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Jelena Pavličić, Marija Petrović and Milica Smajević Roljić

THE RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY IN TIMES OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS[1]

ABSTRACT
The current coronavirus pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) has presented many scientific disciplines, including philosophy, with various theoretical and practical challenges. In this paper, we deal with three philosophical issues related to the pandemic and specific approaches to them. The first part of the article is dedicated to the analysis of the term "expert," whose significance was highlighted at the outbreak of the pandemic. By examining Plato's ancient and Goldman's modern understanding of this concept, we will try to emphasize the importance of expert opinion in crisis circumstances. In the second part of the paper, we will deal with the issue of public mistrust of scientific authorities as well as the problem of the flourishing of so-called conspiracy theories. Goldenberg's and Cassam's approach to this topic will help us see where the source of these problems might lie and what potentially harmful consequences they can produce. In the third part of the text, we list some of the main moral dilemmas we have faced since the beginning of the pandemic. Special attention is paid to Kant's moral philosophy in which we find advice on how an individual should act in times of crisis.

KEYWORDS
pandemic, reliability, public trust, pandemic ethics, experts, epistemic authority, mistrust of science, conspiracy theories, fast science

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) has led to profound changes both in everyday life and in scientific research trends. Finding the most acceptable and effective ways to combat its spread is a task that has quickly

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Jelena Pavličić: Research Associate; University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy; jelena.pavlicic@f.bg.ac.rs.
Marija Petrović: Research Assistant; University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy; mpetrovic@f.bg.ac.rs.
Milica Smajević Roljić: Assistant Professor; University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy; milica.smajevic.roljic@f.bg.ac.rs.

become a priority of governments and experts around the world. However, the fact that, even at the height of the pandemic, there was still not enough reliable data on issues such as the prevalence of the virus in the entire population, predictions on when the pandemic will end, the effectiveness of various health measures (e.g. different measures adopted by different countries at different times under similar circumstances), and so forth, has contributed to an overall atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty. Given the long-run perspective, the wider debates in the field of public health have been joined by debates that analyze other aspects of the ongoing crisis, such as epistemological, ethical, social, and economic issues. Their aim is to re-examine whether, and in what way, it is possible to establish if the proposed measures bring more benefits than harm to society in the long run. That is, to what extent it is possible to achieve the desired public health results without jeopardizing education, economic growth and equality, democracy, social cohesion, and so forth. In this context, many solutions initially believed to be optimal have become subjects of discussions (e.g. "How has the temporary shutdown of schools and universities affected the pandemic and the way in which it is evolving, and how did it impact the development of skills which are typically attributed to traditional forms of schooling?"; "Have social and economic losses overshadowed the gains in terms of health outcomes?").

In this paper, we will show that the pandemic highlights some questions that have been the subject of philosophical debates throughout the history of philosophy, but at the same time opens new questions that require answers. The first chapter of this paper is dedicated to the analysis of the term "expert" and the examination of the role of experts in the process of acquiring knowledge. Although interest in this topic is not new in philosophy, the pandemic era emphasized the importance of expert knowledge, especially in the field of medicine. To determine when we can say that someone is an expert in a certain field, we will first focus on Plato's philosophy, especially the Socratic notion of experts in Plato's early dialogues. After that, we will analyze Goldman's contemporary considerations of this issue. The second part of this paper examines the problem of mistrust of science and scientific authorities, which became an important topic with the beginning of mass vaccination and growing confidence in so-called "conspiracy theories". We will pay special attention to Maya Goldenberg's and Quassim Cassam's researchers, who have been dealing with this topic for several years. The last chapter of this paper tackles the ethical aspect of the current pandemic, which has faced many individuals with challenges related to making morally right decisions. We will list only some of the current moral dilemmas, and then see how the analysis of Kant's moral philosophy can help us to understand and solve them.

1. How Can We Recognize Who the Experts Are?

For the part of the general public that is willing to contribute to ending the pandemic, the above-mentioned debates raise many different issues, such as:

(a) What are the reasons to determine if an argument is reliable and if the advice given based on that argument is useful?; (b) How can well-grounded and reliable sources of information be distinguished from those that are not?; (c) Do decisions that are justified in the light of expert knowledge and expert judgment deserve unconditional acceptance of the general public, or are there cases when skepticism about their probity or quality is justified?; (d) Under what circumstances can public rejection and the lack of trust in scientific claims be expected?; (e) How can we criticize experts' recommendations constructively and transparently without undermining people's trust in the scientific community?; etc. The ability to recognize and adequately use scientific information is of great importance not only in the current crisis but also as a preparation for timely and efficient dealing with future challenges.

How can we know if someone claiming to be an expert actually is one? In most cases, when we consult an expert, we seek their help or advice because we know that we do not know what we suppose that they do know. For example, if we want to determine if a seamstress next door is good at their job, i.e. if they are an expert in their field, we could ask around and see if people are pleased with their services, we could ask for their credentials and check where they had learned to sew, or we could simply try out their services. That way we will know if they took our measurements correctly, if the clothes they made for us fit, if they made what we asked for, and wearing it will show us if it's made with quality, is it durable or not, and so forth. In some cases, we can know if someone is an expert by relying on our own resources, without risking too much. But most cases are not like this. We usually seek experts to help us with important things in life, where there is little or no room for mistakes, and trusting a layperson could come with a great cost. The asymmetric epistemic relation (Hardy 2010: 7) between experts and laypeople and the importance of trusting experts leaves us with very important questions: if we, as laypersons, don't know what we suppose an expert knows, how can we assess the truth of their statements?; if we do not know the truth of an expert's statements, what should be the basis for our reliance on those statements? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to specify what we mean by the term "expert", i.e. to determine who is entitled to speak from the position of expert and to determine their role in the production and distribution of knowledge. It is important to point out that the interest in experts is not a novelty in philosophy. Debates about what it means to be an expert and how one can achieve expertise can be dated back to ancient times.

The issue of expertise (τέχνη) is often discussed in Plato's dialogues and is an important part of his theory of the eudaimon life, especially in his early dialogues where virtue is regarded as a kind of expertise or a craft "whose goal is the production of a good life" (Brickhouse, Smith 1994: 6). The above-mentioned question is asked by Socrates in the dialogue *Charmides* when discussing how it is possible to distinguish someone who only pretends to be a doctor from someone who actually is one: "If the wise man or any other man wants to distinguish the true physician from the false, how will he proceed?" (*Charmides*

170e). Although Socrates does not give us a clear definition of what expertise is, Brickhouse and Smith gathered up a list of requirements it needs to meet. It needs to be rational, i.e. guided by knowledge; teachable, meaning that it needs to be something one can learn and pass to others; explicable, i.e. an expert should be able to give an account of what they are an expert at; inerrant, meaning that an expert does not make mistakes in their work or judgment about the subject they are expert at; unique, meaning that the expert's abilities are unique to them and other experts in the field, it has to have a distinct subject matter so it can be distinguished from any other expertises; finally, the expert has to possess knowledge or wisdom i.e. they have to be wise when it comes to their area of expertise (Brickhouse, Smith 1994: 6–7).

In his paper *Seeking the Truth and Taking Care for Common Goods – Plato on Expertise and Recognizing Experts,* Jörg Hardy also gives a list of qualities an expert should possess, found in various Plato's dialogues. According to this list, Plato's Socrates states that an expert: "(a) is always seeking the truth – trying to be "free from error" (*Charmides* 171d–172a; cf. *Theaetetus* 170a–179b), (b) makes caring for common goods her priority in practicing her expertise (*Gorgias* 464e–465a, 513d–e; *Alcibiades I* 126a–c), is able (c) to produce success in practicing her expertise (*Charmides* 171d–172a; *Euthydemus* 280a), (d) has a holistic understanding of a given subject matter S, which enables her (e) to give an account of the particular things that belong to S (*Gorgias* 464e–465a, *Phaedrus* 270a–272b, cf. *Theaetetus* 201c–d in conjunction with 145d–e, 147c–148e), and (f) to make reliable prognostic statements about the particular things that belong to S (*Theaetetus* 178b–e); an expert is also able (g) to provide evidence of her expertise (*Laches* 185a–186e; *Gorgias* 514d–e), (h) to teach her knowledge (*Laches* 185a–186c; *Meno* 87c; *Gorgias* 514a–515a; *Alcibiades I* 188c–d), (i) to recognize another expert in the same domain (*Ion* 531d); and finally an expert (j) agrees with other experts on the facts of her expertise (*Meno* 95b; *AlcibiadesI* 111b–d)" (Hardy 2010: 10–11).

Having all this in mind, he puts the Socratic definition of an expert as: "A person is an expert in a given domain if and only if she is always seeking the truth, makes caring for common goods her priority in practicing her expertise, is able to produce success in practicing her expertise, and has a holistic understanding of a given subject matter" (Hardy 2010: 11). More than Brickhouse and Smith, Hardy emphasizes the moral aspect of expertise. He points out that, for Socrates, an expert is not just a person who possesses technical knowledge of a certain field. In order to be considered an expert, one must not only have the knowledge but also use that knowledge in accordance with what is the common good.

One might notice that this does not answer the "*epistemological* question of who is an expert" because for Plato "epistemic authority is *moral* authority too" (Hardy 210: 11). From today's perspective, one could be considered an expert solely based on their knowledge level, and questioning their intentions would fall into ethical considerations. Plato may not give us *epistemologically* satisfactory answers to the questions we have, but practical advice can be drawn

from his dialogues – if we are not sure whether someone is an expert or not, we should ask someone we consider wise or someone who we presume knows more than we do, just as Lysimachus and Melesias asked for Socrates' help in deciding if they should trust Nicias or Laches (*Laches* 184d–185a). These considerations point to the extremely complex task of defining and identifying objective epistemic authority and an important "Socratic contribution to the prehistory of modern social epistemology" (Hardy 2010: 19).

Contemporary considerations of these issues can be found in Alvin Goldman's writing. When it comes to the epistemology of expertise, he seeks to point out the characteristic errors that occur when assessing expertise, such as identifying it with the reputation which one enjoys (Goldman 2018: 3–10; Goldman 2001: 85–110). Goldman warns that the only certain thing we can agree on is that the epistemic authority of the *expert* must be based on the *expert's knowledge*[2] reflected in their professional history or "track record" which, to an extent, laypersons or novices may be familiar with (Goldman 2018: 3). However, the problem of assessment of epistemic authority (or, in Goldman's words of finding a passable track record and relevant information necessary to form an adequate picture) is the subject of enduring and undergoing rethinking (see: Strevens 2010; Hardoš 2018; Goldenberg 2021; et al.).

The question "Who are the epistemic subjects on whose claims we should be relying on?"[3] is not only philosophically interesting but also has practical value, since it is closely related to the issue of public confidence in science and scientific recommendation—an issue that nowadays is of the greatest importance in the field of health care and public health (see: Brean 2020). In this sense, philosophical debates that have over the past decade seriously dealt with the problem of undermined trust in the claims of experts (which is manifested, among other things, in the reluctance on part of the public to undergo the vaccination, i.e. "vaccine hesitancy") can be of crucial importance for understanding the resistance that the recommendations of the scientific community are facing even in this crisis.

2. The Problem of Public (Mis)Trust of Scientific Authorities

Previous considerations bring us to one of the most relevant topics related to the pandemic, the issue of immunization. Questions that have over the last several years been the focus of Maya J. Goldenberg's philosophical studies, such as: Why does skepticism concerning vaccine effectiveness and safety exist and how should it be addressed? (Goldenberg 2016: 561); How and to what extent do "vaccine hesitancy" considerations bring forward new insights about public trust in science and scientific recommendations? (Goldenberg 2021) – are of central importance for our understanding of the various degrees of

2 For more on the terms "expert" and "expert knowledge" see Pierson 1994: 398–405 and Scholz 2009: 187–205.

3 See more in Hoffmann 2012: 299–313.

individuals' readiness to engage in socially beneficial behavior necessary to defeat the pandemic.

The orthodox approach to the anti-vaccine problem takes the public's alleged poor understanding of and unfamiliarity with scientific knowledge to be a substantial part of the problem and, in general, of public resistance to scientific recommendations. In this regard, campaigns related to public health awareness have been predominantly designed under the presupposition that vaccine anxiety could be alleviated through education. Although over the last few decades many scholars in different fields (historians, sociologists, etc.) demonstrated its pitfalls and advocated for moving health strategies away from the so-called "knowledge deficit model", in *Vaccine Hesitancy: Public Trust, Expertise, and the War on Science*, Goldenberg indicates that this model has still not been superseded in practice (Goldenberg 2021: 40). Taking into account years of disciplinarily diverse research on the anti-vaccination movement, Goldenberg holds that, contrary to popular belief, "vaccine hesitancy and refusal sentiment" is not a sign of public ignorance but a symptom of faltering trust in scientific practice. According to her view, significant gains in terms of science trustworthiness and, accordingly, in improving the rate of vaccination, can be reached by recognizing the main sources of public mistrust of science. Discussions on the concept of trust and those concerning the appropriate relationship between trust and sciences received much coverage within the philosophy of science, epistemology, and social epistemology of science (see: Hardwig 1985, 1991; Hawley 2012; De Melo-Martin, Intemann 2018; et al.). The necessity of exploring the complex reasons for resistance to important policies which are firmly grounded in science is emphasized by philosopher Katherine Furman in her recent paper On *Trusting Neighbors More Than Experts: An Ebola Case Study* (2020). Viewed from the perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic, the uncovering and understanding of the aforementioned reasons are of great significance since many of the concerns that the pandemic brought to light are just a reflection of problems that were already present. No doubt, among them is the problem of conspiracy theories which calls for a richer understanding of their persistence, seductiveness, and impending danger (Van der Linden 2015; Van Prooijen, Douglas 2017).

Another side of the problem of the potential slowdown in adhering to and implementing the specialists' recommendations that aim to get the pandemic under control, is related to the widespread prevalence of conspiracy theories about the origin of the pandemic and its development, as well as the safety and efficacy of an immunization program (Jerit, et al. 2020; Gertz 2020; et al.). As a result of the above, it shouldn't come as a surprise that a great deal of papers has already been produced that focus on some of the following questions (see: Bolsen et al. 2020; Gray Ellis 2020, et al.): Why is the pandemic accelerating the emergence of conspiracy theories? How should they be understood? On what basis does a section of the public assess explanations based on such theories as very attractive? Does favoring conspiracy theories have epistemic value? How do these theories relate to the truth? Do their creators

really believe in them? How can we get rid of them and what would happen if they received political support? The prevailing opinion among the authors dealing with these issues is consistent with that advocated by epistemologist Quassim Cassam. He believes that conspiracy theories should be understood exclusively as a form of political propaganda, where *propaganda* refers to any form of speech, written or oral, that pretends to influence a person's beliefs by manipulating their emotions (Cassam 2019: 56). Cassam points out that one of the clear indicators of problems in intellectual and political life is that the majority of people accept conspiracy theories, whose harmfulness is mostly reflected in its disastrous consequences, i.e. in the direct threat to human life and health. Spreading these theories is dangerous and that is why scientists cannot afford to ignore them but must work to refute them. What presents a major obstacle in the process of suppressing conspiracy theories by providing grounded argumentation is the fact that conspiracy theorists reject evidence that refutes their theories (Cassam 2019: 72). If we accept Goldenberg's claim that the main source of vaccine hesitancy is not public ignorance but the eroding trust in scientific institutions, it does not come as a surprise that conspiracy theories cannot be suppressed by scientific evidence or rational explanation. The problem isn't the public's lack of knowledge or incapacity of ordinary people to understand scientific literature, but deteriorating trust in science itself. And witnessing how, *to an extent*, anti-vaccine sentiment is accompanied with endorsement and promotion of "The Big Pharma conspiracy theory", we can see how Goldenberg's set of points fit well with one that Cassam made: that it is a mistake to think of conspiracy theories primary in intellectual or epistemological rather than political terms (Cassam 2019, *Preface*).

Despite the difficulty of the task, philosophers are, in Cassam's opinion, obliged to try to find a solution to the problem we face. They should at least provide an overview of how conspiracy theories emerge, and then offer a proposal on how to most effectively stop their spread. Philosophers of science Cailin O'Connor and James Weatherall are taking a significant step in this direction. They point out that our actions are guided by our beliefs, while the latter is largely conditioned by social factors, more specifically, by who we know and with whom we are in day-to-day contact. This is just one example in a series of significant research in which philosophers, both independently and in collaboration with psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists, have taken on the task of providing deeper insights into what factors are responsible for spreading false information (O'Connor, Weatherall 2019; et al.). Given that the current pandemic has exposed the scientific community to the public eye more than ever, the work of these authors may be of importance for answering questions regarding the formation and transmission of false beliefs within the scientific community, organization and structure of scientific teams, as well as specific ways of communication between them (O'Connor, Weatherall 2019; et al.).

If we adopt Cassam's view that philosophers – primarily philosophers of science and epistemologists – are obliged to express their judgment on the

current pandemic situation, the question arises as to what extent they are and should be part of current international debates. In other words, the question is whether philosophers should offer their assessment of the arguments put forward by the medical profession and politicians. Although it may seem that the answer to this question is undoubtedly positive, immediately after the outbreak of the pandemic we did not see many public appearances by philosophers. The reasons for that can be numerous, and one of the main ones may be that philosophers today usually write and act retrospectively when analyzing past and completed events to offer criticism while participating in debates that have a direct impact on society is almost unheard of. Also, it seems that the status of philosophy has changed greatly in relation to the time of antiquity and the period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when philosophers like the previously mentioned Plato or Kant were important figures of public life whose opinions were listened to and well respected.

Although they could present important and relevant arguments, especially when it comes to epidemiological models that generate predictions, philosophers of science more often decide not to be part of the so-called fast science. It seems that their restraint is the result of them not being accustomed to fast science and debates which have an immediate policy impact. Their field of research concerns problems that require long-term and highly elaborate analysis. However, even if this were to change, and if philosophers of science engaged more with fast science, some of the problems would still remain. First, for philosophers of science to have an impact on the general public, their expertise in pandemics and epidemiological models must be generally recognized. How do we get the general public to believe the predictions of a philosopher of science to the same or even greater extent as the predictions of a doctor or epidemiologist? Second, philosophers of science must publish their work on platforms and in journals that are accessible and known to a wider audience. Unfortunately, neither professional philosophical journals nor popular journals seem to be a good choice. The process of publishing in philosophical journals is often long because it is subject to double reviews, and the response from the editorial board is waited for several months or even longer, which makes it impossible for the published work to be relevant at the time of publication. Popular journals, on the other hand, are usually not interested in publishing papers on the philosophy of science because they are not in line with their editorial policy.

However, to understand the development of the pandemic and offer a critical discussion of public health policy we need further elaboration and reflections on epidemiological models. In this regard, numerous philosophers of science are perfectly capable of understanding the methodology behind epidemiological models. Not only are they trained to expose its shortcomings by carefully examining the proposed evidence but they are also able to audit and discuss the role of normative values and different biases in the development and dissemination of models of the pandemic. Having that in mind, it is important to recognize that in a decision context the path from acquired scientific evidence or that which is considered as a widely accepted scientific position,

to quality decision-making is rarely straightforward. And when we look at the question of trust in science that has been previously addressed in this chapter, this kind of scrutinization brought by philosophers in a public discussion can contribute to a better assessment of reliability, assertiveness, and credibility of relevant scientific works and communities.

3. The Ethical Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic

If the path from acquired scientific evidence to quality decision-making isn't straightforward, how do we make decisions in everyday life? When it comes to moral issues, since the very beginning of the pandemic, both experts and common people have had to make morally challenging decisions, with no prospect of simple solutions and outcomes. Questions such as that of the just distribution of scarce resources, including medical care, protective gear, ventilators, etc., is exactly the kind of question that during challenging times extends beyond the realm of philosophical thought experiments to the area of lived experience. How these and related challenges will be resolved depends on a multitude of factors, including the competence and integrity of the policy-makers, their capacity to appraise both current and long-term consequences, their ability and readiness to convey that information in a clear and accessible manner, etc. These challenges require several tools and diverse perspectives which philosophy is certainly capable of contributing to. Thus, for example, specifying the conditions under which a morally responsible risk communication is achievable, determining if and to what degree should we make discussions on the prevailing risks more transparent, inclusive, and democratic, might help contribute to their efficient mitigation. This is reflected in the growing number of philosophical works which aim to show that to be both effective and trustworthy, public health-related decision-making must be considered in an open and accessible manner, taking into account the most current results of scientific research as well as its ethical and democratic dimensions.[4]

Some of the other moral dilemmas that arise in the context of health risks and require philosophical reflection can be illustrated with the following questions: (a) Following which moral criteria should healthcare professionals decide who should and who should not have access to necessary healthcare, in situations with limited resources? (b) In times of crisis and uncertainty, is it justified to ask people to give up their individual rights and freedoms for the sake of the common good? (c) What principles should guide those trying to answer these questions and offer advice to policy-makers? (d) Are these principles universally binding or can they change over time? In other words, ethical, epistemological, and political issues related to medical research and healthcare practice

4 That the legitimate policy requires not only groundedness in reliable data, but also making sure that the proposed policies are democratically accepted and, in the best-case, the result of a deliberative process which includes "political leaders, experts and all affected parties" is strongly argued in a philosophical paper written in the context of COVID-19 by Norheim et al (2021: 10–13).

are deeply intertwined. Therefore, it is necessary to offer answers that rely on different branches of philosophy. Theorists in the field of ethics, bioethics, philosophy of medicine, philosophy of biology, philosophy of science, philosophy of law, and other relevant fields can cast a critical perspective upon them and offer useful tools for finding innovative solutions, taking into account many different aspects of the considered problems so they can achieve deeper understanding and assessment of the challenges that the global situation brings.

The answer to some of the mentioned doubts can be found by examining Kant's moral philosophy. One of the main features of his ethical doctrine is the emphasis on the rational part of human nature and the explicit prohibition of putting the individual and their personal aspirations and goals in the foreground. The supreme principle of morality in Kant's ethics is derived from reason, and is therefore universal and applies without exception to all rational beings. Although its existence cannot be proved, Kant believes that it is the basis of the rational world and that awareness of it exists in every rational being endowed with will (Kant 1996a GMS 4: 403–404). Anyone who possesses "ordinary human reason" can understand what moral law is and how to act rightly. Kant also emphasizes the importance of the autonomy of human action, where he defines autonomy as "property of the will by which it is a law to itself" (Kant 1996a GMS 4: 440) and stresses the idea of self-legislation as the only possible basis of moral obligation.[5]

The supreme moral principle, which is expressed in the form of a categorical imperative, together with the test of universalization, can still serve us today in the morally challenging age of the pandemic, as a kind of guide for moral agency. If we follow Kant, before making any decision we should first ask ourselves what would happen if we all acted in a certain way, that is, would we indeed be content to live in the world that would arise in that case. If we find that we cannot will our maxim to become a universal law, then it should be rejected because "it cannot fit as a principle into a possible giving of universal law" (Kant 1996a GMS 4: 403). Otherwise, the proposed action should be accepted as moral.

5 However, it would be wrong to conclude that Kant believed that the possession of reason and the ability to act freely and autonomously were sufficient for making morally right decisions. He emphasized the great importance of theoretical knowledge and education in general, and in his famous essay *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, but It Is of No Use in Practice* he claimed that "no one can pretend to be practically proficient in a science and yet scorn theory without declaring that he is an ignoramus in his field" (Kant 1996b TP 8: 276). This quote shows us that Kant considered practical agency to be closely related to theoretical knowledge. Onora O'Neill, who dealt with this topic, expressed Kant's idea in the following words: "Theory is the only available guide to practice. It can point us towards a more specific view of what we ought to do, although not to a particular act" (O'Neill 2007: 166). A more detailed treatment of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to point out that Kant's understanding of moral law, autonomy and freedom should not be viewed as a form of moral expertise nor does imply decision-making deprived of all external input (see: O'Neill 2007; Schneewind 2013).

To show how Kant's ethical principles can be applied to address specific concerns, we will provide a brief analysis of one problem that societies around the world have faced since the beginning of the pandemic. Namely, we will examine the problem of the shortage of basic medical and hygienic products (such as protective masks and toilet paper), which occurred due to their excessive purchase during the state of emergency. Although this problem may seem negligible compared to other, primarily medical problems we have encountered, we believe that its understanding is of great importance for the correct interpretation of human behavior in unusual conditions.

Suppose that individuals who over-purchase some of the listed supplies are guided by the following rule of conduct: "buy more than you need and make stocks in case of shortage". The maxim formulated in this way does not pass the test of universalization because we cannot will a situation that would arise if everyone adhered to it. Namely, if everyone would buy more than they need, then it would not be enough for everyone; some people would have unused supplies while others would lack basic medical and hygiene products. Such behavior is based on the irrational part of human nature (primarily on our fears), and therefore we cannot will it to be accepted as a universal rule of conduct. The problem that arises here is that people tend to take themselves as an exception when it comes to issues concerning self-preservation and survival. Kant points this out in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Kant 1996c: RGV 6: 95–100 and RGV 6:176). Although people are rational beings, when they feel that their survival is somehow threatened they tend to put themselves first. This behavior is caused by fear for one's future and the future of loved ones. However, only if we all buy only as much as we need, everyone can buy what they need. If each individual acted following their rational nature, excessive buying would never occur.

Although Kant did not explicitly address the topic of moral agency in the case of a pandemic, he believed that his moral principles were universal and could be useful in making decisions for any individual who follows the principles of reason. This leads us to the conclusion that, if reason was to determine our will, it would be easier to deal with at least some of the moral dilemmas we encounter and we would make the right decisions in potentially challenging situations. Similarly, Kant's moral principles can help us solve other important practical problems brought about by the pandemic era.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we focused on various philosophical issues and the different ways in which philosophers can contribute to our understanding of the pandemic and guide our response to it so we can make sensible and just decisions. We saw that in addition to raising genuinely new questions, the crisis caused by SARS-CoV-2 has brought up some philosophical problems that are in normal times of lesser importance.

Although the interest in defining the term "expert" dates back to antiquity, in today's age of pandemics it has gained significant importance, mostly because the knowledge of experts can help us better understand the current crisis and its consequences. In this paper, we have not offered a final definition of this notion, but we have presented Plato's ancient and Goldman's contemporary view of this topic, which has given us very useful guidelines for a deeper understanding of this term and a basis for further research. We believe that the philosophical analysis of this concept is of great relevance since it can help us understand how to think of scientific authority in the context of decision-making, and in so doing, to explain our motivation for adherence to recommendations of scientists.

The need to understand the latter led us to the second part of the paper and a plausible idea that potential resistance to the recommendations of the scientific community during the coronavirus pandemic is just a reflection of pre-existing problems: the crisis of public trust in scientific practices and growing confidence in so-called "conspiracy theories". Hereof, we have tried briefly to illustrate the approaches taken by philosophers immediately prior to the pandemic to identify the sources of the aforementioned problems, their interdependence and potential harmful effects on society. Subsequently, we pointed out some of the significant insights philosophers of science could provide regarding the methodology of epidemiological models and their predictions of the further course of the pandemic, which are essential in the formulation and evaluation of epidemiological measures.

In the last part of this article, we presented some of the main moral dilemmas that societies, but also individuals, have been facing since the beginning of the pandemic. In the search for moral principles that could help us make morally right decisions in the challenging situations we encounter on a daily basis, we invoked the basic principles of Kant's ethics. If we follow Kant, then it is important that each individual tries to act in accordance with their rational nature, not out of fear or some other inclination. This would make dealing with moral dilemmas we encounter easier and we would be less inclined to make mistakes in potentially challenging situations.

We have shown that by addressing these problems philosophers can enhance our understanding of the epistemological, moral, and practical aspects of the pandemic, which in turn can hopefully yield to fairer and more beneficial strategies for dealing with the crisis that has largely defined our lives in the previous period.

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Jelena Pavličić, Marija Petrović i Milica Smajević Roljić

Relevantnost filozofije u doba korone

Apstrakt

Aktuelna pandemija virusa korona (SARS-CoV-2) suočila je brojne naučne discipline, među njima i filozofiju, sa različitim teorijskim i praktičnim izazovima. U ovom radu razmotrićemo tri filozofska pitanja povezana sa pandemijom i tri odgovarajuća pristupa njihovom rešavanju. Prvi deo rada biće posvećen analizi pojma „ekspert", čiji je značaj naglašen u vreme izbijanja pandemije. Ispitujući Platonovo antičko i Goldmanovo (Goldman) moderno shvatanje ovog pojma, pokušaćemo da istaknemo značaj stručnog mišljenja u kriznim okolnostima. U drugom delu rada bavićemo se pitanjem nepoverenja javnosti u naučne autoritete, kao i problemom ekspanzije takozvanih „teorija zavere". Goldenbergov (Goldenberg) i Kasamov (Cassam) pristup ovoj temi će nam pomoći da uočimo izvor ovih problema i potencijalno štetne posledice do kojih mogu da dovedu. U trećem delu teksta navešćemo neke od glavnih moralnih dilema sa kojima smo bili suočeni od početka pandemije. Posebna pažnja biće posvećena Kantovoj moralnoj filozofiji, koja nam može pružiti savete kako pojedinac treba da se ponaša u svakodnevnim životnim situacijama tokom krize.

Ključne reči: pandemija, pouzdanost, poverenje javnosti, pandemijska etika, eksperti, epistemički autoritet, nepoverenje u nauku, teorije zavere, brza nauka