

Intellectual Heritage in the Development of Society: Vincas Čepinskis on the Mission of Science

Summary

Professor Vincas Čepinskis (1871–1940) was a famous physicist, teacher, public figure, and publicist of independent Lithuania. Based on the texts published in the inter-war press the article aims to analyse and evaluate Professor Vincas Čepinskis's main ideas on the role of science in the development of society. It also aims to identify the characteristics of Professor's participation in the academic discourse of the time, which have not yet been specifically addressed in the contemporary scientific literature. In the publications devoted to the history of Lithuanian higher education in the 20th century, the authors have acknowledged his significant organisational work and his important contribution to the internationalisation of university studies and research, to the promotion of scholarly relations, which, along with other areas of academic work, formed the modern foundations of the National University. The historical literature on the history of higher education rightly emphasises the role of the professors from Kaunas in the public promotion of science, an activity in which V. Čepinskis was also actively involved. In the years between the wars, the professor worked as a collaborator and wrote articles for the magazines „Kultūra“, „Židinys“ and other periodicals, and gave public lectures. His interests and writings were not only in the history of science,

but also in some of the theoretical problems of the dissemination and impact of science on the development of society. It is therefore reasonable that Čepinskis' works have been mentioned in some Lithuanian publications on the history of philosophy and philosophy of science, where the authors have pointed out that Čepinskis' worldview was characterised by natural-scientific empiricism, although his views were not always coherent. In many of his lectures and publications, he interpreted natural and social phenomena as historically evolving and saw progress as a process of reality, with human well-being as one of its main measures. V. Čepinskis, as evidenced by his published texts, emphasised the ability of science to predict the future and influence the life of society. He raised the problems of the importance of interdisciplinary synthesis of sciences, analysed the issues of the interaction between science, religion and society, the responsibility of science and the new challenges of modernising society. The question under consideration constitutes an important part of scientific studies on the development of Lithuanian science and is related to the trend of sociology in Europe and the USA in the 1930s, which focused not only on the social relations between those creating scientific knowledge, but also on defining the role of science in civilisation.

Keywords: Vincas Čepinskis, science studies, sociology of science, public education, Republic of Lithuania.