

Soviet and Ukrainian Studies of American Philosophy: Translation of Philosophical Texts

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Studies of the history of American philosophy by Soviet and Ukrainian philosophers are described in this article. The specifics of the history of philosophy in the Soviet Union under the conditions of official ideology are emphasized; the tradition of translating Western philosophical texts and the appearance of the Russian philosophical lexicon (the language of the Soviet Union) is described. Studies of translation activities and critical literature of Soviet philosophers on American philosophy allow us to study the ideological components that Ukrainian philosophers seek to avoid. The article briefly describes the history of translation activity and some aspects of translations of English texts. The features of the Soviet selection of texts that would be consistent with official ideology are revealed. Also, in the article the most popular and well-known texts of the Soviet period and independent Ukrainians, philosophers and translators (such as, Alexey Bogomolov, Anyur Karimsky, Yuri Melville, Nikita Pokrovsky and others) who worked on American studies are described. The article also mentions two volumes of “American Enlighteners: Selected Works” compiled by Goldberg N. with an introductory article by Bernard Bykhovsky in the multivolume edition of the “Philosophical Heritage”. Their contribution to the development of American studies was demonstrated on the basis of an analysis of scientific works: critical literature and translations of primary sources. The article is focused on the need for the absence of a “correct” philosophy, which is a recurrence of the totalitarian practices of Soviet philosophy and ideology.

Keywords: American philosophy, Soviet philosophy, Ukrainian philosophy, philosophical translation, ideology.

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During the period of the Soviet Union, philosophy was based on the principles developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. These principles, in turn, were developed in the writings of Vladimir Lenin. Vasily Zenkovskiy (1881–1962), a professor at Kiev University, a religious philosopher, witnessed revolutionary actions and described the state of philosophy in the 20s of the 20th century: “...the system of “Soviet philosophy,” for the development of which there is a special Philosophical Institute at the Academy of Sciences (along with the Marx-Engels-Lenin

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Institute under the central government), is actually built under the constant guidance and vigilant gaze of the government” [Zenkovskiy, 2001: 690]. The purpose of authority was to destroy all dissent in the Soviet Union, to force all who did not accept the new ideological doctrine, to give up their views. Philosophical thought has lost the most important condition — intellectual freedom. This situation resembles the definition of totalitarianism, this concept appeared in the first half of the 20th century and was understood as a society in which the main state ideology has a strong influence on citizens.

Professor Elena Yurkevich in 2009 wrote an article dedicated to the history of the translation of philosophical literature “Translation of philosophical texts in Ukraine: history and contemporaneity” in which she described the situation of translation in the Soviet era:

“Only ideologically trustworthy texts of classical philosophy and Marxist literature were translated into the Soviet period. The translation of philosophical texts was also tested for ideological reliability and, in case of special popularity of any ideologically incompatible text, it was still translated, but with detailed introductory articles and comments. The significance of these comments was formed by the authority of the CPSU, the publishing house and the personality of the translator, who had to voluntarily agree with the official attitude to the text, or stick to his point of view, which was different from the official one. Then the interpreter got into a situation of double evaluation, a “double standard” in understanding and interpreting the translation” [Yurkevich, 2009: 244-245].

Professor defines the main problems of translating philosophical texts by Soviet philosophers. First, it is the problem of freedom of translation due to the influence of ideology. Translations of Nikolay Lossky (1870–1965) and Aleksei Losev (1893–1988), Professor Yelena Yurkevich, consider as the exception, in other words — “not on orders.” Secondly, there was a problem of understanding the translations of the philosophical text, due to the gap with Western culture. Thirdly, the problem of the accessibility to already translated philosophical texts. Soviet publishing houses were centralized; there was a monopoly and planning [Yurkevich, 2009: 245]. There is a tradition to define the years after World War II as the “era of translations”; new relations between states around the world have influenced the exchange of legacy literature, including philosophical texts. One way or another, in the Soviet philosophical culture, translations of foreign texts were subject to increased demand. It is clear that the translation should not just accurately convey the meaning of the text, but also involve the reader in the overall context of the foreign language. In philosophy, this rule is doubly effective, where it is not just a text, but an idea in it that can be caught and interpreted. And this applies not only to idioms and metaphors; it can be about using the most common words and terms. This is the danger on the one hand of imperceptible distortion, on the other hand, of purposeful change.

As the well-known Ukrainian philosopher of the Soviet period and the times of Ukraine’s independence Vylen Gorsky (1931–2007) said: “Translation requires the development of our own living language, we work in accordance with the ideas that the thinker lives on, whose work is translated” [Gorsky, 2001: 54]. Each time translating a philosophical text, Soviet philosophers, like Ukrainian today, searched for the appropriate words to translate this or that term. The language of philosophy of the times of the Soviet period was naturally Russian. The tradition of translating Western philosophy into Russian began in the 18th century. For example, Grigori Teplov (1717/1716–1779) in the 18th century in his book “Znaniya, Kasajushhiesja Vooobshhe do Filosofii” (*Knowledge Relating in General to Philosophy*, 1751) for the first time translated into

Russian such concepts as Being (Latin: *Ens*), (Russian: Бытие), Substance (Latin: *Substantia*), (Russian: Вещество), the Essence of thing (Latin: *Essentia*), (Russian: Существо) and so forth. As for the concept of “Being”, his translation is still relevant, but the translation of “Substance” in the philosophical language has changed. In Russian, the concept of “substance” originally was translated as “material”, emphasizing only the material nature of the substance.

Gradually by the 20th century the Russian philosophical language was formed, dictionaries appeared in which the rules of translation were legalized. During the Soviet period, the so-called “pre-revolutionary” translations of philosophical texts were actively used as a basis. The main issue in Soviet philosophy was the question of the relationship between matter and consciousness, and the main method was dialectics. Everything that did not conform to the official doctrine should be reprinted with censorship.

“The Newest Philosophical Dictionary” compiled by Alexander Gritsanov defines Soviet philosophy as a non-uniform, ambiguous and internally contradictory intellectual tradition in the USSR 1930-1980’s.:

“As a self-aware system of ideas, theories, hypotheses, and ideologically-protective myths formed as a result of: (a) Forcible rejection of Russian social science and human studies of non-Marxist thinkers; b) entering the dominant positions in the system of philosophical academic structures and theoretical bodies in the USSR; c) making attempts of a certain systematization and giving respectability to this tradition...” [Gritsanov, 1998].

In 2008, the editor-in-chief (1988-2009) of this journal, Academician Vladislav Lectorsky, wrote the book “Filosofija. Nauka. Kul’tura: “Voprosam Filosofii” 60 let” (*Philosophy. Science. Culture: “Questions of Philosophy” is 60 years old*, 2008), he summed up the trends in Soviet philosophy. He mentioned everything in our philosophy before 1991 (including the philosophical journal *Voprosu Filosofii*) was none other than the absolute absence of any kind of thought. Indeed, the situation in which there was a philosophy in the Soviet years was very difficult: “There was a rigid ideological dictate, it was impossible to discuss the serious problems of social philosophy, many publications were forbidden, for quite some time the teaching of philosophy was conducted according to such textbooks, which could only disgust any philosophy” [Lectorsky, 2008]. In his article, the academician says, that the isolation of Soviet philosophy was relative, since many Western texts were translated into Russian, and this is not surprising. After the Second World War, a new “probable adversary” appeared before the Soviet Union. It was necessary for the Soviet leadership to know the philosophy of America, how people think there, what they dream about, what they want. The study of American philosophy made it possible to better know the Americans themselves. But to acquaint the Soviet man with the ideas of the capitalist west was required cautiously. It was impossible to admit the idea of the superiority of America over the Soviet Union. For ideological reasons, philosophers in the Soviet Union were forced to receive dosed information about what was being done abroad. There were well-known directions for collecting information and there was a methodology for its interpretation. The term “history of foreign philosophy”, “criticism of anti-communism”, “bourgeois ideology” and others entered into use. It is important to note that this does not mean that Soviet philosophers have studied American philosophy exclusively by criticizing it. America also had its own critics of Soviet ideology, critics of communism.

In the Soviet Union and later in Russia, a group of researchers of American philosophy was formally formed. They were such researchers as Alexey Bogomolov (1927–1983), author

of “Anglo-amerikanskaja burzhuaznaja filosofija jepohi imperializma” (*Anglo-American Bourgeois Philosophy of the Era of Imperialism*, 1964), “Burzhuaznaja filosofija SShA XX veka” (*Bourgeois Philosophy of the United States in the 20th century*, 1974), Anyur Karimsky (1932–1993) author of “Filosofija amerikanskogo naturalizma” (*Philosophy of American Naturalism*, 1972), “Revoljucija 1776 g. i stanovlenie amerikanskoj filosofii” (*Revolution of 1776 and the Formation of American Philosophy*, 1976), “Problema gumanizma v sovremennoj amerikanskoj filosofii” (*The Problem of Humanism in Modern American Philosophy*, 1978), Yuri Melville (1912–1993) author of “Charlz Pirs i pragmatizm” (*Charles Pierce and Pragmatism*, 1968), “Amerikanskij pragmatizm” (*American Pragmatism*, 1957), Nikita Pokrovsky is the author of “Genri Toro” (*Henry Thoreau*, 1983), “Rannjaja amerikanskaja filosofija. Puritanizm” (*Early American Philosophy. Puritanism*, 1989), “Ral’f Uoldo Jemerson. Konkord: Centr amerikanskih issledovanij” (*Ralph Waldo Emerson Concord: Center for American Studies*, 1995), Maria Kozlova, Nina Yulina, and others.

It is worth mentioning two volumes of “Amerikanskije prosvetiteli. Izbrannye proizvedenija v dvuh tomah” (*American Enlighteners: Selected Works*, 1968-69) compiled by Nikolay Goldberg with an introductory article by Bernard Bykhovsky in the multivolume edition of the “Filosofskoe nasledie” (*Philosophical Heritage*). The book series published since 1963 by the Russian publishing house “Mysl”, under the auspices of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, later — Russia. Prof. Bernard Bykhovsky emphasizes that the philosophers of the American Enlightenment were outstanding thinkers and public figures who “the American people are proud”. The idea of an anti-colonial revolution impressed the official ideology of the revolutionary consciousness of the Soviet Union. Soviet philosophers were allowed to talk about this period in the history of American philosophy, as a “right” period. By “right” is meant a period that has similarities with Soviet history: in particular, the struggle for independence from the monarch, revolutionary ideas, concern for the common people and criticism of religion. Prof. Bernard Bykhovsky writes: “One of the most important tasks of Marxist philosophical historiography is to extract from the Summers materialist thinkers who are forgotten by the idealistic history of philosophy, to restore their authentic, not vulgarized and not distorted by opponents views and to understand their actual role in the struggle of the two camps in philosophy and meaning their ideas in the progress of social thought. In education philosophy in this regard is of particular interest due to its inseparable connection with advanced, revolutionary for their time, socio-political aspirations” [*American Enlighteners: Selected Works*, 1968: 8-9]. This fact confirms that for the Soviet philosopher there was a “correct” and “wrong” philosophy, that there was an ideology that was the yardstick of truth. The struggle between the two “lines of philosophy” in the face of materialism and idealism was declared, everything that concerned idealism was blamed, everything that concerned materialism was praised (therefore, European materialism was well studied by Soviet philosophers).

In 1962, the book of the well-known literary critic Vernon Luis Parrington “Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginning to 1920, 1927–1930” was translated into Russian. This three-volume book is devoted to the history of American literature, but at the same time acquaints the reader with the philosophical works of American thinkers. Moreover, three volumes allow us to fully consider the development of American thought from the Puritanism of the first colonists until the 20th century.

Soviet philosopher, prof. Mikhail Ovsyannikov (1915–1987) in 1977 edited translations of books by American Romanticists “Jestetika amerikanskogo romantizma” (*Aesthetics of American Romanticism*, 1977). The authors of translations Alexey Zverev and Zinaida Aleksandrova took

as the basis the book of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau and others. The author of the introductory article Alexander Nikol'yukin wrote that "The revolutionary activity of the broad masses of people, who sought to achieve not only the liberation from the yoke of the English metropolis, but also to make social transformations, gave rise to new ideals in the minds of yesterday's residents of the colony in North America. Political and State Unity country was the beginning of the formation of national culture, literature, art [and philosophy — *Sobolievskiy Y.A.*]" [Aesthetics of American Romanticism, 1977: 9].

Remembering that "Language is the house of the truth of Being", we must pay attention to certain issues related to the translation of English-language philosophical texts. First of all, English has a different semantic structure than Russian or Ukrainian. English is more structured; it has the order of words. The researcher Sergey Nikonenko in his article "The Problem of Translating English-Language Philosophical Texts" suggests several examples of difficulties that interpreters face: "...the complexity is connected with the many-valuedness of the majority of English philosophical terms ... the majority of philosophical concepts are also the words of everyday language; therefore, can be included in various ways, while changing the way of use. For example, the word "sense" is translated as "feeling", "sensation", "meaning", and so forth." [Nikonenko, 2004: 158].

In fairness, many translators and philosophers were able to circumvent censorship and acquaint us with qualitative translations of Western wisdom. So, for example, the translation of the book by the classic American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson "Nature" performed Alexey Zverev introduced to the idealist philosophical ideas of the thinker. Such lines as "Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries, embodies it in his language, as the FATHER" [Emerson, 1836: 35]. The lines radically contradicted the materialistic philosophy of the Soviet period. Ralph Waldo Emerson called the Spirit as the Creator, while Soviet philosophers taught about the dialectic of materialism that matter self-developed into the world.

The topic of this article correlates with the scientific program of the Faculty of Philosophy of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. As it was written by the article of Professor Sergii Rudenko, associate professor Vadim Tytarenko: "In the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, according to the mentioned earlier scientific program of the Philosophical Faculty "Modernization of Philosophical Education and Science of Ukraine on the basis of International Educational and Scientific Standards", was resumed the tradition of teaching a special courses" [Rudenko et. al., 2018: 136]. For two years, the course "American Philosophy: Originality or Heritage?" has been taught at the Kiev University. The purpose of the educational course is to acquaint students with the history of American philosophy, with the primary sources, the texts of American philosophers. Thanks to new translations and publications, students can understand American philosophy without political censorship.

As Professor Taras Kononenko writes, the changes in public consciousness and the absence of Soviet ideology have a beneficial effect both on the political situation in Ukraine and on education: "Thanks to the events in Ukraine, freedom, democracy and the values created at the territory of Europe became global and have created the new world paradigm. Freedom and democracy become the meaning of existence of the new global system, of the new world order. I am sure that struggle for these values will lead to the peace and prosperity of the people of free will" [Kononenko, 2017: 34].

Conclusions

Translations of European and American philosophical texts have become popular in recent years in Ukraine; however, most often their quality is average, because of what the translated text is not always suitable for use, both in education and in research work. There was a need to create a standard for the translation of humanitarian texts, and modern Ukrainian philosophers work on it. The 20th World Philosophical Congress, held in 1998 in the United States, was essentially the first congress in history, where the English language was undivided.

Gradually, English became not only the language of science but also of philosophy, as a result, interest in Anglo-American literature increased significantly, and the history of the development of English philosophical terms on both sides of the ocean became topical. The history of English philosophy is very well studied in contrast to the history of American philosophy. Studying the history of American philosophy will complement the crater of English-speaking philosophical vocabulary.

The tradition of translating philosophical texts in the Soviet Union was confronted with ideology, as a result, translated exclusively into Russian texts, such as books by American enlighteners, American romanticists. Their ideas of the unity of theory and practice, materialism, deism, criticism of the bourgeoisie and revolutionary ideas impressed Soviet philosophers. On the other hand, the books of American puritans and idealists were not known to Soviet philosophers and were not translated into Russian.

If philosophers do national philosophy, then translators work the world philosophy. The quality of translations of philosophical texts in Ukraine is much better than in the Soviet Union, since there is no Soviet ideology. In order to improve the quality of translations of philosophical texts, the “Philosophical Fund” was organized in 2001. The activities of the Foundation and scientific and educational institutions in modern Ukraine are jointly aimed at finding new objective ways of developing the humanities. A new view of philosophy as a science devoid of such qualities as “correct” or “wrong” allows us to leave in the past a Marxist ideology. It’s possible, that the elements of this ideology have survived in the scientific worldview of modern Ukraine, but this requires some new research.



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