Kharkiv Research School in Ukrainian Philosophy of Soviet Period: Social, Political and Philosophical Researches

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The article analyzes the key points and expresses the future perspectives of socio-political and historical-philosophical researches of Kharkiv Research School of the Soviet period. The main emphasis is on current issues of research of Kharkiv philosophical tradition in the ’60s-’80s of the 20th century. An attempt was made to outline the problems and clarify the specifics of Kharkiv Research School of this period to reproduce a holistic picture of the development of Ukrainian philosophy of the Soviet period. For this purpose, the peculiarities of the explication of socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-practical, and philosophical-anthropological issues, which took place in Soviet philosophical thought in the conditions of the dominance of dialectical and historical materialism as a scientific paradigm, were studied. Key points in the research of Kharkiv scholars who tried to move away from the theoretical and methodological doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, contrasting their development of philosophical problems in science, epistemology, and methodological issues of scientific knowledge, ethical and sociological issues, were traced.

Keywords: Kharkiv Research School, Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism, Ideology, Ukrainian Philosophy of the Soviet Era

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Introduction

Today, the urgency of a systematic study of national philosophy development is due to the need for a comprehensive rethinking of the place and role of the cohort of Ukrainian philosophers in the institutionalization of domestic philosophical education, science, and culture. Today, the evolution and development of Ukrainian philosophical thought is a very interesting subject of study, especially in the Soviet period, when philosophy officially had the status of a political and ideological affair, dominated by strict control over scholars’ expression in the spirit of party guidelines. However, neither ideological pressure nor the party’s instructions to recognize only Marxist-Leninist philosophy could stop the Soviet-era scholars who managed to carry their own thoughts and research through all the prohibitions. Gradually (after Stalin’s repressions), the pressure weakened, and an atmosphere was created for Soviet philosophy in which the main topics of research were the problems of the epistemology and the methodology of science. Different interpretations of the epistemology and different interpretations of the philosophical and methodological ideas of the classics of Marxism-Leninism led to the emergence of different scientific schools (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa) (Yarmolitska & Gan, 2020).

This article aims to investigate the development of Kharkiv Research School of the Soviet period, providing an unbiased and systematic study of its functioning as a center of socio-political and philosophical thought to determine the impact of these studies on Ukrainian science and culture. To accomplish this task, we will try to reconstruct the research field of the outlined period, and for this, we will analyze some publications that were published during this period by Kharkiv scientists and became the basis of this article.

Let us turn to the beginning of the foundation of Kharkiv Research School. For a certain period (‘20s–’30s of the 20th century.) Kharkiv Research School was considered as the center of philosophy. During this period, the philosophical research of scholars focused on the history and theory of Marxism-Leninism, Ukrainian philosophy, socio-political thought, and foreign philosophy. From the middle of the 20th century, Kharkiv scholars’ researches focus on the development of socio-political and philosophical views of Russian and Ukrainian thinkers. In the ‘60s–’80s, scientific knowledge’s theory and methodology began to be actively developed, attention was paid to ethical issues, and epistemological and logical-methodological issues were developed. However, the philosophical reflection of Kharkiv Research School scholars of the Soviet period is dominated by methodological versions of the contemporary system of Marxist philosophy in the context of the unity of dialectical and historical materialism.

The history of science in Kharkiv, in particular the history of philosophical thought, was mainly concentrated at Kharkiv University, where Western European specialists worked at various times, among whom was the famous German philosopher J. Shad. Many well-known names are also connected with the university — V. Karazin, I. Ryzkyi, I. Osipovskyi, O. Potebnia, D. Bagalii, T. Butkevych, and others.

Based on the research of Western European philosophers, Kharkiv scholars have made a significant contribution to the development of philosophical thought, exploring the humanistic traditions and ideas of freedom and responsibility, and the history of philosophical and social thought in Ukraine and Russia, central problems of epistemology, subject, subjective and objective, actively developed the theory and methodology of scientific knowledge and
problems of social activity. The search for Kharkiv scholars in the philosophy and sociology of the Soviet period was based primarily on the social theory of Marxism. Traditionally supported by Ukrainian thinkers was a general approach to the methodology and periodization of the history of philosophy, based on the tasks of the Marxist-Leninist historical and philosophical concept. However, the realities of social practice-led scholars to radically rethink the theories and practices of communist ideals.

About the Kharkiv center of philosophical thought, about its history of the foundation and to the beginning of the 21st century published many articles and monographs (G. Panov, A. Shchedrin, N. Radionova, V. Abashnyk, S. Golikov, O. Mamalui, L. Denisko, V. Korablova, O. Burova, V. Sukhina, I. Shudryk, etc.). However, these studies do not exhaust all possible ways to study the history of Soviet philosophy. There is a need for explications of the definition of such a phenomenon as Kharkiv Research School, the study of which is quite broad and diverse and, accordingly, requires a systematic and in-depth study of the least studied stages of its formation.

Research of philosophical problems of natural science and categories of Marxist dialectics by Kharkiv scientists in Soviet times

Philosophical problems of natural science began to be developed quite intensively during the Soviet period, and most of the works were devoted to the Marxist-Leninist coverage of certain questions of natural science. Thus, Kharkiv researcher K. Havrysh studies the nature of the ideological struggle around one of the most important problems of modern (at that time) natural science — the problem of the essence of life. The main attention of her research is focused on the analysis of the basic principles that constitute the essence of the dialectical-materialist approach to life as a special, qualitatively peculiar form of motion of matter, attempts are made to show the meaning of these provisions for further development of biological research, for the struggle against the idealism and mechanism of that time, the expediency of developing a new definition of life corresponding to the latest scientific achievements is considered. Also, in his research K. Havrysh emphasizes the growing role of Soviet science, which faces the task of broad and comprehensive development of theoretical research in the field of natural sciences. Of fundamental importance here is that several tasks in the first place are to clarify the essence of the phenomena of life. This is primarily due to this problem’s practical significance because to manage life processes, and they should be known. “Human beings will only become the complete master of living nature when he/she finds what determines the specifics of life, which underlies the difference between living and non-living” (Havrysh, 1965: 1).

Due to its ideological nature, the problem of the essence of life has always been the subject of a fierce ideological struggle. In Soviet times, this problem was also not overlooked by naturalists and philosophers. The question of what life is, what its nature is, has attracted attention since the birth of philosophical thought. There were acute debates around this issue. At certain stages of the development of philosophy and natural science, there was a struggle between two opposite directions — materialism and idealism. As K. Havrysh notes, only the new philosophy — dialectical materialism — makes a decisive step in solving philosophical issues related to the problem of the essence of life (Havrysh, 1965: 7-41).

In the ‘60s, there are many studies published by young scientists of Maksym Horkyi Kharkiv State University, which attract attention with their curiosity, but unfortunately are also covered by the same ideology as their senior mentors, who testify to the ideological party pressure from
the Soviet authorities on scientists who did not have the opportunity to freely express their views. In the published work “Some Questions of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy” (1964), the categories of Marxist dialectics, the classification of categories of historical materialism, the ideas of historical progress in pre-Marxist sociology, and others were studied. Currently, O. Ivanishchenko, researching the categories of Marxist dialectics, noted that they are the basic logical concepts that reflect certain general aspects of the laws of various processes that take place in nature, society, and thought. At that time, little-studied categories such as — things, property, quality, etc., belong to thinking. According to the young scientist, the study of these categories plays an important role in natural science research. Without clarifying the objective content and their features, it is impossible to correctly understand the laws of science and the laws of society. The material world is the unity of an infinite variety of things. However, “each thing, in turn, acts in the same way as the unity of diversity — the unity of different mutually influential material processes. The presence of the unity of opposites in objects is the basis of their stability” (Some questions, 1964: 15). But such unity is not absolute. It has a relative coincidence. The identity of opposites is incomplete. As a result of which the objects of the material world are subject to change, it can be both transforming into each other and unified into new material systems.

In general, methodological versions of that time system of Marxist philosophy in the context of the unity of dialectical and historical materialism did not go unnoticed in the studies of young Kharkiv scholars. Thus, their scientific research focuses on the study of the concept of historical progress. O. Mamalui conducted his research in this direction. He noted that since its inception, the idea of historical progress had undergone a complex evolution in pre-Marxist sociology, going from the first assumptions to the revolutionary-democratic concept of historical progress. None of its representatives was able to rise to a scientific, dialectical-materialist understanding of socio-historical progress. This was done only by the ideologues of the working class K. Marx and F. Engels (Some questions, 1964: 108). As we can see, totalitarian control and management in Soviet times completely covered the thinking of Kharkiv scientists, leaving almost no chance for independent research and direction to new reforms in science.

Philosophical, sociological, and epistemological research of Kharkiv Research School in ‘60s-’80s of the 20th century

In the ‘70s-’80s of the 20th century, Kharkiv scholars actively worked on research on issues related to philosophical and sociological problems, which later became a significant contribution to Kharkiv Research School. During this period, philosophical research focuses on the problem of interaction of legal and moral regulation of social relations, a new aspect of morality and law as interacting complex dynamic systems that perform certain social functions was comprehended. The research of Kharkiv scholar O. Yakuba was devoted to the issues of complex social systems methodology of cognition, theoretical problems of ethics, legal science, and the issues of regulation of human behavior. She explained that only the analysis of the relationship between law and morality would allow us to understand their features, patterns of development, to clarify their role in managing social processes.

Based on interdisciplinary research, there is an interest in the problem of the relationship between communist morality and socialist law, which in the late ‘50s, and especially in the ‘60s, became especially popular among scholars. Most scholars devote their work to
these problems, studying the relationship between social consciousness forms and more thoroughly considering the commonalities and differences between law and morality. In this aspect, O. Yakuba’s attempt to systematically analyze legal and moral phenomena seems extremely important. She makes a general analysis of the relationship between morality and law as certain systems of phenomena, as complex ideological forms of society and shows the peculiarities of their interaction in regulating social activity. In a way, the researcher emphasizes the specific sociological study of the relationship between morality and law as ideological forms of society, which allows her not only to reveal the mechanism of interaction but also to clarify some general theoretical issues.

Exploring morality and law as sociological categories, O. Yakuba turns to such categories as social life and social consciousness, social relations, mode of production, socio-economic formation, laws of development of social processes, etc., which the scientist believes have important methodological significance in the study of morality and law. Along with this, it considers the basic laws and categories of dialectics, such as freedom and necessity, possibility and reality, part and entire, essence and phenomenon, form and content, and others. In general, the study of legal and moral systems of regulation of social relations achieves its goal only when the basic principles of dialectics build it as logic and epistemology. The analysis of social phenomena requires a dialectical-materialist approach, which in turn requires a systematic approach to the study of social processes, which involves the structural and functional analysis of complex systems in their dynamics and relationships with other systems. Both morality and law, as sociological categories, have methodological significance for specific sciences because they allow us to understand the place of morality and law in the system of relations of society as a single social organism, to identify their most significant features as specific aspects of this single whole (Yakuba, 1970: 3 -10).

During the same period, in parallel with O. Yakuba’s research, there is another Kharkiv scientist O. Plakhotnyi, who also devoted his research to sociological problems, namely, to the analysis of the sociological aspect of the relationship between freedom and conformity. The study of this problem, the scientist says, will not only reveal the active role of the subject’s consciousness but also more fully determine its content, dependence on different social communities of people, on the organization of society itself. However, his research did not pass without a critique of bourgeois sociology, without which no scientific study could do in Soviet times.

Analyzing the sociological aspect of freedom and responsibility, it is necessary to proceed from the organic connection of two problems: philosophical — “freedom — necessity” and sociological — “personality — society.” After all, the philosopher, exploring the problem of “freedom — necessity,” gives a theoretical analysis of these categories, which reflect the qualitatively special connections of the objective world, which are not covered by other categories. According to O. Plakhotnyi, materialists-dialectics understand by necessity what naturally follows from the internal, essential connections of this process. Necessity is connected with the very essence of the process by which it is conditioned, and freedom is a practical mastery of necessity based on the knowledge of objective patterns. In the history of philosophy, the solution to the problem of freedom has always rested on the understanding of the relationship between necessity and chance (Plakhotnyi, 1972: 4-5).

Suppose we talk about what the sociologist encounters in the study of freedom and responsibility. In that case, we should pay attention to the fact that he is dealing with a specific subject of the study, namely — society, social relations, personality, with special
social interests of various social forces, with a world in which the idea, views, moods, social
theories, ideologies, worldview, etc. play an important role. “The problem of the relationship
between freedom and necessity is the methodological basis of the theory of responsibility
because this problem in sociological research takes the form of freedom and social necessity
(responsibility). The analysis of freedom and responsibility in the sociological aspect allows
not only to reveal the active role of the subject’s consciousness but also to more fully determine
its content” (Plakhotnyi, 1972: 6-7). Thus, both the philosophical and sociological aspects of
the study of freedom and responsibility will be able to give positive results only with a specific
historical approach.

At the same time, a young scientist Yu. Bukhalov, known in certain circles of philosophers,
began his activity. He began as a historian of Ukrainian philosophy and took part in the
“epistemological turn” of national thought, which at that time was headed by P. Kopnin. Subsequently, the Kharkiv scientist joined the research of socio-practical, socio-cultural,
anthropological direction in philosophy. Later, these studies based on the Department of
Philosophy at Kharkiv University served as the beginning of the laboratory of sociological
research, then the department, and finally the creation of the Faculty of Sociology. But all this
was later, and in the ‘60s and 70’s the research of the young scientist Yu. Bukhalov concerned
problems of epistemology, logic, and methodology of science, the ratio of subjective and
objective in practice and cognition, the cognitive activity of the subject, etc. Currently, defining
dialectical materialism as the science of the general essential relations of subject and object,
which is based on the principle of materialism understanding of history, the scientist explores
the relationship between subject and object, based on two main forms of interaction between
subject and object, are the two main forms of social activity — practice and cognition, the
structure of dialectical materialism is represented as the unity of historical materialism (theory
of practice) and epistemology (theory of cognition).

The study of the relationship of philosophy with other sciences, with spiritual culture
and social life during the Brezhnev “stagnation” took place under the banner of Marxist-
Leninist philosophy as a methodological basis of scientific knowledge and social practice,
and the development of principles of the new thinking was associated with party program
tasks, the main of which was — to form a scientific, Marxist-Leninist worldview in all
Soviet people. Most Soviet scientists worked in the same direction, trying to determine the
specifities of philosophy itself, its subject (V. Akulov, M. Alekseev, V. Babushkin, E. Ilienkov,
P. Kopnin, T. Oizerman, V. Rozhyn, E. Solopov, etc.). As limited ideological guidelines, they
worked to define the subject of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. During this period in the Soviet
philosophical literature, there are several points of view on the subject of Marxist philosophy,
one of which can be called ontological, in which scientific philosophy in the main sense is a
general theory of matter. Marxist philosophy essentially coincides with ontology as a science
of the general in the world, of the world as such, of the essences, substances of the world, the
way, and the general laws of its existence. The epistemology occupies a subordinate place. Its
subject is the cognitive subject-object relations, as well as the process of cognition. Another
logical and epistemological point of view is that the philosophy of Marxism is the science
of the general laws of thought that reflect reality. According to Yu. Bukhalov, the materialist
understanding of history is not just an important aspect of Marxist philosophy, but its basis,
the essence that determines its other aspects and features. It is “the materialist understanding
of history, being also dialectical, that has made it possible to reveal the failure of idealism and
to overcome the basic shortcomings of pre-Marxist materialism. It substantiated the organic
unity of materialism and dialectics, the social role of Marxist philosophy, a new understanding of the subject of philosophy and its relationship with other sciences and forms of social consciousness” (Bukhalov, 1989: 3-9).

Thus, we can conclude that the scientific research of Kharkiv scientists of that period covered a wide range of research on pre-Marxist materialism, epistemological and ontological aspects of the concept of “matter,” the relationship between “matter-consciousness” and “object-subject,” considered dialectical materialism as the unity of historical materialism and the epistemology, defining dialectical materialism as the science of the relationship between subject and object, considering them from the standpoint of a materialist understanding of history, and others. They argued that the materialist understanding of history is a theoretical basis for the communist restructuring of society (Bukhalov, 1989: 121-122).

**Human problems in philosophical and anthropological research of Kharkiv Research School**

In the ‘60s-’70s 20th century, the origin of philosophical anthropology can traced to Kharkiv’s philosophical thought; this is manifested in the fact that some philosophers conclude that it is impossible to study the problems of the theory of consciousness without a holistic philosophical and anthropological concept. Scientists of this period follow the path of the critical study of the philosophical heritage of many famous thinkers of the pre-Marxist period, trying to show what place the problem of man occupied in the philosophical theories of philosophers of different times, not avoiding the social meaning of the assessment given by K. Marx, defining the previous philosophy as a contemplative philosophy, as well as not missing the essence of the revolution made by him in philosophy, indicating how this overturn solves the world-historical problem of human.

Let us turn to the point of view expressed by the Kharkiv researcher of that time A. Mark regarding Marxism, the party history of philosophy, and the attitude of pre-Marxist (as well as bourgeois, that was modern at that time) philosophy to human. The author believes this problem is essentially a problem of the scientific worldview, which in itself determines the attitude to human in the epistemology, research methodology, theories of socio-historical, politics, ethics, and aesthetics. In all parts of philosophy, it directly or indirectly affects its general relationship to the human being. Therefore, A. Mark tries to highlight more revealing studies of pre-Marxist philosophical speculation, turning to its most influential representatives (Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Democritus, Kant, Hegel, etc.). He also examines how man was considered in the philosophy of bourgeois society (F. Bacon’s materialism, Spinoza’s philosophy, French materialism of the 18th century, Kant’s “critical” idealism, Hegel’s absolute and dialectical idealism, L. Feuerbach’s materialism). According to A. Mark, such a study will help to find an answer to the question: what place did human occupy and occupies in philosophical constructions, in the worldview of thinking people throughout the prehistory of human society (Mark, 1970: 4-75).

The vast majority of researchers of that time held the view that the problems of a human, his social activity formed the real basis of the Marxist revolutionary worldview and served as a guide to the study of the development of philosophical thought in historical and philosophical science. Interpretation of important problems of cognition, says A. Mark, as well as the interpretation of issues directly related to social and moral issues in philosophical systems, were largely devoid of social and human meaning and imbued with contemplative objectivism,
which many philosophers had antihumanism meaning. The lack of purposefulness aimed at real changes in the objective world in the interests of a human, at real subordination to a human, all this led to the fact that in the development of human thought, there was a historical need to humanize philosophy, especially as a worldview (Mark, 1970: 184-186).

Until the early ’70s, there was intensive research in Soviet philosophy, which focused on the problems of the essence and education of human simplicity and modesty in public and private life, considered the formation of the principle of communist morality in its inseparable connection with the education of a new person. Marxist-Leninist morality, on the formation of the moral image of the Soviet human, established the principles of the moral code of the builder of communism. For example, Kharkiv philosophers’ research focused on the education of communist consciousness, the formation of communist morality, determined the most important norms (rules) or requirements imposed by a particular class or society as a whole on human behavior. By the principles of morality are characterized by a human’s moral state, he evaluates his actions and behavior. On this basis, J. Bludov and O. Stepanchenko define one of the principles of the moral code of the builder of communism — simplicity and modesty in public and private life, the basis for the formation of certain qualities that characterize the moral purity of man (Bludov & Stepanchenko, 1963: 3-5).

They are working within the framework of Marxist-Leninist ethics, Ya. Bludov and O. Stepanchenko explored such concepts as simplicity and modesty, as well as the moral principles that should guide everyone, and which are contained in the moral code of the builder of communism. Philosophical understanding of such concepts and principles is the next attempt at research, which was prescribed in the moral code. Here are some of them: devotion to communism, love for the socialist homeland; conscientious work for the benefit of society; high awareness of public duty; collectivism and friendly mutual assistance; humane attitude and mutual respect between people; honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, simplicity and modesty in public and private life, etc. (Bludov & Stepanchenko, 1963: 11-13). Such principles of the moral code had to be followed by every builder of communism because it is in the principles of communist morality that its deep reliability, humanity, human justice, and nobility are expressed.

Conclusions

The period of difficult Soviet times, when philosophers were required to ideologically support party policy in the form of scientific communism, philosophical commentaries and propaganda of party decisions, the official recognition of the philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism, domestic philosophy was able to survive, passing to new philosophers philosophical thoughts to those who were interested in it. In this context, the activity dimension of scientific research of Kharkiv Research School enabled philosophy to perform some important functions in the cultural system, to promote the unification of the philosophical community into a single communicative space to ensure the continuity of philosophical knowledge and methodological principles, as well as the education of the ability to think critically, and a certain philosophical critique of Soviet ideology helped to survive Ukrainian philosophical thought.
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