

Epistemological Importance of Philosophy for Understanding of Contemporary Civilizational Processes

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Svyrydenko, Denys and Wiktor Moźgin (2021) Epistemological Importance of Philosophy for Understanding of Contemporary Civilizational Processes. *Philosophy and Cosmology*, Volume 27, 145-152. <https://doi.org/10.29202/phil-cosm/27/11>

Globalization processes in the contemporary world have been implemented in political, economic, and socio-cultural discourses. Compared to others, the philosophical discourse is not anachronistic and amethodic and has been omitted in this respect. Thus, the article presents the importance of philosophy in the area of learning and analyzing globalization processes. The authors, referring to the example of reactivating the concept of the New Silk Road (One Belt One Road Initiative) and the involvement of the People's Republic of China in this project, show the importance of philosophy in analyzing the ideas and processes associated with it. They emphasize the role of the "spirit" and the values that have been created around this project. The Silk Road is currently one of the most significant globalization initiatives to ensure peace and sustainable development. Therefore, the implementation of philosophy into epistemological and analytical processes of the idea of the Silk Road strongly emphasizes its importance in the contemporary philosophical discourse.

Keywords: civilization development, philosophy, metaphorical processes, contemporary pragmatism, One Belt One Road Initiative

Received: 18 April 2021 / Accepted: 16 July 2021 / Published: 1 October 2021

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Introduction

In the modern world, the term “globalization” has become so widespread that hardly anyone wonders what constitutes the existential basis of the processes that are described by this word. The phenomenon of globalization has been absorbed in its interpretative nature by political, economic, and social sciences. The consequence of this was the consolidation of a paradigm in which only the above-mentioned narrative directions matter. The legitimacy of performing analytical activities within the framework of political, economic, or social discourses boils down only to superficial, often anachronistic, and amethodic descriptions of a globalized reality. Anachronism in this context is associated with the dynamic nature of the changes taking place because often emerging political, economic, or social theories aimed at explaining reality become outdated quickly. The amethodic nature, in turn, comes down to the lack of a reliable analysis based on an appropriate methodology. This does not mean that political, economic, and social sciences do not have adequate research tools. Still, it correlates with the claim that they are insufficient for in-depth analysis and explanation of globalization processes. In this context, it seems justified to emphasize the importance of philosophical reflection, which has significantly weakened over the last few years.

Therefore, this article aims to indicate the pragmatic aspects of the philosophical approach that can be used in explaining the processes of globalization in the contemporary world. In their deliberations, the authors refer to the work of Peter Sloterdijk *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory*, which defends philosophy as an effective theoretical tool with which a reliable and in-depth analysis of globalization processes can be made. It highlights the epistemological aspect of the processes taking place in the contemporary world. However, this is done through the prism of philosophical methodological thinking. Peter Sloterdijk accuses the representatives of political, economic, and social sciences of the lack of precision in analyzing globalization processes. He draws attention to the semantic nature of the terms used by researchers. He claims that the modern scientific narrative has been weakened precisely by the “unscientific gibberish” of media stations and pseudo-scientific circles that do not meet the standards of a “real” constructive scientific debate (Sloterdijk, 2013: 12-15). The article’s authors, referring to Sloterdijk’s thoughts, emphasize the importance of a metaphorical turn in philosophy, which returned to favor thanks to Immanuel Kant. This direction of study also boils down to metaphorology, which means, according to the assumption of Hans Blumberg, a critical perception of the world and rationalization in the selection of concepts by which this world is described (Blumberg, 2010: 38-43). The significance of the metaphorical turn in the context of the philosophical approach in analyzing globalization processes is best reflected by the contemporary idea of the authorities of the People’s Republic of China concerning the reactivation of the Silk Road, which was also referred to as the One Belt and One Road initiative. The epistemology of the idea of the Silk Road has a long tradition and history, and in short, it actually means building communication networks connecting the East and the West. Thus, an initiative that has a metaphorical or, in other words, a philosophical foundation in terms of meaning is implemented as a great globalizing project.

To accomplish the task set by the authors of the article, several scientific methods have been used. Primarily logical, theoretical, technical, and interpretative analyses were used. It made it possible to study the importance of philosophy in the processes of explaining globalization processes in the contemporary world. In the next part of the article, the stages of shaping philosophical meaning in the context of explaining globalization will be presented. In this respect, the authors refer to the semantic theory of history by Reinhart Koselleck,

who derives his considerations from the thesis concerning the limitation of historical time (Koselleck, 2004: 23-25). This means that the story can be broken down into specific stages, most of which end in a paradigm shift. Nevertheless, in the context of these considerations, this time limitation is interpreted as a division into parts within a given whole. This whole is the idea of universalism and the desire to control the world.

Philosophy as a Tool Explaining Globalization Processes

The philosophical discourse of globalization is related to the concept of cosmopolitanism, which covers the entirety of political, economic, and socio-cultural processes taking place in the world. Currently, in cosmopolitanism, three main directions can be distinguished: egalitarian, libertarian, and mondialistic. These three lines relate to an ancient school of philosophy – Cynics, Cyreneics, or Stoics. However, this does not diminish the importance of the cosmopolitan idea today. It is considered a universal philosophical doctrine in time and space (Shestova, 2021: 203-205). Looking at cosmopolitanism from a global-historical perspective as the basis of globalization processes, its unchanging and permanent essence is noticeable, not dependent on specific conditions. The idea remains the same, only the way of looking at reality changes, which depends on technological and information development (Chumakov, 2015: 154-156).

In turn, the already mentioned in this article, Peter Sloterdijk lists three stages of shaping globalization processes in his work that can undoubtedly be included in the trend of cosmopolitan thinking. This German philosopher points to the cosmic-uranic stage, identified with Hellenism; the land-sea stage related to modernity; and the synchronous stage, i.e., the period of existence of the postmodern globalized world. In addition, Sloterdijk presented the world and the processes taking place in it as spherical, i.e., a model of the globe where all points are equally distant from the center (Sloterdijk, 2013: 108-110; 234-237). The sphere in a given context, i.e., the sphere's shell, is a metaphor because the globe, due to the movement around its axis and the resulting centrifugal forces, has the shape of an ellipsoid, which means that not all points are as far away from the center as it would be in the case of a globe. Nevertheless, it is worth looking at the various stages of globalization, which constitute a continuity of the cosmopolitan idea but with a paradigm-shifting perception of reality.

The first stage, the period of Hellenism, is associated with the representation of being and the cosmos with the help of a sphere. The circular shape, the same everywhere, having no beginning or end, and therefore perfect – is the most important metaphor for being for Greek philosophers. The ancient cosmic order was also used in Leo Strauss's deliberations on the ideal form of the processes taking place in the world (Meier, 2006: 124-128). Moreover, in the era of Hellenism, sphericity was equated with the protective shell of the Earth. It made it easier for the Ancient Greeks to observe or refer to the Platonic sense of this phenomenon – to look into the essence of the world (James & Steger, 2017: 24-25).

The second stage, covering the period of modernity, is related primarily to the paradigm shift in perceiving the world. Peter Sloterdijk describes this process as the transfer of transcendence to horizontality (Sloterdijk, 2013: 179-181). The Copernican revolution emphasizes this change even more because in order to exceed the limits of one's knowledge and oneself; one did not have to look skyward - it was necessary to focus on the immense ocean, the exploration of which became a challenge for the next several decades. In the modern era, man also begins to perceive materiality differently. A great example in this context is the Great Geographic Discoveries. The expeditions of Christophe Colombo, Vasco da Gama, Marco Polo, or Hernan Cortes are primarily about finding faster and cheaper trade

routes. This period also marks the beginning of the great movement of money, which becomes the nucleus of modern commercial transactions. Adding to this a pragmatic approach and materialism, it can be presumed that this was the period of the birth of modern globalist capitalism.

The third stage is the stage of contemporary globalization processes. It is accompanied, as before, by a paradigm shift in the perception of reality caused by technological and information developments. Still, the idea of cosmopolitanism and universalism remains unchanged. The world is subject to the laws of unification because the same rules and values govern regardless of place (in most cases). The rule is to look for cheaper and faster ways of communication, which are then used as tools to increase material resources (Svetelj, 2018: 396-397).

The postmodern world is a world of large corporations and electronic money. In 1944, when the global financial system was based on the gold resources of individual players, a parallel process began with the great game of resources, which proved itself to be moving away from paper money as a means of payment. Today, what counts above all is the funds on the bank account, which can be easily operated, making various transactions quickly and efficiently (Baader, 2016: 207-210). The world of corporations and material security, which is the modern philosophy of human existence, creates a network of mutual structural connections. Nowadays, it is easy to see a tendency in every aspect of human life, let's call it "corporate materialism." This process is exemplified by, for example, the education process at the university. It is no longer an institution that is supposed to teach how a person should perceive reality and understand it. The times of such a university, the manifestation of which was the German and English models, have changed along with the paradigm of perceiving reality. Nowadays, the university as an institution is experiencing a crisis. Massification, empowerment, and a decline in educational standards are appropriate adjectives for today's universities (Možgin, 2019: 59-61). The main problem faced by a young person in university is the right course of study. How can this be implemented? The answer is straightforward – demand in the labor market. The demand for qualified employees has become almost the most important criterion for choosing studies by modern youth. The student today is involved in a multifaceted conflict between the university and the labor market. Therefore, often an institution such as a university, which should educate the elite of society – following the assumption of the idea of the university - today is only the next level on the path of a young person's career.

Therefore, modern man's existential goal is to eliminate the concept of space (the next stage will certainly be space exploration and the search for the possibility of extending the spheres of influence to the space of other planets). Interpretation and, above all, understanding the logic of globalization processes require an in-depth analysis. It is impossible to comprehend globalization without knowing the particular phenomena and ideas that underlie specific initiatives (Svyrydenko & Fatkhutdinov, 2019: 87-89). Certainly, the idea that accompanies any initiative to create communication links between different countries or parts of the world, taking into account all connotations – political, economic and socio-cultural, is to achieve peace and sustainable development. Despite the existence of different lines of tension between the various players on the international stage, global, cross-border initiatives are primarily aimed at ensuring effective international cooperation while respecting the diversity existing in the world. This aspect is present in political agendas and shapes the educational discourse in many universities around the world. This aims to develop social skills that will ensure appropriate conditions for cooperation at the level of large corporations and governments of individual countries.

It is up to individual states to play a significant role in ensuring sustainable development and peace. Despite the existence of the subjectivity of large corporations and international organizations in the light of international law, the state is still the most important decision-maker. This claim is quite controversial because looking at the processes taking place in the international arena, corporations and international organizations are equal to states in their activity. However, when decomposing all processes in the contemporary globalized world into factors, we will see that the states decide whether or not to establish a specific organization and that state law regulates the functioning of individual corporations. This way of reasoning indicates that various types of activity in the international arena should be considered from the perspective of the activities of individual countries.

Understanding contemporary globalization processes is possible if we look at them from the ideological perspective that forms the conceptual basis of such initiatives. The application of a philosophical approach in this context, allowing to reach the core of the idea of implementing a specific project, will allow not only to understand, but also to indicate further vectors of its development. It is therefore worth taking a closer look at the Silk Road initiative implemented by the People's Republic of China, which, thanks to its economic and socio-cultural potential, allows us to presume that it will be one of the most important initiatives in the future, especially in the context of the weakening role of the European Union and the United States.

Philosophical Platform of the Belt and Road Initiative

In 2012, the People's Republic of China authorities announced to the world that they were starting to implement the plan to re-vitalize the idea of the Silk Road. During the "China-Eurasia Expo," which took place on September 3, 2012, in the Chinese city of Urumqi, the Prime Minister of that country, Jiabao Wen, gave a speech entitled *Towards New Glory of the Silk Road*, in which he emphasized the importance of rebuilding the Silk Road and the tradition of ties between equal cultures and continents (Jiabao, 2012). Another signal confirming China's commitment to reactivating the old tradition of cooperation with the West was the speech of the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, at the Nazarbayev University of Kazakhstan in Astana regarding the *Silk Road Economic Belt*. During the speech, declarations were made about reconstructing economic cooperation between China and other countries (Xi, 2013).

In 2015, a document was published in China. One refers to the tradition of the old Silk Road and describes and explains the emergence of its new concept. It is essential in the context of this article that the content of this document includes the idea of "*the spirit of the Silk Road, which is the historical and cultural heritage of all countries around the world*" (Belt and Road Forum, 2015). The scope of getting to know "spirituality" is significant in the process of analyzing the One Belt One Road Initiative. Thus, to do so, one must resort to a philosophical approach that will allow us to reach the existential nature of this phenomenon. In this context, it will be reasonable to apply the teaching of the spirit of Wilhelm Dilthey, who, referring to the Hegelian concept of spirit, created the concept of the objective spirit. By implementing these considerations in the field of the science of spirit, one can presume that the idea of reactivating the Silk Road is pragmatic. "Spirituality," which is referred to in the official documents of the People's Republic of China, primarily emphasizes the values of peace, sustainable development, cooperation, mutual learning and its benefits, progress, prosperity, prosperity, and friendly relations. It is also worth emphasizing the dichotomous nature of this idea and its global importance because, firstly, the old Silk Road is the heritage

of all humankind. Secondly, an exemplification of its “spirituality,” the new initiative promotes peace and development worldwide (Nobis, 2020: 82-83). The reference to these contents has become an integral part of the official Chinese narrative on the international stage. Emphasizing the importance of reactivating the Silk Road has become a priority task for Chinese officials. It is worth mentioning that the President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, referred to this content during his speech at the United Nations in 2017, delivering a crucial document entitled *Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind* (Jinping, 2017).

Other players in the international arena also implement the idea of rebuilding the Silk Road. For example, in 2005, the Silk Road Foundation was established in Seoul. In 2008, the Asian Development Bank in Manila launched The New Road Silk, a program describing the development of Central Asia. In addition, the reconstruction of the Silk Road as a tool connecting the East and West was also mentioned in Antalya, Turkey, during the Promoting Trade Among Silk Road Countries Forum, which took place in 2008 (Nobis, 2020: 81). Nevertheless, the involvement of the People’s Republic of China made the idea of reactivating the Silk Road gain momentum and became one of the greatest globalist projects.

In addition, UNESCO is also implementing its own Silk Road Programme. According to the concept proposed by this organization, the Silk Road is an idea that has been connecting civilizations, cultures, and people of different parts of the world for thousands of years, enabling not only the exchange of goods but also the interaction of ideas and culture that has shaped our world today: “Since 1988, UNESCO has sought to better understand the rich history and shared legacy of the historic Silk Roads, and the ways in which cultures have mutually influenced each other. In light of the enduring legacy of the Silk Roads in connecting civilizations throughout history, the UNESCO Silk Roads Programme revives and extends these historical networks in a digital space, bringing people together in an ongoing dialogue and fostering a mutual understanding of the diverse and often inter-related cultures that have sprung up around these routes. As a part of UNESCO’s commitment to creating a culture of peace, the Silk Roads Online Platform seeks to promote this unique history of mutual exchange and dialogue” (UNESCO, 2021).

The idea of the new Silk Road also has its metaphorical sense (Bhoothalingam, 2016). Silk was and still remains one of the most valuable commodities. It is known from history that few countries could afford to buy silk. What’s more, it was an extraordinary distinction and prestige. In this way, by emphasizing the importance of silk in the history of that time, the importance of the route that it traveled is also emphasized. Today, this metaphor emphasizes the importance of communication routes between the East and the West. Silk, as a commodity, has not played such a role for a long time (without diminishing its importance in contemporary trade relations, of course), but the meaning, or otherwise, its “spirituality” has remained and dictated the contemporary political, economic and socio-cultural discourse. The Old Silk Road was formally introduced into the scientific discussion by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. After returning from an expedition to Asia, he presented a map marking the old communication routes as only an ideological model. Today, the Silk Road is more than just a communication route, as it is primarily international cooperation for sustainable development and peace. It is the realization of the cosmopolitan idea mentioned earlier in the article. The New Silk Road is a way to combine two significantly different parts into one whole (Ling& Perrigoue, 2018).

Thus, the philosophical approach used by the authors made it possible to explain the multifaceted and ambiguous nature of the idea of the Silk Road. At the same time, the role of

philosophy as a tool for making such an analysis was emphasized. The Silk Road initiative reactivated primarily by the People's Republic of China is one of the most significant globalist projects, which is why it was so important to get to the existential basis of this project. The aforementioned "spirituality" and the axiological aspect create a specific envelope around this initiative, emphasizing the uniqueness of the One Belt One Road Initiative, which will certainly play an important role in the development of all mankind.

Conclusions

Political, economic, and social sciences have dominated globalization as a worldwide process. Explaining the phenomena of globalization in recent years has therefore become too superficial. What matters is presenting the fact of a specific process, not an in-depth analysis of it. In this context, the philosophical discourse, which, through its methodical approach, makes it possible to explain the existential nature and the idea of globalization processes, is ignored. To emphasize the importance of philosophy, the authors of this article referred to the example of reactivating the idea of the new Silk Road (One Belt One Road Initiative), which the People's Republic of China is implementing. The "spirituality" of the Silk Road and its axiological context emphasizes the importance of this initiative in the contemporary world. The assumption is to restore communication routes connecting the East and the West and, above all, to ensure sustainable development and peace worldwide. China's involvement in the reconstruction of the Silk Road was a turning point, as it was this country that gave impetus and had a decisive influence on the implementation of this idea of civilizational development (Eom, 2017).

The authors also point out that the omission of philosophy in deliberations on globalization processes causes forgetting about their transcendent, ideological character. Only the pragmatic, materialistic aspect is emphasized, which is visible, for example, in contemporary educational models.

Today's globalized world is the result of the activities of previous generations. In this context, "globalization" is a relatively new concept that defines specific processes. However, what remains unchanged is the philosophical concept of cosmopolitanism, or universalism, that sets the tone for social development. And to implement the assumptions of world domination, humankind was looking for faster and faster ways of communication and better and better tools to facilitate this activity, thus creating the material world.

However, it plays a secondary role in the process of understanding the world. Therefore, to know what we are dealing with, we must remember the philosophy that will answer the fundamental question: "what is it?". Consequently, it is worth emphasizing that Peter Sloterdijk is of considerable importance because restoring philosophy to its proper place in the context of considering us through contemporary globalization processes is essential to be able to analyze, above all, understand them reliably.

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