

NEW PERSPECTIVES OF GEORGIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE LIGHT OF INTERCULTURAL THOUGHT

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Abstract

The present article analyses new perspectives of rethinking the traditional models of philosophy in the process of knowledge transformation. Problems of intercultural philosophy, its methodology and topicality in the context of modern global thought are also discussed. Special attention is given to the recent concept of intercultural philosophy (“crossroad”) that was developed in his latest work by T. Iremadze. This concept connects systemic and historical aspects of philosophy to each other in a new way and formulates the “topos of mutual understanding” of different thinking traditions. The importance of the idea of “Caucasian Philosophy” is stressed that can offer new perspectives for further research and turn the Georgian-Armenian philosophical relations into a special subject of interest.

Keywords: Interculturalism/intercultural philosophy, philosophising at the crossroads, Caucasian philosophy, cultural dialogue, topological research

“In all its essence and appeal philosophy strives to establish universal communication among people and to determine the general scopes that are the strong bases for peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of the world.”

Tengiz Iremadze

Introduction:

The epoch of global changes and the necessity to respond to the challenges posed by this epoch requires from us rethinking the content of the humanities. The maintenance of the existing knowledge, its dissemination, transformation and application becomes essential. In the transformation process of the humanities, the essence and the purpose of philosophy also transform. Rethinking of the traditional models of philosophy enables to set new perspectives and methodologies. Rethinking of philosophy, first and foremost, means a new definition of history of philosophy.³⁰⁸ Moreover, in this context it becomes necessary to adapt the present potential of philosophical thought to the modern cosmopolitan thinking, to take into account different thinking traditions, thereby balancing Eastern and Western cultures and traditions.

The analysis of different thinking traditions and peculiarities of the transformation of philosophical thought is an intercultural process. In his research on Georgian and intercultural philosophical perspectives, Udo Reinhold Jeck states that namely such researches have great perspectives³⁰⁹. In this context it becomes necessary to evaluate the entire historical heritage of Western philosophy anew and define its role in a new way.

Thus, apart from theoretical-visionary function of philosophy, its social-practical function becomes more and more important – it should facilitate formation of mental unity as well as establishment of optimal communication between people.

³⁰⁸ U. R. Jeck, *Erläuterungen zur georgischen Philosophie*, Tbilisi, 2010 (2nd edition: 2013).

³⁰⁹ U. R. Jeck, *Erläuterungen...*, p. 54.

Today, in the post-classical period, it is also of paramount importance that philosophy should again stand in guard of free thinking inasmuch as it outlines contours of human liberty and reveals its real nature, sets and analyzes the values on which legal state, civil society, personal and cultural orientations should be based.

Contemplations on Intercultural Philosophy:

Transformation of philosophy or a philosophical style aims at approximating philosophical theory with practice. Together with its own tradition, Western philosophy should intensively study philosophical traditions that differ from its own one. It is intercultural philosophy that offers this opportunity.

Recent researches deal with intercultural philosophy as an alternative to globalization³¹⁰. It is a project aiming at changing/altering the paradigm of philosophy. It can be achieved through disintegration of mono-cultural structures created by traditional philosophy. Intercultural philosophy is based on the type of thinking that transcends its own cultural boundaries. Not only does it acknowledge different forms of thinking but strives to solidarity as well. For intercultural philosophy, different traditions of thinking are separate worlds existing in their own terms. Consequently, it understands that it is only through these “universums” that the approximation of philosophy to universal can be reached. On the whole, “intercultural philosophy strives to turn into a philosophy that can be practiced by cultural collaboration”³¹¹.

Today, the idea of universal as a practice of solidarity between the cultures is forgotten. Intercultural philosophy reflects and re-thinks philosophical knowledge not only on the theoretical level but on the level of certain historical reconstructions as well. Thus, *at the crossroads*, the reconstructed knowledge and more stable philosophical models and monocultural conceptual systems are discussed side by side.

Intercultural philosophy requires criticism of its own philosophy as well as of the tradition from which it took its origins. In this context the own tradition can become a certain bridge and linking ring for intercommunication. And here the construction of other knowledge becomes topical as well as the respect towards other, the analysis of those reflections and mutual influences that “are revealed between textual groups of different cultures and origins”³¹².

Intercultural philosophy is significant in many aspects, but it is especially topical in research projects referring the problems, methodologies and fields important in the context of modern global thinking. Intercultural philosophy influences and gives feedback on the process of acquiring education and knowledge, thus broadening scope of vision. Consequently, many essential issues of philosophy, history of philosophy, comparative philosophy and political globalism can be innovatively assessed and grasped.

New Concepts of Georgian Philosophy:

Interculturalism and interdisciplinarity are recognized as one of the important and successful methodologies for the study of philosophical problems. Methodological contemplations in this direction are extremely significant and reveal new unique perspectives for the integration of the Georgian philosophy into the worldwide philosophy. In this context the work by Professor Tengiz Iremadze “Philosophy at the Crossroads of Epochs and

³¹⁰ see R. Fernet-Betancourt, ‘An alternative to globalization: theses for the development of an intercultural philosophy’, in: M. Sáenz (ed.), *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization: Ethics, Politics and Alternative Visions*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 230-236.

³¹¹ Ibid, p. 230

³¹² U. R. Jeck, *Erläuterungen...*, p. 68.

Cultures. Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Research”³¹³ is of paramount importance. The book deals with the old and new concepts of philosophy from intercultural and interdisciplinary perspectives. The study is interesting in many ways: 1) it aims to transgress “narrow-national” boundaries of philosophy, criticize Eurocentrism and show the necessity of universal thought in the age of global thinking; 2) the author highlights a new concept of intercultural philosophy – “Crossroad”- that connects systemic and historical aspects of philosophy to each other in a new way; 3) the monograph introduces for the first time the idea of “Caucasian Philosophy” that can offer new perspectives for further research and turn the Georgian-Armenian philosophical relations into a special subject of interest. Reflections on main aspects in Iremadze’s work enable interpretation of Georgian philosophy from a completely different angle and determining many new and fruitful ideas.

If we logically and sequentially comprehend the main ideas in Iremadze’s work, we should firstly pay due attention to the author’s viewpoint on place and role of philosophy: Philosophy “is the study of universal and general whereas a philosopher is a specialist of universal and general. It must be able to find those *anthropological constants* in the rapidly changing world that will show the necessity of universal thinking in the age of global changes.”³¹⁴ Intercultural analysis of “impressive documents” created at the crossroad of different epochs and cultures aims at overcoming unilateralism of European philosophical historiography. In this context, first and foremost, it becomes essential to revise and re-activate the initial original statuses of old ideas, concepts and models of philosophy. New methodology and such a hard process of cognition are “rooted in the dialectics of visualizing the new and revising the old”³¹⁵.

On the basis of such dialectics Iremadze considers appropriateness of the division of philosophy into more or less important, European and non-European, privileged and non-privileged, main and marginal lines as questionable. Relying on this methodological prerequisite he formulates arguments against the critique of Eurocentrism which is still topical in the modern philosophical discourse.³¹⁶ According to the author, proceeding from the Hegelian concept of the history of philosophy, “[...] this sharp and strict division accomplished by the European philosophical historiography, [...] hindered the desirable processes of drawing together and forming mutual understanding between Western and Eastern cultures.”³¹⁷ Moreover, in his opinion, “such an approach appeared to be fateful even for the development of European thought and it considerably prevented the process of intercultural dialogue”³¹⁸.

Iremadze’s theoretical viewpoints point to the necessity of the revision of Hegelian philosophical historiography as Hegel was one of the most faithful supporters of Eurocentrism. European thought appeared to be as unilateral in reaching the “common wisdom” and intercultural dialogue as the Eastern culture. Overcoming of this theoretical drawback³¹⁹ from the methodological viewpoint is possible by the so called “**paradigmatic**

³¹³ T. Iremadze, *filosofia epoqata da kulturata gzagasakarze. interkulturuli da interdisciplinuri kvlevebi* [*Philosophy at the Crossroads of Epochs and Cultures. Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Researches*], Tbilisi, 2013.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³¹⁶ See L. Zakaradze, ‘Udo Reinhold Jeck and Georgian philosophical thought (In the light of the criticism of Europocentrism)’, in: T. Iremadze and G. Tevzadze (eds.), *aghmosavleti da dasavleti. interkulturuli da interdisciplinuri kvlevebi* [East and West. Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Studies], (Philosophy, Sociology, Media Theory, vol. 6), Tbilisi, 2012, pp. 15-33.

³¹⁷ T. Iremadze, *filosofia...*, p. 8.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³¹⁹ In this context the interpretation of F. Nietzsche’s theory of individualism and G. Robakidze’s philosophical-sociological works are very interesting. See T. Iremadze, ‘Truth, Interpretation and Problem of Communication in Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy’, in: L. Zakaradze, M. Gogatishvili (eds.), *sicocxlis filosofia. problemebi da perspeqtivebi* [Philosophy of Life. Problems and Perspectives], Tbilisi, 2009, pp. 10-15; T. Iremadze,

metaphors” that, proceeding from the epistemological and conceptual perspectives, will eliminate the shortcomings of “dry” and “empty” concepts in the intercultural process of cognition³²⁰.

According to Iremadze, philosophising “at the crossroad” and dialogue between different cultures form the “topos of mutual understanding” between Western and Eastern, European and non-European thinking. This method of research became an object of interest for a number of scholars. So, for instance, while speaking on the importance of new “typological research”, a Russian philosopher Michail Reutin in his recent researches³²¹ names the works of Tengiz Iremadze and Michele Trizio, these two scholars of “new generation”. Comparison of different thinking traditions is far more important than just sharing different ideas or “going deeper into oneself”. These two traditions have much to say to each other.

It should specially be noted that for characterization of intercultural philosophy in general as well as Georgian philosophy the concept/metaphor “crossroad” can become of basic importance. The analysis of medieval and new age Georgian philosophy and theology ascertains that Western and Eastern philosophy meet here and form “tops of mutual understanding”. “Philosophising at the conceptual and epistemological junction, at the crossroad of different cultures, religions and traditions – it is here that we must search for original and specific nature of Georgian philosophy”³²².

Georgian philosophy developed mostly with the influence of Greek-Byzantine philosophical tradition. **“Reflection”** and **“reincarnation”**, **reception** and **transformation** of the ancient (Byzantine) based theses in different thinking models appeared to be decisive not only in formation of European (Latin, German) culture but for Georgian thinking as well. In this aspect, “paradigmatic (con)text(s)” of Georgian philosophy in the intercultural and interdisciplinary study can reveal new aspects. In its turn, it creates possibility to speak about the legitimacy of the idea of **“Caucasian Philosophy”**³²³. The best example of it in the new age Georgian thought is Anton Bagrationi and his philosophical-theological school. His school fostered the dialogue of philosophical thinking between Georgia and Armenia. It should be noted that via Ioane Petrizi’s philosophical way in the medieval and new age Georgian and Armenian thinking the peculiarities of reception and transformation of Proclus’s philosophy were determined³²⁴. By establishing the idea of “Caucasian philosophy” and expanding Georgian-Armenian philosophical collaboration in future it is possible to outline new geophilosophical contours of Caucasian thinking space.

Traditional forms of culture and human existence are based on certain concepts and values. In most cases they are considered as absolute and undoubted notions. Philosophical category of truth belongs to such notions. However, the notion of truth has lost its universal nature in the modern models of thinking and has been replaced by “interpretation” and “evaluation”. Hence, the works of Friedrich Nietzsche acquire extraordinary importance from the perspective of intercultural thought. Nietzsche’s philosophical theses – “every age has its own Truth”, “history always creates new truths”, “truth is a temporal truth beyond good and evil” – are extremely significant in this context. Iremadze offers on the one hand,

Individualism or intersubjectivity? (Nietzsche and Kant in Grigol Robakidze’s contemplations), in: M. Tavkhelidze, T. Iremadze (eds.), grigol robakidze da tanamedrove azrovneba [Grigol Robakidze and Contemporary Thought], Tbilisi, 2011, pp. 110-123.

³²⁰ See T. Iremadze, *filosofia...*, p. 13.

³²¹ М. Ю. Реутин, *Мистическое богословие Майстера Экхарта*, Москва, 2011; М. Ю. Реутин, ‘Ответ М. Ю. Реутина на рецензию монаха Диодора (Ларионова) *О некоторых проблемах интерпретации наследия святителя Григория Паламы*’, 2009 // <http://www.bogoslov.ru/es/text/472026.html>. Проверено 15.07.2013.

³²² T. Iremadze, *filosofia...*, p. 14.

³²³ Ibid., p. 9.

³²⁴ It is universally acknowledged that the first Armenian translation of Proclus’s “Elements of Theology” made by Gar n isi Bishop Simeon in 1243, was done from the Petrizi’s Georgian translation of the text.

(re)interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophical program, and on the other hand, reconstructs the old notion of the truth.³²⁵ The second important methodological approach is to put forward reception and transformation: "Philosophical ideas acquire significance through their reception and transformation"³²⁶.

It is through this perspective that the questions on basic concepts of modern philosophy arise. By re-actualizing old traditional concepts of philosophy one of the main peculiarities of philosophy is highlighted: "[...] its future should be sought in its own self and expansion of its horizons"³²⁷. By restoring and expanding traditional "Antique-Medieval" model of wisdom it becomes possible "to surmount really existing confrontations and contradictions, to overcome them and morally improve the world".³²⁸ Iremadze's contemplations about the purpose and perspectives of philosophy respond to the pathos of recent opinions in modern Western philosophy³²⁹.

In the direction of intercultural philosophy, new correlations of Georgian philosophical research are shaped – "disappearance of Petrizi's ideal of freedom" and "fate of the idea of freedom in Soviet Georgian philosophy", "European endeavor" and "philosophical endeavor", comparative-critical analysis of Friedrich Nietzsche's "great European politics" and Merab Mamardashvili's "little European politics" will outline the contours of the thinking of principally new responsibilities, namely, of the new European responsibility³³⁰.

While talking about new perspectives of Georgian philosophy, the critical analysis of the philosophical idea of freedom in Soviet Georgian philosophy is very important. "Destruction of Old Ideas, New Concepts and Intercultural Thinking" (the third chapter of the book) covers problematic analysis of the history of freedom and non-freedom. The destructive impacts of the Soviet ideology primarily touched the humanities and social sciences. "They appeared to be the victims of wrongly understood and interpreted Marxism. [...] The leading representatives of the Georgian philosophical thought of that time had to stand in service of Marxist-Leninist ideology"³³¹. Thus, the thorough study of the history of non-freedom in Georgian (Soviet) philosophy will promote the restoration of "critical-enlightening pathos" lost in the Georgian humanities and social sciences for decades. At the same time, it "will enable to reveal and expose the false basis and background of Georgian Soviet science..."³³². It is through this method that we can "really re-evaluate and withdraw" thinking paradigms characteristic to Soviet thinking.

Conclusion:

The return to the basic sources of philosophy as well as discovery of hitherto unknown documents through their interpretation and re-actualization still remains as one of the reliable perspectives of philosophy. Intercultural philosophy which is interested in driving forces of human cultural activities and thinking and general (unifying) principles, offers unique opportunities in this respect. Thus, the old and the new concepts of Georgian philosophy gain new perspectives in the direction of intercultural philosophy. This, in its turn, raises truly theoretical and practical interest towards Georgian philosophy and grants it with new scopes.

³²⁵ T. Iremadze, *filosofia...*, p. 67.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³²⁹ It should be noted that in the conditions of strict requirements of modern economic market, the German philosopher Julian Nida-Rümelin sees the overcoming of social and other types of injustice and the achievements of these goals in the restoration of Antique ethic teaching. (see J. Nida-Rümelin, *Die Optimierungsfalle. Philosophie einer humanen Ökonomie*, München, 2011).

³³⁰ L. Zakaradze, 'Merab Mamardashvili: Perception of European Identity – a Road towards Self-Awareness', *European Scientific Journal*, (July Special Edition, 2013), pp. 87-96.

³³¹ T. Iremadze, *filosofia...*, p. 109.

³³² *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

Tengiz Iremadze's above discussed research highlights exactly these aspects and sets new ways for future theoretical thinking.

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