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PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE IN RUSSIA:
THE ST. PETERSBURG PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (1897-1923)**

Abstract

This article is devoted to the philosophy of science in Russia from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 1920s. In that period, the Philosophical Society was one of the philosophy centers in the country. An important characteristic of the society was its interdisciplinarity. This affected both the list of its members and the topics of the papers presented at its meetings. From the very beginning, the society consisted of representatives of various fields of science, including botanists, physicists, mathematicians, lawyers, psychologists, historians, and philosophers. This enabled a comprehensive review of individual philosophical problems and ideas. With the principle of interdisciplinarity at its root, the Philosophical Society became a platform for fruitful debates over important problems from various disciplines, including philosophy of science. Some of them are summarized in this article.

Keywords: philosophy of science, scientific societies, history of Russian science, the St. Petersburg Philosophical Society, public organization, Russian philosophy

The Philosophical Society was a significant phenomenon in the history of Russian science and made significant contributions to the development of Russian philosophy. The Society was closed in 1923 as a result of the repressive policy of the Soviet government, which effectively put a stop to a Russian philosophy that could be free from ideological influence.

Scientific societies in Russia played an important part in the system of organizing scientific research. They were also a significant factor in the institutionalization of science. The Philosophical Society was the first specialized philosophical association founded in Russia. It was established as late as 1897 but this accomplishment had been preceded by almost twenty years of work.

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On February 15, 1880, famous “representatives of the philosophical thought of St. Petersburg” — Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev,¹ Mikhail Ivanovich Karinsky, Ernest L’vovich Radlov, Nikolai Nikolaevich Strakhov, Alexander Emelyanovich Svetilin, Konstantin Nikolaevich Bestuzhev-Riumin — met in the house of Fedor Gustavovich Turner, later Deputy Finance Minister, to prepare a draft charter of the future philosophical society (Radlov 1920: 190). The charter was submitted for approval to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Dmitry Andreevich Tolstoy, who rejected it because he believed that “the Philosophical Society is an idle undertaking, not at all necessary for the Russian society” (Radlov 1920: 190). At that time, the reformist fervor of the 1860s was fading away. It should be noted that the Philosophical Faculty had been abolished at the St. Petersburg University on January 26, 1850. Philosophy had returned to the universities thanks to the charter of 1863 but the next university charter of 1884 reduced the obligatory courses of philosophy to the study of Plato and Aristotle.

Indeed, according to the apt expression of Vladimir Nikolaevich Ivanovsky, philosopher and author of one of the first Russian works on the philosophy of science, philosophy in Russia began to develop poorly from the end of the 18th century and then lived in essence “from one destruction to another” (Ivanovsky 1923: xxxix).

The slow and difficult process of institutionalization of philosophy in Russia began in the 1890s. The last decade of the 19th century also saw the creation of first philosophical journals in Russia, which was an important component of the infrastructure of philosophy in the process of its institutionalization. At the same time, the teaching of philosophy at universities began to acquire a systemic and multidisciplinary character, since cadres of university professors were rapidly expanding with the influx of “privat-docents” (freelance teachers).

In these favorable conditions, a second attempt was made to create a philosophical society in St. Petersburg. This time the initiative belonged to the professional philosopher Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova (Vanchugov 2014: 6-15). She had met with well-known philosophers, visited Ernest L’vovich Radlov, Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky, Nikolai Grigorievich Debolsky, and some others, “inviting them to take the initiative to establish the Philosophical Society” (SPbF ARAN, r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 3).² A corresponding proposal letter was prepared and sent to a whole range of “stakeholders.” The document stated, among other things, that “an idea was formed to establish

¹ Soloviev played a crucial role in the development of Russian philosophy at that time. See his papers in English: Soloviev 1996, 2005. For more on his ideas, cf. Shein 1970: 1-16, Dahm 1975, Mueller 1951, Poole 2008: 349-371.

² Cf. Bibliography at the end of this paper for explanation of the following abbreviations: *Protokoly*, SPbF ARAN, SU RSFSR, TsGA SPb, *Ustav*.

a philosophical society at the Imperial St. Petersburg University” (SPbF ARAN, r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 3). The constituent assembly of the newly created Philosophical Society was held on March 25, 1897 (SPbF ARAN l. 1). It discussed the draft society charter, prepared by the initiative group. The document, in accordance with the law, went through several stages of coordination within the university — the dean’s office of the Faculty of History and Philology, the University Council, and, finally, on August 27, 1897, after being signed by the university’s rector, it was sent to the head of the St. Petersburg Educational District (SPbF ARAN f. 14, op. 2, d. 1169, l. 1-2.). On October 22, 1897, the Minister of Public Enlightenment, count Ivan Davydovich Delyanov, approved the “Charter of the Philosophical Society at the Imperial St. Petersburg University” (SPbF ARAN r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 3.).

The society’s official aim was to work toward the development and dissemination of philosophical knowledge. To achieve this aim, according to the third paragraph of the charter, it had the right to arrange private and public meetings for scientific papers, print works in the form of separate publications and periodicals, etc. (*Ustav* 1897: 3).

The first meeting of the Philosophical Society took place on December 7, 1897. It was chaired by the Dean of the History and Philology Faculty of the Imperial St. Petersburg University, Professor Ivan Vasil’evich Pomyalovsky. The Council of the society was elected at the meeting. It included Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky, Ernest L’vovich Radlov, Alexander Sergeevich Famintsyn, Vladimir Mikhailovich Bekhterev, Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin, Yakov Nikolaevich Kolubovsky, and Alexander Petrovich Nechaev. Radlov was elected deputy chairman of the society (*Protokoly* 1899: 87). However, the election of chairman was dramatic. Votes were divided between Vvedensky and Mikhail Ivanovich Karinsky (SPbF ARAN r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 4.). The election was postponed and only a year later Vvedensky was appointed chairman, this time unanimously (*Protokoly* 1899: 99).

According to the charter, the society had the right to organize closed meetings and public meetings. The closed ones were for solving organizational, financial, and other practical issues, and only the society members could attend them. The public ones were for presenting the research results. Meetings were divided into annual, at the beginning of the academic year, and ordinary. Public meetings were very popular among the educational community and students (of both genders).

The annual and particularly crowded public meetings of the society were held in the University Assembly Hall, and the closed ones took place in a small meeting room of the University Council. Sometimes meetings could be arranged in auditorium no. IX, one meeting in 1899 was held in the

Mineralogical study room of the University. All meetings, with rare exceptions, began at eight o'clock in the evening and often ended after midnight. It is noteworthy that in 1898 meetings were held on weekdays, in 1899 the Philosophical Society almost always met on Saturday or Sunday. The meetings took place twice a month, and from May to September no meetings were held. During the first three years, there were 22 meetings (one in 1897, 11 in 1898 and 10 in 1899).

An important characteristic of the society was its interdisciplinarity. This affected both the list of its members and the topics of the papers presented at the meetings. From the very beginning, the society consisted of representatives of various fields of science. The Philosophical Society included botanists (Andrei Sergeevich Famitsyn), physicists (Orest Danilovich Khvol'son), mathematicians (Sergey Evgenevich Savich), lawyers (Anatoly Fedorovich Koni, David Davidovich Grimm), psychologists (Polina Osipovna Ephrussi), historians (Alexander Sergeevich Lappo-Danilevsky, Sergey Fedorovich Platonov), philosophers (Soloviev, Vvedensky, Radlov, Lapshin, Karinsky), and others. This enabled a comprehensive review of individual philosophical problems and ideas. With the principle of interdisciplinarity at its root, the Philosophical Society became a platform for fruitful debates over important problems from various fields. Some of the papers presented and discussed at the society meetings were devoted to philosophy of science.

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was widely celebrated by the Philosophical Society in March 1898. Comte was considered the founder of positivism and of sociology as an independent science. By the end of the 19th century in Russia, positivism in philosophy drew an increasing number of supporters and followers.

One of the anniversary papers was delivered by a historian and the founder of sociological research in Russia, Lappo-Danilevsky, who spoke "about the positive method in the sociology of Comte." According to Lappo-Danilevsky, "Comte's methodological instructions were of great importance in the history of sociology" (*Protokoly* 1899: 96). The speaker pointed out that "Comte, in comparing society to an organism, understood organisms not only in the biological but also in the psychological sense, and among the factors of progress, he put ideas first" (*Protokoly* 1899: 96).

Natural scientists considered Comte's views on mathematics, biology, and physics. Mathematician Sergey Evgenevich Savich delivered a paper about the mathematical works of Comte. He noted that Comte considered mathematics the most advanced science "in terms of the coordination of facts" and "a powerful tool for finding the laws underlying phenomena" (*Protokoly* 1899: 94).

The famous physicist Khvol'son delivered a paper on the attitude of Comte's positive philosophy to physics. Wondering whether Comte could be considered a unifier of philosophy and natural science in relation to physics, he came to a negative conclusion, and expressed his conviction that "the unification of natural science and philosophy can only be achieved through collective work" and that "the Philosophical Society, which has opened its doors to naturalists, can bring many benefits in this matter" (*Protokoly* 1899: 95).

Epidemiologist Sergey Mikhailovich Luk'yanov, in his paper *Comte's Positive Biology*, presented the basics of Comte's classification of biological sciences, stressed that Comte was unrivaled when it came to describing the methods of biological research, and that the rapid development of animal physiology was largely due to Comte's influence (*Protokoly* 1899: 95).

Unfortunately, only the main points of those papers were recorded in the protocols, but their full texts were published in various scientific and educational journals in 1898 (Luk'yanov 1898: 216-253, Savich 1898: 152-169, Khvol'son 1898: 41-68).

The paper by Leonid Egorovich Obolensky titled *The Main Types of Ideas about the World, as It Is in Itself, and Their Criticism*, from November 25, 1898, was devoted to the theory of knowledge. Obolensky argued that "the desire of mankind to seek knowledge of the world in itself is due to two reasons: mental and moral" (*Protokoly* 1899: 104). He believed that his scientific position "sheds new light on the very process of cognition, which no longer requires an incomprehensible transition from mechanical excitation of the senses to the mental: it is enough to allow the transfer of the subjective state from one to another" (*Protokoly* 1899: 105). Three people participated in the discussion that followed Obolensky's talk. They agreed that the main points of the paper were not sufficiently substantiated and required the speaker to provide a further critical analysis (*Protokoly* 1899: 105).

Academician Alexander Sergeevich Famintsyn gave the paper *Modern Science and Its Immediate Task* in October 1899. He drew attention "to an urgent need to expand the area of activity of natural scientists by applying the experimental method to mental phenomena" (*Protokoly* 1900: 92). He listed the shortcomings of modern natural science: "the lack of analysis of our cognitive ability as well as of our methods and means for understanding the external world" (1900: 92). According to Famintsyn, "natural science should not be limited to material phenomena; rather, it should extend its investigations to psychological phenomena as well" (1900: 93).

Another talk, by Bogdan Alexandrovich Kistyakovsky, was devoted to the philosophy of social science: *Categories of Necessity and Justice in the Study of Social Phenomena*. The paper was presented on December 16, 1899.

Kistyakovsky argued that the concepts of necessity and justice in nature and in the social world depend on perspective, and not on the essence of the phenomena themselves (1900: 110). He also claimed that there is no fundamental difference between objects of historical and natural-science research, but due to the difference in the methods of research in those kinds of studies, the judgments obtained by them are opposite in their logical structure (1900: 111). Kistyakovsky also pointed out that, considering the social process in its entirety, it is possible to establish not only material or economic but also socio-psychological causal relations, judgments about which have the same apodictic character as natural scientific forms (1900: 111).

It should be noted that Kistyakovsky was a representative of Marxist philosophy at that time (he abandoned Marxism in the first years of the 20th century), and so he gave a very positive assessment of a number of important Marxist theses, especially when it comes to the application of new methods to the study of social phenomena. The talk was followed by a heated debate. But all the opponents tended to criticize Marx's theory instead of arguing against Kistyakovsky.

A remarkable paper was presented by Nikolai Nikolaevich Kostylev on February 14, 1908. Its title was *The Latest Influences in the Scientific and Philosophical Synthesis in Western Europe* (TsGIA SPb f2265, op. 1, d. 1201, l. 1). Kostylev noted the importance of the present-moment form for scientific and philosophical synthesis, since it was not the logical form that was changing, but the very concepts underlying it. In addition, he noted that the changes that took place in the "mental data" were very important (TsGIA SPb l. 10b). In this connection, he discussed the criticism of the concept of mental ideas given by Richard Wahle, Ernst Mach, and others, as well as Felix Le Dantec's and William Rou's theory of functional development of organisms. Kostylev emphasized that the replacement of statistical data ("matter and spirit") with the dynamic foundation of monism was the basis of philosophical synthesis (TsGIA SPb).

One of the most outstanding Russian scientists, physiologist Vladimir Mikhailovich Bekhterev, presented a paper entitled *Strictly Objective Method in the Study of Neurophysics Activity and Its Role in Substantiating Human Reflexology* on February 9, 1917. Bekhterev noted that external or objective manifestations of mental activity, both in animals and humans, can be considered as higher reflexes that are acquired through exercise or education, and so they develop during life under the influence of individual experience (Bekhterev 1917: 79). Reflexology, as a scientific discipline, sets as its task the study of neuropsychic manifestations, regarded as higher reflexes. Admitting the influence of subjective factors on the course of mental processes, Bekhterev

stressed that the subjective factors themselves are either a consequence of an external cause or they are already included in the past conditions of the individual, which should be viewed from an objective perspective. In this case, it is preferable not to dwell on the subjective aspects of mental activity, but to rely on objective data (1917: 79-80). In conclusion, he noted that a strictly objective method of investigating neuropsychic activity had already indicated the complete pattern of development and manifestation of higher reflexes (1917: 80).

Unfortunately, the Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg did not have its own periodical, so only a few papers presented at the meetings were published in renown journals: *Vestnik Evropy* (*European Herald*), *Mir Bozhiy* (*God's World*), *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya* (*Journal of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment*), *Cosmopolis*, etc. At the end of 1898, an agreement was reached with the editors of the journal *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* (*Problems of Philosophy and Psychology*), published by the Moscow Psychological Society, regarding the printing of the materials of the Philosophical Society (*Protokoly* 1899: 109). The Moscow Psychological Society was established on January 24, 1885, at the Imperial Moscow University. Since 1899, the journal was published under the auspices of both societies, which together contributed to the "content and success" of the "common organ of Russian philosophy" (Grot, Preobrazhensky 1899: V).

In the course of two pre-revolutionary decades, philosophy emerged as an independent science. It dissociated itself from other forms of "national spirituality," acquired a professional character, and stood on a purely scientific basis.

The October Revolution radically changed life in Russia. Science under the new Soviet government found itself in a difficult situation due to huge human losses, destruction of infrastructure, lack of normal material conditions for conducting scientific work, loss of international relations, and no exchange of scientific literature even within the country. All those circumstances, of course, affected the viability of scientific societies.

The Bolsheviks did not ban the activities of numerous pre-revolutionary societies and unions, but the difficult situation in the country led to the dissolution of some of them: the Law Society of Petrograd University,³ the Russian Society of Historians, and some other scientific societies were closed. The Anthropological Society at the Petrograd University, the Petrograd Otolaryngic Societies and others temporarily suspended their activities. The

³ After the outbreak of the Great War, Saint Petersburg was renamed Petrograd (to remove German connotations). After Lenin's death, it was renamed Leningrad.

Philosophical Society at the Petrograd University also stopped functioning. Nonetheless, despite all the difficulties of the Civil War and War Communism, most scientific societies, such as the Moscow Agricultural Society, the Pirogov Society of Russian Physicians, the Russian Technical Society, the Russian Geographical Society, the Russian Mineralogical Society, and many others continued to operate.

The end of the Civil War and the transition to the New Economic Policy led to an increase in public activity. Nikolai Onufriyevich Lossky wrote in his *Memoirs* (Lossky 1991: 181):

Before, when we were extremely exhausted by hunger and cold, professors could only walk to the university, give a lecture and then return home and lie down for an hour or two to recover their strength. Now we have a desire to hold meetings of scientific societies and re-establish journals in place of discontinued publications.

In the largest scientific center, Petrograd, many scientific societies were reactivated (the Russian Sociological Society, the Petrograd Society of Roentgenologists and Radiologists, the Russian Urological Society, etc.) or created (e.g., the Society of the Researchers of Ukrainian History, Literature, and Language, the Scientific Society for the Protection of Motherhood and Children). Overall, in the beginning of 1922, there were 42 scientific societies in Petrograd.

Philosophy was revived in the country too. The first meeting of the Philosophical Society after a break of almost four years took place on February 27, 1921 (SPbF ARAN, r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 11). Shortly afterwards, the society was faced with the question of legitimizing the organization in Soviet administrative bodies. Scientific societies, which before the revolution had been under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment, now came under the authority of the People's Commissariat of Education and its local agencies. It is worth noting that the charter that was sent for registration had been printed in 1910. Apparently, the society organizers had to take this rather risky step due to extremely limited resources: even simple writing paper had become a scarce commodity. Still, some changes were made to the charter "by hand." The word "Imperial" from the name of the university was blacked out and replaced with "State" and any references to representatives of the imperial family were deleted — e.g., a note to the 30th paragraph, which read: "If someone from the Imperial family honors society to assume the title of Chairman, then their title shall be Honorary Chairman" (TsGA SPb, f. 2555, op. 1, d. 341, l. 8 ob).

The paragraph devoted to the funds and property of the society had undergone significant changes. The society's funds, according to the changes,

could only be made up of subsidies from the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment and profits from the sale of the society's publications (TsGA SPb, l. 9). Before the revolution, scientific societies had existed primarily thanks to membership fees, interest on capital, and donations. They had been obliged by law — as “government” institutions with their credit guaranteed by the city council and zemstvo⁴ — to keep their originally small amount of capital in the form of interest-bearing securities (Plato 1903: 5).

The Philosophical Society had been no exception. But, as a result of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee Decree *On the Nationalization of Banks* (SU RSFSR, no. 10, 1917, art. 150), adopted on December 27 (14), 1917, and the decree of the Council of People's Commissars *On Former Private Banks Joint-Stock Capital Confiscation* (SU RSFSR, no. 19, 1918, art. 295), published on February 8 (January 26), 1918, scientific societies had now lost their funds. Membership fees could not be paid regularly, and, in any event, they could not cover all the expenses. So the state had become the only source of funding for scientific societies in the new political and economic conditions. This was reflected in the amended charter of the Philosophical Society.

The amended charter was approved “as temporary” by the head of the Office of Higher Education and Scientific Institutions, Mikhail Petrovich Kristi, on April 2, 1921 (TsGA SPb, f. 2555, op. 1, d. 341, l. 4). However, it soon became necessary to register societies in the Petrograd Provincial Executive Committee. On August 27, 1921, the Provincial Executive Committee, “in order to take into account the number and composition of societies and unions operating in the city of Petrograd and the Petrograd province,” adopted a resolution on the mandatory re-registration of societies and unions of Petrograd in the Department of Management of the Executive Committee within seven days of the publication of this resolution (TsGA SPb). Moreover, organizations that did not register within the prescribed period were to be “considered non-existent.” The Philosophical Society sent all the necessary papers to the executive committee on August 30, 1921 (TsGA SPb, f. 1000, op. 6, d. 9, l. 2-10).

It should be noted that the years of the revolution and the Civil War had been a difficult ordeal for the Philosophical Society. The Society had lost all its savings and many of its members had died (Debolsky, Lappo-Danilevsky, Karinsky, Leo Mikhailovich Lopatin, Fedor Dmitrievich Batyushkov, Peter Fedorovich Kapterev, Aleksander Fedorovich Lazursky, and others), and some had left Petrograd (Semen Lyudvigovich Frank, Yakov Nikolaevich Kolubovsky, and others). However, after the reactivation in 1921, the society was supple-

⁴ Zemstvos (zemstvo institutions) were elected bodies of self-government (zemstvo meetings, zemstvo councils) in the Russian Empire at the local and provincial level. They were created by the Zemstvo Reform in 1864.

mented by a number of new people who became regular participants of its meetings: Yuliya Nikolaevna Danzas, Ksenia Mikhailovna Miloradovich, Nikolai Ivanovich Lazarevsky, Vasilii Vasil'evich Leont'ev, Modest Nikolaevich Marzhetsky, Igor Yakovlevich Kolubovsky, Vladimir Semenovich Iof, Adrian Antonovich Frankovsky, Samuil Solomonovich Zusman, Vasilii Emilevich Sezeman, Vyacheslav Vyacheslavovich Sreznevsky, Vladimir Fedorovich Pischulin, Alexander Alexandrovich Krolenko, Vasilii Vasil'evich Boldyrev, Olga Mikhailovna Kotelnikova, Mikhail Izrailevich Tubyansky, academician Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky, Nikolai Mikhailovich Koyalovich, and others.

Meetings began to be held every two weeks on Sundays, but not in the building of the university, as before the revolution. The meetings had been transferred to the Public Library, whose director at that time was the deputy chairman of the Philosophical Society Ernest L'vovich Radlov. The chairman, as before, was Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky, who, however, was ill and barely attended the meetings. For this reason, Radlov was assigned the duties of chairman of the society. After the reactivation, 21 meetings were held (14 in 1921, 7 in 1922), and 19 papers were presented.

For objective reasons, the meetings of the society became less crowded than before the revolution. The nature of the meetings had changed as well. In 1922, Ksenia Mikhailovna Miloradovich, a remarkable young philosopher and a full member of the society (SPbF ARAN, r. IV, op. 1-1922, d. 875, l. 12-14) wrote about it very vividly in an essay on the history of the Philosophical Society:

I remember that before the break the meetings bore the seal of classical German philosophy. Kant reigned here, and, perhaps, Hegel and partly Fichte. Definitely this was due to the strictly Kantian direction of Chairman Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky, who made his mark on the society he led. The newest philosophy was isolated, so that the young philosophers who returned from abroad several years before the war (Sergei Iosifovich Gessen and Vasilii Emilevich Sezeman, to name just a few), who brought with them the struggle of the Freiburg and Marburg schools from German universities, even felt at one time the need to create a special "young" philosophical society . . . However, what has been said should not be understood in an absolute sense. There was never a hard wall between them. . . . But those who headed the society set the tone, and that tone was of classical German idealism. At present, the relations of the parties are changing, and although the philosophy of Kant, as well as Hegel and Fichte, continues to have its representatives in the Philosophical Society, it is significantly pushed into the background by the ideal-realism of Nikolai Onufriyevich Lossky⁵ and the methods of thinking introduced into the philosophy by Cohen, methods used by the extremely talented Nikolai Vasil'evich Boldyrev.

⁵ For more about him and his ideas, cf. Shein 1966: 214-216, Tremblay 2016: 149-163; 2017: 3-16; 2019: 193-232.

Indeed, the latter gave a talk on epistemology. Boldyrev's paper *Contemplation and Reason, Being and Cognition* (April 17 and 24, 1921; cf. Boldyrev 1922: 13-32) analyzed the ontological motives of gnoseological criticism, for which some "main points of philosophy" were formulated. He argued that ontological problems can be successfully solved only by gnoseology (1922: 14). According to Boldyrev, skeptic and subjective criticism of the experience of reality was "the first act of true philosophizing" (1922: 16). He contrasted criticism with rationalism, recognizing the priority of the latter, arguing that the mind is not an abstract but a universal principle, always occupied by internal self-determination, the establishment of living unity, and the concretization of the abstract (1922: 31). Completing the critique of criticism, Boldyrev quoted one of its close opponents, Friedrich Julius Stahl, "We have to be systematic because God is personality" (1922: 31).

There were more papers on the philosophy of science at the society meetings during that period, such as Sergey Alekseevich Alekseev's *Analogy as the Main Method of Cognition*, delivered on May 29, 1921. It was later published under the pseudonym Askol'dov (Askol'dov 1922: 33-54). According to Alekseev, analogy was defined in the courses of logic as a conclusion from the similarity of some signs of similar subjects to the similarities of other signs of the same objects (1922: 33). The analogy as a method was usually characterized as very unreliable. Alekseevich spoke out against such a simplified understanding of the essence of analogy and against its dismissive assessment. In his opinion, the basis for analogy was not the number of similar signs, and certainly not the absence of dissimilar ones. Rather, the basis for analogy was the meaning of signs or their connection and position in the composition of similar objects — that is, various forms of relationship between the object as a whole and its parts, elements, or signs (1922: 34). In conclusion, Alekseev stressed that "knowledge must adapt itself to being, and not vice versa" (1922: 54) and that "for the last century, philosophy has done too much with the motto 'fiat scientia, pereat mundus,' which reflects the essence of positivism. Isn't it time to proclaim the opposite, 'fiat mundus, pereat scientia'?" (1922: 54).

In her paper presented on November 20, 1921, Olga Mikhailovna Kotel'nikova focused on the problem of knowledge in the philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (Kotel'nikova 1922: 89-116). On the basis of a false interpretation of Jacobi's philosophy as a philosophy of "faith and feeling," she tried to deal with the main problem raised by Jacobi — the problem of the reality of the object of knowledge and its directness. Analyzing Jacobi's philosophical system, Kotel'nikova claimed that his gnoseology did not boil down to logic or theory of truth "in itself." Rather, its main problem was the rela-

tionship between the subjective and objective aspects of knowledge, and its main question was how truth in itself becomes truth for the cognizing subject (1922: 110).

On January 22, 1922, Ksenia Mikhailovna Miloradovich presented a paper called *Should We Strive for Metaphysical Knowledge?*, which formed the basis of an article published in the journal *Mysl'* (Miloradovich 1922: 58-67). Proceeding from Kant's position "about the impossibility of metaphysics in the form of knowledge," she tried to prove that "even if it — i.e., metaphysics in the form of knowledge — were possible, it would not be needed" (1922: 58). According to Miloradovich, "knowledge — i.e., the systematic definition of a metaphysical essence — would make moral relation to it impossible" (1922: 65). The paper analyzed some of the main philosophical concepts: "will," "freedom," "necessity," "knowledge," etc. Miloradovich's thoughts about faith were also interesting: faith remained alive "only with openness to doubt" (1922: 67), and knowledge would make faith impossible, "and especially not when it would conflict with the dogma of faith, but when it would confirm it" (1922: 67). Miloradovich believed that philosophy "cannot be only a science" because it "must accept the belief in freedom" (1922: 66). In conclusion, she declared that "metaphysics is needed, leaving free will" (1922: 67).

The post-revolutionary activity of the Philosophical Society was not limited to meetings: the work on the publication of papers of Russian and foreign philosophers in translation continued as well. In particular, the society was preparing the complete works of Plato. This required significant financial support. Thus, scientists and scholars had to become businessmen in the conditions of the New Economic Policy. To obtain the necessary funds, the Philosophical Society organized a bookstore, which was opened on October 10, 1921. In December 1921, the society was able to submit an application to the Press Department of the Petrograd branch of the State Publishing House to register its own scholarly publishing house "Academia." The permit was obtained on December 31, 1921. Radlov became the head of the publishing house; Boldyrev and Krolenko were its supervisors. 25 books were published in 1922.

One of the proofs of the revival of Russian philosophy and of the fact that its true center was the Philosophical Society in Petrograd was the creation of the journal *Mysl' (Thought)*. It was a completely new element in the activities of the society. Only three issues of *Mysl'* appeared in the first half of 1922. The fourth issue "was already forthcoming but did not appear: the Bolshevik government banned the periodical" (Lossky 1991: 181). The revival of philosophy in Soviet Russia turned out to be very short-lived indeed.

On August 16-17, many intellectuals, including some members of the Philosophical Society (Lossky, Leo Platonovich Karsavin, Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin,

and others), were arrested in major cities of Russia. The Soviet government, intent on showing that “its regime is not a barbaric despotism” (Lossky 1991: 185), decided not to resort to physical reprisals; instead, it expelled members of objectionable intelligentsia from Russia.

In the general atmosphere of distrust towards the scientific intelligentsia, towards the so-called “old specialists,” the remaining leaders of the Philosophical Society, fearing unwanted attention from the authorities, virtually ceased all activities. They did not submit documents for a new re-registration of the society, which was announced in the country in connection with the publication — on August 30, 1922 — of the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars *On the Procedure for Approval, Registration, and Supervision of Societies and Unions that Do Not Pursue Profit* (SU RSFSR, no. 49 (1922), art. 622). According to the Decree, the society had to submit three copies of a draft charter “together with a statement of approval, indicating the names of at least ten founders together with their addresses and signatures” (SU RSFSR).

The selection of elements of the public sphere was carried out taking into account the social, political, and ideological attitudes of the Soviet government. It seems that the Philosophical Society could not be re-registered, even when all the regulation had been observed.

Officially, termination of the society was announced on May 3, 1923, in a circular addressed to the Petrograd University.⁶ The circular was signed by the head of the Petrograd Governance of Scientific Institutions of the Academic Center, Mikhail Petrovich Kristi, and the head of the Department of Scientific Institutions, Yakov Nikholaevich Gessen. It said that “due to non-receipt of the re-registration notification to date, the Philosophical Society at the University is excluded from the number of societies that are under the jurisdiction of the named Administration.” This meant that failure to re-register was the main official reason for closing the society.

At the same time, in some societies, the registration procedure was delayed for several years for bureaucratic reasons, but they continued to function (e.g., the Russian Geographical Society and the Russian Mineralogical Society). Others, however, such as the Russian Sociological Society named after Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky and the Russian Archaeological Society, were immediately closed.

The post-revolutionary activity of the Philosophical Society, short-lived as it was, turned out to be a significant and very interesting period in the history

⁶ Cf. Otdel rukopisey Rossiyskoy natsional’noy biblioteki (Department of Manuscripts of the Russian National Library), f. 626, op. 1, d. 100, l. 1.

of science. The society had managed to achieve a number of important scientific and organizational goals: it had created its own publishing house, established its own journal, attracted talented philosophical youth, and established links with philosophical organizations from other regions. Regular meetings had been held and scientific papers discussed. The Philosophical Society was a true center of philosophy in the country. Its demise in 1923, together with the termination of the journal *Mysl'* and the expulsion of prominent Russian thinkers in the fall of 1922, marked the end of an ideology-free philosophy in Soviet Russia.

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