

*Tomasz Mróz*

## REPLY TO THE PAPER “NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AS A SUBJECT OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH”<sup>1</sup>

First of all, I would like to thank my Ukrainian colleagues for taking the time and energy to carefully read, think over, and review my small book. I think that every author wishes to find such diligent and competent readers. In fact, their paper is much more than a review, for it involves current Ukrainian discussions on similar subjects and reveals a set of questions with which they are beset while researching the history of Ukrainian philosophy.

As the author of the book, I should remind the readers of this reply that the kind words S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko had for the methodological part of the book, should be credited to the scholars of previous generations. For instance, the terminological distinctions made by Wiktor Wąsik, and many statements on the interdisciplinary character of research on the history of Polish philosophy from the discussion started by Andrzej Walicki, constitute the material basis for my conclusions. My only merit, if any, was to sweep some dust off their ideas, which I found to some extent worth renewed consideration and to which in many cases I adhere. Nijolė Radavičienė should be credited in this respect as well, since she rightly – as the present discussion proves – decided to edit and publish these lectures, and, last but not least, Una Maclean–Hańckowiak, who took the pains of language editing these lectures, the style of which was assessed by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko as “available”.

On the one hand, it looks as if S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko expected much more from the book than it could have offered, since it originated from the Erasmus lectures for philosophy students in Vilnius University, hence it seemed to be more useful not to set forth only definite solutions, but also to put questions and provide proposals with arguments. On the other hand, the book seems to have provoked much more than its author could have hoped for. Since many issues are intermingled in the text by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko and raised more than once, I’d take the liberty to address their concerns, to answer their questions and take up some new issues which result from their paper and reach beyond the conclusions of the book, in an order which does not always reflect the structure of S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko’s text.

It is noticeable that most of S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko’s attention was drawn to the first lecture (“*Polish Philosophy*” or “*Philosophy in Poland*”?) [Mróz 2016: 13-38], which

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<sup>1</sup> [Yosypenko, Rudenko 2018]. The final version of this reply owes some development to the meetings and discussions held with the author in Kiev at the lecture and workshop held at the Faculty of Philosophy of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv with the authors of the review (with whom also e-mails were exchanged), and also with professors Taras Kononenko, Olga Varenytsya and Vadym Tytarenko. Language editing of this reply was done by Una Maclean–Hańckowiak.

touches upon methodological issues which are inevitably faced by every conscientious historian of any minor philosophical tradition. The second and third lectures (*Plato's Reception in Polish Philosophy (1800–1950)* [Ibid. 39-66]; *Wincenty Lutoslawski's Vilnius Period (1919–1931)* [Ibid. 67-96]) are referred to by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko mostly in connection with the first one, which thus turned out to be the most essential, most probably because of its methodological ideas, which may still be applicable and of value, and which are not limited to Polish philosophy only. As S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko themselves admit, the historiography of Polish philosophy constitutes a kind of "mirror" in which Ukrainian philosophy can be reflected or compared, since both traditions have some common points, not exclusive for this or that tradition only.

One of the great merits of S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko's analysis is to call for a deeper reflection on the history of national philosophy in order to produce "historical self-awareness" of philosophers doing philosophy. Certainly, S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko have the right to insist on applications and generalizations of the ideas presented in the book in the field of philosophy. My aims, however, were much more moderate and were limited to the field of the historiography of philosophy which has developed in less dominant cultures. I do agree that the history of philosophy should not be considered by philosophers as expendable literature and should not be left for purely historical and antiquarian research. Philosophy can and should be pursued in a constant dialogue with the past, but first of all, it will be necessary for historians of philosophy to prepare editions, commentaries, studies and presentations of the philosophical past, and this cannot be done without undertaking the most basic and fundamental research steps. My aim, however, was not to do philosophy *per se*, whether national or not. Historians of minor philosophical traditions struggle with numerous difficulties in their work, and I hoped to set forth some of them.

Let us turn to the issue of making minor European traditions in philosophy known to western scholarship. In order to make it possible for foreign scholars to do comparative research of the East and Central European philosophical traditions it is necessary for us, namely for the historians of philosophical traditions of East and Central Europe, to undertake the fundamental work of bringing these traditions nearer to western scholarship. The only way of doing this is to prepare and publish translations of studies presenting the history of this or that philosophical problem in the works of the past philosophers of this area of Europe. In my opinion, these studies should, however, have one distinctive feature: they should present these problems in their interconnections with some part of the history of philosophy with which western scholars and readers are familiar. A possible starting point could be research on the reception of this or that western current, idea or system in our part of Europe (and in some respects this has already proved its worth in the past). If the philosophical tradition under discussion is linked in this or another way to the knowledge of the readers, it can help them relate the new ideas to the ones well-known and at the same time to broaden and supplement their knowledge with new information which will not form a separate or parallel line of development, but will be presented in close connection with the history of philosophy with which western readers are familiar. Hopefully, both narratives will eventually form one comprehensive history of European philosophy, which will be reflected in historiography.

This is why studies presenting "immanent developments" of minor philosophical traditions, though indispensable and important for domestic audiences, do not meet the above requirements. We may complain that, in their comprehensive surveys of the general history of philosophy, western historians of philosophy (it is not necessary here to name any names)

do not take into account East and Central European philosophical traditions, but in this respect both parties are to blame. Admittedly, some presentations of minor philosophical traditions are available in English or German and they should have been used by western historians. Still, a much larger number of such studies still needs to be published in order to achieve the goal of integrating minor philosophical traditions into the general European historical narrative in philosophy. There is, undoubtedly, some amount of wishful thinking in these considerations, but without making an effort to bring all the non-dominant philosophical traditions (including Polish and Ukrainian) to the notice of western readers, there is not much hope for these traditions to take their due place in the historiography of European philosophy as a whole.

The mention of reception studies, which was commented on by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko, was presented in the book only as a short digression, and served the purpose of supplementing the main line of argument that national philosophies, though they belong to various national cultures, were not insulated and that books and ideas travelled through time and space. Reception studies are not meant to replace research into the distinctive features of any national tradition in philosophy, nor to vault into a prominent position in such research, but rather to provide further evidence of the differences between national traditions, which accordingly to their own specific features refer to and reflect differently on the philosophical phenomena under reception.

While focusing on reception problems in the history of philosophy, S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko, distinguish between reception as the simple impact of alien philosophical ideas and reception as a conscious process of selectively adopting only those ideas which are considered by the recipient as potentially fruitful or useful for the present or future. The first type of reception presents national traditions in philosophy as passive recipients, while the latter – as active co-operators. However, the very idea of a pure impact, devoid of any active and conscious factors, does not sound probable. Philosophers do not simply rewrite foreign arguments into their own language. Should this be so, they would be rather interpretators as translators. Moreover, simple translation of this or that philosophical text requires the translator to select the text to be translated and from among different terminological options. In short, even the translator is not a transparent and clear medium. Examples can be multiplied.

If I am not mistaken, in the case of an active reception even more questions are brought forward by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko. Not all of them can be addressed here. The attempt to distinguish selective interpreters and active followers from historiographers and commentators is likely to encounter numerous obstacles. Commentators and historiographers, while commenting on past philosophers and writing volumes of histories of philosophies, reveal their own philosophical positions. To answer S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko's question<sup>2</sup>: certainly, Plato's reception in Polish philosophy reflects the trends and currents in Polish philosophy and reveals the philosophical views and methods of Polish philosophers. It belongs, therefore, to the history of Polish philosophy. A positive answer should also be given to the second part of S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko's question: certainly, Polish reception of Plato is a part of the global process of Plato's reception, Plato's influence, Plato scholarship. It should be noted, however, that with particular writers the situation turns out to be more complicated. They may have claimed that they were "only" historiographers, but none of these writers is purely an "objective" historiographer nor an interpreter without proper historical

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<sup>2</sup>"*Plato's reception in Polish Philosophy* is rather a page in the history of Polish philosophy or a page of world spread of Plato's philosophy?" [Yosypenko, Rudenko 2018: 120-129].

knowledge of the issue. As is observed by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko, my studies on Plato's reception in Poland were in some part published in English. I consider this as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the interdisciplinary character of researching the history of Polish philosophy. History of Polish or East European studies on Plato is interesting for international readers as a part of the global impact of Plato's philosophy, and at the same time they may learn about the "mirrors" in which Plato's philosophy was reflected, namely about the philosophical positions of Plato's interpreters who form a part of the history of Polish philosophy. And this part of the history of philosophy is interconnected with European studies on Plato, and the danger of a presentation focused on "immanent development" is avoided.

As for the situation of philosophers, and Polish culture in general, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the dismemberment period, there were restraints on teaching and publishing in Polish, but with some exceptions. It suffices to name only two of the greatest periods of academic philosophy which flourished in the first three decades of that century in Vilnius, and in Kraków and Lwów under Austrian rule, where Polish philosophy grew stronger in the course of the century when Galizia received its autonomy. Thus "institutionalization" of philosophy after 1918, when the old Polish universities were turned into state-operated institutions or were newly established, can be considered as a fact of greater historical, political, and administrative than philosophical significance. Freedom to pursue philosophy in the interwar period allowed the younger generation of scholars to take an active part in the development of European philosophy, and – as S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko do not fail to observe – they were less concerned with issues relating to the pursuit of a distinguished philosophical tradition of Poles, for as they were living in an independent state, they did not need as much spiritual unification as they had beforehand. In pursuing Polish philosophy they contributed to European discussions, took up universal problems, developed general education in philosophy, translated classical philosophical texts into Polish, and so on. One may then rightly conclude that such a national tradition in philosophy does not consist in pursuing philosophy in order to consciously produce distinctive and unique national philosophical ideas. The aims of a historian are, however, different. Historian of national philosophy searches for such distinctive features in the philosophical past, researches conditions which are not purely philosophical and which influenced philosophy of the past, searches for the origins of this or that phenomenon, finds relations and influences, emphasizing – where possible – distinct local, national, philosophical features and their connections to national culture and history. And such historical conclusions may additionally explain the current situation in philosophy as resulting from the course of history.

When touching upon the relations between culture and philosophy, it has to be remarked that the features of culture evolve, as does philosophy, which changes accordingly. Certainly, not all the branches of philosophy are directly affected by cultural or political changes. For example, formal logic, 'logistics', does not appear to have any connection to the changing cultural or political environment. The development of this branch of philosophy was, however, affected by ideological premises. In the Soviet period it was regarded as a bourgeois, metaphysical and idealistic distortion of mathematical logic. It was then rejected as abstract and purely formal, and even more, as a weapon in the bourgeois struggle against the scientific, materialist outlook. Non-philosophical conditions did not influence, then, the very conclusions of logistics, but they could prevent researchers from engaging with this branch of philosophy. As for the history of logic, its special status and its faint relation to the history of national philosophy was raised by Kotarbiński.

S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko finally turn their focus to the third lecture on the Vilnius' years of Lutosławski and they ask a difficult question concerning how to define the boundaries for philosophers of being Polish or not. Should it be their Polish origins, or lecturing at a Polish university, or lecturing in Polish in an Austrian university, or maybe publishing in Polish? I'd be glad to include among Polish philosophers those figures who meet even one of the above requirements, without excluding to the possibility of their being related to or even belonging to Austrian, Russian, Ukrainian or Lithuanian philosophies. Another question about Lutosławski which is raised by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko focuses on the value of his works which attracted attention of international philosophers. This question can be answered on non-philosophical ground, namely his works were simply available in English, German, French and Italian, therefore his philosophy, especially his works on Plato, was brought closer to the international public. His spiritual metaphysics, individualistic worldview, historiosophy, application of yoga exercises were also found interesting to international readers because they were available in western languages.

Was Lutosławski a minor author? Opposing S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko's remark I'd rather say he was a great and well-known figure, internationally recognized, productive in many languages, active in numerous philosophical fields, and at the same time, isolated and disregarded by some philosophers. Not being a minor author, he turned out to be a very suitable subject for research to be presented to an international audience, which S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko rightly observe.

Finally, some minor issues require clarification: Lutosławski, unfortunately, cannot be considered as my predecessor in "Polish Platonism". He considered himself to be a Platonist, while I only attempt to research the history of Plato in Poland. In this respect he is rather one of the subjects of my studies than my predecessor. The term "Polish philosophy" is, rightly, in my opinion, used by Wąsik to describe philosophy which developed in Poland not earlier than the Renaissance period, when the national language was applied to philosophical considerations. Another remark: while speaking about researching "minor authors" I did not mean to turn them into the "centre" of studies, but to convince the audience to direct their attention to these less influential figures, to encourage potential young researchers of national traditions to focus on them instead of studying over and over again the well-known, internationally recognized philosophers.

Let me conclude on a slightly lighter note. There is no doubt about it that comparative studies on various phenomena in the histories of national philosophies lead to important results, and that the relation of philosophy to national culture is a complex problem, and that various histories of national philosophy can be written and they can throw different lights on various phenomena, changing the emphasis, and stressing this or that problem. Moreover, historians of philosophy should, certainly, discuss their methods and improve them, but this process can imperceptibly turn into endless refinements without any real, even imperfect, application. Lack of a perfect method cannot justify not taking up the basic work. In the end, the value of every method can be estimated only after it has been applied and its results have been presented and assessed.

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**Tomasz Mróz**

**Reply to the Paper "National Philosophy as a Subject of Comparative Research"**

The paper aims to clarify and develop some of the issues raised by S. Rudenko & S. Yosypenko who reviewed the author's book *Selected Issues in the History of Polish Philosophy*. It focuses mostly on methodological questions in the historiography of national philosophies, and on interdisciplinary approach which is presented as useful and fruitful for researching less influential philosophical traditions.

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**Томаш Мруз**

**Відповідь на допис «Національна філософія як предмет порівняльного дослідження»**

Допис має на меті прояснити й розвинути питання, порушені С. Йосипенком і С. Руденком у їхньому огляді авторової книжки *Selected Issues in the History of Polish Philosophy*. Автор зосереджується головним чином на методологічних питаннях історіографії національної філософії та на міждисциплінарному підході, які видаються корисними і продуктивними при дослідженні не впливових філософських традицій.

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