Abstracts

László Székely: Beings from Space. Extraterrestrial Civilisations in Sci-Fi and Modern Science

Whereas the expression „sci-fi" refers to a synthesis between scientific worldview and fiction, it is clear that the particular science appearing in the sci-fi-s is rather a production of fantasy then real science.

If we find some parallelism between the fictional and scientific descriptions of extraterrestrial intelligence this does not mean that sci-fi has predicted scientific development (similarly to Jules Verne who had predicted several technical achievements of his future). On the contrary: since the science of our days considerably restricts the probability of extraterrestrial civilisations, the spiritual desire to find mates for the mankind in the cosmos pushed science in the direction of the literary fantasy.

The literary and „scientific" ideas of extraterrestrial civilisations have common motivations and move in the same fantasy space; both aim at a compensation of the post-Copernican situation in which we are surrounded with an indifferent cosmic space.

If we would find intelligent messages arriving from the cosmic areas, it would be this indifferent space characterised by Blaise Pascal in his famous fragment as silent and frightening which would begin to glimmer and promise mates for humankind. However, this approach ignores the Pascalian way, the turn toward transcendence. The fantasies about extraterrestrial intelligent beings may have such a spiritual significance only in an epoch in which the transcendence is pushed in the background and the world is considered to be no more than a meaningless conglomerate of indifferent entities.

Veronika Szántó: Astronaut on the Strawberry Field. Bioethics and Science Fiction

As bioethics often engages itself in the exploration of the moral nature of possible future scenarios wherein new technologies are ivolved, it shares a degree of resemblance to science fiction. Some critics of this extrapolation-oriented bioethics, also called sci-fi bioethics, point out the alleged weakness of its approach and methodology. They conclude that sci-fi bioethics, although it contains promising elements, is basically bad biotehics. They criticize sci-fi bioethics for its inclination to depart from scientifically unsound principles that necessarily lead to ill-grounded predictions. In addition, bioethics can be charged of being caught into the moral perspective of the present, hindering its reflection to the mutability of moral norms in

time. The author argues, however, that the apparent shortcomings are not inherent in the extrapolating tendencies themselves rather in its actual application, facile and bold predictions being more characteristic of futurology than of bio-ethics. As to ethical appraisal based on present norms, the author contends that this is an inevitable feature of ethical discussions of any kind. The demand for integrating sound science and a sociologically and historically sensitive criticism of science itself into bioethics does not and should not rule out predictions, directives and ethical evaluation from bioethical discourse as long as it intends to play an active role in society.

László Ropolyi: Thus Spoke Trurl and Klapaucius

In this paper Stanislaw Lem's philosophical ideas and the philosophical thoughts included in his works – especially in *The Cyberiad* – will be identified, characterized and analyzed.

Lem's philosophy has two fundamental components: his commitment to critical thinking and scientific knowledge, and the diagnosing of the dominance of irrationalism in the human world and the lament over this situation. The style of Lem's works is basically a philosophical one, his science fiction stories can be considered as philosophical fictions or fables.

The fables of *The Cyberiad* describe a future in which the reason and technology can solve almost all the problems, but the human conditions, the culture and the society are deeply underdeveloped. The confrontation of the cybernetic and the feudalistic/hierarchical worldviews is an inexhaustible source of the irony, but it cannot essentially ameliorate the existing world.

Trurl and Klapaucius, the heroes of *The Cyberiad* are late relatives of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. They represent the eternal recurrence of „humanity" in the universe of the robots, of the „human-like-machines-overcoming-the-humans".

Lajos András Kiss: Techno-Utopia and Science Fiction in the GDR. Georg Klaus and Franz Fühmann

The study tries to illuminate an almost unknown aspect of the intellectual life of the former East Germany.

One of the most important figures of the philosophy of the GDR, Georg Klaus with his "technophile" attitude, from the fifties to his death in 1974, tried to establish the cybernetic foundations of a universal philosophy, which – at least, by his opinion – could warrant the creation of a "frictionlessly working" socialist society.

Klaus' monstrous idea has theoretically unified the advantages of the modern cybernetics, the information technology, and the concept of society of

the Marxism. Klaus' techno-utopia has promised a realisable "perfect socialist democracy", which could be an operable contestant of the contemporary capitalist world. Franz Fühmann, in opposite of Klaus' technicistic visions, has formulated his sceptical criticism on the society and modernity in a science fiction novel, which has denied both the East-German, and West-German reality.

Szonja Odrovics: Science Fiction and/or Fantasy? About MMORPGs

The dominance of fantasy compared to science-fiction amongst Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games is becoming more and more obvious along with the increasing popularity of the genre. Can this dominance be explained solely by the idiosyncrasies of the genre? Or do this question lead us further and the key lies in the differences of sci-fi and fantasy?