2002). Besides the plays already mentioned, there was also *Velika piramida* (*The Great Pyramid*, 1959), while in 1971 Supek published a volume entitled simply *Plays*, consisting of six works for the stage. His more recent plays include *Lutrija Imperatora Augustusa* (*The Lottery of Emperor Augustus*, 1991), *Vrag je tiho naglas* (*The Devil's Quiet Noise*, 1991), *Gabrijel* (*Gabriel*, 1994), *Biskup i ban* (*The Bishop and the Governor*, 1995), *Pusta, zatrovana zemlja* (*Deserted, Poisoned Land*, 1996) and *Tais* (*Thais*, 1997).

Supek published several memoirs and non-fiction works, especially in more recent times. One of the most important of these was *Krivovjernik na ljevici* (*Heretic on the Left*, 1980), published abroad during the so-called “leaden years” (in Bristol, where Edo Pivčević, professor of philosophy at the University of Bristol, assisted in its publication; the book was published in Croatia only in 1992). This work represents a sort of overview of Supek’s life since the late 1930s and conflicts on the left up until the “Croatian Spring” movement and the subsequent “Karadorđevo Bolshevik coup”. At the time and in the circumstances of its publication, the book played an unusually important role in raising awareness about (political) conditions in the former Yugoslavia, especially among the younger generation of students and intellectuals. This generation (to which I myself belong) might be called the “post-Spring generation”, one which had, in a way, been left unscathed by the Croatian Spring, since in 1971 its members had been too young for political or any other kind of cultural activity; and by the time they had matured and became capable of such activity, they found themselves in the middle of the “leaden years”. Although Supek had already experienced various attacks and greater or lesser unpleasantnesses when *Heretic on the Left* was published, a true “avalanche” of accusations was launched against him by the Yugoslav political leadership a few years later, when the aforementioned novel *Crown Witness against Hebrang* (a fictionalized account of the “Hebrang case”¹)

¹ Andrija Hebrang was a Croatian Partisan leader and political secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia during the Second World War. In 1944 he was dismissed from office due to his “insufficient articulation of the Yugoslavian idea”. He was accused of collaboration with the wartime Ustasha regime in 1948, and killed in prison in 1949.

was published abroad. The means and the “vocabulary” used in attacking Supek were anything but moderate: his passport was seized, he was summoned more than once for an “informational interview” with the police, the papers proclaimed him an “Ustasha extremist”, a “supporter of the rejected ideology”, and a “leader of the enemy emigration”, and there were even some who demanded that the pension to which he was entitled as a member of the Academy be revoked. Naturally, everyone who knew Supek was aware even then that these attacks were unfounded. Yet for the general public it was probably only Supek’s (political) engagement during the 1990s that revealed how groundless these accusations had been.

Although quite advanced in years, Supek continued writing in the 1990s, and kept on doing so till the end of his life. When I used to visit him at his home on Rubetićeva Street in Zagreb – during his last years he did not come out much – he would tell me: “I mostly just write”. In terms of their “genre”, these writings were mostly essays on historical, political, moral, religious, scientific, or philosophical topics, often interwoven to some degree with references to his own life. The following works may be highlighted: *Povijesne meditacije* (*Historical Meditations*, 1996), *Promašaji i nade* (*Errors and Hopes*, 1997), *Mene tek el fares* (1999), *Na prekretnici milenija* (*At the Turn of the Millennium*, 2001), *Religija i filozofija* (*Religion and Philosophy*, 2003), *Refleksije o znanosti i politici* (*Reflections on Science and Politics*, 2005), *Haaški protokoli* (*The Hague Protocols*, 2005), and *Tragom duha kroz divljinu* (*Tracing the Spirit through the Wilderness*, 2006).

Provisionally distinguishing two periods in Supek’s life – one in which, until the end of the 1950s, he was mostly engaged in science (i.e. physics), and another one in which literary work prevailed – one might wonder if something connects these two periods, something through which these two otherwise distinct areas could be regarded as two poles of the same effort. What, then, would be the link between them? The answer is already clear, to some extent: philosophy. For both when he was engaged in physics (as one of the sciences) and when he devoted himself to literature (as one the arts), Supek never “let go” of philosophical questions, never “forgot” about philosophical problems. Moreover, just by recalling the title of one of Supek’s books – *Science, Philosophy, Art* (1964) – one realizes that science and art were, for him, two unique “moments” of a single general endeavor that may be called philosophy. Admittedly, to these two “moments” a third should be added, namely, the aforementioned moral “aspect” of both. In doing so, one recognizes, at least in its basic outlines, what Supek had tried in various ways, from sometime in the 1960s till the end of his life, to establish, develop, systematize and round out under the heading of the “philosophy of humanism”. He liked to connect his phi-

losophy of humanism or, perhaps better said, the very concept of humanism with the European humanist movement, which had appeared in the late 14th century and the first half of the 15th, with particular reference to Croatian humanists: Ivan Vitez (1405–1472), Vitez’s nephew Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), and Markantun de Dominis (1560–1624). However, one can already identify the core of this conception of humanism in Aulus Gellius’ “definition” of the Latin word *humanitas*. This definition – to which the (European) humanists themselves used to refer – states that *humanitas* is “an education and upbringing in the fine arts” (*eruditio institutioque in bonas artis*). Two crucial concepts, or “things”, which marked European humanism should be added to this: universality and tolerance. Universality, according to Supek, reminds us that the humanists formed a specific “supranational” and, in that sense, truly European circle, making use of the “supranational” and, indeed, “universal” language of Latin. But universality also denotes one of the basic characteristics of science, namely, the universal value of its knowledge, which is not limited by any national borders (and so again, it is “supranational”). As for tolerance, with Supek it was never reduced to a mere “concept”, or something only to be “discussed with erudition”; it was always an active principle of his life.

Supek developed these ideas gradually, particularly during the aforementioned second period, i.e. when he began devoting himself more and more to literature; and they reached their full extent in a book published in 1979, *Filozofija znanosti i humanizam* (*The Philosophy of Science and Humanism*). An expanded and revised edition was published in 1991, with the somewhat modified title *Filozofija, znanost, humanizam* (*Philosophy, Science, Humanism*), and the book was published once again – likewise revised and expanded – in 1995. In some sense, it might be considered Supek’s major “philosophical” work; for in it he presented his basic philosophical views and his understanding of philosophy as such. In another sense, however, two other books that Supek published during the 1970s – *Spoznaja* (*Knowledge*, 1971) and *Teorija spoznaje* (*The Theory of Knowledge*, 1974) – could actually be regarded as his “most philosophical” works. First and foremost, the titles of both books point, *prima vista*, to one of the basic branches of philosophy, one of its main traditional fields (i.e. the theory of knowledge, gnoseology or epistemology), and also indicate which part of philosophy was most interesting for Supek and formed his main preoccupation. This also helps one to understand, at least to some extent, Supek’s philosophical position, and so to “place” him in the context of other 20th century philosophies. Of course, these two titles are by no means accidental, nor are they self-explanatory. For, on one hand, putting the problem of knowledge at the centre of attention

should not be surprising in a man who was an excellent physicist, and who nurtured a critical stance towards the “results” of science (especially with regard to the aforementioned “Copenhagen interpretation” of quantum theory). On the other hand, however, one should not forget Supek’s early encounter with Kant’s philosophy, or his intention of writing a dissertation on Kant. (Supek used to say that Kant, whether accepted or rejected, had significantly influenced all later theories of knowledge and all later philosophies). Finally, it is in these two books, more than anywhere else, that one finds Supek’s interpretations of individual 20th century philosophers – his reflections and remarks on them, as well as his disagreements with many of them. To take one example, there is the large disquisition entitled “Did Wittgenstein Eliminate Philosophical Problems?” in *The Theory of Knowledge*, in which “both” Wittgensteins – younger and older – are discussed, as well as Russell, Husserl, and phenomenology).

Then again, some might claim that Supek’s most important philosophical work was *Ruđer Bošković: Vizionar u prijelomima filozofije, znanosti i društva* (*Ruđer Bošković: A Visionary at the Turning-Points of Philosophy, Science and Society*), published in 1989 (second edition 2005). And this not only because Supek presented here his understanding of Bošković (as a philosopher and scientist with whom he had been occupied throughout his entire life), but also because, in analyzing both Bošković’s predecessors and his successors, Supek sets forth a number of his own views about many historically important thinkers, philosophers and scientists.

Supek’s increasing interest in philosophy after the early 1960s resulted in his founding the Institute for the Philosophy of Science and Peace, as part of what was then the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb; today it exists as the Philosophy of Science Section of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. (In 1948 Supek became a corresponding member, and in 1960 a full member of the Academy; he was also its president for two terms, in 1991 and 1994.) The Institute was conceived as a place where dialogue could be established between science and philosophy, and, in particular, where the philosophy of science could be developed as a new branch of philosophy. Consequently, its staff was made up of trained philosophers, physicists and mathematicians, but also biologists. In 1966 the Institute began publishing the journal *Encyclopaedia Moderna*, founded with the aim of promoting the basic tenets upon which the Institute had been founded. The journal was published up until 1976, when numbers 32 through 35 were published as a single issue, after which all financial support was denied to it (in those times, this was a kind of euphemism for a ban on publication). The journal was revived in 1991, following demo-

cratic changes in Croatia, and its issue no. 36 was published. Although it is perhaps not easy today to understand the role this journal played during its first years of publication, I nevertheless feel that its significance – not only to philosophy but to the entire life of society at that time – has still not been adequately recognized. For *Encyclopaedia Moderna* was, in the fullest sense of the word, “open” to all philosophical and scientific trends, viewpoints and approaches, without imposing *a priori* any ideology or “firmly established” philosophical position that would “dictate” in advance the selection of its articles. For example, in the summer of 1970, during the fifth year of its publication, two articles vividly illustrating the journal’s wide scope were published one next to the other in issue no. 13: “New Accelerators of Elementary Particles and the Concept of the Elementary” by Ivan Andrić (a discussion of the quark structure of matter) and “Rudolf Steiner: The Science of Inner Experience – Anthroposophy” by Marijan Cipra (an overview of the work of this famous esoteric, occultist and founder of anthroposophy).

Concerning the “institutional” aspect of Supek’s philosophical work, one should recall another respectable institution he founded in the early 1970s, during his second term as rector of the University of Zagreb. (Supek served as rector for two terms, in 1968 and 1970.) In 1970 Supek had proposed the founding of the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, where an English-language course in the philosophy of science was introduced in 1974. The course began on October 24th of that year, with an introductory lecture by Werner Heisenberg on the relationship between physics and philosophy. Unfortunately, this fruitful period in Supek’s life was violently interrupted: after 1971 the “political elite” of the former Yugoslavia gradually began to obstruct his philosophical and literary work, culminating in the 1980s, as already mentioned.

If one were asked to briefly delineate the basic philosophical views of this “Croatian Russell” (as Supek is sometimes called), one would have to admit that this is no easy task. For from the early 1960s (more or less with the founding of the Institute) until the end of his life, Supek underwent a philosophical development of his own. For example, although the Institute’s very name emphasized the “philosophy of science”, Supek was becoming less and less fond of this term. The more the philosophy of science as a specific philosophical profession was becoming “recognized” in Europe and the rest of the world, the less attention Supek devoted to it. It was as if, in the act of “constituting” this discipline, Supek saw its limitations, so that “philosophy of science” (just like physics itself, at a much earlier time) became for him merely an “area” or a “discipline”, and as such too narrow. (Perhaps this could be seen as the reason for his changing the title of *The Philosophy of Science and Humanism* to *Philosophy*,

Science and Humanism.) Furthermore, since Supek generally promoted science and its relationship to philosophy, one might be led to think that he was close to physicalism, or some sort of naturalism. Philosophically, however, nothing was further from him than such views. First of all, he was a great opponent of all positivism, including logical positivism; he used to say that no one in the Vienna Circle understood what science really was. This might also explain why he was not fond of the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* period; yet it should be added that he was even less fond of Wittgenstein's second phase and his *Philosophical Investigations*. He especially disliked the "Oxford School" and the philosophy of ordinary language. As he argued more than once in our discussions, Supek believed that the philosophers of ordinary language had dragged philosophy into "linguistic depths" from which they could no longer "extricate" it (besides the things already mentioned, perhaps it was these same "linguistic depths" that further distanced him from Heidegger). He was also quite opposed to all views of science which, in analyzing and explaining the scientific enterprise, neglected the role of the imagination, which he considered a crucial component of scientific research, one largely "responsible" for scientific discoveries. Finally, he was just as critical of Russell, Ayer or Popper.

And yet, as time went by, Supek became more and more interested in "classical" areas of philosophy. This was particularly evident when he was preparing his book on Bošković. At that time, we frequently discussed some philosophers who had historically preceded Bošković, and especially the relationship – that is, the similarities and differences – between Descartes, Newton, Leibniz and Bošković. However, we probably talked most in these conversations about Aristotle and Aristotelianism, and about how much Bošković owed to Aristotle. It was then that I noticed how strongly Supek was attracted to Aristotle and his *Metaphysics*. Aristotle's doctrine of modal being, his famous conceptual pair δύναμις – ἐνέργεια and, in particular, his concept of potentiality were among the philosophical problems Supek liked to talk about most. Back then, I also got the impression that the very concept of metaphysics – not especially popular among physicists or scientists in general – had been successfully re-thought by Supek from another point of view and given a new dimension.

On the other hand, although he was against any sort of radicalism (such as Bolshevism, or the radicalism of the 1968 movement), Supek never forsook the idea of social justice and his aspiration to a certain "egalitarianism". For instance, he never gave up the endeavor to eliminate the differences between rich and poor. Likewise, although he often seriously objected to particular philosophies which, in one way or another, linked themselves with science (from various kinds of positivism to cer-

tain tendencies within analytical philosophy), Supek never abandoned his basic idea concerning the exceptional importance of science and the interdependency of science and philosophy. Finally, although he did not have too much sympathy for the latest tendencies in philosophy, which call themselves “postmodern”, Supek (unlike many fervent advocates of “understanding the Other”), actively applied the principle of tolerance in his life, always showing understanding for the other and the different, and remained faithful to an “ethics of duty” opposed to all pragmatism, a deontology opposed to all utilitarianism.

Professor Supek was always cordial in personal encounters and moderate in conversation, never gruff or categorical. He did not like to impose his views, although he would clearly make it known if he did not agree with someone. He helped everyone, whenever and wherever he could. Supek transferred this spirit of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding to his Institute and all its staff. One might call it the spirit of philosophical good manners. He would be harsh only rarely, whenever someone, even unwittingly, had questioned these values and this spirit.

Supek has left behind him an enormous opus, scientific, philosophical and literary. His philosophical works, like the rest of this opus, have yet to be carefully studied. It must be read entirely, analyzed in all of its aspects, and only then interpreted as a whole. It is clear that one’s interpretation of Supek’s opus will depend significantly on the point of view from which one approaches it, what one particularly wishes to highlight, which of its diverse components one considers fundamental. Moreover, future generations will surely develop their own particular interpretations of Supek’s philosophy, and will certainly have their own understanding of Supek the philosopher. Be that as it may, one thing is indisputable: a gentleman philosopher has left us, one of a kind which, since 1945, has not been too common in Croatia.

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