

Philosophy of War and War in Philosophy: Philosophical Reaction to the War

Online seminar

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Aleksey Kamenskikh (University of Bremen)*

How to turn the Patriarch of the Enlightenment into a war hawk? Voltaire, Catherine II and the antiquising imagination / Как превратить патриарха Просвещения в ястреба войны? Вольтер, Екатерина II и «антикизирующее воображение»

During his study on the correspondence between Catherine II and Voltaire in the years of the first war of the Russian empress against the Ottoman Empire (1768-1774), the author of the paper analyzed the work of the forms of “antiquizing imagination”, in which the enlightenment discourse of the French philosopher and the Russian czarina is revealed as a colonizing one, representing the Northern Black Sea region, Constantinople and the Balkans as a legitimate heritage of an “enlightened” (Russian, in the case) monarch. As, within the Enlightenment model of knowledge, ancient Greece serves as the foundation of European history and as a narrative collection of examples of European civic virtues (and Voltaire sees Catherine's war against the Ottoman Empire as a chance to free the cradle of European civilization from "ignorant barbarians" and to restore Greece to its ancient luster and glory), only those, the "patriarch of the Enlightenment" convinced, who *know* the "true history" of the Balkans and the entire area that had once been part of ancient culture – i.e. those who have studied the writings by Herodotus and Plutarch – have the "right" to possess it. By the forces of the "antiquising imagination" of the participants in the correspondence, Crimea turns into “Tauria”, the lower Don into “Tanais”, and the Greek rebels of the Peloponnese into "Spartan legionnaires". Moreover, such an "antiquising narrative" allows Voltaire to declare Catherine a legitimate successor to the Byzantine emperors: “Ragusa, which called ... in ancient times Epidauria ... so long belonged to the Eastern Empire, *that is yours*” (Voltaire's letter of 2 November 1771).

The remarkable persistence of the identified schemes of historical imagination, as well as their colonial nature, is demonstrated by the last year's propagandist interview of Mikhail Piotrovsky, director of the Hermitage, given to Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 22.06.2022: Russia (unlike the current EU) is the real Europe because it has an ancient heritage (Kerch, Chersonesos, Taman), “and whoever has an ancient heritage is Europe”.

Mikhail Nemtsev (Independent institute of Philosophy)*

Philosophy of War and War in Philosophy. Philosophical reaction to the war / Философия войны и война в философии. Философская реакция на войну

In my speech I shall concentrate on two interrelated topics. War had been considered by philosophers since antiquity, and in the 20 Century it also has become a topic of philosophy. It makes sense even to talk about the historical development of a peculiar "philosophy of war". In contemporary Russia, the events of the last two years have become a challenge for philosophy. As one of the possible answers we can consider the formation of its new "philosophy of war" (which I propose to call "national militarism"). As another answer, philosophical criticism of the causes of Russian aggression. In the report, these two answers will be considered in the context of the problems of the philosophy of war of the 20th-21st centuries. /

В докладе речь пойдёт о двух взаимосвязанных темах. Война с древности рассматривается философами, и в XX веке она тоже становилась темой философии. Можно говорить об истории особой «философии войны». В России события последних двух лет стали вызовом для философии, и одним из возможных ответов стало формирование своей новой «философии войны» (которую я предлагаю называть «национал-милитаризмом»), а другим – философская критика причин российской агрессии. В докладе эти два ответа будут рассматриваться в контексте проблем философии войны 20-21 веков.

*Bio

Until March 2022, **Aleksey Kamenskikh** was an Associate Professor at the Perm branch of the Higher School of Economics, researching the politics of memory in contemporary Russia, teaching courses in public history, critical thinking, and the methodology of historical research. After the full-scale Russia's invasion in Ukraine began, under conditions of direct threat to his security and freedom as a board member of the Perm branch of the Memorial Society, he was forced to leave Russia and participated in a series of short-term research projects at universities in Bremen (Hans Koschnick fellowship program), Mainz (Gerda Henkel Foundation fellowship), and Amsterdam (Memory Studies Association grant). He is currently living in Mainz and working with the Research Center for East European Studies at the University of Bremen to prepare for publication the camp diaries (1960-1964) of a Soviet writer and political prisoner Kirill Uspensky (Kostinsky),
https://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de/de/3/20110606111634/20230302163452/Dr-_Aleksei_Kamenskikh.html.

Mikhail Nemtsev. Ph.D. (kandidat nauk) in Philosophy, MA in Gender Studies. Works in the field of Political philosophy and intellectual history of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Served as vice-editor of "Gefter.ru", taught philosophy and methods of political studies. Member of the Independent institute of Philosophy.