

ФИЛОСОФИЯ

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**VOPROSY FILOSOFII IN THE CONTEXT OF 1990s-ERA
RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNALS**

The article provides an analysis of the journal *Voprosy filosofii* in the era of the 1990s. This journal is compared with other philosophical journals published in Russia at that time. While it is methodologically problematic to do a one-to-one comparison of 1990s issues of *Voprosy filosofii* and independent philosophy journals, a comparison of the two can offer some interesting (but not unexpected) conclusions. What is interesting about the data from *Voprosy filosofii* is not what it tells us about *Voprosy filosofii* itself, but how it can help us better appreciate the diversity among 1990s independent philosophical journals. Some of these journals published mostly scholarly texts; others included high percentages of historical texts and translations. However, most saw themselves as new vehicles for a new discipline. They crafted distinctive intellectual identities for themselves, be it underground philosophy in St. Petersburg (*Stupeni*), phenomenology (*Logos*), the history of Russian philosophy (*Nachala*), or post-structuralism and postmodernism (*Paralleli*). *Voprosy filosofii* too reacted to the new intellectual freedoms of the early 1990s, but its reaction was tempered by the fact that it was a professional philosophical journal with a long history and, thus, far less flexibility in form and content. Perhaps this is why independent philosophical journals made such a splash in the early 1990s, and perhaps this is why most of them would cease to exist by the time the new millennium hit. Refs 4. Tabl. 5.

Keywords: *Voprosy filosofii*, Russian philosophy, philosophical journals, 1990s-era.

A. ДеБласио

**«ВОПРОСЫ ФИЛОСОФИИ» В КОНТЕКСТЕ РУССКОЙ
ФИЛОСОФСКОЙ ПУБЛИЦИСТИКИ 1990-х ГОДОВ**

В статье представлен анализ деятельности журнала «Вопросы философии» в 1990-е годы. Проводится сравнение этого журнала с другими философскими журналами, издававшимися в России в то время. Несмотря на то что с методологической точки зрения весьма проблематично сделать адекватное сравнение официального журнала «Вопросы философии» и независимых философских журналов 1990-х годов, это сравнение может привести к некоторым интересным (хотя и ожидаемым) выводам. Прежде всего следует отметить, что анализ содержания «Вопросов философии» позволяет получить информацию не столько о самом журнале, сколько о том идейном разнообразии, которое было характерно для не-

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зависимых философских журналов 1990-х годов. Некоторые из этих журналов публиковали в основном научные тексты; другие предпочитали переиздавать работы классиков философии и печатать новые переводы. Тем не менее большинство журналов претендовали на роль проводников новой философской дисциплины. Были четко обозначены критерии философствования и та проблематика, разработке которой и были посвящены соответствующие издания, будь то «Ступени» — печатный орган андеграундной философии в Санкт-Петербурге, «Логос» — рупор феноменологии, «Начала», сосредоточенные на проблемах истории русской философии, или «Параллели», проводящие идеи постструктурализма и постмодернизма. «Вопросы философии» тоже отреагировали на введение новых интеллектуальных свобод в начале 1990-х годов, однако реакция эта во многом была смягчена тем, что это был профессиональный философский журнал с долгой историей, что и обусловило гораздо меньшую его гибкость относительно формы и содержания. Возможно, именно поэтому независимые философские журналы сделали такой рывок в начале 1990-х годов, и поэтому же большинство из них прекратили свое существование к началу нового тысячелетия. Библиогр. 4 назв. Табл. 5.

Ключевые слова: Вопросы философии, русская философия, философские журналы, эпоха 1990-х годов.

In my 2014 book, *The End of Russian Philosophy: Tradition and Transition at the Turn of the 21st Century*, I dedicated the second chapter to analyzing the numerous independent, small print-run journals that were founded in Russia in the early 1990s [1]. Most of these journal disappeared after several years, in the same decade in which they were founded. However, some are published to this day, including the journals *Logos*, *Mysl'*, and *Filosofia nauki*.

In his 2015 review of my book, published in *Filosofskie nauki*, philosopher Petr Kusliy wondered why I chose not to include *Voprosy filosofii* or the Soviet periodical *Filosofskie nauki* in my analysis [2]. Now, on the same page from which Kusliy quotes, I make clear my methodological reasons for *not* including these two journals:

In this chapter I take an in-depth look at the independent journals that were founded in the early 1990s. Since [the journals founded in the 1990s] developed independently of the Soviet publication structure (materially, at least), these journals lacked the historical and ideological baggage — as well as the intellectual clout and infrastructure of authoritative periodicals like *Voprosy filosofii* (*Problems of Philosophy*) or *Filosofskie nauki* (*Philosophical Sciences*) [1, p. 42].

In other words, my work in this particular chapter of *The End of Russian Philosophy* was not a study of *all* philosophical journals from the 1990s, but a focused investigation into journals that were *founded* in the 1990s. Regardless of the importance of *Voprosy filosofii* and *Filosofskie nauki* to the Soviet and Russian philosophical landscapes, my task was explicitly to address that short-lived, but very fruitful, period of philosophical entrepreneurship in the 1990s—a decade where there were more active philosophy journals than at any other point in Russian history. The list of 1990s-era independent philosophy journals is too long to reproduce here, but includes such publications as: *Paralleli* (Moscow, 1991); *Nachala* (M, 1991–1996); *Sto stranits* (St. Petersburg, 1991–1998); *Stupeni* (SPb, 1991–1997 and 2000); *Logos* (M, 1991 — present); *Filosofskie issledovaniia* (M, 1993 — present); *Sfinks* (SPb, 1994–1995); *Veche* (SPb, 1994 — present); *Filosofia nauki* (M, 1995 — present); *Metafizicheskie issledovaniia* (SPb, 1997–2000); and *Mysl'* (SPb, 1997 — present).

If the present article was intended as a response to the review in question, then it would end here. *Voprosy filosofii* and *Filosofskie nauki* (founded in 1947 and 1948, respec-

tively), arose in a fundamentally different cultural, political, intellectual, ideological, and economic context, are clearly not part of the 1990s philosophical boom, and are therefore outside the scope of my analysis as I intended it in my 2014 book.

Though the objection that Kusliy's review proposes is irrelevant in the context of my chapter on 1990 philosophical journals, I was nevertheless intrigued by the broader implications of his question. How, indeed, would 1990s-era issues of authoritative journals hold up against the long list of independent journals that I studied in *The End of Russian Philosophy*? When comparing 1990s journals with their more authoritative and institutionalized counterparts, would we find any instructive similarities or differences where content, approach, and message are concerned? In this article, I will take up that very question: I will analyze the issues of *Voprosy filosofii* from 1991, 1992, and 1993 according to the same categories that I analyzed 1990s era journals in *The End of Russian Philosophy*. I will start by summarizing the bibliometric data that I collected on 1990s journals, for those readers who do not have easy access to my original work on this. Then I will do a similar analysis of all issues of *Voprosy filosofii* from 1991–1993 in order to see what such a comparison might tell us about the content of early 1990s content of Russia's oldest and most authoritative philosophy journal.

Summary of My 2014 Analysis on 1990s-Era Philosophical Journals

In my 2014 analysis of independent philosophical journals, I analyzed 1990s issues of several journals based on three main categories: (1) the realities of printing (print-run, sponsorship, and quality); (2) the importance of journal names and cover designs to narratives about independence, freedom, and the roots of philosophy in Russia; and (3) the content of the journals themselves. In the case of *Voprosy filosofii*, the first two categories are not particularly relevant. *Voprosy filosofii* was an established journal, and so there was no need to fund the project from scratch, or to construct a narrative about the goals of the journal or justifications for its existence. *Voprosy filosofii* had already done this in 1947, in its first issue, in a strikingly different context about which I will speak later. In this article, I will focus on the third category listed above: the content of the journal issues themselves.

The table below summarizes some of the bibliometric data I collected from the first issues of the journals *Logos*, *Nachala*, *Paralleli*, and *Stupeni* — all founded in 1991 (Table 1). The content is divided among several categories, which I selected according to my main research question: Were 1990s philosophy journals primarily publishing texts from the history of Russian philosophy or were they primarily publishing original, contemporary work? I posed this question as a response to a pejorative narrative about 1990s-philosophical content in Russia, which I detail in chapter two of my book. In the tables that follow, I chose to calculate percentages based on numbers of articles and not on numbers of pages, in order to more accurately represent the topical and genre distribution of the tables of contents of these journals. In this spirit, I excluded introductions, book reviews, bibliographies, and other short-form genres, like letters to the editors and obituary notices. The idea of my analysis was — and remains — not to offer a foolproof method or set of scientific data, but to offer a way to, in approximate terms, quantify the tables of contents of these issues in order to see if any topical trends emerge.

Tabl. 1. Survey of the inaugural issues of four journals founded in 1991

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Texts from the history of Russian philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column A	Translations of foreign philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column C	Other scholarly articles	Other
<i>Logos</i> (No. 1)	3 (14 %)	3 (14 %)	9 (41 %)	4 (18 %)	1 (5 %)	2 (9 %)
<i>Nachala</i> (No. 1)	3 (27 %)	0	0	0	1 (9 %)	7 (64 %)
<i>Paralleli</i> (No. 1)	1 (11 %)	0	1 (11 %)	0	7 (78 %)	0
<i>Stupeni</i> (No. 1)	2 (18 %)	1 (9 %)	1 (9 %)	1 (9 %)	5 (45 %)	1 (9 %)

In Tabl. 1 we see that all the above journals, except *Paralleli*, dedicated over a quarter of their inaugural content to publications either from the history of Russian philosophy or the history of foreign (Not-Russian; non-Soviet; non-Russian language) philosophy. In the case of *Logos*, that number is over 50 %, and includes three texts from the history of Russian philosophy and nine foreign historical philosophical texts.

The exception here is the journal *Paralleli*, which published only one historical text in its first issue, but which included no fewer than four articles on the history of Russian philosophy in the “other scholarly articles” category (specifically, on Berdiaev). If we look at a comparison of the only two issues of *Paralleli*, both published in 1991, we see that there was not much change in approach from No. 1 and 2 (Tabl. 2). *Paralleli* emphasized the publication of contemporary scholarly works by philosophers like Valerii Podoroga and Mikhail Ryklin, though it did include scholarly works on Berdiaev, Platonov, and Florovsky.

Tabl. 2. A comparison of the only two issues of *Paralleli*

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Texts from the history of Russian philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column A	Translations of foreign philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column C	Other scholarly articles	Other
<i>Paralleli</i> (No. 1)	1 (11 %)	0	1 (11 %)	0	7 (78 %)	0
<i>Paralleli</i> (No. 2)	1 (12.5 %)	1 (12.5 %)	0	0	6 (75 %)	0

In short, we can say that while all four journals — *Logos*, *Nachala*, *Paralleli*, and *Stupeni* — indeed took the history of Russian philosophy seriously in their inaugural

issues, in no way can we speak of a dominating focus on publishing from the history of Russian philosophy or a lack of original work — two things for which these journals have been attacked. Also, it is clear that there was no homogenous model for the 1990s journal, and that every new publication took its own approach to the presentation of historical content — something we will look at in detail below.

The journal issues from 1992 offer similar findings (Tabl. 3)¹. However, here we see how *Nachala* moved from publishing more historical Russian philosophical texts (column A) and creative genres (column F) in 1991, to publishing much more scholarly criticism on the history of Russian philosophy in 1992 (column B). In fact, in the case of most independent philosophy journals from the 1990s, texts from the history of Russian philosophy were paired with contemporary scholarly articles on those same texts/thinkers. This methodological choice to combine archival material with contemporary scholarly criticism is important to keep in mind, because we will see a difference in these numbers when we look at 1990s issues of *Voprosy filosofii*.

1992

Tabl. 3. Survey of available issues from 1992

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Texts from the history of Russian philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column A	Translations of foreign philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column C	Other scholarly articles	Other
<i>Logos</i> (No. 3)	3 (15 %)	0	7 (35 %)	2 (10 %)	8 (40 %)	0
<i>Nachala</i> (No. 1, 2, 4)	20 (50 %)	13 (32.5 %)	1 (2.5 %)	0	4 (10 %)	2 (5 %)
<i>Stupeni</i> No. 3)	2 (13 %)	1 (7 %)	2 (13 %)	0	7 (47 %)	3 (20 %)

In Tabl. 4 we see data for the same journals, according to the same categories, for the year 1993. Here we see how in 1993 the editors of *Nachala* placed even more emphasis on publishing contemporary scholarly articles, specifically those that were linked to texts from the history of Russian philosophy.

Of the journals I have looked at here, the content of *Logos* was above others comprised mostly of publications of primary sources from the history of Russian philosophy and translations: 55 % in 1991, 51 % in 1992, and 74 % in 1993. The journal *Stupeni* was made up almost predominantly of new material for all three years studied here; the same can be said for the two issues of *Paralleli*. In 1991, *Nachala* published three texts from the history of Russian philosophy, but in 1992 primary source material made up just over half the content of *Nachala*. In 1993, the ratio of primary sources to original criticism in *Nachala* was split at 40/60. In the case of *Logos*, the journal published 26 (of a total of 78) articles either from or on the history of Russian philosophy in its first four issues, amounting to nearly a third of its content during that period. In short, even journals that did not

¹ Here *Paralleli* is excluded, as the journal was only released in two issues: *Red* and *Blue*, both published in 1991.

associate themselves with “Russian philosophy,” like *Logos*, still included significant proportions of pre-revolutionary and émigré Russian philosophical texts in their early years.

1993

Tabl. 4. Survey of available issues from 1993

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Texts from the history of Russian philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column A	Translations of foreign philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column C	Other scholarly articles	Other
<i>Logos</i> (No. 4)	11 (58 %)	1 (5 %)	3 (16 %)	2 (11 %)	1 (5 %)	1 (5 %)
<i>Nachala</i> (No. 1, 2, 4)	11 (37 %)	18 (60 %)	1 (3 %)	0	0	0
<i>Stupeni</i> (No. 1)	3 (18 %)	0	2 (12 %)	1 (6 %)	7 (41 %)	4 (24 %)

As the data above shows, these publications were not merely vehicles for the reintroduction of texts from the history of Russian philosophy. Many of them fashioned explicit intellectual identities for themselves. *Logos* positioned itself as a Western philosophical journal in the phenomenological tradition, while *Stupeni* paid particular service to underground and independent philosophical life in St. Petersburg. Moreover, we must not forget that the conception of these journals was itself a novel and highly intentional scholarly activity, as we see from the enthusiastic editorial introductions and careful, personalized cover designs of many of the journals. It is fair to say that, on the whole, 1990s independent philosophy journals were not only engaged in making historical texts available to the reading public (they were), but in creating an open scholarly space of inquiry and criticism around the history of Russian philosophy and the history of foreign philosophy — a space that had not previously existed, at least not in any fully open sense, on the pages of philosophy journals. Independent philosophy journals were on the frontier of philosophical creativity in the 1990s and this is why they are so important to our understanding of the discipline of philosophy in Russia in that decade.

The Case of *Voprosy filosofii*

Now let's turn to an analysis of issues of *Voprosy filosofii* from the same years, according to the same categories (Tabl. 5).

We saw in the previous section that independent philosophy journals from the early 1990s actively published texts from the history of Russian philosophy, and now we see that *Voprosy filosofii* too participated in this trend. For instance, the 1992 issues of the journal included previously unpublished works by Mikhail Bakhtin (No. 1), Semen Frank (No. 3); Merab Mamardashvili (No. 4 and 5); Nikolai Berdiaev (No. 5); Aleksei Losev and Vladimir Solov'ev (No. 8); Vladimir Bibikhin and Sergei Bulgakov (No. 10); Alexander Zinoviev (No. 11); and Petr Struve (12). However, unlike some independent philosophy journals (*Logos* and *Nachala*), *Voprosy filosofii* did not put as much emphasis on pairing the publication of historical texts with critical works on those texts, especially as the decade went on. Perhaps the journal had such an established identity that the editorial team

did not feel the need to craft an intentional methodology for their introduction of previously unpublished philosophical material.

1991–1993

Tabl. 5. Survey of all issues of *Voprosy filosofii* for the years 1991–1993

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Texts from the history of Russian/Soviet philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column A	Translations of foreign philosophy	Contemporary articles on texts from column C	Other scholarly articles	Other
<i>Voprosy filosofii</i> 1991 (No. 1–12)	19 (18 %)	20 (18.5 %)	14 (13 %)	3 (3 %)	48 (44.5 %)	3 (3 %)
<i>Voprosy filosofii</i> 1992 (No. 1–12)	27 (29 %)	9 (10 %)	22 (23 %)	6 (6 %)	22 (23 %)	8 (9 %)
<i>Voprosy filosofii</i> 1992 (No. 1–12)	14 (11 %)	7 (6 %)	23 (18 %)	4 (3 %)	71 (56 %)	8 (6 %)

The methodology of this kind of work becomes murky quickly when we consider whether to identify the work of living writers as part of “The History of Russian Philosophy.” In the case of some authors — for instance Bibikhin and Zinoviev — the works published in early 1990s journals were written earlier, but remained unpublished. For the sake of my analysis in this paper, I have decided to consider these “historical texts,” since my emphasis on “historical” means “unpublished in the Soviet period.” A similar situation arises when we wonder whether to categorize thinkers like Boris Groys and Alexander Kojève as “Russian” or “non-Russian” thinkers. For the purposes of this analysis I have decided to consider them “Russian” thinkers, since my main goal with this category was to see how many historical texts were written in Russian and how many were translated into Russian. Here is a good time to note yet again that this way of data collection is no way scientific, but is simply one way to quantify — or better yet, visualize — the kind of articles published according to the categories that I am trying to investigate.

When we look at the publication of non-affiliated, contemporary articles — that is, regular scholarly articles that are not explicitly connected to the publication of texts from the history of Russian philosophy — this is where we see the main difference between *Voprosy filosofii* and independent philosophy journals. *Voprosy filosofii* published a substantially higher number of articles in the “other scholarly articles” (column E) and “other” (column F) categories than most independent philosophy journals from the 1990s, with the clear exception of *Stupeni*. Here category E, “other scholarly articles,” simply means standard, academic articles that don’t explicitly correspond to the publication of a historical text in the same issue. As we have seen, this kind of pairing is something that independent journals from the 1990s did very often: they would publish a historical text by somebody like Nikolai Berdiaev, and then publish several articles alongside it, in which

contemporary thinkers would analyze, criticize, contextualize, etc. Berdiaev's work. *Voprosy filosofii* did this too, but not to the extent that *Logos* and *Nachala* did. For any given year no more than 39 % of the content of *Voprosy filosofii* was comprised by this kind of pairing, while for *Logos*, *Nachala*, and *Stupeni* the high numbers for this kind of pairing were 63 %, 97 %, and 27 % respectively.

It is also worth noting that, for *Voprosy filosofii*, 1992 was the high point for this kind of historical pairing. As the decade went on, and especially toward the middle and late 1990s, the editorial interest in publishing texts from the history of Russian philosophy appears to have waned. The high point of such publications in 1992 is logical; we can imagine a situation in which much of the journal content for 1991 was already in place a year earlier, in 1990, so it makes sense why only in 1992 would we would see the full force of the post-Soviet legacy on the pages of an established journal like *Voprosy filosofii*. Even in the year 1992, there is a clear increase in the number of stand-alone scholarly articles published in issues 5–12 when compared to issues 1–4.

Early 1990s era issues of *Voprosy filosofii* also published translations of foreign philosophy, but not to the degree that *Logos* did. In 1991, for instance, *Voprosy filosofii* published translations of works by Nicholas de Cusa (No. 5); Husserl (No. 7); Nicola Abbagnano (No. 8); Theodore Adorno and Karl Popper (No. 10); and James Campbell (No. 12), the latter appearing in a special section called “Panorama of American philosophy”. Still, the content of issues of *Voprosy filosofii* from 1991–1993 is mostly made up of “other scholarly articles,” that is academic articles that don't have any specifically articulated connection to translations. Also, most issues of *Voprosy filosofii* would start with a Round Table on a specific topic, which I also categorized as “other” (column F), even when the topic was on, for instance, “Religion and Politics in Post-communist Russia” (No. 7). In other words, for most of its content, *Voprosy filosofii* continued to do what it had been doing for decades: publishing stand-alone, scholarly articles that did not have any explicit connection to a broader theme or the presentation of primary sources from the history of philosophy. As we have seen, however, this did not mean that the journal did not participate in the enthusiasm of the period for publishing texts from the history of Russian philosophy.

Methodological Problems and Considerations

There are some obvious problems with the comparison that I am running in this article. First, the categories in the above tables were chosen for the specific realities of small print-run journals, and so they are not necessarily the best representatives of a journal like *Voprosy filosofii* — a publication with a significant legacy and significant resources. This goes hand in hand with the question of flexibility. How are we to compare the new, flexible genre conventions of the 1990s (as well as the 1990s-emphasis on freedom) with *Voprosy filosofii*? Journals founded in the 1990s were seeking to generate new intellectual territory by publishing previously censored materials in new venues, and were often published as self-organized and self-printed projects—almost always conceived by individual philosophers or small groups of philosophers, rather than by institutions or advisory boards.

Voprosy filosofii, on the other hand, has been around since 1947. Since its beginning, the journal was firmly entrenched in the ideological debates of the discipline, and often the journal was at the very center of those debates. Indeed, the journal was founded as a way to present these debates to the scholarly public: the first issue of *Voprosy filosofii* was

the publication of the transcript from the 1947 discussions on Grigorii Alexandrov's *History of Western European Philosophy* (1946). In these discussions, which were moderated by Zhdanov, Alexandrov's textbook was fiercely criticized for a whole host of ideological shortcomings, including: failing to realize that science and scholarship are necessarily connected to Party affiliation; failing to provide the class backgrounds for 48 of 69 major philosophers; and providing general philosophical descriptions that had no connection to concrete historical problems of philosophy [3].

The genesis stories of *Voprosy filosofii* and 1990s independent journals couldn't be more different. *Voprosy filosofii* represented the ideological restrictions on philosophy, as the handmaiden to ideology in the post-war period. And then there were the 1990s independent journals, where, in the case of the St. Petersburg-based journal *Sto stranits*, editor Konstantin Pigrov said: «In this magazine were willingly published amateur philosophers with the most insane ideas, if only they were original»² [4]. Creative enthusiasm and a strong value on freedom were built into the names, cover designs, and content of independent philosophy journals from the 1990s. With *Voprosy filosofii* this simply was not the case.

Conclusion

In closing, while it is methodologically problematic to do a one-to-one comparison of 1990s issues of *Voprosy filosofii* and independent philosophy journals, a comparison of the two can offer some interesting (but not unexpected) conclusions. What I think is interesting about the data from *Voprosy filosofii* is not what it tells us about *Voprosy filosofii* itself, but how it can help us better appreciate the diversity among 1990s independent philosophical journals. Some of these journals published mostly scholarly texts; others included high percentages of historical texts and translations. However, most saw themselves as new vehicles for a new discipline. They crafted distinctive intellectual identities for themselves, be it underground philosophy in St. Petersburg (*Stupeni*), phenomenology (*Logos*), the history of Russian philosophy (*Nachala*), or post-structuralism and postmodernism (*Paralleli*). *Voprosy filosofii* too reacted to the new intellectual freedoms of the early 1990s, but its reaction was tempered by the fact that it was a professional philosophical journal with a long history and, thus, far less flexibility in form and content. Perhaps this is why independent philosophical journals made such a splash in the early 1990s, and perhaps this is why most of them would cease to exist by the time the new millennium hit.

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