

## ФІЛОСОФІЯ У ЛИТВИ ПІСЛЯ 1989 РОКУ

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**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто стан академічної філософії у Литві після 1989 року. Пострадянська литовська філософія здебільшого керувалася двома імпульсами: спробою вільно та автентично філософствувати та бажанням стати частиною західного та/або світового філософського середовища. Бібліометричні дані показують, що у своєму прагненні до цих цілей академічні філософи Литви майже повністю відмовилися від марксизму і натомість стали «імпортерами» західної філософської традиції, впроваджуючи різні філософські концепції та ідеї у вигляді академічних публікацій та перекладів основних зарубіжних філософських текстів. Найбільш популярними традиціями стали феноменологія та порівняльні дослідження, значну частку уваги було також приділено християнській філософії. Якщо перші два десятиліття незалежності характеризувалися переважно імпортом ідей, то останні десятиліття число міжнародних публікацій литовських філософів невпинно зростає, що дозволяє зробити попередній висновок, що литовська академічна філософія починає реалізовувати своє прагнення бути частиною світового філософського процесу.

**Ключові слова:** литовська філософія, пострадянська філософія, пострадянські дослідження, феноменологія, філософія у Східній Європі

Повнотекстова версія статті доступна англійською мовою.

## PHILOSOPHY IN LITHUANIA AFTER 1989 <sup>\*</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The article discusses the state of academic philosophy in Lithuania after 1989. Post-Soviet Lithuanian philosophy was mainly guided by two impulses: attempts to philosophize freely and authentically, and to become part of the Western and/or global philosophical milieu. Bibliometric data indicates that in their quest toward these goals, academic philosophers in Lithuania almost completely abandoned Marxism and instead became “importers” of the Western philosophical tradition by way of introducing various philosophical concepts and ideas in the form of academic publications and translations of major foreign philosophical texts. Phenomenology and comparative studies became the most popular traditions, while a significant share of attention was also devoted to Christian philosophy. While the first two decades of Independence were characterized primarily by import, the number of international publications by Lithuanian philosophers has been steadily growing in the last decade, which allows one to tentatively conclude that Lithuanian academic philosophy is beginning to fulfil its quest to become a part of the global philosophical milieu.*

**Key words:** *Lithuanian philosophy, post-Soviet philosophy, post-Soviet studies, phenomenology, philosophy in Eastern Europe*

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## Introduction

In this article, I discuss the state of Lithuanian academic philosophy over the last three decades with a special focus on the Soviet period for the purpose of comparison and context. In this discussion, I use available bibliometric data, while also commenting on the contents of certain publications where I find it appropriate. I also suggest some hypotheses to explain certain circumstances of the current situation, which, possibly, could be tested by further research.

In the first section, I discuss the transitional period starting in the late 1980s and ending around 2000. Here I discuss the dilemmas which Lithuanian philosophers faced at the time and use some of the public debates of the time as illustrations. The second section discusses the thematic interests of post-Soviet Lithuanian philosophers and compare these with the interests of philosophers of the Soviet period. It is noted that Marxism, as one might expect, loses its dominant position. More unexpectedly, analytic philosophy also loses its relative importance, while comparative studies and philosophy of religion emerge as relatively popular topics. I provide some potential reasons for these developments. Finally, the third section contains an overview of the most important academic institutions, periodic publications, and figures of the last three decades. Without pretense of being exhaustive, this overview is meant only to give a taste of the most prevalent philosophical figures and institutions at the time of writing. In the end, I conclude with some hypotheses about possible development of academic philosophy in Lithuania.

## The Transition

The symbolic beginning of post-Soviet philosophy in Lithuania could well be the establishment of the Lithuanian Philosophical Association. In December 1988, annulment of the Lithuanian branch of the USSR Philosophical Association and the establishment of the autonomous Lithuanian one, it appears, was considered to be a highly significant event, outreaching a mere change in academic nomenclature, as one of the main dailies in the country *Komjaunimo tiesa* devoted a full page to the news. Although this symbolic event can legitimately serve as the illustration of the rupture between the Soviet status quo and the incoming post-Soviet philosophical environment, one of the goals of the new Association was to “to nurture and develop Lithuanian philosophical culture and to continue the tradition of philosophical thought” (Gedutis 2010: 9). This, then, suggests that although local philosophers felt the need for a break with their Soviet counterparts, they also felt that there is something worth preserving. As Gedutis notes:

The statute unambiguously states that there is a philosophical tradition, which has to be preserved. This indicates that to the Lithuanian Philosophical Association this tradition is a value, for otherwise it would not be mentioned, and its continuation would not be declared. (Gedutis 2010: 9)

Such an inner tension can be seen in the public debates of academic philosophers in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Soviet Union. After 1989 Lithuanian academic philosophy faced a series of dilemmas that shaped how it understood its own

mission in the world. The first was the problem of continuity. As already noted, on the one hand, the very existence of at least some academic philosophers indicated that there is some past, and, therefore, tradition that is perhaps worth preserving. On the other hand, the pervasive realization, that philosophy of the Soviet period had fundamental flaws due to ideological pressures, seemed to demand some sort of break with that tradition. This problem was perhaps exacerbated in the early 1990s, when a lack of funding and the priorities of the state being elsewhere made academic work almost extremely unrewarding and difficult, if not impossible. Academic philosophers, as indeed many members of academia in general, compared unfavorably the new state of affairs with the Soviet period. Some even argued that philosophy was possible only during the Soviet period, because outward pressures of ideology and the system in general required one to develop inner freedom, imperative for authentic philosophizing. For example, Arvydas Šliogeris once claimed that the Soviet period was more conducive to philosophy than what followed after:

Acquired inner freedom resulted in attempts to think originally, without authorities, superstitions, without dogmas and ready-made thought systems, impressed from outside or acquired autonomously. (Šliogeris 1995: 108)

Others, however, countered that such argumentation perhaps is fruitful to rehabilitate some parts of philosophy of the Soviet period, but does not provide “any guidelines for philosophy to flourish in new conditions of reality that are free from ideology” (Putinaitė 2001: 600)

Another dilemma was related to the conviction that Lithuanian academic philosophy and its vocabulary, conceptual apparatus, and methods are lagging behind the Western and global trends, which, therefore, means that the immediate task of Lithuanian philosophy is to catch up with those trends. On the other hand, the dominant conception of philosophy as primarily authentic thinking for some meant that the primary task of a philosopher is not to concern oneself with the outward trends, but rather instead focus on one’s own philosophical endeavor. This dilemma was articulated by the distinction between philosopher-creator and philosopher-imitator (Stoškus 1995), in which only the former is seen as a true philosopher, capable of authentic and, by implication, original thinking. Others, however, countered that the very idea of authenticity as independent from a broader context is a fiction, and, therefore, the only way for Lithuanian philosophy to say something original is by inserting oneself fruitfully into the currents of global thought not by way of imitation, but by way of productive appropriation of Western ideas and concepts and their application to local realities (Jokubaitis 1997).

It is tempting to note that in these debates the more conservative elements (Šliogeris and Stoškus in the examples above) were of older generation who had acquired their education in the Soviet period, while the more open positions were defended by the younger thinkers (Putinaitė and Jokubaitis in the examples above), and, hence, there exists a generational conflict in these debates. It is a plausible hypothesis, worth testing, but there is no evidence that the participants of these debates saw them as such.

Be it as it may, by the turn of the century it seems that these debates exhausted themselves. The system of academic publication crystalized, cultural magazines, which

would normally be the platform of such debates, lost out in prestige and academic value to academic journals, while, at least publicly, there seems to be a consensus that the import of both classical and contemporary philosophical concepts and debates is, if not a primary, then at least a fundamental task of Lithuanian philosophy. This import was executed by translating the Western texts and publications on those texts in articles and monographs, almost exclusively, in Lithuanian.

## The Output

Purely quantitatively, the output of Lithuanian philosophy grew exponentially through the Soviet period and has only increased in recent decades. During the Soviet period (1960–1989), Lithuanian philosophers produced on average 20.7 articles and 1.4 monographs per year, while after the Soviet period,<sup>\*</sup> the annual averages rose to 76 and 4, respectively (Kabelka 2012: 116). Importantly, the available data incorporates only publications in Lithuanian and does not include international publications, which only suggests that, purely quantitatively, Lithuanian philosophical production has grown even more than the data at hand shows. One can only speculate for why that is, but the possible factors are: free access to publication (lack of ideological and institutional censorship), growth of profession (increase in number of professional philosophers), and growth of professionalism (growing pressure to publish within academic environment).

One method to measure the continuity, or lack thereof, is the thematic interests of Lithuanian philosophers in the periods in question. Kabelka, who has analyzed bibliometric data from both periods, notices by sheer quantity that the thematic division of Lithuanian philosophy in the Soviet period was the following:

Marxism – 39.5%,  
analytic philosophy – 10.2%,  
phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy 7.2%,  
other themes – 43.1%.

After 1989, the situation became the following:

phenomenological-hermeneutic philosophy – 13.9%,  
comparative studies-orientalism 9.4%,  
postmodernism – 6.4%,  
philosophy of Arvydas Šliogeris – 6.1%,  
analytic philosophy – 4.6%,  
Christian philosophy – 4.6%. (Kabelka 2013: 26)

The central position of Marxism-Leninism as the official ideology of the Soviet Union required any aspiring philosopher to situate oneself in relation to this philosophy.

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<sup>\*</sup> Kabelka's bibliometric data accounts only for the period between 1990-2010, but there's nothing to suggest that the productivity has decreased in the last decade.

There seemed to be three possibilities available: (i) devote oneself to the study of Marxism; (ii) pay some lip service to the official ideology, but in essence devote oneself to the study of other traditions or schools; (iii) cut off all the ties with official ideology or even antagonize oneself within it and risk losing institutional position and/or support.

In the case of the first choice, an aspiring philosopher still had to situate oneself in relation to the official party line in the highly hierarchical Soviet nomenclature. In this regard, Lithuania did not have any self-professed figures that would openly denounce or disagree with the official party line like, for example, György Lukács in Hungary or Leszek Kołakowski in Poland. The most prominent of Lithuanian Marxists of the period, Eugenijus Meškauskas (1909 – 1997), to the contrary, was famous for his good relations with the Party officials, which guaranteed some form of freedom in the choice of topics for young upcoming scholars, while he himself did not demonstrate any conceptual issues with official ideology.\*

The intuition that Lithuanian philosophers of the Soviet period were not willing to choose open hostility seems to be corroborated by the fact that it is hard to think of any philosophers who represent the third option. The only philosopher that perhaps can be mentioned in this regard is Justinas Mikutis (1922 – 1988). A survivor of the Gulag, upon returning to occupied Lithuania, Mikutis, a Socratic and peripatetic figure, spent a few decades at Vilnius Art Academy working as a figure drawing model. During the drawing sessions, while posing for students, he would also give unofficial lectures on aesthetics. Mikutis is credited by some to have influenced a few generations of Lithuanian painters. It seems that Mikutis was the only prominent non-academic philosopher in Soviet Lithuania, although, considering that anyone who risked antagonizing the official ideology and institutions, also risked the loss of access to being published and to any intellectual employment, the possibility remains that there are still figures and / or texts that remain unknown.

Be that as it may, undoubtedly the most popular strategy of Lithuanian philosophers of the period was the second choice. In general, this meant paying lip service to the official party line by officially declaring the correctness of Marxist-Leninist thought and ideals, but then turning to another subject matter and devoting oneself to it. This allowed one to engage with traditions and thought outside Marxism. Another possibility was to find oneself a field or a topic that would forgo any ideological implications and, in this way, avoid the attention of overzealous ideological supervisors altogether. Perhaps this, at least partially, can explain the relative prevalence of analytic philosophy in Soviet Lithuania or, alternatively, might have led some to the decision to research the history of Lithuanian philosophy. Nevertheless, the scare of attention of the censors could not have been too high, as a lot of Lithuanian philosophers also read and published on the Continental tradition and its non-Marxist strands, especially on phenomenology and hermeneutics, which clearly required some ideological equilibristic and strategic quoting.

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\* Although there have been some attempts to argue that one can speak of “Meškauskas School”, these are mostly based on his relative *laissez-faire* attitude towards non-Marxist philosophers at his Department of Philosophy at Vilnius University than anything conceptually informed.

The choice of the second option, however, did mean that a philosopher would have to compromise not only by inserting material that he or she might disagree with, but also by omitting things that he or she might think need to be said. Therefore, it is not surprising to find out that there was some level of double intellectual life going on. For example, Bronius Kuzmickas (b. 1935), a philosophy professor at the Academy of Sciences and a prominent figure in the Soviet period, also wrote for émigré periodicals under various pseudonyms. Tomas Sodeika (b. 1949), at the time an upcoming philosopher at Vilnius University, collaborated in cultural *samizdat*. Arvydas Šliogeris wrote both texts for publications that met all ideological requirements of the time, and some that he himself thought would never be published. His confession in the Introduction to *Being and World*, published in 1990, is a testament to that and an illustration of what the choice of the second option entailed for a philosopher in Soviet times:

I wrote *Being and World* as if this book will remain in the drawer forever. Therefore, I did not have to lie, to use Aesopian language and to curtsy to the *status quo*. (Šliogeris 1990: 7)

This, of course, raises questions of how to interpret the *published* texts of the adherents of the second option. If it is agreed that the published texts contained lies, Aesopian language and curtsies to the *status quo*, then the reading of the academic texts surely requires a specific hermeneutic tactic that would allow for the correct interpretation of this texts. Generally, it is presumed that the other members of the community knew how to interpret these texts because they knew the context: the required quotes, the verbal codes, etc. Even if that is the case, as time passes and the community of those who did in fact live in the Soviet reality shrinks, the risk that the published texts will be misinterpreted only grows.

After 1989, the thematic constellation of Lithuanian philosophy was dramatically transformed. Although one could expect the reduction of Marxist-oriented output in this period, the fact that Marxism almost completely disappears as a theme in Lithuanian philosophy indicates that the majority, if not all, Marxist output during the Soviet period was done out of necessity rather than genuine interest. Another factor, perhaps, was that those few, who remained faithful to Marxism, lost institutional power and were viewed mainly negatively by the rest of the philosophical community. Only in the most recent decade has there been some revival of Marxist thought, first and foremost associated with the work of Andrius Bielskis (b. 1973), who tries to combine Aristotelian understanding of politics and virtue, inspired by Alasdair MacIntyre, with Marxist critique of ideology and capitalism. It remains to be seen if these efforts will develop into a broader strand of Lithuanian philosophy.

Having diagnosed the almost complete disappearance of Marxism from the horizon, we can then note that, at least quantitatively, neither philosophical school or tradition took its place as the dominant philosophical *locus*, with no particular philosophical school or tradition exceeding 15% of the whole of academic philosophical output in terms of quantity. This, perhaps, can be interpreted as a sign of healthy diversity within Lithuanian philosophical community, although, it has led some commentators to

remark on unhealthy fragmentation and, therefore, a lack of interaction and discussion among Lithuanian philosophers. As, for example, Nerijus Milerius remarked:

In Lithuania even for a “green” philosopher, who’s just starting out, it is quite easy to become *the first* – to reflect on or merely introduce to the philosophical horizon a topic, that here no one yet has reflected upon or even noticed. (Milerius 2002: 156)

Quantitatively, phenomenology and hermeneutics attract the most attention with 13.9% of all academic publications in the period were devoted to this tradition. Although the quantity of the output does not necessarily have a correlation with quality, the fact that the three most prominent Lithuanian philosophers of the last three decades – Arvydas Šliogeris, Tomas Sodeika, and Arūnas Sverdiolas (b. 1949) – all worked within this tradition surely indicates that contemporary Lithuanian philosophy is most interested in the development of the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition. Algis Mickūnas, an American-Lithuanian philosopher, working in the broader tradition of phenomenology, has authored numerous books and lectured at various Lithuanian universities and, thus, also undoubtedly contributed to the prevalence of phenomenology among Lithuanian philosophers. Thematically philosophers working in this tradition are interested in a variety of topics: imagination (Sabolius 2012), pain (Geniušas 2020), animality (Gutauskas 2021), and issues of early phenomenology (Jonkus 2015). These are just a few examples and is in no way meant to be an exhaustive list, but it is still possible to remark that the conclusion of Arūnas Sverdiolas and Tomas Kačerauskas that “the dominant concern of phenomenologists in Lithuania is the contact between poetry and philosophy” (Sverdiolas and Kačerauskas 2009: 38) is completely unfounded and even misleading. To the contrary, this tradition seems to be most diverse and vibrant in Lithuanian academic philosophy. Gedutis is right that “it is possible to see some beginnings of phenomenological tradition, and, presuming that the intensity of phenomenological texts will not cease, one can expect in the future the emergence of [specifically] Lithuanian phenomenological tradition” (Gedutis 2010: 17).

If in terms of phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition one can see certain continuity and growth between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (7.2% in the former period and 13.9% in the latter), the opposite can be observed in terms of analytic philosophy. If during the Soviet period analytic philosophy was the second most productive in terms of quantity (10.6% of the whole output), then in the two subsequent decades its share of the whole academic philosophical discourse significantly decreased (4.6%). It is difficult to identify the reason for such a change. For example, Jonas Dagys and Evaldas Nekrašas theorize that in the Soviet period

the development of research into philosophy of language and philosophy of science was made easier by the fact that at the time (the 1980s – V.B.), when Marxist philosophy was, of course, still dominant, but the political regime became somewhat more liberal, the investigation into the problems of philosophy of language and philosophy of science came to be seen as ideologically comparatively neutral (contrary to, for example, political philosophy) and useful for the progress of science. (Dagys & Nekrašas 2010: 43–44)

Another possible factor was the fact that the two most prominent and productive figures of the Soviet period in the field – Rolandas Pavilionis (1944 – 2006) and Algirdas Degutis (b. 1951) – abandoned their work after Independence. Pavilionis left for academic administration and politics, while Degutis turned his attention to issues in political philosophy. Deprived of human capital, analytic philosophy in the first two decades of Independence was virtually non-existent. This is reflected by not only the absence of publications in this field, but also the absence of analytic philosophy in the study programs. For example, between 1990 and 2006 there has been virtually no doctoral dissertation written and defended on the problems in analytic tradition. Recently, the situation has been gradually changing, with some research groups forming at Vilnius University with the focus on analytic philosophy of language, logic, and metaphysics. The bridge between the Soviet and the recent periods is provided by Evaldas Nekrašas (b. 1945), whose monograph *Logical Empiricism and Scientific Methodology* (Nekrašas 1979), was the first academic monograph on philosophy of science in the Soviet period, and whose reappraisal of positivism, *The Positive Mind: Its Developments and Impact on Modernity and Postmodernity* (Nekrašas 2016), remains one of the few book-length studies by a Lithuanian philosopher available in English.

The two completely new thematic strands that were virtually non-existent during the Soviet period are comparative Oriental studies and philosophy of religion. In the field of Oriental studies, the most productive figure is Antanas Andrijauskas (b. 1948), who is mostly interested in comparisons of Indian, Chinese, Islamic traditional cultures with the West, with the particular focus on art and aesthetics. If Andrijauskas can be considered to be interested in a comparative aspect, Audrius Beinorius (b. 1964) is willing to investigate the Orient on its own terms. He particularly focuses on Indian culture and intellectual tradition.

The philosophy of religion is another “winner” in terms of thematic interest after the collapse of the Soviet system. Rita Šerpytytė (b. 1954) is the most consistent and productive philosopher in this regard and her two monographs *Nihilism and Western Philosophy* (Šerpytytė 2007) and *The Specters of Reality. Western Nihilism Between Diagnosis and Theory* (Šerpytytė 2019) presents a continuous attempt to analyze the so-called post-secular turn in contemporary philosophy. She comments on and engages with thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo, and Giorgio Agamben, among others. Another undoubted authority in the field is Tomas Sodeika. Famous for preferring spoken word in the classroom to academic publications, Sodeika exerted influence not by monographs or academic articles, but by teaching in the classroom and publications in cultural periodicals and alike. His translation and introduction to Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* (Sodeika 1998) and introduction to the Lithuanian edition of Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* (Sodeika 1995) became important points of reference for the subsequent discussions in Lithuanian philosophy of religion.

In conclusion, thematically one can diagnose almost complete disappearance of Marxism from the horizon, an increased interest in and continuing growth of phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, a significant decrease of the share of analytic philosophy, and the emergence of comparative and Oriental studies and philosophy of

religion. It is important to emphasize once again that the bibliometric data shows only quantitative aspects that do not have a necessary correlation with the quality of publications. Also, the bibliometric data available analyses only academic publications in Lithuanian and in this way has a “blind spot” for international publications. If this can be somewhat justifiable while analyzing the Soviet period (when non-Lithuanian publications were virtually non-existent) after 1989 that the picture becomes increasingly skewed. Although there was a tendency among Lithuanian philosophers to duplicate their articles (by first publishing the article in Lithuanian and then, if possible, publishing the same text in English or other language<sup>4</sup>), recently there is a growing trend among Lithuanian philosophers to publish only in English. For example, Vilius Dranseika, who works in the field of experimental philosophy among other interests, publishes almost exclusively in English. The same can be said about Kristupas Sabolius and some others. Quite a few select a “mixed” strategy of varying between the two: choosing either Lithuanian, or English, according to the most probable audience of their research. This will surely require adjusting the scope of bibliometric analysis in the future. For the time being, one can merely note the gradual but increasing “coming out” of Lithuanian philosophy into the international academic milieu.

For this section, I have followed Kabelka’s thematic division as a framework, with the slight adjustment of renaming what he called Christian philosophy into the philosophy of religion. In his analysis, he identifies one more significant theme in the post-Soviet period, namely, the philosophy of Arvydas Šliogeris, which comprises 6.1% of all the philosophical output in the post-Soviet period, i. e. quantitatively more than analytic philosophy and philosophy of religion. I presume that this name might not be familiar to foreign readers, therefore, I chose not to discuss Šliogeris in the thematic section, but rather do that in the next section, devoted to prominent figures.

### Prominent Figures

Arvydas Šliogeris is undoubtedly the most prolific and influential Lithuanian thinker of the post-Soviet period. This is not only shown in the numbers, as mentioned above, but also testified by numerous commentators. Although he came to prominence in the 1980s, the rise of his original output coincided with the start of *Perestroika* and subsequent Independence. The most important of his original works are *Being and World* (Šliogeris 1990), *Silence of Transcendence* (Šliogeris 1996), and *Nothingness and Is-ness* (Šliogeris 2005). Šliogeris is mostly preoccupied with the question of Being and, more specifically, the relation between human existence and the outer Being. Equally suspicious of transcendent Being and complete solipsism of solitary human existence, Šliogeris tries to develop a space in between, in which human existence is shaped by both an overwhelming realization of Nothingness and the immediate concrete sensual and, preferably non-lingual, aesthetic experiences. In order to articulate both, Šliogeris coins his own conceptual apparatus. A human here is understood as a Son of Nothingness, while

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<sup>4</sup> The article of Kačerauskas and Sverdiolas, quoted in this article, is a case in point. At first it was published in a Lithuanian academic journal and then in an international academic journal in English.

the importance of one's concrete experiences in one's immediate surrounding is exemplified by the notion of *philotopy*. An elegant and forceful writer, Šliogeris, by a broad consensus, is the only candidate to original thinking among contemporary Lithuanian philosophers. Having said that, in Lithuania, his thought has not been systematically investigated yet (all attempts at writing a dissertation on his thought so far have come to naught), therefore, his standing in a broader philosophical tradition remains unclear. At the time of writing, he remains virtually unknown outside of Lithuania and, therefore, his conceptual contribution to a broader philosophical tradition remains non-existent. It remains to be seen if that is bound to change in the future. Šliogeris passed away in 2019.

The other two extremely influential philosophers of the period are Tomas Sodeika and Arūnas Sverdiolas. They are of the same generation as Šliogeris (all three were born in the 1940s) and together were the single most influential thinkers of the last thirty years in the country. Sodeika was the first to introduce Jewish thought in general and Martin Buber in particular in the 1990s, while also, in addition, wrote extensively on phenomenology, especially Martin Heidegger and Roman Ingardern. Sverdiolas, in turn, is mostly interested in hermeneutic tradition. He wrote extensively on Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and other hermeneutic philosophers. At the same time, he devoted some efforts to the Lithuanian philosophical tradition (Sverdiolas 2012) and was the *spiritus movens* of the journal *Baltos lankos*, which was influential in Lithuanian philosophy and humanities for the biggest part of the last three decades.

Leonidas Donskis (1962 – 2016) was of a younger generation than the first three but rose to prominence in the 2000s with a series of books on ideology, utopia, and moral imagination. He was the first Lithuanian philosopher, whose academic output was primarily in English, but he also was a popular public intellectual and commentator on current affairs in the country. After academic hiatus during a spell as a member of the European Parliament, he started a fruitful collaboration with Zygmunt Bauman in the 2010s (Donskis & Bauman 2011; Donskis & Bauman 2013). Unfortunately, a premature death in 2016 cut short what was otherwise a brilliant academic career. Alvydas Jokubaitis (b. 1959), roughly of the same generation as Donskis, is a political philosopher, whose focus is primarily the critical assessment of contemporary liberalism in politics and scientism in academia.

Jūratė Baranova (1955-2021) and Rita Šerpytė (b. 1954), who are a bit younger than the former group and a bit older than the latter, also stand apart from both of these groups in their philosophical interests and linguistic orientation. Baranova, a productive scientist, writer, and publicist, as an academic philosopher was notable as a pioneer of philosophical didactics in Lithuania (she authored a few popular textbooks of philosophy for secondary schools) and also worked on the intersection of philosophy and art, especially literature. If Šliogeris, Sodeika, and Sverdiolas mostly draw on German and French thinkers, while Donskis and Jokubaitis are much more open to English speaking political philosophy, Šerpytė is the expert of contemporary Italian philosophy. In addition to the monographs, mentioned above, she also edited two volumes on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas.

In contrast to Šliogeris, Sodeika, and Sverdiolas, who all defended their dissertations in the Soviet period, Šerpytytė, Donskis, and Jokubaitis all became academic philosophers during the transitional period of 1988 – 1992. The next generation of Lithuanian philosophers all defended their theses in independent Lithuania, which marked not only the growing number of academic philosophers, but also the growing number of books and articles, as well as the increasing variety of themes. Cultural anthropology (Gintautas Mažeikis), postmodernism and feminism (Audronė Žukauskaitė), philosophy of cinema (Nerijus Milerius), hermeneutic-analytic divide (Marius Povilas Šaulauskas), sociology of science (Aldis Gedutis) added to the continuous interest in Husserlian and contemporary phenomenology (Dalius Jonkus, Mintautas Gutauskas) and contemporary continental ethics (Danutė Bacevičiūtė, Jolanta Saldukaitytė, Viktoras Bachmetjevas).

The youngest generation expanded the topics furthermore with interests as diverse as experimental philosophy (Vilius Dranseika), speculative realism (Kristupas Sabolius), philosophy of communication (Kęstas Kirtiklis), and philosophy of disability (Jurga Jonutytė), among others.

This recent decade was also the period when Lithuanian academic philosophy seems to have mastered English as its go-to language for academic publications, which was not the case during the first two decades of Independence. During the Soviet period, Russian language was seen as a window into the world and a benchmark for the quality of the work. This was quickly forgotten after Independence, but rather than turning to the *lingua franca* of the academic world at present, i. e. English, Lithuanian academic philosophy at first focused on writing and publishing in Lithuanian. It is difficult to say definitively what were the reasons, but perhaps it was a mixture of factors: a wave of patriotic sentiment, understanding philosophical practice as a form of uncovering the origins of thought in language, the influence of diaspora philosophers and their notions of carriers of language as a means of survival of the Lithuanian nation altogether, the perceived duty to enrich Lithuanian language and culture, lack of international contacts and, last but not least, insufficient knowledge of English.

Be it as it may, the perceived duty to enrich Lithuanian language and culture was definitely a factor in another aspect of the activities of Lithuanian philosophers in the first two decades of the post-Soviet period, namely, the translations of major texts of Western philosophical tradition. Basically, every prominent Lithuanian philosopher of the period was also an accomplished translator. Šliogeris (Hegel, Heidegger, Arendt, Popper), Sodeika (Husserl, Buber), Sverdiolas (Levinas, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty), Šerpytytė (Vattimo), Jokubaitis (Charles Taylor, Isaiah Berlin), among countless others, all saw translating philosophy into Lithuanian as a significant part of their philosophical oeuvre. Tatjana Aleknienė, who works in the field of classical philosophy, occupies a special place in this regard with her splendid translations of Plato's dialogues, enriched by extensive introductions, commentaries, and additional critical apparatus, that became a golden standard of Lithuanian philosophical publishing.

Another curious and, perhaps, unique, development is the drifting of some academic philosophers toward other disciplines and becoming key figures there. Zenonas

Norkus, in addition to his work on the philosophy of history, is also notable for his work in the field of contemporary comparative sociology. Aleksandras Dobryninas, a philosopher by education, is one of the leaders in criminology in Lithuania, Nerija Putinaitė, at the beginning of her academic career a scholar of Kant, has become a prominent sovietologist and historian of culture. These are just examples and in no way meant to be an exhaustive list. Also, it remains to be seen if these developments are of accidental character or indicate some broader tendencies in Lithuanian academic philosophy.

In the last three decades, Lithuania has acquired translations of more or less all major philosophical texts in Lithuanian. A significant part of that was facilitated by the funding of Open Society Lithuania, which produced around 400 translations of major texts of Western intellectual tradition, including Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hobbes, etc. After the winding down of the program in 2008, this work continues, but without the same intensity as before.

### **Academic Institutions and Philosophical Periodicals**

Vilnius University remains the focal point of Lithuanian academic philosophy. In 1989 the re-establishment of the Faculty of Philosophy at the university was a highly symbolic event. The Faculty has philosophy programs at all levels, is the home to the most influential academic philosophical journal *Problemos*, and generally sets the tone for academic philosophy in Lithuania. The Faculty of Philosophy is the only institution in Lithuania that produces some research in analytic philosophy, but it is particularly strong in contemporary continental philosophy. Šerpytytė, Sabolius, and Dranseika seem to be the most productive at the moment of writing, while Sodeika is also associated with the Faculty. In addition, Sverdiolas is an emeritus professor at the Faculty of Philology, which focuses on various theories of meaning and literature. Political philosophy is in the focus of the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences, where Jokubaitis is the current head of the Department of Political Philosophy and History of Ideas.

The other notable institution is the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. It has departments devoted to the history of Lithuanian philosophy, Ancient and Medieval culture, comparative studies, and contemporary philosophy. The Institute runs various PhD programs related to philosophy. Together with Vilnius University, the Institute is responsible for the majority of academic philosophical output in Lithuania. The most notable and productive philosopher at the Institute currently is Audronė Žukauskaitė, who has published on postmodernity, feminism, cinema, and recently focuses on bio-philosophy and the Anthropocene. Bacevičiūtė, who works in the field of contemporary ethics, is another notable figure here.

Vytautas Magnus University is the only other institution that has all levels of philosophy programs. Established in 1989 by émigré and local intellectuals as the new, free university without any ideological background and censorship, Vytautas Magnus University styles itself as a liberal, student-oriented academic institution. Jonkus (phenomenology), Mažeikis (philosophy of communication, cultural anthropology), and

Aleknienė (ancient philosophy) are the most productive and notable figures there at the time of writing.

Although there have been numerous attempts to establish philosophy or related programs at other universities, at the moment, only Vilnius University and Vytautas Magnus University have philosophy programs.\* Nevertheless, almost every university in Lithuania has a Department of Philosophy to serve the general didactic purposes of the university. Some of those departments are academically more active than others. Andrius Bielskis at Mykolas Romeris University and Tomas Kačerauskas at Vilnius Tech University are productive and active both in academic philosophy and in the public arena as public intellectuals.

*Problemos* is by far the most influential philosophical journal in Lithuania. Established in the Soviet period, it is the longest running philosophical journal and provides a certain continuity with the past. After many years of having been almost exclusively geared towards local philosophers and published in Lithuanian, in recent years it has an increasing number of publications in English. It can be interpreted as a sign of both local philosophers' willingness to publish in English, but, perhaps, also an indication of an increasing attraction of the journal to non-Lithuanian authors. *Problemos* normally publishes two issues per year and a biannual supplement under the guidance of long-time editor-in-chief Nijolė Radavičienė.

*Logos* is a quarterly journal devoted to scholarly studies in all areas of philosophy, but also open to academic publications in religious studies, arts, and culture. Somewhat unusually, it is published not by an academic institution, but by an individual Dalia Marija Stančienė, who also serves as the editor in chief since the establishment of the journal in 1990.

*Athena* is an annual philosophical journal, published by the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute since 2006. Every issue focuses on one philosophical theme or topic, for example, the latest issue is devoted to philosophy of media and technology. It has no editor-in-chief, but instead is run by the collegial team of editors.

*Filosofija. Sociologija* is a journal under the auspices of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Its four issues per year are divided between philosophy and sociology with each getting two separate issues annually. *Darbai ir dienos* is an academic journal published by Vytautas Magnus University, which incorporates all the disciplines in humanities and, therefore, philosophical publications there are continuous, but far from the main occurrence. Two other academic journals that featured philosophy heavily, *Religija ir kultūra* and *Žmogus ir žodis*, have ceased publication.

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\* With the exception of European Humanities University, Belarussian university in exile in Vilnius, which runs a PhD program in philosophy. I do not include this institution in this overview, because its relations with the rest of Lithuanian academic life are sporadic and of rather accidental nature.

## In Conclusion

After three decades of Lithuanian independence, it is very difficult to see any significant continuity with the Soviet period. Lithuanian academic philosophy in the Soviet period started virtually from zero and, therefore, it is difficult to expect any valuable or meaningful tradition to have emerged in such a short period of time under such unfavorable conditions. In addition, methodological possibilities, available to Soviet philosophers—dialectic-materialism or one form or another of Aesopian language—are clearly unattractive to contemporary Lithuanian philosophers, as they are seen as either incapable of being fruitful (the former), or simply unnecessarily complicated (the latter) for successful philosophical endeavor. Instead, philosophy in Lithuania after 1989 mainly saw its goal as catching up with Western contemporary philosophy, hence the importance of translation in addition to philosophical research. And although there have been some attempts to argue for continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet philosophy in Lithuania, it seems that for the most part the most productive Lithuanian philosophers are simply not interested. Even those who work in the history of philosophy in Lithuania are more interested in other things—the philosophy in Vilnius University in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries or in the interwar period. This lack of interest is illustrated by the fact that there is still no systematic study on the philosophy of the Soviet period (by contrast, there are a few on the academic history and historiography in the Soviet period) and the one dissertation on Marxist philosophy in Lithuania is being written at the Faculty of History rather than the Faculty of Philosophy. Therefore, it seems that currently academic philosophy is more interested in participating in the international philosophical debates than investigating its murky origins in the Soviet period.

Having noted the increasing internationalization of Lithuanian philosophers in terms of their publications, it is also important to note that a Lithuanian philosopher with an academic position outside of the country is still a relatively rare occurrence, while a philosopher of non-Lithuanian origin with an academic position in a Lithuanian institution is an even rarer one. In addition, the faculty hiring procedures at the three institutions with PhD programs in philosophy (Vilnius University, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, and Vytautas Magnus University) lack transparency, while the strongest of them – Faculty of Philosophy at Vilnius University – tends to hire exclusively its own alumni and, thus, seems to be a paradigmatic case of faculty inbreeding, which is defined as “the practice of selecting former students of an institution as members of its faculty.” (Eells & Cleveland 1999: 579) It is as of now not evident that this situation is seen as problematic by the administrators of the aforementioned institutions, therefore, it remains unclear how and when this problem is going to be addressed.

Finally, in light of the above, the last three decades of Lithuanian philosophy can hardly be described as *post-Soviet*. After the initial period of transition, the Soviet period ceased to be a meaningful point of reference. It is unclear, however, what characterizes these three decades instead. Perhaps here spatial metaphors can be more helpful than temporal, as general intuitions and goal of the philosophers of the period are not to enter into some new era or period, but rather to belong. As has been noted, the texts of Lithuanian philosophers of the period after 1989 are saturated with intentions of

“joining,” “confluence,” “merging,” etc. This is completely in line and reflects the broader intention of society of joining the “West” and its political and cultural institutions. Lithuanian academic philosophy, then, for the most can be seen as simply reflecting this more general striving and seeing as its goal to be a part of the Western or global academic philosophical trends and currents so it could simply flow further on as a part of those trends and currents.

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