

Preface

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The present issue grew out of a conversation that the undersigned held, more than two years ago, with Professor Abdusalam Guseynov, currently the director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in Moscow. The idea came to mind to ‘represent’ the state of philosophy in Russia as seen from the perspective of the scholars attached to the several ‘sectors’ of philosophical research within the Institute; although all of the materials appearing here are by scholars associated with the Institute, they bear on philosophy and philosophers throughout the Russian academic system as a whole. It goes nearly without saying that the background question concerns shifts in orientation by academic philosophers in Russia since the demise of the Soviet Union that brought in its wake the eclipse of the official state ideology which had arrogated to itself the content and institutional practice of philosophy. Accordingly, the purpose of the issue is twofold:

- first, to provide a picture of the individual domains of research in philosophy—the personalities in the round, the themes under discussion, the resources brought to bear on the themes;
- second, to touch on some of the key controversies driving research in the individual domains with an eye to the direction, the evolution of the discussions.

The first part of the present issue consists of eight articles each of which focuses on a specific domain of research. In most cases, the authors consider whether and how Russian philosophers today take into account parallel developments in philosophy outside of Russia and how they position themselves with respect to these

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developments. This question returns with more emphasis in the second part of the current issue in which the contributions are addressed explicitly to ‘state of philosophy’ in Russia today. The respondents are scholars with long-standing experience and established reputations within the post-Soviet Russian academic establishment. While some of the views they express may be controversial none of their critical evaluations appears to be one-sided, be it positively or negatively. After all, the question about the state of philosophy is one that is on the minds of many philosophers outside Russia as well: it concerns not only the internal workings of the philosophical mind, but also, perhaps especially, the way in which philosophers respond to and articulate, in their specific manner, the broader concerns at the heart of societal reality. All the more so in the case of Russia, not so long ago still in the throes of systemic crisis; here the broader context needs to be kept in clear view when assessing whether philosophical research and its impact is in sync or out of kilter with the broader societal matrix. Thanks to the candid views expressed here, the reader is given a unique opportunity to sense how Russian philosophers evaluate their contributions to the needs of the times.

Especial thanks are due to Professor Gusejnov who facilitated the project, to an unnamed translator without whose efforts this issue would not have seen the day, and with particular mention to Dr. Aleksandra Yakovleva, executive secretary to the Director of the Institute, who oversaw the entire process, providing expert mediation between the undersigned and the individual authors.