

THE REVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP
“PHENOMENOLOGY IN USSR”
SEPTEMBER 20–21, 2022 (MOSCOW, RUSSIA)

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A workshop on “Phenomenology in the USSR” took place on the 21st and 22nd of September, 2022, at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow (Russia) within the Laboratory for Transcendental Philosophy framework¹. The main idea of the workshop was to sketch the long story of phenomenological thought in Russia, first initiated by the lecture of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* and *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* that were published in *Logos* journal in the early 1910s. Further development of this reception went through some historical twists and turns after the October Revolution and was almost wiped out under “orthodoxal” Marxist-Leninist thought. Even though at the beginning of the 1920s, some of Gustav Spet’s colleagues and disciples could still work on phenomenological topics in the soviet State Academy of Art Sciences (GAKHN). Their work has been sat in the archives, and the relevant debates in the institutional field came to a halt until the early 1980s. Even under ideological suppression, phenomenological thought in USSR grew into quite an original movement. Numerous philosophers could be respectively considered as its proponents, such as Merab Mamardashvili (1930–1990), Vladimir Bibikhin (1938–2004), and Nelly Motroshilova (1934–2021). However, their contribution to the “ideologically hostile” phenomenology was concealed under the forms of translations and historical works.

The relations between phenomenology and ideology and its influence on the development of an autochthonous phenomenological movement in Russia were particularly considered during the workshop “Phenomenology in the USSR.” Fifteen scholars from different institutions presented papers concerning methodological problems of soviet phenomenologists and various aspects of philosophies of Gustav Spet, Merab Mamardashvili, Givi Margvelashvili, Nicolay Zhinkin, and Nelly Motroshilova, whose archives will be published soon. Diverse topics within the scope of phenomenology, from its

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relation to ideology, the possibility of non-indoctrinated thoughts, aesthetics, phenomenological language, and revelation, as well as concrete problems having a universal significance, were addressed for two days of work.

The first day started with the opening remarks of Vladislav Terekhovich, the head of the School of Philosophy and Culturology, and the head of the Laboratory, Dr. Svetlana Klimova, who outlined the main directions of the further discussion. Then there was an intervention by Maxim Miroshnichenko (Poletayev Institute for Theoretical and Historical Studies in the Humanities) devoted to Lefevre and Pyatigorsky’s works. They both focused on searching for a scientific notion of a human, working in the domain of cosmic functionalism and observational philosophy, respectively. According to the remark of Georgy Chernavin, this report “turned inside out” the subject of phenomenology in the USSR because the focus of the report was clearly antiphenomenological projects of researchers who spent a significant part of their lives in exile.

Svetlana Konacheva (RSUH) presented the second paper, *Soviet Heideggerian Thought: From Existentialism to Phenomenology*. Tatyana Shchedrina (RGGU) expanded the disciplinary frame with the accent on the archive work on the heritage of Gustav Gustavovich Shpet — one of the most significant followers of Husserl in the USSR, who began his phenomenological studies in pre-revolutionary Russia and continued them despite radical ideological changes. In their reports, Diana Gasparyan (HSE University) and Mikhail Belousov (RANEPA) examined various aspects of Merab Mamardashvili’s work, which can be described as phenomenological. Mikhail Belousov, in particular, drew attention to the similarity of the understanding of *metaphysical a posteriori* by Mamardashvili (*Lectures on Proust*) and Marcel Proust with Husserl’s concept of “a posteriori necessity.” Alexey Savin (RANEPA) presented the paper about the reception and development of phenomenological ideas in the work of Soviet philosophers who adhered to Marxism-Leninism and paid particular attention to the forms of autolegitimation in post-soviet philosophy that used the rupture with Marxism-Leninism as a part of its identity. Tatyana Litvin (HSE University) completed the first day of the workshop with a report devoted to the phenomenological motives of Mamardashvili’s work.

Andrey Patkul (SPBU) opened the second day of the workshop with a speech about the axiological interpretation of Givi Margvelashvili’s philosophical project, which is little known in the Russian-speaking world. Georgy Chernavin (HSE University) did not turn to the reception and development of phenomenology in the USSR. In his paper, Professor Chernavin

made a phenomenological division of the concept of conscience contained in the "Stalinist" works of Marietta Shaginyan, showing an ethical blind spot, personified and taken out. The phenomenological motives in the works of Nikolai Ivanovich Zhinkin, devoted to studying the inner word and the meaning of speech, were covered by Ekaterina Khan (RUDN University) in her speech. Viktor Molchanov (RSUH) touched upon his personal experience of participating in the formation and development of the phenomenological movement in the USSR. Dmitry Kleopov (MSU) spoke with a homage to Vladimir Bibikhin, referring to his understanding of the language of philosophy and the influence of Wittgenstein on it. The report of Natalia Artemenko (SPBU) was devoted to the reception of Husserl in the work of Nelli Motroshilova in the 1980s and her experience in processing archives prepared for publication. Anna Ganzha (HSE University) concluded the workshop with a report on the work of Soviet filmmakers and writers whose language can be considered indoctrinated by ideology. In the final report, some institutional dimension was offered, including the history of marginality.

*Mariia Stenina and Ilya Onegin
Laboratory for Transcendental Philosophy
HSE University (Moscow, Russia)*