
Bogodelnikova, L. A. 2023. "The Life and Philosophy of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova : Is a Woman Philosopher Allowed to Speak?" [in English]. *Filosofiya. Zhurnal Vysshey shkoly ekonomiki [Philosophy. Journal of the Higher School of Economics]* 7 (4), 64–83.

LYUBOV BOGODELNIKOVA*

THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF MARIA VLADIMIROVNA BEZOBRAZOVA**

IS A WOMAN PHILOSOPHER ALLOWED TO SPEAK?

Submitted: June 01, 2023. Reviewed: Aug. 30, 2023. Accepted: Nov. 01, 2023.

Abstract: The article presents an exploration into the history of Russian philosophy with the help of the genealogical approach, which, on the one hand, allows to take a fresh look at the texts of women philosophers and to approach them from new angles, and, on the other hand, actualizes the idea of alternative memory, an alternative history of philosophy, returning female thinkers to the field of historical research and finding a place for their ideas and theoretical achievements. The discourse-methodological analysis underlying genealogy allows to study utterances from the point of view of its social production, which leads to the problems of power and knowledge and shows that the latter is created not only through the discourse of affirmation, but also through that of exclusion. Consequently, it is not only necessary to deconstruct the dominant historical and philosophical discourse, but also to examine what this discourse excludes, and feminist genealogies set themselves such a task. This has led to a change in the status of philosophy itself, which can no longer be «high theorizing» about abstract principles, but becomes the practice of the political. This approach, applied to the analysis of the texts of the Russian thinker M. V. Bezobrazova, paints a clear picture of both the general philosophical significance of her ideas and the political meaning of the problems under study, and allows to trace the movement of thought from philosophy to politics. Of particular importance is the conclusion that the feminist analysis of the texts of women philosophers serves, first of all, to establish intergenerational dialogue and the manifestation of female solidarity.

*Lyubov Bogodelnikova, PhD in Philosophy; Associate Professor at the Baikal Institute of BRICS Countries, Irkutsk National Research Technical University (Irkutsk, Russia), bogodelnikova@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-5294-560X.

**© Lyubov Bogodelnikova. © Philosophy. Journal of the Higher School of Economics.

Acknowledgements: The main provisions of this article are already published in abridged form within the conference abstract titled "Pragmatika gumanitarnogo znaniya: social'no-pravovye i filosofskie aspekty : materialy III Vserossiyskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii. Irkutsk, 28–29 aprelya 2023 goda" [Pragmatics of Humanitarian Knowledge: Socio-legal and Philosophical Aspects : Materials of the III All-Russian Scientific-practical conference. Irkutsk, April 28–29, 2023] / ed. by A. E. Smirnov. — Irkutsk : Irkutsk Law Institute (branch) of the Federal State Establishment of Higher Education "University of Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation" [in Russian]. Publishing House of the V. B. Sochava Institute of Geography SB RAS, 2023. 315 p. Text : electronic.

Keywords: M. V. Bezobrazova, History of Russian Philosophy, Feminist Genealogy, Discourse, Power, Women Philosophers, Foucault.

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2023-4-64-83.

INTRODUCTION OR WHO IS ALLOWED TO SPEAK?

The title of the article is a homage to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 1988), in which she asks whether a gradual emancipation of the subaltern is possible within the framework of the current imperialist project, and also suggests rethinking the colonial historiography of India from the point of view of the genealogical method, which, in her opinion, will allow to move away from "colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism" (ibid.: 38) and prove the idea that "the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" (ibid.). Spivak begins her reasoning with a detailed analysis of the famous conversation between Deleuze and Foucault, which raises "the most essential for French post-structuralism themes of power/desire/interest" (ibid.) and ideology.

The ideology appears to be necessarily connected with the living conditions of the oppressed, governed by the current phase of development of imperialism and the economic conditions of the international division of labor. This, in turn, leads the author to the class theory presented in the text by the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Karl Marx. The problem of epistemic violence turns to be one of the central issues raised by Spivak in the text, the main manifestation of which is the "far-flung and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as the Other" (ibid.: 35). In the final, fourth part of the article, Spivak says: "I tactically confronted the immense problem of the consciousness of the woman as subaltern" (ibid.: 48), forced to be in a state of unquestioning submission. Spivak writes:

Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out to the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of "woman" seems most problematic in this context (ibid.: 46).

These questions and the reasoning of Gayatri Spivak inspired my research into the place of women in the history of philosophy. Keeping in mind Spivak's warning not to "construct the monolithic third-world woman" (ibid.: 48), which I am changing into "not to construct the monolithic woman philosopher," I intend to focus on understanding the place of a woman philosopher in the history of Russian philosophy, having considered a number of works and referring to some aspects of the life of the first Russian female philosopher Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova. Therefore, for the purposes

of this paper, I have transformed the questions about the subaltern in the following way: Can or could Russian women philosophers speak? Can the voice of women be heard in the history of Russian philosophy? To answer these questions, the first thing to do is to look at the history of Russian philosophy through the optics of genealogical approach and feminist genealogy, which can highlight what the reality of Russian philosophy is with and without the female voice.

Prior to delving into the issues raised, I would like to focus on a purely linguistic problem. I did not want to leave the verb “can” in the title of this text, since this verb implies the presence of some ability to do something, to be able, to be capable. I found it more appropriate to replace the verb “can” with the verb “to allow”. In this version, “can Russian women philosophers speak?” transforms into “are women philosophers allowed to speak?” The questions of whether they were allowed to speak before and are they allowed to speak now? And with this, according to the tradition started by Foucault, the speech act becomes a political act, that of violating the integrity of the community, introducing conflict into a certain field of culture. Speaking, questioning and searching for the truth requires courage, destroys unity, creates dissensus. (Foucault, 2019: 9) This is the courage that resides in someone, speaking sincerely and frankly, that is, the parrhesiast. In my opinion, M. V. Bezobrazova, the first Russian woman who practiced philosophy and created her own unique system of “ethical idealism” (Kravchenko, 2016; Vanchugov, 2009; 2014; Kiejzik, 2019), was such a parrhesiast in the full sense of the word. She set up the first Russian Philosophical Society, and stood at the origins of the Russian Women’s Mutual Charitable Society and the Ethical Society. Lacking the opportunity to get a philosophical education in Russia, she did everything to practice philosophy enthusiastically, despite all odds and undeterred by society’s disapproval. She set an example of a woman who should have the right for professional fulfillment, self-improvement and independence.

FEMINIST GENEALOGY AND HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY,
FEMINIST GENEALOGY INSTEAD OF HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.

What, then, is so perilous in the fact that people speak, and their discourse proliferates to infinity? Where is the danger in that? (Foucault, 1971: 8)

The use of a genealogical approach in studying the history of Russian philosophy is essential in order to perceive that the latter is rather a het-

erogeneous than a homogeneous formation, in which, if desired, different voices can be heard, and, primarily, the voices of women philosophers, whose marginal status in Russian philosophy can and should be changed.

The main idea underlying genealogy as an approach, is that history should be explored and recreated in all its diversity and uniqueness. Therefore no other method seems possible if the aim is to hear the voices of everyone, and not just the prevailing discourse.

Nietzsche, who is rightfully considered the founder of this approach, contrasted the methodological function of genealogy with classical historicism, whose functions, in his opinion, consisted in the transformation of diversity into universality, the identification of historical patterns and, at the same time, the loss of many “traces” of events and processes that took place.

A history whose function is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself; a history that always encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past; a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development. The historian’s history finds its support outside of time and claims to base its judgments on an apocalyptic objectivity. This is only possible, however, because of its belief in eternal truth, the immortality of the soul, and the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself (Foucault, 1998: 379).

Foucault, following Nietzsche, applies genealogical approach to the studying the history of culture and fundamentally refuses to explore some predetermined essence, “something” that exists and varies with time. He claims that

genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history-in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally, genealogy must define event those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized (ibid.: 369).

To apply the genealogical approach, according to Foucault, means to consider any phenomenon as the result and effect of power. History, as the genealogist sees it, is a change of types of power, a chain of denotation of rules. And this history should be recreated in all its diversity and originality. The genealogy of power is Foucault’s main research issue. Power is impersonal and indifferent, but it is the will to power that establishes relations of domination and subordination, to which all others can be reduced to one degree or another. Power relies on knowledge and at the same time initiates

it. Power and knowledge form a single alloy, complementing and reinforcing one another.

Power, accordingly, is understood not as an instance that transforms some archetype, but as a force field that produces the studied phenomenon from the very beginning of its existence. The power that produces various historical phenomena functions in close connection with knowledge.

In placing present needs at the origin, the metaphysician would convince us of an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it arises. Genealogy, however, seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations (Foucault, 1998: 376).

Thus, genealogy moves away from the search for foundation, and turns to the power that produces discourse. In accordance with the research practice of the French philosopher, discourse will be understood as a socially conditioned system of speech and action. In this understanding, culture acts as a set of discourses, a system of practices in which a person creates the space of their own existence (Komkov, 2019). And according to Foucault, the main problem of culture lies in what is said, when, and by whom, and I would also add “why” on my own behalf. This “why” turns out to be very important, since it is quite consistent with the discursive practice of control, which is a hallmark of the culture of our time: can everyone be allowed to speak if this creates multiple discourse, chaos, uncertainty (Foucault, 1998)?

In Foucault’s genealogical approach, I am most interested in two issues that are necessary for this study: (1) how Foucault’s genealogy has influenced feminist historiography and the formation of feminist genealogies (see Butler, 2002; Braidotti, 1994; Scott, 1996 and others); (2) the discourse of exclusion. I will now briefly address each of the points. As researchers (Pulkkinen, Gavryushkin, 1999; Samylov, 2013) note, Foucault did not literally stand at the origins of various areas of postmodern historical science, but his influence on feminist studies of history, on changing the understanding of the place of women in history in general, and in the history of philosophy in particular, is beyond doubt. Modern feminist genealogy is based on the discursive-methodological analysis he developed.

One of the important conclusions of the Foucault’s is that

genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of oblivion; its task is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes (Foucault, 1998: 374),

and, of course, the requirement to consider any historical events through the prism of power relations: power-submission. These ideas have found their continuation in feminist studies of history, as well as in feminist epistemology (Haraway, 1988), for which the problem of the relationship between power and knowledge becomes fundamental (Agalamova & Kostyleva, 2022: 238).

Of particular importance to my research is the idea of the discourse of exclusion. When asked why one system of knowledge should be preferred over another, Foucault replied that the way knowledge is coded and organized determines the way that the world is comprehended (Foucault, 1971). Discourse standardizes knowledge and thus rejects all alternative formulas for its codification. Therefore, it is not just the ideas that the discourse represents that are important, but also the ideas that it excludes. Speaking about the history of philosophy, it becomes obvious that the ideas that discourse excluded were often those that belonged to women. The latter seems possible to apply to the study of the history of Russian philosophy, with the aim of discovering “hidden figures” (Kiejzik, 2019), “silent voices” of women philosophers, hidden “traces” of women’s philosophical studies. It turns out that not only is the discourse itself important, but also what it excludes. Finally, the practices of exclusion require no less attention than what remains and actually constitutes discourse.

Perhaps it may easily be explained why there were no women philosophers or very few (see Nochlin, 1988). It is more difficult to give reasoning for why a feminist interpretation of history, in particular the history of philosophy, is needed. I propose to return to this issue at the end of this paragraph, after considering the positions of two philosophers: Joan Scott and Rosi Braidotti, who are not only trying to rethink the place and role of women in history and history of philosophy, but also to deconstruct the dominant discourse and reconstruct our understanding of the past, turning the process of deconstructing history into “a political act that does not represent the past, but creates its model based on current political and social processes” (Samylov, 2013: 28).

The approaches of these two feminist researchers show the place of Bezobrazova in the history of Russian philosophy in a new light, and help to define her achievements.

I will begin with Joan Scott and her feminist historiography, in which the main goal was to find out how to make the voices of female researchers heard.

Joan Scott in her text “Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis” attempts to substantiate a methodological approach that allows to rethink the role of women in history and build up a new feminist historiography

based on the concept of “gender.” An exploration of this concept leads Scott to conclude that “women’s scholarship would fundamentally transform disciplinary paradigms” (Scott, 1996: 1054), force a “critical reexamination of the premises and standards of existing scholarly work” (ibid.). Scott’s reasoning is of high interest for me, because behind the requirement to include women in history, she sees not only the possibility of including personal, subjective experience in the concept of historical significance, but, above all, the opportunity to build a new history.

It is not too much to suggest that however hesitant the actual beginnings, such a methodology implies not only a new history of women but a new history (ibid.).

Scott proposes a methodological framework for feminist history studies that would help create an alternative to classical historiographical traditions. In this task she sees a

synthesizing perspective that could explain continuities and discontinuities and account for persistent inequalities as well as radically different social experiences (ibid.: 1055).

The main challenge for feminist historiographies is to move away from the further marginalization of women’s historical studies. According to Scott, women’s studies should neither be included as an integral part of a larger field of research, nor create some kind of atomized, autonomous discipline, a kind of history of women, written by women researchers for women. In both cases, the voice of female researchers appears to be heard, but it is either still in the position of an oppressed, subordinate, as in the first case, or it sounds like the voice of a marginalized part of society, as in the second. This is where Scott’s demand to write not “a new history of women, but a new history in general” arises. These issues raise the problem to a fundamentally new level: it is necessary to reconstruct, or even better, deconstruct the dominant approach to research. And then such a task shifts the problem of feminist historiographies from a purely methodological to a political one, which brings us back to Foucault’s main research issue: the relationship between power and knowledge, the discourse of affirmation and the discourse of exclusion.

The history of women, according to Scott’s deep conviction, cannot be “dissolved in the historiographic coordinate system created by the history of the masculine gender” (Samylov, 2013: 28). The creation of such a history becomes a political act in which the past is not represented, but the present political and social is expressed. This challenge

requires analysis not only of the relationship between male and female experience in the past, but also of the relationship between past history and contemporary historical practice (Scott, 1996: 1055).

Moving on, in the consideration of the feminist genealogy by Rosi Braidotti, the central problem is seen as the relationship between women's studies and power, which finds its expression in the institutionalization of women's studies. According to Braidotti, only those feminist theories become real, which "open up possibilities of confronting the issue of power, subjectivity, and knowledge in all its complexity" (Braidotti, 1994: 205). The institutionalization of women's studies is important both politically and epistemologically, as it raises important questions concerning the extent to which women in institutions can discern how knowledge is codified, transmitted and recognized, the mechanisms specific to feminist practice for canonization and transmission of knowledge, the possibility of a direct link between institutionalization and the loss of radical views (*ibid.*). Braidotti admits that she, like a number of researchers, "has put a very heavy stake on the subversive, or transformative potential of female feminist bonding in postindustrial patriarchy" (*ibid.*: 207).

It is feminist genealogies that provide the basis for changing the masculine patterns of thinking and teaching of women (liberation from phallogocentric modes of thinking and learning).

Central to this project is the notion of feminist genealogies, that is, the process of thinking backwards through the work of other women. Genealogies are politically informed counter-memories, which keep us connected to the experiences and the speaking voices of some of the women whose resistance is for us a source of support and inspiration. In this respect, a feminist genealogy is a discursive and political exercise in cross-generational female bonding, which also highlights the aesthetic dimension of the thinking process, that is the fact that ideas are actually "beautiful events," capable of moving us across space and time (*ibid.*).

Braidotti addresses the idea of speaking, speaking of the feminist voice and feminist style, she defines them as "new spaces of speech, new different ways of speaking" (*ibid.*: 209).

Feminist ideas are the trajectories of thought, flight paths to impossible horizons; they seek to reunite those layers of experience that patriarchal power keeps in isolation from each other. Feminist ideas are constructs that bring to life new, alternative ways of constructing the female subject. [...] From the politics to the poetics of the feminist voices — new spaces of enunciation are opened to us new, different, and differing ways of speaking (*ibid.*: 208).

Emphasizing the transdisciplinary nature of feminist studies, she criticizes the discourse of “high theory” (Braidotti, 1994: 209) and especially philosophy, which supports the patriarchal habit of over-investment in the theoretical mode (*ibid.*: 210). Feminism, in her opinion, allows the coexistence of different representations and ways of understanding not only the subjectivity of women, but everything.

In line of Rosi Braidotti’s reasoning, I will allow myself to highlight two ideas that are of particular importance to me for further study of the place of women’s studies in the history of Russian philosophy. The first is that feminist genealogy contributes to establishing and strengthening ties, building a dialogue between women researchers of different generations (cross-generational female bonding), which ultimately will help to realize and finally use the “transformative potential of female solidarity.” The second idea expresses the need to overcome the male canon of thinking and teaching, which leads to a rather provocative conclusion: feminist texts and speaking require new ways of listening.

Once more, the question stands whether a feminist interpretation of history, and in particular of the history of philosophy, is needed. To answer it, I will repeat in a slightly modified form the idea of Joan Scott, who describes the need to write a new history of philosophy as opposed to creating a “new women’s history of philosophy.” Feminist genealogies are not about opposing male and female views of the past, and not about clarifying the differences between male and female experiences in the past. Feminist genealogies, in the case of the history of Russian philosophy, is an approach that can help manifest and make the voice of women-philosophers heard.

Whether the understanding of Russian philosophy will change from the knowledge that there were women philosophers in its history, is the kind of question that can only be answered by revising the theoretical framework of modern historical research, and recognizing that

the traditional divisions of intellectual inquiry are still adequate to deal with the meaningful questions of our time, rather than the merely convenient or self-generated ones (Nochlin, 1988: 146).

Can and should we reconstruct historical knowledge, remembering, in the wake of Foucault, that history is a representation not of the past, but of the present, or would it be more correct to say, a representation of the past through the prism of the present? My answers to all of these questions are definitely “yes.”

I repeat that the problem of women in the history of Russian philosophy is not a “female problem” about which some women, after reading texts written by women, must tell other women. This is an institutional and political problem. The question of women in the history of Russian philosophy should, in my opinion, lead to a change in the state of affairs in the present, when equality of achievement will not only become possible, but will also be actively encouraged by public institutions. And for this, women themselves

must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look at the facts of their situation full in the face, without self-pity, or cop-outs (Nochlin, 1988: 151).

RESTLESS PERSON — MARIA VLADIMIROVNA BEZOBRAZOVA:
FROM ETHICS TO POLITICS

None shall enter the order of discourse if he does not satisfy certain requirements or if he is not qualified to do so (Foucault, 1971: 16).

One of the interesting facts in the life of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova is as follows: during her lifetime in 1912, in the book *Iz odnogo alboma* (*From one album*), she expressed a wish: “Please make an inscription on my grave: Here lies a restless person...” (Vanchugov, 2014: 13). By carefully reading her texts and following the twists and turns of her personal and professional destiny, one becomes convinced that the idea of restlessness can be an important characteristic, both for understanding her biography and her philosophical research. A few decades later, Judith Butler, an iconic figure in post-structuralism, political philosophy and ethics, who influenced the development of both philosophical and political feminism, would write in the introduction to their work “Gender Trouble” that

trouble became a scandal with a sudden intrusion, the anticipated agency, of a female “object,” who inexplicably returns the glance, reverses the gaze and contests the place and authority of the masculine position (Butler, 2002: VII).

The concept of trouble may be seen as quite the accurate characteristic of Bezobrazova, since she attracted the attention of coevals for venturing, despite not always wanting to admit it, into the masculine sphere of Russian philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For context, the Russian philosophical community of the 19th century was monolithically male, which is directly connected with the fact that in Russia until the middle of the 19th century women were not allowed to enter the university.

In 1861, the year of the abolition of serfdom, the draft of the new statute for universities was discussed in the Russian Empire.

The results of the discussion (over 1000 pages of text) among professor-members of the senates were published in book form (“Замечания на проект Общего Устава императорских российских университетов”, 1861). At the end of the second part of the compilation was the chapter — Decision of university senates regarding the admission of female persons to participate in university lectures. In the preamble to the chapter it was explained that the Department of National Education proposed that university senates answer a few questions: (1) Can persons of the female gender be allowed to listen to lectures on an equal footing with students? (Note: “students” is used to refer only to men); (2) What conditions should be put in place in the case of positive decisions? (3) Can persons of the female gender be agents of scientific research (i. e., can they acquire academic degrees on a par with men) and what rights, in the case of positively completed procedures, are they entitled to? It is known that the senates of the universities of Kharkov, Kazansk, Kiev and Saint Petersburg expressed themselves positively. The situation was different at Moscow University. This, the oldest Russian university, which had great pride in its founder, Mikhail Lomonosov — answered the questions posed negatively, and in addition, rather laconically and abstractly. The protocols recorded 23 votes against, 2 for: it was decided not to allow students and female persons to jointly participate in lectures, under any circumstances. At the same time, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Western universities opened their auditoriums to women seeing nothing wrong in doing so. Thus, in the history of the “woman question” in Russia, a unique period of mass trips to foreign universities, especially to Switzerland and Germany, began. Russian women studied there primarily medical or philological sciences, including pedagogy, less often the exact sciences. But there were also those who chose philosophy. When they returned with the scientific degrees they had gained, they could not be ignored (Kiejzik, 2019: 199).

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the negligible small number of women philosophers in the history of Russian philosophy is the result of the institutional structure of science and education of that time.

And yet, to understand why philosophy in Russia in the 19th century was a purely male occupation, it is essential, in my opinion, not only to analyze the socio-political context, it is also important to answer questions about *who a philosopher is* and *what it means to practice philosophy professionally*. Taking into account the fact that philosophy can be considered as “a part of the social structure, mediated and determined by specific social institutions” (Nochlin, 1988: 152), does it follow from this that being a philosopher in the late 19th century meant being included in an official academy and having access to education and teaching at the university? Positive answers to

the above questions lead back to the idea that “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers they carry” (Foucault, 1971: 164). The discourse of power and subordination manifested itself in the fact that a woman who decided to study philosophy in Russia, despite the circumstances, had neither the opportunity to get an education, nor the opportunity to teach at the university, nor the opportunity to be published on equal bases. Thus, in writing philosophical texts, giving public lectures, publishing at her own expense, supporting other women in their pursuit of education, knowledge, profession, a woman philosopher, such as Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova, becomes a “nightmare” (Kiejzik, 2019), an exception that disrupts the dominant discourse, disturbs society, as it “contests the place and authority of the masculine position” (Butler, 2002: VII).

Females philosophical studies in Russia before the Soviets represent a discourse of exclusion, the voices of women philosophers, if they were sounded, were not heard. Of course, it must be remembered that philosophy as an academic discipline in Russia began to develop only in the 19th century, which is associated with the name of Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviev. It is significant that Soloviev in all his considerations of femininity

could have done a lot to include women in the philosophical community in Russia, but he did not. Probably not for lack of good intention, but the fact itself must arouse astonishment, given that he was a lecturer at the university and on the Higher education courses for women. He did not even try to help with recommendations for Bezobrazova (related to him by his sister’s husband) a philosophy graduate and with a scientific degree bestowed by the University of Bern (Kiejzik, 2019: 196).

Another side of the question of what it means to practice philosophy professionally concerns the “quality” of the ideas produced. Can it be considered a sufficient condition for the professional realization of a philosopher that their ideas are not only heard in the professional community, but are also in demand? How is it possible to assess the relevance of the theory? Does this always mean creating a unique philosophical “system?” Does this mean that only a systematic presentation of ideas, and not a single statement or discourse, deserves attention?

The difficulty of perceiving Bezobrazova’s ideas was associated with the style of her writing, which she herself described as “aphoristic” (Vanchugov, 2014: 8). Many commented on her writing style as epigrammatical and

rhetorical, so unusual for the accepted style of academic writing. Bezobrazova's style was in many ways similar to the writing style of Nikolai Berdyaev, which can be described as the style of philosophical journalism and philosophical autobiography, which, in the case of Berdyaev, was accepted and supported by readers, followers and colleagues, while Bezobrazova remained largely misunderstood.

Vasily Vasilyevich Rozanov offered his own understanding of the reasons for the obscureness of Bezobrazova. Describing current state of affairs in Russian philosophy, Bezobrazova once said: "There are so many keeping chew of Comte and Kant, and you don't know which of them is more." Rozanov commented on it like this: "our university philosophy is chews Kant, our magazine philosophy chews Comte, showing in both its branches something lazy, dull and hopeless. Both in their lifelessness [...] in the absence of any connection with their native soil [...] resembles the darkest times of scholasticism [...] Bezobrazova was too serious, simple and gifted to be successful in a society that, in philosophy, runs after the 'idol of the theatre' [...] She did not want to 'chew Comte and Kant again'—and certainly she was not invited and was not even let in their 'chewing' magazines [...] She did not have a common gloss, a common shade—she was 'not like everyone else,' and for the one hundred first time the Russian story 'wit works woe' happened to her" (cited in Vanchugov, 2014: 25).

Perhaps, as Braidotti suggests, women's voices and speech require new ways of listening, as well as a rethinking of what philosophy is, what it should do and how it should do it. One can only assume that in the 19th century, the emerging Russian academic philosophy could not and was not ready to develop new methods of research that would give value to the affective, emotional foundations of philosophy, and not just its rationalistic structure. The dominant discourse did not allow a different way of speaking, a different way of understanding, a different style of writing, did not allow the existence of various representations, did not allow a change of position in which different voices could be heard, including women's voices.

Bezobrazova herself explicitly or indirectly addressed the question of what philosophy is in her various texts (Bezobrazova, 1892; 1894; 1911a,b; 1912). In *A Brief Review of the Significant Moments in the History of Philosophy*, starting with discussions about the impossibility of maintaining objectivity in expounding the history of philosophy, she writes that

any history of philosophy is always a theory, and as a theory it is always one-sided, always subjective. There has never been and never will be an objective history

of philosophy even less, perhaps, than an objective history of culture, than an objective philosophy of history (Bezobrazova, 1894: 3).

Bezobrazova identifies three possible takes on the history of philosophy: first, where a single theory is recognized, from the standpoint of a certain worldview, as the only true one; second, one where there is no single truth, and in each of the theories there exists a certain rational grain of truth; and the third, in which the study of the history of philosophy proceeds from the recognition of the original fallacy of all philosophical systems that have ever existed. She then comes to the paradoxical conclusion that “the entire history of philosophy is nothing but the history of delusions,” and concludes: “it is wonderful that philosophy itself can be denied, but not its history” (ibid.). And even more than that, “through which epochs philosophy will not pass, in what new forms it will not manifest itself, its essence will remain the same, the same ignorance” (ibid.: 7). What then follows is a passage about continuity in philosophy as a process of inheriting the mistakes and errors of predecessors, and the conclusion that this is the only way to get closer to the truth.

And only by working you make mistakes, and every mistake is instructive for those who go further, who continue the work, to make mistakes in their turn, in order to most often leave to the descendants one huge mistake, and sometimes a grain of truth in it—a spark of that very Promethean fire, which alone helps to put up with life and illuminates the path (ibid.).

Having defined philosophy as a spiritual science and highlighted its three key parts: psychology, ethics and logic, Bezobrazova proposes an answer to the question of who a philosopher is:

Who wants ready-made answers and wants to calm down with them is not a philosopher [...] if whoever thinks of finding an unshakable truth in some philosophical system requires exact and categorical answers, which means that a person has not yet gained an insight into philosophy (ibid.).

Doubt, open questioning, readiness to rethink the established canon of philosophical research—these are the essential features of her original style, a unique philosophical “voice” that can be heard by the attentive audience, if they wish to listen.

“The duty of a philosopher is not to be afraid to speak,” writes Bezobrazova, who understood philosophy as a way of life. What should a philosopher not be afraid to talk about? For herself, this has been expressed in the study of ethical issues. Under the influence of Immanuel Kant, interpreting

his categorical imperative in a peculiar way, she created her own “ethical idealism,” a system of “pure morality” (Kravchenko, 2016: 37). In her work *On Immorality*, she reformulates one of the three Kantian questions, instead of: “What ought I to do?” Bezobrazova will look for answers to the question: “What ought I NOT to do?”

One of the important features of Russian philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was its ethical orientation. V. S. Soloviev, S. N. Trubetskoy, S. N. Bulgakov, S. L. Frank, L. I. Shestov, N. A. Berdyaev are representatives of idealistic thought in its religious and mystical form, for them ethics was the center of research interests. Russian idealistic ethics were based on the belief in the need for divine sanctification of morality, and for this reason all ethical problems were considered by them in a religious key. The work of Maria Vladimirovna “On immorality” is fundamentally different from the works of Russian religious philosophers of that time. She called this “the book of the linings and the seamy side of life,” in which Bezobrazova names and explores the main social problems of Russia at that time. This is reminiscent of the activity of a doctor who is trying to diagnose a patient, but the diagnosis, as known, is needed in order to restore a person to health. Approximately the same applies to Bezobrazova, revealing the vices of Russian society, she shows the way to recovery.

She begins this text with an examination of the problem of suicide, especially childhood suicides:

in school suicides, they forget that they are much more connected with disorder and rudeness of family life and with pornographic literature than with a harsh school (Bezobrazova, 1911b: 10).

In her opinion, the person committing suicide is not always sinful, “not allowing others to commit suicide is the task of morality” (ibid.: 8), someone suicidal is always a “victim of society” (ibid.), since in Russian society there is an ostentatious, hypocritical and fake humanity.

Behind every example of immorality, Bezobrazova sees a social reason, raises the question of collective responsibility for what is happening. “Russian life is far from true mercy, true love and true justice” (ibid.: 6). Russian pseudo-humanity and Russian negligence, immorality come from the fact, that Russians work too little.

Work has become the scorn of Russians, all life is now adapted to the tastes of those who enjoy and revel—everything for such people is now in Russia, nothing for a modest family life, for working people who want quiet joys, and not the tinsel of popular entertainment [...] There is money for carousing, but not for the

construction of roads necessary for work, which leads to the weakening of the working population of the country (Bezobrazova, 1911b: 16).

For Russian religious philosophers, the ethical is connected with the tasks of saving the soul, and not with the real change in the practices of social action. But such an understanding of the problem does not suit Bezobrazova, because a person may save themselves, but the vices of society can only be eradicated in unison. "It is high time to overcome evil and perk up by uniting in common task" (ibid.: 28). Bezobrazova understood that the "god-manhood" concept of goodness, justice, virtue, and freedom would remain in the field of "abstract principles," if they did not find a way out into real political action, help fight current social problems, and raise the question of moral responsibility for the state of affairs in society for everyone.

And as it often happens at a doctor's appointment, it can be very unpleasant to learn and listen to the diagnosis. "This is our modern Russian life, it is an immoral life that, like an ostrich, hides its head from its own shame" (ibid.: 1). And further,

modern Russia lives in discord, there is a deep discord between the government and society. There can be no steps forward, the prosperity of the state is not conceivable until the strife between society and the government ends (ibid.: 18). [...] The only way for salvation is the establishment of peace in Russia, but not external, not ostentatious, of course, but real, from the realization that it is necessary to improve the moral atmosphere. This must be done together to finally give the country a breath (ibid.: 27).

Reading this text, one can realize that the formula Bezobrazova proposed "Russian life—immoral life" comes into conflict with the familiar and often used concept of "Russian spirituality." To formulate a problem, to name a diagnosis is already half of the way to healing. The work *On Immorality*, in my opinion, should be considered a manifesto which declares the need to restructure Russian society, minimize injustice and cruelty, eradicate vices and social evil. Pointing out how the current state of affairs does not correspond to ideas of goodness and justice, Bezobrazova appears as a parrhesiast who destroys consensus for the sake of asserting the truth. "The duty of a philosopher is not to be afraid to say," and with this text Bezobrazova proves that she was not afraid to speak even about what the others did not want or were not ready to hear.

Having analyzed the theoretical works and life path of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova, I am absolutely convinced that we need to rewrite the history of Russian philosophy, to be able to hear, albeit rarely, albeit incomparable

in strength with male voices, the female voices. These, in turn, should not be individual monographs devoted to women in Russian philosophy (see, for example, Vanchugov, 2009), without any detraction of the author merits, but the most common public textbooks, manuals, papers on the history of Russian philosophy, which should be the basis of lecture courses taught at schools and universities. The task of such changes is not to oppose male and female studies, and not to replace male philosophers with female ones, but to return female thinkers to the field of historical research, to find a place for their ideas and theoretical developments, actualize the memory of them, and then to inherit the research experience of the first Russian women philosophers. The possible and indeed necessary deconstruction of the history of Russian philosophy can and must become a political act. The genealogical approach and the feminist critique of the Russian history of philosophy are aimed at discovering, researching and removing cultural and ideological restrictions that did not allow female researchers to be a part of discourse. It is my deep conviction that only such a careful and precise approach to the history of Russian philosophy will make it possible to avoid replication of institutional errors in the present and future development of Russian philosophy.

CONCLUSION. IS SPEAKING ALLOWED OR IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE HEARD?

And even if the doctor's role were only that of landing an ear that is free at last, he still does this listening in the context of the same division [...] If the silence of reason is required for the curing of monsters, it is enough for that silence to be on the alert, and it is in this that the division remains (Foucault, 1971: 9).

I would like to organize the conclusion of the text in the form of questions. I decided to use this technique at the end of my paper, as an author to invite a potential reader to reflection and an indirect discussion of sorts.

So, the question remains, is a woman philosopher allowed to speak?

There is no doubt that women philosophers in Russia today have the opportunity to speak, publish and research. It is hard to imagine that one could not be published or admitted to a university, not be allowed to do academic research, simply because of one's biological sex. At first glance, it seems that the question of whether women philosophers are allowed to speak is a question directed to the past. But in order to understand what has changed in the status of a woman philosopher in Russia since

the time of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova, I propose to try to answer the following questions:

- ◊ Do we have the opportunity to write and explore not only a new history of women, but a new history in general?
- ◊ Do women in the history of Russia in general, and in the history of Russian philosophy in particular, continue to be invisible as historical subjects? Despite the fact that we know that they participated and continue to participate in great and small historical events?
- ◊ Is the number of publications of female philosophers an indicator, on the one hand, of the quality of research being carried out, and, on the other hand, of the inclusion of the female voice in the modern agenda of philosophical research?
- ◊ What are the research issues of modern Russian women philosophers?
- ◊ Is it fair to say that feminist studies in philosophy are studies by women philosophers of texts written by women philosophers? And if so, do women philosophers continue to be a marginalized community?
- ◊ Are women's studies becoming the basis for women's solidarity, communication and memory formation?

All these issues require attention and broad free public discussion outside the academy. But the most important question for me is not about the opportunity to speak, but the opportunity to be heard and listened to. Hence, the question that seems the most important to me is as follows:

- ◊ Are they ready to hear female philosophers in Russia, are they ready to listen to us?

Or do we continue to bear witness to a situation where the listener does not take the speaker seriously, as it was in the days of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova?

REFERENCES

- Agalamova, L., and E. Kostyleva. 2022. "Donna Haraway's Antiphilosophy: Objectivity without Objectification." *Logos* 32 (1): 223–236.
- Bezobrazova, M. V. 1892. *Filosofskiye etyudy* [*Philosophical Etudes*] [in Russian]. Moskva [Moscow]: n. p.
- . 1894. *Kratkiy obzor sushchestvennykh momentov v istorii filosofii* [*A Brief Overview of Significant Points in the History of Philosophy*] [in Russian]. Moskva [Moscow]: n. p.
- . 1911a. *O beznравstvennosti* [*Of Immorality*] [in Russian]. Sankt-Peterburg [Saint Petersburg]: n. p.
- . 1911b. *Shopenгаuer* [*Schopenhauer*] [in Russian]. Sankt-Peterburg [Saint Petersburg]: n. p.

- . 1912. *Iz odnogo al'boma [From One Album]* [in Russian]. Sankt-Peterburg [Saint Petersburg]: n. p.
- Braidotti, R. 1994. "Women's Studies and the Politics of Difference." In *Nomadic Subjects and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 205–212. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Butler, J. 2002. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. 1971. "Orders of discourse." *Social science information* 10 (2): 7–30.
- . 1998. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, ed. by J. D. Faubion, 369–391. New York: The New Press.
- . 2019. *"Discourse and Truth" and "Parresia"*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Haraway, D. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599.
- Kiejzik, L. 2019. "Why Have There Been no Great Women Philosophers (in Russia)?" *Solov'yevskiyе issledovaniya* 61 (1): 195–204.
- Komkov, O. 2019. "The Foucault's Order of Discourse (The Hermeneutics of Subject)" [in Russian]. Monocler. Accessed Feb. 2, 2023. <https://monocler.ru/poryadok-diskursa-fuko/>.
- Kravchenko, V. V. 2016. "Tvorchestvo M. V. Bezobrazovoy: iz predystorii gendernykh issledovaniy v Rossii" [in Russian]. *Istoriya filosofii* 21 (1): 32–40.
- Nochlin, L. 1988. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" In *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays*, 145–178. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pulkkinen, T. 1999. "O performativnoy teorii pola. Problematizatsiya kategorii pola Yudit Batler [On the Performative Theory of Sex. Problematicization of the Category of Sex by Judith Butler]" [in Russian]. In *Germenevika i dekonstruktsiya [Hermeneutics and Deconstruction]*, ed. by V. Shtegmayyera, Kh. Franka, and B. V. Markova, trans. from the English by O. S. Gavryushkin, 167–181. Sankt-Peterburg [Saint Petersburg]: n. p.
- Samylov, O. V. 2013. "Genealogicheskiy metod M. Fuko i perspektivy istoricheskogo poznaniya [M. Foucault's Genealogical Method and the Prospects of Historical Knowledge]" [in Russian]. *Vestnik SPbGU*, no. 2, 21–29.
- Scott, J. W. 1996. *Feminism and History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Can the Subaltern Speak? : Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. by R. C. Morris, 145–178. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vanchugov, V. V. 2009. *Zhenshchiny v filosofii (iz istorii filosofii v Rossii) [Women in Philosophy (from the History of Philosophy in Russia)]* [in Russian]. Moskva [Moscow]: RUDN.

———. 2014. “Bezobrazova — zhenshchina-filosof, etik i istorik russkoy filosofii [M. V. Bezobrazova — Woman-philosopher, Ethicist and Historian of Russian Philosophy]” [in Russian]. *Vestnik VyatGU*, no. 3, 6–15.

Bogodelnikova L. A. [Богодельникова Л. А.] The Life and Philosophy of Maria Vladimirovna Bezobrazova [Творчество и судьба М. В. Безобразовой] : Is a Woman Philosopher Allowed to Speak? [позволено ли говорить женщине-философу?] // Философия. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. — 2023. — Т. 7, № 4. — Р. 64–83.

ЛЮВОВЬ БОГОДЕЛЬНИКОВА

К. ФИЛОС. Н., ДОЦЕНТ

ВАЙКАЛЬСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ БРИКС

Иркутского национального исследовательского технического университета (Иркутск);

ORCID: 0000-0002-5294-560X

ТВОРЧЕСТВО И СУДЬБА М. В. БЕЗОБРАЗОВОЙ

ПОЗВОЛЕНО ЛИ ГОВОРИТЬ ЖЕНЩИНЕ-ФИЛОСОФУ?

Получено: 01.06.2023. Рецензировано: 30.08.2023. Принято: 01.11.2023.

Аннотация: В статье предлагается исследовать историю отечественной философии с помощью генеалогического подхода, что, с одной стороны, позволяет по-новому посмотреть на тексты женщин-философов, переосмыслить их, а с другой, актуализирует идею альтернативной памяти, альтернативной истории философии, возвращая мыслительниц в поле историко-исследовательского рассмотрения, находя место их идеям и теоретическим разработкам. Дискурсивно-методологический анализ, лежащий в основе генеалогии, позволяет анализировать речевые высказывания с точки зрения их социального производства, чем обращает нас к проблеме власти и знания, показывает, что знание создается посредством как дискурса утверждения, так и дискурса исключения. Как следствие, возникает не только необходимость деконструкции господствующего историко-философского дискурса, но и необходимость исследований того, что этот дискурс исключает. Такого рода задачи ставит себе феминистская генеалогия. Будучи примененной к истории философии, она подрывает целостность академического дискурса, разрушая господство теоретического модуса мышления, переходя к открытому вопрошанию, а впоследствии и к изменению статуса и характера самой философии, которая более не может быть высоким теоретизированием об отвлеченных началах, а становится практикой политического. Такой подход, примененный к анализу текстов русской мыслительницы М. В. Безобразовой, позволяет увидеть не только общеполитическое значение ее идей, но и политический смысл исследуемых проблем, проследить движение мысли от философии к политике. Особую важность представляет вывод о том, что феминистский анализ текстов женщин-философов прежде всего служит установлению межпоколенческого диалога и проявлению женской солидарности.

Ключевые слова: М. В. Безобразова, история русской философии, феминистская генеалогия, дискурс, власть, женщины-философы, Фуко.

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2023-4-64-83.