

## Man's Attitude to Things: Objective Being

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*The issues addressed in the article are of particular relevance due to the deepening anthropological crisis in the current geopolitical situation. The aim of the article is to introduce a category of 'objective being' into the language of science. The used research methods: philosophical reflection, comparative analysis and logical-historical integration. The main theoretical and methodological framework for the study is the approach to understanding a human being through the system of fundamental human attitudes to the world such as human attitude to things (objective being), human attitude to other people (social being) and human attitude to the Absolute (eternal universal being). The study is dedicated to the analysis of the human objective being and identification of its development stages: the stage of immediate relationship with things; the stage of 'mediated relationship' when technology becomes a mediating tool; and the stage of 'double mediation', when technology as a tool becomes a necessary precondition for the emergence of another mediating tool – cyberspace, potentially containing 'curled up' virtual realities. Such approach allows identifying the contradictions between the existential, instrumental and cybernetic spaces, arising in the process of the objective being development. Introduction of the category of 'objective being' as a type of fundamental human relationship to the world into the language of science expands the methodological background for the research into the vital anthropological issues of our time.*

**Key words:** *a human being, attitude to things, existential space, instrumental space, cyberspace, man frontiers.*

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## Introduction

Dynamic development of the subject environment of modern society, the movement of the most important forms of life activities (education, work, leisure, services, etc.) from the real sphere to virtual again actualizes research into anthropological issues.

The 21st century is marked by changes in *the methodology of human studies*. Instead of comprehending the essence of things, in the foreground of the research there is disclosure of *fundamental attitudes of a human being towards the world and oneself*. Now the key research objects are fundamental human attitudes to the world such as attitudes to things (objective being), attitudes to other people (social being) and attitudes to the Absolute (eternal, universal dimension of a man being). Fundamental attitudes of a human being towards the world constitute the problem field that is conventionally defined as the 'man in the world'. The human attitude to oneself forms the 'man's inner world' or 'I'. The 'man in the world' and the 'man's inner world' are methodological concepts that represent a human being as an anthropological entity in its ontological differences. The 'man in the world' and the 'man's inner world' in their interrelation form a unity of *man's existential space*.<sup>1</sup>

The objective being<sup>2</sup> holds a special place among the fundamental attitudes of man in the world, because it is an activity aimed at creating the own specific environment for human existence – culture ('the second nature'). It should be noted that the notion of 'objective being' here is used in the following meaning: the product of man labour as a result of objectifying man forces, abilities, knowledge and skills in the objects of culture. The world of cultural objects surrounding a human being is the objectification of human experience and knowledge. Every object is a fixation of the human mode of behaviour. Mastering each thing created by people means learning how to act and live as a human. The process of man's activity is accompanied by constant objectification of human forces, abilities, knowledge and skills in the objects of human culture. De-objectification, on the contrary, assumes appropriation of objects of culture by a human being. The forms of objectification and de-objectification of human vital forces have been historically changing.

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<sup>1</sup> Lubov E. MOTORINA, A Man as Anthropological Integrity: Philosophical Reflection, *Nova Prisutnost*, 15 (2017) 1, 31-46, 39. In more detail about the concept of the author of understanding a person as anthropological unity in its ontological differences, see MOTORINA L. E. *Filosofskaya antropologiya* [Philosophical Anthropology]. Moscow, INFRA-M, 2017, 82-197.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of 'objective being' is used in the sense of a product of human labour, representing the objectification of forces, abilities, knowledge and skills in objects of human culture.

## 1. Objective being as immediate man relationship with things

Initially the human attitude to things had a nature of *immediate relationship*. Although the tools, as man forces objectified in the objects of the culture created by people (the artificial environment), appear from the moment of the start of human labour activities, they do not exist separately, but are organically included in human existential space. The things created by humans were objects of everyday use, and in this case produced for own needs and considered appropriate and necessary. Even they were produced for other people, the craftsman was proud of being trusted and recognized as a master. In Heidegger's philosophy, such things are defined as companions to human life, and the very attitude to such things is called 'intimate' – as an attitude to something personally invented or personally appropriated.

In his book 'Being and Time', Heidegger identifies the initial ontological form of 'equipment' (*das Zeug*, which also means a tool or instrument). Heidegger defines daily being of human in the world ('everyday being-in-the-world') as 'dealings in the world', characterised by the phenomenon of 'care'.<sup>3</sup> In the 'careful dealings' man creates tools ('equipment'), but they are always subordinated to the structure of the existential space. Beings encountered in taking care Heidegger defines as useful things. Heidegger writes:

"Strictly speaking, there "is" no such thing as a useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is. A useful thing is essentially "something in order to...". The different kinds of "in order to" such as serviceability, helpfulness, usability, handiness, constitute a totality of useful things. The structure of "in order to" contains a reference of something to something."<sup>4</sup>

In this sense, each thing created by people initially had its own *place* and *value*. Production of a thing was determined not only by its 'what-for' usability but also the 'where-of' property of its composition. The things were produced of natural materials, where the 'first nature' was *a natural precondition for human existence*, and the thing revealed its beauty and concealed properties. Any produced thing contained 'an assignment' to its producer and user. The 'work produced' lived according to the laws of man – its 'master'. Heidegger defines such existence mode of things ('equipment') as 'handiness'.<sup>5</sup> "Handiness is the ontological categorial definition of beings as they are "in themselves."<sup>6</sup> Heidegger emphasises that 'handiness', as the constitutional principle of being of 'a totality of useful things', does not always refer to the individual being, it

<sup>3</sup> Martin HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, Translated by Joan Stambaugh, NY, State University of New York Press, 1996, 68.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 71.

can also occur in the mass production, but the produced goods should retain the property of 'handiness' and meet the world in which they are waited by users and consumers – the world “which is at the same time our world.”<sup>7</sup> As emphasized by Heidegger, any produced thing should be 'handiness' not only in the domestic world of the workshop – it should also remain 'handiness' in the public world. The most important is that the man-made things reveal the *'surrounding world of nature'*.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, based on the research findings by M. Heidegger, we can conclude that the human attitude to the world of things at the first stage of the development of human objective being has *a nature of immediate relationship*. Everything (even the goods produced as tools) is part of the unified *existential space*. The world of the man-made things exists as 'a totality of useful things', representing the 'second nature' (culture), which is *organically linked to the 'first nature'* and develops on the basis of *personal principle*. In this case, the produced things always contain a positive value-defined meaning.

## 2. The stage of 'mediated relationship' with things

However, the situation was gradually changing, and people started losing control of the things created by them. The things began to exist and function according to laws of commodity production and market. That was the start of a new relationship between a human being and the world; 'a totality of useful things' ceases to be 'handiness' for man. Objectifying own vital forces, people gradually ceased to possess things as something personal, inherently human, because the man-made things no longer belonged to them. The things and the human forces objectified in them acquired their independent existence. Rather than just a companion to man life, the thing became a tool, having not only a positive meaning and 'meaningful value' but also generating negative consequences threatening human existence. Man was no longer facing threat only from the 'first nature', but also from the 'second' (culture), which was intended to protect humans. The *instrumental space* emerged as a self-functioning phenomenon of culture (the second nature). That stage of the development of human objective being began from the start of industrial production of machinery ('equipment'), and the 'first nature', which used to be the condition of human existence, also became 'equipment' after was included in the production process. This new type of relationship is characterized by the destruction of an integral existential space, which is broken into two worlds: instrumental and existential. The instrumental world (industrially produced machinery) has

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

*dual nature*: results of man activity still have a positive meaning but begin posing threat and risks for Man.

The purpose of human activities changes from overcoming daily deficiencies and seeking protection from the elemental forces of nature to actively using and transforming the surrounding world for the own needs. The transforming and consuming component of human objective being literally 'overwhelms' man, and gradually it becomes unimportant for people whether the goals of man activities coincide with the goals and tasks of the world itself. This phenomenon is pointed out by I. Kant.<sup>9</sup> He emphasizes that a human being is under the illusion that the world seems to exist only to be cognized and transformed. Yet the world has its own goals, and, in order to comprehend them, a human should learn to 'ask the world the right questions', trying to discover the goals of the world.<sup>10</sup> The most comprehensive analysis of the role of technologies in the life of modern human is made in the works by S.L. Frank, N.A. Berdyaev, M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers and other major thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They revealed and uncovered important aspects related to the interpretation of technology as a phenomenon that caused significant changes in the relationship between human and the world. The philosophers especially focused on the analysis of the 'duality of technology' caused by the contradiction between the creative nature of a human being and the results of human creative activities. Z. Freud in his work 'Discontent in Culture' states that this contradiction is fatal for the history of mankind.<sup>11</sup>

Exploring the dual nature of the technology, Jaspers notes that technology distances us from nature and brings us closer to it at the same time, because it allows us to discover previously unknown properties of the world and develop our own abilities.<sup>12</sup> In other words, technology, on the one hand, contributes to man's self-development and self-realization but, on the other hand, it reduces the level of controllability of the so-called instrumental space. Jaspers considers that the main threats for man are 'spiritual emptiness'<sup>13</sup> and 'loss of the meaning of life'. To existentially experience and more deeply comprehend the degree of this threat, we'd like to quote here from the book 'The Downfall of Idols' by Russian religious philosopher S.L. Frank, posing questions worth reflecting upon. He wrote:

<sup>9</sup> See Lubov E. MOTORINA, Kant's Anthropology as a Coherent Doctrine of Man, *Studia philosophica kantiana*, 2 (2017) 20-30.

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel KANT, *Kritika čistog razuma* [The Critique of Pure Mind], Immanuel KANT, *Sochineniya v 6 tomah* [Works in 6 Volumes]. Moscow, Mysl, 1964, V. 3, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund FREUD, *Nedovolstvo v kulturi* [Discontent in Culture], *Filosofskie nauki*, 1 (1989) 94-100, 100.

<sup>12</sup> Karl JASPERS, *Smysl i naznachenie istorii* [The Origin and Goal of History], Moscow, Politizdat, 1991, 118-128.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

"We are not happy any more with the progress of science and the development of technology associated with it. Travelling by air – this avian flight which man had been dreaming of for centuries – has already become almost a routine, ordinary way of travel. Yet what is it for if you do not know where and why to fly, if the same boredom and a hopeless spiritual weakness and emptiness reign all over the world? (...) The general development of industrial technology, accumulation of wealth, improvement of the external conditions of life – all these things are good and definitely, necessary, but isn't there some kind of hopeless Sisyphean labour in all that (...)? Is that young, naive faith with which generations of people worked to accumulate wealth and develop production, considering that to be the means to achieve some joyful final goal, still possible today? And is this unlimited accumulation and transformation of a man being into a slave of things, machines, telephones and all other sorts of dead results of human activity really necessary for happiness?"<sup>14</sup>

M. Heidegger also writes about the contradictory nature of technology, which is reflected in his notion of *Ge-stell* ('enframing') – a way of revealing the concealed properties of the world, the phenomenon in which the essence of modern technology manifests itself. Therefore, he considers technology to be one of the ways to expand human creative possibilities. In accordance with philosophy of M. Heidegger revealing the concealed properties of the world goes in two ways: a way of poetic ('bringing-forth') and a way of production ('challenging-forth'). He identifies two modes of revealing: productive (instrumental) and poetic (existential). "The challenging revealing has its origin as a destining in bringing-forth."<sup>15</sup> The expansion of the first of them, in his opinion, leads to the loss of the second, and people gradually lose their inherent ability of revealing the concealed properties of the world. Technology, according to Heidegger, is the destiny of man, and he considers destining in the *Ge-stell* mode (productive and enframing approach to revealing the concealed properties of the world) to be the supreme danger. He reiterates that the danger does not lie in the negative consequences of technological development themselves. The most serious, danger is caused by the fact that people are not ready for such transformation of the world. According to Heidegger, people have to develop relations with the world in accordance with the essence of technology, its dual nature.

Thus, based on the research findings by M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers and S.L. Frank, we can come to the following conclusion: while the prevailing component at the first stage of the objective world development was being protected from the elemental forces of nature through strengthening and expansion of human capabilities, the stage of the mediated man's relationship with the world

<sup>14</sup> Semyon L. FRANK, *Sochineniya* [Works], Moscow, Pravda, 1990, 139.

<sup>15</sup> Martin HEIDEGGER, *The Question Concerning Technology, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Translated and with an Introduction by William Lovitt, NY&London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1977, 29-30.

of things is characterised by the dominating component of risk or threat – a threat of not only physical destruction, but also of the destruction of morals and values. *The gap between the existential space and the instrumental space is widening.*

The instrumental world exerts more and more pressure on the man's existential space. Such concern was expressed at the end of the 20th century by French sociologist A. Touraine. He emphasizes that the ties between personal freedom and social effectiveness are breaking down in the modern society; culture and economy – the symbolic world and the instrumental world – are becoming more and more divided. Therefore, A. Touraine raises a question whether we can remain human or let us be torn apart between the universe of instrumentality and the universal identity.<sup>16</sup> Expansion of the instrumental space significantly narrows, distorts and sometimes destroys the existential space. The personal principle in culture is increasingly replaced with its systemic foundations. Culture, as the objectified creative power of man, which was initially protecting it from the elements of nature, now itself gradually turns into an element raging within the culture. A *systemic, anonymous, interchangeable* man more and more prevails in the modern culture. 'I' is today dissolving in 'It', and personality encounters the impersonal world. The loss of the value of a separate individual and the personal principle in culture, its transition to impersonal systemic foundations poses important worldview questions for man. What kind of super-individual structure will become bearer of such personal qualities as responsibility, conscience, sense of duty, dignity and others, without which the life of mankind is inconceivable? Is a personal meaning possible in an impersonal anonymous culture? And is it possible to continue creating (objectifying oneself) in such culture, having lost the personal meaning? These questions remain unanswered so far.

### 3. *The stage of 'double mediation'*

That next stage of the development of human objective being, characterised by some specific properties, we define as the stage of 'double mediation'; it is related to the emergence of the 'third nature' – a new phenomenon which is called virtual reality. A turning point in the emergence and study of virtual reality was the appearance of computers as *a new means of objective world construction*. From the point of view of everyday occurrence, the appearance of computers looked like the emergence of a new reality, a new thing and its associated range of values, i.e. computers have become a tool of evidence for a new reality, namely computer virtual reality pointed to new meanings and

<sup>16</sup> See Alain TOURAINE, *Can We Live Together: Equality and Differences*, Translated by David Macey. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000, 336.

life practices that until now people did not know. Famous Spanish researcher of modern civilization processes M. Castells noted that the concept of computer virtual reality turned out to be the key in comprehending the meaning of the information age both as a whole and in all its aspects: social, political, technological, etc. He points to a new phase development of a society in which identities washed away and virtuality recognized as an integral and essential attribute of the new world order.<sup>17</sup>

The meaning behind the concept of virtual reality remains unclear, blurred, not clarified in any conventional way. One can argue only the fact of wide interdisciplinary research of this phenomenon, which is quite perspective at this stage. As for the philosophical comprehending of the phenomenon, until it received an unequivocal holistic conceptual lighting, although it is actively discussed in the philosophical literature.<sup>18</sup>

Many scholars mention paradoxicality as a characteristic feature of virtual reality. The essence of the paradox lies in the fact that virtual reality is not an objective entity in the full meaning of the word, because it is supported by the activity of the generated technical environment.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, today the most vital research issue is *the ontology of virtual reality*. The scholars working in this research area look for answers to several questions. Does virtual reality exist actually or potentially? Is it a state of human consciousness or a part of objective being? If it is a part of objective being, what form does it take (an independent reality or a phenomenon supported by the technical environment generating it)? Can it be considered as a part of culture (second nature) or a medium constructing a new artificial world (third nature)? These questions need to be developed as a methodological basis for their further research.

For now, directly opposite points of view are expressed on the ontology of virtual reality. So, S.S. Horuzhij accentuates the problem of ontology of virtual reality based on the categories of Aristotle: opportunity, potentiality, energy, actualization, implementation, etc., and concludes that the virtual reality is not

<sup>17</sup> Manuel CASTELLS, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, Vol. III. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 488.

<sup>18</sup> See Nikolai A. NOSOV, *Manifest virtualistiki* [The Manifesto of Virtualistics], Moscow, Put., 2001; Georgii I. RUZAVIN, Virtual'nost' [Virtuality], *Novaya filosofskaya ehnciklopediya* [New Philosophical Encyclopaedia] in 4 volumes, Moscow, Infra-M, 2010, Vol. 1; Ekaterina E. TARATUTA, *Filosofiya virtual'noj real'nosti* [The Philosophy of Virtual Reality], St Petersburg, SPbGU, 2007; Sergei S. HORUZHII, *O starom i novom* [On Old and New], St Petersburg, Aleteia, 2000; Lyudmila BAEVA, Virtualizaciya zhiznennogo prostranstva cheloveka i problemy internet-igrovoj zavisimosti (IGD) [Virtualization of human life space and problems of internet gaming dependence (IGD)], *Filosofskie problemy informacionnyh tekhnologij i kiberprostranstva*, 1(11) (2016), 7-19.

<sup>19</sup> Irina V. CVYK, *Filosofskie problemy 'iskusstvennogo intellekta' i virtual'noj real'nosti*, [Philosophical Problems of 'Artificial Intelligence' and Virtual Reality], *Istoriya i filosofiya nauki*, Pod red. Yu.V. Kryaneva, L.E. Motorinoj [History and Philosophy of Science, Ed. by Yu.V. Kryanev, L.E. Motorina], Moscow, ИИФРА-М, 2016, 259.



Aristotle reality.<sup>20</sup> In his opinion virtual reality is like under-exposed, not-born being. In future S.S. Horuzhij predicts virtual reality as a departure from reality in some ontologically independent sphere separated from the main reality. On the contrary N.A. Nosov asserts the ontological independence of virtual reality speaking of its multi-level organization, polyonticity. He considers generation and interactivity to be specific features. According to him the objects of virtual reality are generated by the objects of a different level but interacting with the reality generating them.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, speaking about the specifics of virtual reality, it is necessary to note the following: on the one hand, virtual reality has the properties of actual reality (space, time, movement, development, reflection, etc.), but, on the other hand, it has virtual-specific properties (technological generation, incorporeal objectness, polysemy, autonomy, interactivity, etc.). If we consider the etymology of the term 'virtuality', we can see the duality in the ontological status of virtual reality.

The term 'virtual' has been used since ancient times. Aristotle already introduced categories of possible and actual to denote things in possibility and things in actuality. In the ontology of Thomas Aquinas, the term is used when considering the antithesis of potential (possible) and actual (real). Nicholas of Cusa in his work 'On the Vision of God' considers virtuality as a potential, using the image of a seed of a tree that potentially contains the tree itself. Thus, the term 'virtual reality' originally meant the reality that could exist both in the state of a potential (possibility) and in the state of actually existing and acting. While in the example of a seed and a tree (used by Nicholas of Cusa) the potential had the form of natural givenness (first nature), the potential in the case of virtual reality exists as a sphere of interaction between a human being and technology (technosphere). In this case the virtual reality can be considered as a part of human objective being, part of culture and the man-made artificial environment. However, this part of human objective being has its own specific features. While at the previous stage of the objective being development the emergence of industrial production technology led to the emergence of its new form – mediated being, the emergence of virtual reality gave rise to a situation of double mediation, because in this case the technical environment as a means in the structure of objective being itself is a condition for the generation of a new kind of mediating tool – cyberspace. Cyberspace is a form of actualization of virtual reality; it is a complex global computer network, in which *virtual realities* exist in a curled form.

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<sup>20</sup> Sergei S. HORUZHIIJ, *O starom i novom* [On Old and New], St Petersburg, Aleteia, 2000, 311-339.

<sup>21</sup> Ekaterina E. TARATUTA, *Filosofiya virtual'noj real'nosti* [The Philosophy of Virtual Reality], St Petersburg, SPbGU, 2007, 60.

Cyberspace is a metaphorical abstraction that came to science from science fiction literature (William Gibson) and used in philosophy and computer science to refer to events and the database of computer and computer networks. Such events do not occur in cities and countries where participants or servers are located, and different countries laws are not applicable to them. Cyberspace is considered in this context as something single, integral and impersonal, as the internal phenomenon of information networks which is a virtual reality in a curled form. In that sense it is an example of double mediation. According to M. Castells it fits into the new nascent order of 'space of flows' and 'timeless time'.<sup>22</sup>

The virtual reality, including many ontologically independent realities, is their modelling simulation, and the virtual reality is modelled in accordance with the existential space needs. Hence, on the one hand, virtual reality exacerbates the problems of personal self-identification, but, on the other hand, it completely removes them, making an individual almost indifferent to its personal material reality. The decreased interest in actual reality strengthens man's dependence on virtual reality. Many experts in this field consider that the development of virtual reality has no technological limitations. The only problem imposing restrictions on the development of virtual reality is, in their opinion, *the ability of man's psyche to maintain its authenticity*.<sup>23</sup> As we can see, the problem of man in terms of protecting the personal principle in the development of culture (especially its objective component) again returns to the centre of the problem field of philosophical reflection.

### *Conclusion*

So, we can identify three stages of the development of human objective being: the stage of immediate relationship with things, characterised by the holistic existential space, where man-made objects represent 'a totality of useful things' and have the property of 'handiness' and are organically included in the holistic space; the stage of the mediated man's relationship with the world of things, characterized by the destruction of an integral existential space, which is broken into two worlds: instrumental space and existential space, with the former having a destructive impact on the latter; and the stage of double mediation, when the existential space itself is questioned. The peculiarity of the stage of double mediation is that the technical environment is a condition for the generation of objective being. A contradiction emerges between the existential, instrumental and cybernetic spaces. This contradiction remains insufficiently

<sup>22</sup> See Manuel CASTELLS, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, Vol. I. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 407-500.

<sup>23</sup> See Richard S. LAZARUS, *Emotion and Adaptation*, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1991.

studied. Introduction of the category of 'objective being', as an important component of understanding a human being as an anthropological entity, into the language of science and identification of the objective being development stages, including the stage of double mediation, expands the methodological background for the research into the vital anthropological issues of our time.

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*Čovjekov odnos prema stvarima: Objektivni bitak*

Sažetak

Teme koje su obrađene u ovom članku od posebne su važnosti uslijed sve veće antropološke krize u trenutnoj geopolitičkoj situaciji. Cilj ovog članka je uvesti kategoriju »objektivnog bitka« u jezik znanosti. Korištene istraživačke metode su: filozofska refleksija, komparativna analiza i logičko-povijesna integracija. Glavni teoretski i metodološki okvir je pristup razumijevanju ljudskog bića kroz sustav temeljnog ljudskog odnosa prema svijetu shvaćenom kao ljudski odnos prema stvarima (objektivni bitak), ljudski odnos prema drugim ljudima (društveni bitak) i ljudski odnos prema Apsolutnom (vječni univerzalni bitak). Istraživanje je posvećeno analizi ljudskog objektivnog bitka i identifikaciji njegovih razvojnih faza: faza neposrednog odnosa sa stvarima; stadij »posredovanog odnosa«, kada tehnologija postaje oruđe medijacije; i stadij »dvostrukog posredovanja«, kada tehnologija, kao oruđe, postaje nužni preduvjet za nastajanje drugih posredujućih oruđa – cyberspace, koji potencijalno sadrži »uvijenu (curled-up)« virtualnu stvarnost. Ovakav pristup nam omogućuje da identificiramo proturječje između egzistencijalnog, instrumentalnog i kibernetičkog prostora, koje izbija u procesu razvoja objektivnog bitka. Uvođenje kategorije »objektivnog bitka« kao tipa temeljnog ljudskog odnosa sa svijetom u kategorije jezika znanosti proširuje metodološku pozadinu za istraživanje vitalnih antropoloških stvarnosti našega vremena.

*Ključne riječi: ljudsko biće, odnos prema stvarima, egzistencijalni prostor, instrumentalni prostor, cyberspace, granice ljudskoga.*

(na hrv. prev. Pavle Mijović)

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