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From Academia

Pro vs. Con

Two and a half millennia ago, Heraclitus was perplexed by the intertwining of opposites, at how one thing's existence hinges upon the coexistence of its antithesis. Scientific inquiry has since then remained fascinated with opposites, and the clash of conflicting theories serves to propel our knowledge forward. One contemporary topic over which opposing theories are battling it out is climate change: while its reality has largely become accepted, debate still continues over how we should cope with it, as discussed in our interview "Climate Facts and Possibilities" (p. 42). Mankind is consuming the planet's existing resources too quickly, without enough attention to inverse processes, i.e. regeneration and sustainability – claims another article, "Polymers for Sustainability" (p. 31).

Research breakthroughs frequently emerge from an unexpected, "opposite" direction. For instance, as "Toxic Fats" (p. 8) reports, the reason why obese individuals (whose numbers are rising rapidly) suffer from metabolic diseases has recently turned out not to lie in excessive adipose (fat-bearing) tissue itself, but rather in fats accumulating in completely different types of tissue.

The advancement of civilization often puts existing opposites into stark relief. Large entrepreneurial farms thrive in market-economy conditions, while at the opposite end of the scale are small "quasi-subsistence" family farms. "A Vanishing Class?" (p. 28) notes that as the latter are being absorbed by the former, the peasant lifestyle is largely disappearing. An analogous kind of tension and opposition can be seen between Europe's minority tongues, *dying languages* struggling for survival, and the dominant languages (p. 12).

On a similar note, we all know how many great artists and thinkers have suffered from psychological disorders. Is torment quite simply the flip side of creative ecstasy? On p. 4 we look at how *genius and lunacy* are deeply intertwined.

ACADEMIA staff



Maria Jarema (1908-1958), Penetration I, 1957

Surrealism was in its heyday, yet Maria Jarema was painting her abstract series Rotations, Penetrations and Rhythms. She worked with artistic groups but was always able to retain her own style. She studied sculpture in Kraków under Xawery Dunikowski, but earned her place in art history as an outstanding painter. She is considered unsurpassed at translating the laws of physics into the language of art