



ON GEORGIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

It is stated in the article that Georgia is a country of ancient culture. The intellectual history of the Georgian nation is unique. Traditionally, it has always been oriented towards the highest spiritual ideals. The existence of Georgian philosophy proves it. Nowadays existence of Georgian philosophy is a fact. It seems impossible that the nation which created a unique culture did not have its original philosophy. At present, many scientists openly speak about a proto-Georgian civilisation, which is often considered even a precursor of European civilisation. Naturally, such a civilisation could not originate if there had not been a corresponding philosophical system, which did not reach our epoch, but despite it, the creative energy of the Georgian nation attained peaks of spirituality. In general, it can be said that philosophy is the same everywhere, though thinking of every nation alongside the general characteristics has its own specific traits. Thus, despite the European origins of philosophy, it is justified to speak about Georgian philosophy. The Georgian nation had to oppose numerous enemies, and very often, there was no time for philosophical creation. In spite of this, Georgian philosophy still developed as an original phenomenon. A special contribution to the study of Georgian philosophy is made by a two-volume edition of “A History of Georgian Philosophy” by Shalva Nutsubidze. It should also be said that our small country, situated at the junction of Europe and Asia, has often been a creator of various philosophical conceptions. To confirm the validity of the above statement, it is necessary to, at least generally, review the past, present and future of philosophy in Georgia. The article deals with the issues of such type.

Keywords

Philosophy, philosophy in Georgia, Georgian philosophy, Georgian philosophers, Petre the Iberian, Ioanne Petritsi, Shota Rustaveli, Solomon Dodashvili, Konstantine Kapaneli, Mikhako Tsereteli, Shalva Nutsubidze, Mose Gogiberidze, Sergi Danelia, Kote Bakradze.

Introduction

Systematic scientific research of the history of Georgian philosophical thought started at the beginning of the 20th century and consists of two stages. The first stage is associated with the names of Ivane Javakhishvili and Niko Marr, the second stage – with Shalva Nutsubidze’s studies. Sh. Nutsubidze’s long-standing and multi-aspected research into the history of Georgian philosophy resulted in a two-volume fundamental treatise “A History of Georgian Philosophy” (vol. I – 1956; vol. II - 1958, Tbilisi). The edition contains the history of Georgian philosophy from ancient times up to the works of Solomon Dodashvili (19th century).

Materials and Methods

The article presents a theoretical-philosophical research conducted using the method of logical analysis. It is based on the primary (works by Georgian philosophers) and secondary (literature on Georgian philosophers and Georgian philosophy) sources concerning the theoretical research problem.

The Research Results

The written sources of as early as the 6th century testify to the existence of a centre studying philosophical thought in historical Georgia. It is fixed in the Greek sources in particular by a famous rhetorician and philosopher, Themistios. According to him, there was a centre for philosophical education in the 4th century Kolhida, which gained such authority and fame that people arrived from foreign countries to receive knowledge of philosophy there.

A 4th-century famous figure, Bakuri, is associated with the Kolkheti school of rhetoric. The Greek sources present Bakuri not only as a commander-in-chief but as a philosopher as well. An outstanding thinker of the Middle Ages, Petre the Iberian, Murvan in the world (411-491), was a descendant of the royal family of Kartli. The interest of scientists towards Petre the Iberian grew stronger when, due to Nutsubidze-Honingman's theory, he was named as the real author of the so-called Areopagitical works. For centuries, the authorship of these works was, by mistake, ascribed to a famous ecclesiastic figure of the 1st century, Dionysius the Areopagite. In the Middle centuries, certain doubts arose concerning his authorship and therefore Doinysius the Areopagite was called “pseudo” (false). Plenty of candidates were named as the author of the Areopagitical books in the scientific circles, though none of these hypotheses withstood testing. In 1942, Shalva Nutsubidze published a work in which he, relying on plausible arguments, proved that Petre the Iberian was the real author of the Areopagitical books. In 1953, a well-known Belgian orientalist, Ernest Honingman, independently of Shalva Nutsubidze, arrived at the same conclusion. In science, this theory is known as a Nustsubidze-Honingman conception.

The arrival of the Assyrian Fathers in historical Georgia in the second half of the 6th century was of great importance. They established an active monastic life and launched various activities. Among the Assyrian Fathers, a special contribution to the development of Georgian philosophical thought was made by David of Gareja and Abibos of Nekresi.

David of Gareja was an outstanding representative of Christian theology. He understood God, as the creator of the universe, the cause and ruler of everything.

Abibos of Nekresi, as it seems, was well acquainted with Empedocles' (487-424), an ancient Greek philosopher's theory of four elements (earth, water, fire, air) and used it to defend the Christian world outlook.

The spreading of Christianity in Georgia brought about not only the development of the original writing but also serious activity in the sphere of translation. In this respect, the Georgian versions of “Life of Grigol of Khandzta” by Giorgi Merchule and “The Wisdom of Balahvar” deserve special attention. In his work Giorgi Merchule described the life and activities of the 8th -9th -century public figure Grigol of Khandzta.

Due to a large-scale building of churches and monasteries in Georgia, centres for spiritual, cultural and philosophical education and development were formed in the country as well as abroad (Iviron Monastery of Mount Athos, Black Mount in Antioch, Petritsoni Monastery), where Giorgi and Eqvtime Mtatsmideli, Ioane Petritsi, Ephrem Mtsire, Giorgi Mtsire and others conducted their scientific and translational activities. Endeavours of the Georgian scholars were not in vain. Their work built the foundations on the basis of which, in the 11th -12th centuries, Georgia, alongside strengthening the state power, reached as well exquisite cultural heights – the culmination of the process was “The Knight in the Panther's Skin” by Rustaveli. This poem is considered a Renaissance masterpiece. The conditions necessary for forming the Renaissance culture were present in the 11th -12th centuries Georgia. According to Ivane Javakhishvili, the most important mark of that period was Georgians' thirst “for philosophical works”, among which Neoplatonism was especially popular. Alongside the Greek philosophy, Georgians learnt the Greek pagan poetry as well. As Ivane Javakhishvili wrote, the Georgians savoured the masterpieces of Hellenic art and literature and greedily incorporated the animating Hellenism, the in-depth and thorough research into which originated the so-called Renaissance in Western Europe. This movement began in Georgia in the 12th century, but it was hindered by the invasion of the Mongols in the 13th century.

An outstanding Georgian thinker of the 11th -12th centuries, Ioane Petritsi, was at the origins of the Georgian Renaissance. He was educated in Constantinople, at the Mangan Academy, where a famous Byzantine philosopher, Neoplatonic Ioan Italus, was his teacher. If we also consider the fact that John Italus, together with a second famous Byzantine philosopher, Michael Psellos, is known as a thinker of the Renaissance mode, we can suppose that Ioane Petritsi, on his return to Georgia, was already enthralled by the Renaissance world outlook. In Georgia, he found a tradition of Neoplatonic studies. Translation of the Areopagitical books from Greek by an outstanding translator and thinker, Ephrem Mtsire, proves it. Ephrem Mtsire, Ioane Petritsi and Arsen Iqaltoeli were the figures who facilitated the rise of Georgian philosophical thought in the country. Ephrem Mtsire (XI c.) was supposedly born in Samtskhe; he received education in Constantinople, and later went to live on Black Mount in Antioch, where he spent all his life. The contribution of Ephrem Mtsire to the introduction of philosophical terminology and establishing it in Georgian thinking, as well as in translating philosophical works, is tremendous. From the aspect of translational activities, we should first of all mention translation of the Areopagitical works and Ioane of Damascus' "The Fountain of Knowledge".

Arsen Iqaltoeli (11-12 cc..) is Ioane Petritsi's contemporary, and they studied together in Constantinople, the Mangan Academy. Later, he went to Antioch – the Black Mount. After returning to Georgia, Arsen Iqaltoeli went to Gelati, later to Shio Mgvime and Iqalto monasteries. In Iqalto, he founded an academy. Among Arsen Iqaltoeli's works is "Dogmatikon", which is a vast compendium (brief contents) consisting of various works. "Dogmatikon" contains Anastasius of Sinai's "Guide Along the Right Path", John of Damascus' "The Fountain of Knowledge", and treatises by Theodore Abu Qurrah, which were directed against Judaism, Islam and various Christian heresies. "Dogmatikon" contains other works as well. From the viewpoint of philosophy, a small-sized philosophical-religious treatise "On the First" which presumably belongs to a famous Byzantine philosopher, Michael Psellos, is of certain interest. The treatise deals with the problem of the "first", which was one of the most important problems for the Middle centuries thinking. In it, a theory of the first cause – God is rendered.

During the periods when pure philosophical activities are ceased, quite often philosophical problems are treated and discussed by representatives of other spheres of culture. In this respect, the activities of an outstanding Georgian writer and public figure, Sulxhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658-1725), are of particular importance. The contribution of this great thinker to the development of Georgian philosophical thought, first of all, consists in introducing philosophical terminology into the Georgian intellectual reality and in a fresh reconsideration of these terms. Definitions of philosophical terms given by Sulxhan-Saba Orbeliani in his dictionary clearly demonstrate the author's close relation to the history of Georgian philosophy. He profusely uses materials from works by Georgian thinkers (Ioane Petritsi, Arsen Iqaltoeli). According to Sh. Nutcubidze, the contribution of Sulxhan-Saba Orbeliani to Georgian philosophy consisted in the fact that he, by means of fables, on the one hand, and through definitions of terms on the other, at least partially revived Georgian traditions and monuments which were made invisible by the centuries-old hardships and in doing it, he facilitated their discussion and analysis by the future generations.

More or less positive turn in the history of Georgian philosophical thought happened at the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century. In this respect, contributions by Anton Bagrationi, Alexandre Amilakhvari, Iona Khelashvili, Ioane Batonishvili, and Solomon Dodashvili are rather important.

Scientific activities of brothers, sons of the last king of Georgia Giorgi XII, - Ioane (1778-1830) and David (1756-1819) Batonishvili, who lived and worked in Russia, are very important for the development of Georgian philosophical thought. Ioane Batonishvili wrote a work of encyclopedic character, "Kalmasoba", in which almost all branches of knowledge, among them philosophy, are presented. David Batonishvili was engaged in translational activities; he is also the author of an original work, "Physics in brief", which deals with philosophical topics as well. Alexander Amilakhvari (1750-1802) wrote a work, "A Wise Man of East", in which he defended the European model of state constitution.

Among the thinkers of this period, Solomon Dodashvili (1805-1836) is an outstanding figure. With him, a new epoch started in the history of Georgian philosophical thought. He was well-read in modern philosophy and had fundamentally mastered it, thus creating a strong basis for his "Logic", which he wrote in Russian and published in Petersburg (1827).

Treatise "Fundamentals of Experimental Psychology" (Petersburg, 1858), written by an outstanding ecclesiastic figure and scientist, Episcopus of Imereti Gabriel, or Gerasime Kikodze (1825-

1896) in the world. This work was translated and published in Georgia with a great delay, in 1993. The sermons by Gabriel Episcopus gained great recognition as well; they were published several times, the last one is a two-volume edition (1990). In the sermons, the author's ideas concerning man's destination and attempts to link together science and faith are worth attention.

Archil Jorjadze (1872-1913) was an outstanding Georgian thinker of modernity who, despite his short life, left a rich and manifold legacy. Four volumes were published during his life, and the fifth volume was prepared by himself.

Mikhako Tsereteli (1878-1965) was a famous Georgian thinker who spent almost all his life abroad. He was a versatile figure (astrologer, philosopher, sociologist). The main part of M. Tsereteli's works is published abroad. The work "Nation and the Humanity", published in 1910 in Tbilisi, brought him wide recognition in Georgia. "Nation and the Humanity" is a serious sociological study in which the author consistently analyses the essence of society, the concept of humanity, the interrelation of nation and society, people, nation and state.

Development of the 20th-century Georgian philosophy, is, in main, associated with the foundation of Tbilisi state university (1918), where shortly after the university began functioning, an "Ioane Petritsi Philosophical Society" was formed. It was followed by Sh. Nutsubidze's philosophical seminars. It all conditioned an exceptional rise of philosophical thinking which is primarily associated with Shalva Nutsubidze, Dimitri Uznadze, Sergi Danelia, Mose Gogiberidze, Kita Megrelidze, Konstantine Kapaneli, Konstantine Bakradze and Savle Tsreteli.

A serious contribution to the development and strengthening of Georgian philosophical thought is made by an outstanding Georgian psychologist, founder of the theory of attitude and set **Dimitri Uznadze** (1886-1950). His works "Vl. Soloviov – his Theory of Cognition and Metaphysics" (Halle) and especially a monographic study "Henri Bergson" (Tb. 1920) are among the most significant contributions to modern Georgian philosophy. Dimitri Uznadze's theory of attitude and set played an important role in the explanation of the acute problems of modern philosophy. The results of research into the regularities of conscious and unconscious psychs, which Dimitri Uznadze formulated in the foundations of general and experimental psychology, build a basis to explain many psychological problems which are linked to both gnosiological and axiological problems.

The beginning of scientific analysis of the history of philosophy in Georgia is associated with **Sergi Danelia** (1887-1963). In this respect, his following works are worth noting: "Antique Philosophy Before Socrates" (1925), "Philosophy of Xenophanes of Colophone" (1925) and "Socrates' Philosophy" (1930).

Mose Gogiberidze's (1897-1951) most important philosophical works are: "Einstein's Theory of Relativity and its Philosophical Foundations" (1924), "Axiomatic Origin of Cognition" (1926), "The Problem of the Subject of Cognition" (1928), etc. In these works, Mose Gogiberidze worked out his own philosophical viewpoint on cognising the infinite world by means of finite logical methods and named it an axiological method.

Kita Megrelidze's (1900-1944) contribution to developing Georgian philosophical and sociological thinking is undeniable. He was very young when he prepared a fundamental study, "Main Problems of Sociology of Thinking"; At that time, the publishing of the work was delayed, and it reached the readers only almost thirty years later. According to M. Gogiberidze, it is necessary to study the social environment of man to understand the specificity of man's thinking.

Konstantine Kapaneli (1889-1952) tried to analyse Georgian culture applying sociological principles in the process. K. Kapaneli formed the theory of organothropism, which is deeply influenced by Nietzsche's theory and biological sociology. His world outlook is based on the irrational principles of the philosophy of life.

Konstantine Bakradze made a great contribution to studying and analysing the history of German classical philosophy, dialectical theory and the issues linked to it.

Savle Tsreteli (1907-1966) made a great contribution to research into the problems of dialectical logic. The result of his longstanding work is a fundamental treatise, "Dialectical Logic" (1970).

Since the 60s of the 20th century, man's philosophical problems have become a subject of intense study. A great contribution to this sphere was made by Angia Bochorishvili (1902-1980). On his personal initiative, a department of philosophical anthropology was formed at the Institute of Philosophy.

Sh. Nutsubidze's tradition in studying the history of Georgian philosophical thought was continued by Shalva Khidasheli (1910-1994). His works are dedicated to studying key issues of the history of early Georgian philosophy (from ancient times to the Rustaveli epoch including). Sh. Khidasheli

deepened and developed Sh. Nutsubidze's conception of Georgian Renaissance. He fundamentally analysed the problem of the philosophical foundations of the Renaissance and wrote special works on this subject ("Issues of Rustaveli's World Outlook", "Neo-Platonic Theory in Rustvelology").

Conclusion

Summing up, it should be said that the above stated do not fully reflect the past, present and future of philosophy in Georgia, though we think that we managed to give those who are interested in philosophy a certain, maybe incomplete, picture proving that the Georgians have a rich and very interesting history of philosophy. We can predict that in the future, philosophy in Georgia will attain more success.

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