

**THE FATE OF PHILOSOPHY AFTER THE FALL OF THE USSR.
Introduction: The Complex and Uneasy Legacies of “De-Sovietization”
and the Course of Post-Soviet Philosophy**

Mikhail Minakov

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
ORCID: 0000-0002-0619-7321

Philosophy as a discipline transcends national borders, periods, and cultures. Its practitioners form a unique intellectual network that similarly exceeds cultures, nationalities, and temporal borders and, as a result, has given rise to a self-reflexive tradition in which all practitioners participate, addressing age-old questions in new ways and posing new questions for contemporary and future philosophers to take up.

Originating in the ancient societies, the philosophical enterprise can be found in very different cultures and epochs up to the present day. Despite the extraordinary cultural and societal-institutional diversity of the last three millennia, philosophy's staying power seems to be connected to something essential to humanity, whether it is our capacity to acknowledge and express Being, the power to act in accordance with the principles of reason, the passion to pursue intellectual challenges, or the gift of thinking. In one way or another, philosophy has been practiced by mainstream theorists and isolated tribal groups, citizens of the polis and subjects of empires, leaders and dissidents, cosmopolitans and representatives of nations, liberals and totalitarians, professors in ivory towers and activists on the streets, the high-born and the lowly wretched. And as one recent manifestation of its vast breadth and depth, philosophy lives on in the societies that have emerged in the more than thirty years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This issue of *Ideology and Politics Journal* deals with the fate of contemporary philosophy in the countries of the east of Europe. The unifying feature of this European region—namely, its common past as administratively part of the Soviet Union—establishes a shared linkage to both political history and the history of philosophy itself. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was accompanied not only by the collapse of the structures of totalitarian society but also by a formal, intentional process of de-Sovietization, including the reform and the restructuring of the security services, the abandonment of the command economy, and the dilution of the ideological monopoly of Soviet communism. At the same time, this process liberated opportunities, domestic and international, in science, politics, and business. For philosophers as well, de-Sovietization entailed a process of ambiguous, though radical change: philosophy quickly lost its former significance as a political-ideological tool and, commensurately, sustained a loss of interest on the part of the authorities and society. On the other hand, it gained a long-awaited unshackling from ideological strictures, and philosophers of the former Soviet

bloc now found themselves able to communicate with philosophical groups around the world. The articles in this issue analyze the renewal of the philosophical enterprise on a different tack over the last thirty to forty years and where it has led, in Belarus, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.

The issue opens with two articles on the prehistory of philosophy in the post-Soviet period. **Mikhail Minakov's** article suggests that "Soviet philosophy" should be viewed in terms of a *philosophical condition* characterized by a specific, Soviet-totalitarian divide between practice and theory. In this condition, philosophical theorizing takes place under conditions of compulsory public scrutiny and the rejection of the intimacy of contemplation, while philosophical practice finds itself under the total control of the authorities. Minakov also proposes a periodization of the development of philosophy in the post-Soviet period. The collapse of the USSR and the beginning of the post-Soviet era can be regarded as a *caesura* that interrupts Soviet tendencies in philosophical processes in Eastern Europe and triggers new philosophical projects on the individual, group, and national scale. **Ilya Tishbeisky**, on the other hand, presents the case for philosophy's continuity through the example of the "methodological" school. This particular school developed for some thirty years under the Soviet philosophical condition, survived the post-Soviet caesura, and has acquired a new philosophical and social meaning in contemporary Russia. The author examines "methodological" thought from a perspective that exposes the existential and ontological dimensions of Soviet and post-Soviet philosophy.

The next set of articles limns to understand the paths that philosophy has taken in Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, and Georgia. **Tatyana Shchittsova** considers philosophy an intellectual practice of "free thinking" that simultaneously participates in cognition and in the crafting of "a model of social development." Thus, her hermeneutics of contemporary Belarusian philosophy turns out to be also an outline of a position from which it is possible to understand Belarusian society's emancipation, as well as the metaphysical organization of the mass protests in 2020. **Oxana** and **Serhii Yosypenko** examine contemporary Ukrainian philosophy as a Bordieuan field whose genesis lies in the Soviet era and which then was decentralized, nationalized, and influenced by the market and by mass media during the independence era. **Alexandru Cosmescu** traces the path of contemporary Moldovan philosophy and the construction of its discourse by analyzing the debates in the pages of the "main philosophical magazine of the country." Turning to the voices of philosophers from Moldova, the author tries to understand them through their specific meanings, tonalities, and melodies. And at the end of this set of articles, **Lasha Kharazi** reflects on the question of philosophy in connection with the *Georgian experience of being*. The author tries to understand the peculiarities of Georgia's commonwealth through the prism of the "radical lack of the philosophical."

If the second set of papers can be characterized as attempting to understand the historical path philosophy has taken in different societies while moving away from a common origin in Soviet institutionalized philosophical practice, the third set of papers explores the diversity of philosophical life in the countries of Eastern Europe, and Latvia and Lithuania, sometimes grouped together with Estonia as "Baltic States." **Maija Kūle**

offers a kind of chronicle of philosophy in Latvia over the last forty years, with data on individual philosophers, schools, and the publishing industry. Using content analysis, **Vadym Menzhulin** describes the thematic fields and geohistorical orientations of contemporary Ukrainian historians of philosophy. The article by **Viktoras Bachmetjevas** analyzes the state of Lithuanian academic philosophy, whose development after 1989 was predetermined by the will to free philosophizing and the desire to be part of the Western philosophical milieu. **Denys Kiryukhin** offers a brief, but thorough, chronicle of contemporary philosophy in Ukraine, which has survived the teaching reforms in the philosophical disciplines, the rethinking of Marxism, and the creation of a Ukrainian philosophical language. Rounding out the section, the article by **Vitali Terletsy** analyzes the ambivalent processes in the study of Kant's philosophy in Ukraine and the influence of Kantian thought on Ukrainian philosophers over the last thirty years.

The research in this issue provides our readers with the information and analysis to decide for themselves whether there is continuity between Soviet and contemporary philosophy, and whether philosophy is influencing the emancipation of societies in the east of Europe, whether local philosophical thought is becoming part of the global intellectual landscape, and whether a particular post-Soviet philosophical condition has emerged.

This issue was conceived in 2020, but we are publishing it in a time of war, after the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. The editorial board of *Ideology and Politics Journal* decided that only articles by those Russian authors who clearly and unequivocally opposed the war would be accepted for publication in this issue.