

## Philosophic sciences: A friendship with wisdom

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### ACTUAL INTERVIEW ABOUT MODERN CITY PHILOSOPHY: FROM LOCKDOWN TO SMART CITY

*The modern era of active urbanization actualizes the study of city-wide processes. But back in the days of policies, Aristotle wrote that “Cities are people, not buildings”, so you should first focus on the features of the urban lifestyle of a city man (Homo Urbanus), its existence and ways for adapting to intense tempo and megaspace. Extraordinary situations that can change quickly and dramatically the city are of special scientific interest: social and natural disasters, revolutions, wars, strikes, epidemics, special life conditions. The main purpose of this publication is to invite a reader to analyze and discuss problems of what worldview positions the current shock can bring us – the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown*

**Keywords:** *Homo Urbanus, lockdown, metropolis, “third places”, online communication, smart-city*

**Анотація.** *Препотенська М.П., Терещенко О.Х. Актуальне інтерв'ю про сучасну філософію міста: від локдауну – до smart-city. Епоха активної урбанізації актуалізує дослідницький інтерес до швидкоплинних процесів всередині сучасних міст. Але ще за часів полісів Аристотель писав, що «місто – це не споруди, а люди», тому перш за все варто зосередити увагу на особливостях урбаністичного образу життя людини міста (Homo Urbanus), його екзистенції*

та способах адаптації до інтенсивного темпоритму і масштабів мегастороу. Особливий науковий інтерес викликають екстраординарні ситуації, які дуже швидко і кардинально можуть змінити вигляд міста: соціальні та природні катаклізми, масові виступи населення, революції, війни, епідемії, особливі режими життя людини. Основною метою даної публікації є запрошення читача до аналізу і обговорення проблематики того, на які нові світоглядні позиції нас може вивести сьогоденне потрясіння – пандемія COVID-19 і локдаун.

**Ключові слова:** Homo Urbanus, локдаун, мегаполіс, «треті міста», онлайн-комунікація, smart-city.

Our world is steadily in the process of urbanization, about 65% of the world's population already lives in cities that are growing rapidly, turning into megacities and metropolitan areas. Megacities carry great challenges, but also provide mega-scale opportunities. They are independent social actors on the stage of world events and concentrate in themselves knots of intersection of political, financial, economic, informational and cultural flows. But the most important object of urbanization during the era of globalization, as before, remains a man, who changes the life of the city in his daily formation and is himself a kind of "product". Analysis of the appearance and the formation of the Homo Urbanus phenomenon today is an understanding of a future of all mankind, therefore, the leading research strategy today is a philosophical methodology in an integrative community with the entire humanities cycle, including bioethics as a sphere of moral evaluation of the anthropogenic civilization achievements. The general nature of the practical enormous changes in the world of cities leads us all the way to the necessity of filling the content of the category "urbanology" as an independent scientific sphere of research in the aggregate of interdisciplinary methodological keys to the analysis of urban life.



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**ANJELIKA AKBAR** – Doctor of Musicology, composer, virtuoso pianist, singer, poetess and writer, admirer of Sufism. Anjelika is a member of the Union of Composers of Ukraine, Honored Artist of Ukraine, a representative of the UNESCO Association. She is an author of more than 400 works for choir, piano and other instruments. She has been awarded many international awards and has successfully toured different world countries. Today she is a Turkish citizen and has been living in Istanbul for more than 20 years.

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**NATALIYA MOROZOVA-SHIMADA** is famous Ukrainian writer and poetess, theater and film actress. She played on the stages of the theater on Podil, the theater on Lipki, the “Vizavi” theater, and starred in dozens of films and television series. Today she lives with her family in Japan.

Of particular relevance is the analysis of city life in an acute border situation. After all, as K. Jaspers claimed, it is Grenzsituation that truly exposes human existence, leading the person out of the illusion of everyday life to genuine being, therefore the problem of what worldview positions the current shock can take us – COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown – has been outlined sharply. Months

of retreat by billions of people amid a pandemic of fear, terrifying statistics, and a plunge into uncertainty... Such a borderline situation in terms of planetary coverage is unprecedented in the history of the city. How did citizens of megalopolises experience lockdown, what existential experience did they get, and what are the prospects for the development of a “smart city”, which features paradoxically sharpened during the dramatic spring of 2020?

We asked seven questions on this topic to citizens of the largest megacities of the world, Tokyo and Istanbul, extraordinary personalities with a successful creative biography and their extraordinary worldview. Our two interlocutors, who were born once in the USSR, but who emigrated to other countries and who have become, as they say now, people of the world, unite different cultures and mental features, create texts, music, create their own lives. The participants in our dialogue are ...

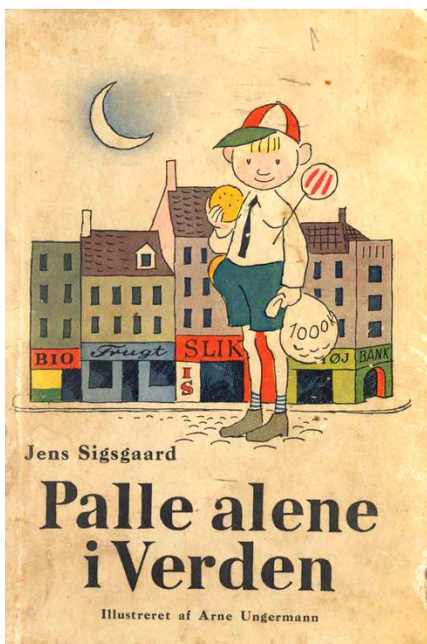
**– The first question concerns the features of our perception of the metropolis as such today and now. Usually in a large metropolis we feel as a part of a huge number of different people on its streets, please share with us your feelings about the “Brownian movement” of modern cities and why is the expression “loneliness in the crowd” so popular?**

**N.M.** I live in the most urbanized part of Japan, on the island of Honshu in the city of Odawara in Tochigi Prefecture, an hour’s drive from Tokyo, and often visit the capital. Tokyo is always a crowded gathering of people, it is an unprecedentedly large crowd of a megalopolis, which, I note, despite its large number, is quite friendly and correct. You can compare the Ukrainian and Japanese crowd on the streets. In Ukraine, as it seems to me, sometimes a certain hidden aggression is felt in the crowd. We know that, unfortunately, often quarrels and mutual irritation erupt on the streets of Kiev or

in transport. In Japan, an atmosphere of politeness reigns, due to the ancient culture and traditions. Even the famous subway attendants, who pack people in subway cars, do it carefully and neatly. I am absolutely calm in Japanese crowd, because I know that in any situation people would help me. Even when the rainy season begins and a constant suffocating humidity is formed, passers-by remain calm and respectful. Loneliness in such a crowd is usually associated with the internal state of a person if they plunges into their own special world of loneliness and does not notice the beauty of the world around them. For me, Tokyo is an inexhaustible source of poetic inspiration as for its crowdedness, its charm of unusualness:

*The artificial canopy is ghostly and perishable.  
 The jingle bells are fragile and crystalline.  
 The houses' silhouettes are initially rude,  
 This is the male Ego made of steel in the sky.  
 The temple is next to the Subway, the Buddha lurks in the temple  
 The Salaryman hurries with a briefcase, Origami in the shop windows  
 Hidden in the leaves is lake Lotus –  
 a tiny paradise in a concrete Cosmos.  
 Mini trees are guarding the peace and Heaven,  
 while students are flocking to "Seven Eleven".*

**A.A.** In my perception, the crowd of Istanbul and other megacities is always animated. I love people, simply love. I observe, learn from life, read life and interpret it like a dream. After all, our reality needs interpretation more than dreams... Many people on city streets are "ground" for studying ourselves and interpreting the world. Once upon a time, at the age of 16, I wrote a poem with a line saying, «I go alone in a desert of a crowd». However, such alienation, loneliness in a crowd is either a lot of youth, until you have found your «oasis in a desert», or a limit of mature years, if the



oasis has been lost. Moreover, when you gain the circle of your loved ones and love, when you have met your calling, then a wisdom comes, and along with it, a sense of kinship with everyone comes. It seems to me, that music speaks about this; and all world religions, many philosophical teachings are about our cosmic unity.

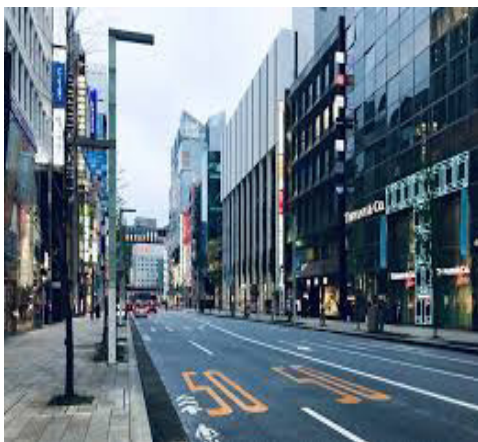
- In the middle of the 20th century a book by Danish writer Jens Sigsgaard, «Paul is alone in the world,» gained popularity. It was translated into many languages and is being reprinted until now. It tells about a boy, Paul, who once wake up, goes out into the streets of his city and find out that there are no people around. But toys and cakes stores, banks are open, he can take whatever he wants. A boy in euphoria rakes these riches, but eventually

**discovers that they are not making him happy: there is no one to share with and no one to talk to. In desperation, he sits on a rocket, flies into space, reaches the moon and ... wakes up. Parents and friends in the playground become real happiness and wealth! Who would have thought that the motives of this old tale might materialize in a sense during the Covid19 period? What were your impressions of a sight of empty cities on the lockdown?**

**A.A.** An insight similar to this tale has happened to me. I looked at empty cities, streets and squares of the world without people on TV, and I am grateful to fate that I saw this, because maybe for the first time I pierced: there is no point in anything if there is no Man. The most beautifully maintained gardens, flowers, the sky and the sea – all in itself does not matter, only a person spiritualizes the world and endows it with meanings, and besides for other people.

**N.M.** Quarantine has become a test. The lockdown took place in our country according to the all-planetary rules of three Cs: to avoid 1) closed spaces with poor ventilation, 2) crowded places with groups of people, and 3) close-contact settings like one-on-one conversations. On May 25 the restrictions were cancelled throughout Japan and we began to go out actively. My first impression was as if I was in a zombie city. Streets and squares were strange. It was scary. Empty eye sockets of houses. Traces for distancing on stores floor. Some citizens were disoriented and scattered: for the first time I saw a man in a business suit who forgot to change his shoes and left his home in flip-flops, and I saw some homeless people smoking in the center (which has never happened before). For the first time I noticed drunk Japanese, which was also unthinkable before. Everyone seemed to look inward and not noticing anything around. Usually people there meet Caucasians kindly and with excitement, especially children, then I walked with the child as if in an airless space. Nobody cared. Alienation...

Nevertheless, since I live outside of Tokyo mainly, the ocean saved me. When you stand on a shore, inhale the ocean air and contemplate this endless force of nature, the oppressed state of mind gradually passes. One of the phenomena that I realized even more is that nature is the best healer of a soul and a thought.



Empty Tokyo. Lockdown (authors photo  
Nataliya Morozova-Shimada)

**- A city, especially a large one, is a kind of fractal: like in the Russian doll, locations are “embedded” one in another: room-apartment-house-yard-district-city. How did you feel in forced home isolation away from other spaces?**

**A.A.** I live in Istanbul in the private sector, where I have my own home and garden. This made it possible to be relatively calm in quarantine. But



Deserted Istanbul during the Quarantine  
(authors photo Anjelika Akbar)

I am already constantly in my world, in myself, and only on the stage or in the television studio «I go outside.» I exist as a snail in my personal «city», which I always carry with me. And this does not alienate me from my beloved family and many wonderful friends whom I appreciate. The lockdown period miraculously returned me to the past – to the music that I played in childhood, in youth. I did not compose anything new, and all the days I recalled the classics and played, as if rediscovering it

for myself. Now my piano is simply flooded with notes of those years, and this creates some amazing sense of integrity.

**N.M.** Home isolation was not easy. I (and not only me) call Japan capitalistic state with a socialist face: work and responsibility towards the state are above all. My husband is the director of a plant, and like all Japanese, he is a big workaholic. He got up at 5 in the morning and spent most of the day at the plant, which is a strategically important enterprise so was not quarantined. Therefore, basically we were at home alone with my son, and most of all I was afraid for him. What will I answer him for his daily cheerful question: “Mom, where are we going today?” First, we had to walk on the balcony, and swim in the bath. Go to your neighbors to ask «for salt», just to talk to someone live was a taboo. In Japan, this is not generally accepted. Earlier, the best leisure for me and my son was live communication with the Slavic Culture Center in Tokyo, where you can speak your native language and understand each other perfectly. And so I had to talk with friends on ZOOM and play, so to speak, in the home one-man theater, but in the end it brought me even closer to my son. And one more conclusion I made was about the inescapable power of faith. I have always had with me, since my student days, the icon and the prayer «Lord, help me». It gave strength.

**- In the urban fractal, the so-called “Third places” which are cafes and anti-cafes, salons, galleries, bars, bistros, etc. play a great role. Ray Oldenburg, an American urbanist and author of «The Great Good Place», claims that “third places” are the foundation of “the right hangout in the right place,” from which civil society forms over time. How do you feel about such institutions, and are there any favorite third places in your city? Why do you appreciate them?**

**N.M.** Of course, during the lockdown, there was a lack of friendly communication and social dialogues. Indeed, it is “third places” that create a special atmosphere of

empathy for conversation, and so on everywhere. I note that all the main ideas of world culture are born and develop in «third places». However, Japan has its own specifics in this area. Local communities are rather tight; it is difficult for Slavs to integrate into them. Therefore, we, as a rule, find friends among similar-minded emigrants from Slavic countries and create our own microsociety, and this communicative niche is not yet occupied, which is odd. I myself seek and find interesting people from the post-Soviet space: composers, singers, scientists, actors, poets. As a result, over the years of our stay in Japan, branch of the famous poetic community in Ukraine and the «Renaissance» magazine appeared, which brings together creative people from different countries, and we are pleased to meet in our cafe club.

Unfortunately, the Slavs in Japan are perceived quite simplistically, at the level of external cultural differences. So far, I do not feel any opportunities for closer contact between our mental and cultural traits and Japanese traditions. I hope that my bilingual child will cope better with this over time, but as an actress I see a great prospect of “third places” for organizing art performances and other modern forms of artistic communication, thanks to which, perhaps, people with very different rules of life and perception of the world will be able to expand the horizons of their joint existence.

**A.A.** It is a cafe, this eternal «third place», where I write my scores and books, when there are a lot of visitors around. This feeds me with positive energy of «today and now presence», because the energy of my writings should mutually fill the lives of people. At home I have an assistant who will always make coffee, and I myself can bake a wonderful cake, the meaning of communication is the exchange of the living energy of all of us, cosmic inspiration. It was a cafe, where I analyzed most often the perception of the “new world” in my life and presented this state in the book “Turkey, which is inside me”, it was accepted by the public and there are already several new publications. The same “third places” helped me write philosophical tales for kids «Bosha’s 12 Stories». Bosha is a white cosmic flying dog that comes to children in a dream, tells them good stories and gives everyone particles of Sun energy. I myself saw these stories in a dream when I was in India. I saw them like a cartoon, and then recorded in literally 12 days! I kept the manuscript on A4 sheets, but, while on tour in France, I met a St. Petersburg publisher, who published the book in the end. This happened after his whole family, as he told, read the stories in one breath. Today it is a rather popular book for children both in Turkey and abroad. Philosophical tales, especially today, are necessary for both adults and children. We live with these eternal questions about ourselves, about our coming to this world, about its meaning, and for adults it is very important to understand what kind of world we want for our children, and then how to educate them.

To ask a question is to take the first step in shaping your worldview, in a special immersion inside yourself. The world contemplation procedure for any person provides a search for harmony and their spiritual unity with the Universe. This state can be represented as a thesis of the theory of Sufism: about a sentient mind and a think-

ing heart. I'm sure that "third places" will certainly be in demand again after the end of the pandemic as a space of spiritual conversation and creative inspiration.

**- The state of lockdown involuntarily intensified the use of virtual communication. ZOOM has become the leading platform for distance conferences, lectures, lessons and communication between various urban and international communities. How do you feel about virtual dialogs and a prospect of the online education spread?**

**A.A.** I accept and appreciate any kind of communication. Imagine what would happen if the Internet suddenly have disappeared today? There is such a passage on this subject: Wikipedia boasted that it knew everything, Google said it would find everything in the world, and electricity smiled quietly and ... Of course, we, citizens of megalopolises, are prisoners of anthropogenic civilization and all its means of livelihood. But it was precisely the form of online learning in such a wide range of use as happened in the last three months of our lives, I could not accept. Moreover, my internal perception protested against such communication. I really hope that this is only a temporary form of training. Nothing can replace the personality of the Teacher next to you, the living magic of knowledge transfer, co-presence and co-creation in the unity of spacetime communication.

**N.M.** I treat virtual communication, as a permanent way of communication, extremely negative. Not only because the "talking machine" will never replace a living contact, but also because it obviously harms a person's health, undermines their psyche and vision, people eventually become simply "blind moles". There are big doubts about the effectiveness of distance education methods, in this case, technical knowledge can be transferred, but it is absolutely impossible to replace the full value of communication with the teacher and the energy of classroom activities. After quarantine ended, for me and my child, a meeting with a wonderful teacher, Zhanna Yurievna, became a real breath of fresh air. Moreover, children used to perceive a computer as a source of entertainment, games, cartoons, and movies. A computer for them is a kind of leisure freedom, and here they have the requirements of the lesson and the disciplinary framework, for many children such learning conditions were taken with great difficulty.

**- How has the city and the people changed after quarantine? What new has appeared in the cities atmosphere and in the inhabitants' mood?**

**A.A.** Under these conditions, a whole range of emotions appeared. Many are exhausted by an atmosphere of uncertainty. How will the situation develop in the future? I see how some people are in panic fear and expecting the worst, they look like fish thrown to a shore. Others try to compare different points of view and in this find peace for their mind. As a believer, I believe both in the power of reason and in the help





(authors photo Nataliya Morozova-Shimada)

of the Almighty, in the fact that we will witness a mental turn in the history of mankind, and then a spiritual one, and the world will gain a new stability of its foundations. Even if small groups of people radiate love and faith in the best, this will affect events on a scale of the Universe. In Turkey, believers hoping for the Almighty, often quote the part of the Qur'an saying Allah is much closer to every person than even the carotid artery, therefore faith and prayer give us great strength.

**N.M.** People have changed dramatically and, apparently, for a long time. This can be described as a state of visible well-being with hidden stress. The mood and taste of life has not yet been restored. Another factor is associated with some people's disappointment with the authorities, since many measures and information were controversial, which causes speculation and fear of the second waves of the virus, etc., which continues till this day. At the same time, there are advantages in the period of forced loneliness that we all experienced.

Everyone had the opportunity to rethink their lives. In some sense, such an unexpected loneliness made us stronger, gave new opportunities for creativity and communication with loved ones.

**- We are witnessing a dramatic flourish of high technology, Artificial Intelligence and the introduction of technological advances in everyday city life. More and more cities on the planet are creating their smart-city projects, in which many options for urban communication are transferred into a digit. What ideas would you suggest for a "smart city"?**

**A.A.** I ask myself: do I want a "smart city"? ... From an environmental point of view it is indisputable, but the other aspects of its development, at least for today, are questionable. Even now, I wouldn't take anything away or add anything, for example, to Istanbul. Everything is in its place, and I like it! However, I am scared by the prospect of a total digitalization of human life. Of course, there are people who just dream of getting a kind of super-capabilities that would qualitatively improve their lives! For example, to implement a polyglot chip, so there would be no need to learn languages. But for me, all the knowledge that comes as if from the outside is not a blessing and does not have the acceptance value. What matters is what coming from within:

from personal effort. Today it is much more important to remain an integral Man, and not to be modified into a technologically advanced Super-man. The main thing is our memory, the constant road to ourselves and the search for harmony of the “oasis”. I love modern cities – these magical human beehives, so diverse and vibrant. For me, the landmark of the urbanization process is the world of New York. Once, returning from a tour in America, I wrote a waltz song about New York right in the plane:

«The wide parks of New York, the sun and the squirrels’ dance. All the nations of the world have merged here in a cadence of diverse voices. Luxurious life flourishes in rich homes, and poor people sleep right next to brilliant restaurants on the ground. This city never sleeps. It talks continuously. Music and art allow it to survive for centuries. Avenues, streets, museums and parks – the polyphonic life of the elements fused with each other. Difficulties, opportunities, contrasts and dreams. New York ... This is a city that can not be described in words to the end».

**N.M.** High technologies create an innovative material space of the city and ideally provide more comfort for citizens, although they threaten excessive social control. In this regard, I would like every city to become “smarter” in the field of protecting human rights. Civil law society is the primary need of the future city when people are consolidating, defending their dignity and rights. Of course, a very important part of urban life is filling its spiritual niches. Here, in my opinion, the process of transformation of theatrical, concert, museum and other types of cultural life of cities becomes necessary, for example, in addition to the existing types of theater, it is necessary to develop the form of performances. In more detail, these are stage creative groups, where both professionals and amateurs participate, united by a common position and script. We move away from traditional classical repertoires and read our works framed by dramaturgy. Such co-creation and even mutual confession of participants and spectators, as it seems to me, has a great prospect for maintaining the emotional balance of a person, mitigates the influence of constant communication challenges in a technogenic city and helps to shape an optimistic perception of the future. I am a big optimist and I believe that modern man has enormous potential for building a world of comfortable urban life, which will include environmental and legal security, freedom of choice and the possibility of developing the creative diversity of each citizen!

**A.A.** In conclusion, I want to return to the philosophy of love and the path to wisdom. Every socially active person today, of course, not only city citizen, – the heart learns to reason, and the mind – to feel. This state is like a horizon line of constant presence and connection. Not a single language of the world has a special term for such a phenomenon, only in Turkish: gönül – a metaphor for the horizon, a fusion of mind and heart, their harmony. Today we all need a worldview that inspires gönül, for deep flight and at the same time for a comfortable existence in the world of modern society. Philosophical doctrines alone cannot provide a person with a harmonious existence in the world, since they always have the nature of discussions and disputes. For me, there is no debate in the philosophy of Sufism, but there is an interaction of

principles, like in the facets of a crystal, like in a prism through which I look at the world. The main here will be the one who follows me, but for him the follower is important, and the last one points to the First...

**We thank our interlocutors for the interview and can summarize the results.**

In such different megacities of the world as Istanbul and Tokyo, the lockdown was similar in some of its manifestations: for many citizens, feelings of stress, fear, depression and discontent, natural for the situation, were growing. Until now, the state of the border situation and uncertainty have catalyzed internal uncertainty and anxiety. A separate test, both for teachers and students, especially younger children, was distance education, which was ambiguously accepted in the educational and pedagogical environment. Although virtual communication inevitably became a way out of the communicative vacuum, it is not able to fully replace the live contact of co-presence. At the same time, forced loneliness brought many families together and became a time of deep reflection and analysis of their own lives, philosophizing. Citizens believe that they will necessarily return to the “third places” of the city and return the joy of live communication!

Representatives of modern cities express certain concerns about the utmost technological development of cities, smart-city digitalization and the introduction of total social control. In contrast to such prospects, civil and legal control over the government and the consolidation of the healthy forces of society are necessary. Microsociums can also successfully resist the buildup of technogenic problems of globalization, automation and depersonalization of life, united by the interests of creative solutions to many modern problems of a city, people can save and ensure the transfer of cultural property to their descendants through artifacts, new types and forms of creating works of art. These understandable values of mutual understanding, love and friendship, the beauty of nature and faith become especially penetrating during a period of social upheaval and natural disasters:

*The birds begin to sing stoutly at five, such that you can set your watch by. They care not for the people chased inside, deserted parks and desolate squares that they silently abide. Birds can now fly free, praising the empty space supreme! Still, I can't help but deem that those songs got a different feel: help us people revive our strength. When all misfortunes asides we rise and chant our vibrant song to the ever rising dawn. (M. Prepotenskaya)*