

## THE CHANGING STATUS OF RATIONALITY IN THE FIELD OF THE NEW RHETORIC THE RATIONAL ARGUMENTATION MODELS OF C. PERELMAN – L. OLBRECHTS – TITEKA AND S. TOULMIN

**Abstract.** The study aims to analyze the changes in the status of rationality in the field of the New Rhetoric – the most influential direction in the modern theory of argumentation, which appeared in the 1960s with the scientific works of C. Perelman – L. Olbrechts – Titeka and S. Toulmin. The thesis presented is that the practices of contemporary public discourse find their most logical and comprehensive theoretical explanation in the teachings of the New Rhetoric, which change the traditional status of rationality and transform it into a logic of practical philosophy. The novelties are ascertained by tracking the dynamics in the understanding of the main categories of argumentation – evidence, argumentation, deductive validity, evaluation criteria, arguments, facts, assumptions, values, consent. Perelman’s model of rational argumentation outlines the transition from *logical* to *communicative rationality*, which introduces the factors of *contextuality* and *functionality*; affirms the validity of a *communicative reasonableness* in which the mechanisms of thought are synchronized with the processes of language; introduces *practical reasoning*, which functions as a strategic interaction between logical thinking, imagination, and language.

*Keywords:* New Rhetoric; theory of argumentation; Chaim Perelman – Lucy Olbrechts –Titeka; Stephen Toulmin; rationality; contextualit

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Book Reviews  
Нови заглавия

**DOBRIN TODOROV. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL  
“WORLDVIEWS” AND THE CRISIS OF HUMANISM.  
SOFIA, PARADIGMA, 2023, 208 P.**

**Prof. Nina Dimitrova, DSc.**  
*Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

Dobrin Todorov’s new book is stated as a thematic and conceptual continuation of his previous monograph – “The Many-Faced Being and the New Worldview of Modern Man”, 2019. The general attitude with which they are written is the definite desire to counteract the tendency towards dehumanization found in the various *projects* of the present day for the improvement of man, i.e. in successive attempts to create a *new man*, this time based on today’s rapidly developing natural and technical sciences. Guided by the hard-to-dispute conviction that the problems he considers are too significant, respectively – their placement in the public debate – urgent, Dobrin Todorov has tried not only to carry out a precise diagnosis of the phenomena he considers, but also to offer his views on how to deal with them with the frightening dehumanization of the human. His searches are in the direction of affirming humanitarian studies as compensating for the damage caused by scientific and technical progress, in the direction of affirming the sciences of the spirit as the space in which basic human values are defined.

The book has three major sections in which the new teachings launched by the global scientific and technological elite, which have taken the place of the traditional creators of worldviews – the philosophers and religious thinkers – are presented and commented on.

In each of the specific analyzes proposed by Dobrin Todorov, one significant contemporary work is embedded. In my opinion, this is an ingenious way of illustrating the stated thesis, given the vast contemporary literature on the issues under consideration. For example, in the first section dealing with biologically based “worldviews” – *constructivist neovitalism* (as one of the worldviews that fits into this type of worldview) is examined and commented on based on Kevin Kelly’s introductory book “Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World”, 1992. After a detailed analysis of the various proposals for hybridization between natural and artificial, Dobrin Todorov concludes that the American author arbitrarily handles the concepts of *spirit* and *ideas*, due either to a

lack of philosophical education or to “a conscious opposition to the thousand-year-old thought tradition standing in the foundation of ,Western‘ civilization”.

The attempt to present neovitalism as overcoming the traditional divisions of worldviews along the axes monism – pluralism, holism – particularism, homogeneity – heterogeneity has been assessed as unrealizable, but the pathos of its rejection (which I fully share) here comes from the very perspective of biological tuning of man.

*Genetic determinism* is another popular present-day solution to the problem of the specificity of human beings compared to the rest of the biological world. The masterpiece of the English biologist and ethologist Richard Dawkins – “The Selfish Gene”, 1976, was chosen as a convincing example on the basis of which to examine this type of biological reductionism (as rightly judged by Dobrin Todorov). Dobrin Todorov shows how the genetic predestination, with which Dawkins explains the behavior of living beings, leads to the annulment of free will and turns people into hostages of their biological predestination.

Another variant of the world picture built on the basis of biology is the *quantum biological* one – here the author examines the research of Jim Al-Khalili and John Joe McFadden “Life on the Edge. The Coming of Age of Quantum Biology”, 2016. Dobrin Todorov problematizes the possibility that the theoretical models of quantum mechanics have a *universal* explanatory power, as is the claim of the “quantum spirit” specific to our time. The two authors‘ understanding of consciousness is defined as *naturalistic*, as far as according to it free will have no place in the deterministic universe created by quantum thinking. Today’s adventurous spirit – the taking of unwarranted risks – is tied to the “quantum zeitgeist” and is cited as one of the negative consequences of its dominance.

I would like to add that among the modern applications of quantum physics (very well described in Dobrin Todorov’s book) there are also attempts to reconcile it with various religious and philosophical concepts, for example with Eastern spirituality – this is the case with the work of Fritjof Capra. The Tao of Physics, 1975. Such use of quantum theory goes beyond the reductionist paradigm discussed in the book.

The second section is devoted to “worldviews” based on the development of technology – the so-called “technoreligions”, the description of which is in the context of the big theme of man and technique.

The technological expansion we are witnessing also changes the public image of the *technocrat* – a figure on which Todorov places special emphasis. From being an existentially and socially insensitive person, driven solely by considerations of efficiency and utility, the technocrat is now thought of as part of the new elite. Looking at the reverse side of technical progress, Dobrin Todorov is adamant that “Without falling into *technophobia*, modern people should give up the hypertrophied belief in the omnipotence of technology”.