

THE UNBEARABLE CHARM OF FRILITY

Philosophizing in/on Eastern Europe

Angelaki (Oxford)

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Length: 5000-7000 words.

Senior Editor: Janus Head.
Guest Editor: Costica Bradatan
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Submission email: bradatan@hotmail.com (with »For the Angelaki issue« in the subject line). Please allow at least 4-6 months for the review process and editorial decisions. Receipt of materials will be confirmed by email in a matter of days.

Authors should keep in mind that they are writing for an academic, but non-specialist (and largely Western) readership. Therefore, references to specifically East-European developments, institutions, figures, etc. should be further clarified in end-notes as appropriate.

All submissions should be in English. Notwithstanding the fact that some authors use English as their second language, it is their responsibility to make sure that their submissions are in publishable English.

Apart from essays, we also invite proposals for a small number of book reviews – on the theme of the issue – and translations of (short) philosophical texts by major East-European philosophers. Interested authors should approach the Guest Editor with a short proposal offering a brief description of the book/translation in question and explaining their relevance for this special issue of *Angelaki*. However, the Guest Editor's initial approval of the book review/translation proposals should not be taken as a guarantee that their book reviews/translations will be accepted for inclusion in the issue.

All materials submitted to *Angelaki* undergo peer-review. Manuscripts and Notes, typed double-spaced, should be submitted to the Guest Editor as e-mail attachments, using Microsoft Word. The author's full address should be supplied as a footnote to the title page.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the MLA Citation Style: <http://www.mla.org>.

Angelaki is inviting contributions on the topic of »Philosophizing in/on Eastern Europe«.

Over the last several years European Union has welcomed a number of new member countries, most of which used to belong to the »Eastern bloc«. While, thanks to the influence of mass-media, tourism, immigration, etc., Western Europe has come to acquire some general geographic knowledge about these countries, relatively little is known about what happens there in terms of production of knowledge and cultural artifacts, in terms of intellectual debates and marketplace of ideas. Although all of them are now part of the same »European family«, there is comparatively little knowledge in the countries of Western Europe about the cultural physiognomy of the East-European newcomers.

The intellectual traffic between East and West within Europe seems to be most often one-way: it is as if ideas and intelligence can only move eastwards, as though from East westwards almost nothing (intellectually valid) is to be expected or desired. As such, the face of the »new Europe« that the West most often sees is that of »le plombier polonais«.

The originality of thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek, Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov, Jan Patočka, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran or Leszek Kołakowski, who have at different times made a significant contribution to the shaping of the Western intellectual discourse, is somehow taken for granted, and the character of the world they have come from is passed over in silence. It is as though these people come from nowhere – out of nothing. No significant attention is being paid to their complex backgrounds, to the specificity of their cultural origins, to the unique blend of intellectual challenges and ethical concerns that shaped their thinking, strengthened their personalities and, in the end, made them who they are.

The special issue we are proposing addresses precisely this situation in an attempt to bridge this gap of intellectual communication between Eastern and Western Europe. Its plan is to map out the complex intellectual landscape, the major intellectual debates and their historical origins, as well as the current marketplace of philosophical ideas in the countries of Eastern Europe. This issue aims at offering insights into the recent (or not so recent) history of »the East-European mind« and its many facets, as well as into what takes place philosophically right now in these places. It also seeks to point to the specific contributions that East-European thinkers might have to the shaping of a new, more comprehensive European intellectual project.

More importantly, this special issue will pay special attention to what connects these countries, giving them as it does a certain »family resemblance«. One important thing that these East-European newcomers to the EU have in common – despite their many cultural, linguistic, political and social differences – is the fact that all of them shared, not long ago, the same historical failure: the failure of the Communist project of Soviet inspiration. Whether you are in Prague or Budapest, Riga or Bucharest, Sofia or Warsaw, you cannot help noticing the traces of this major historical event: they are everywhere, in the public discourse as well as in the private conversations, in the ways people articulate their thoughts, in the language itself. For people living in Eastern Europe simple words such as »freedom«, »human rights«, »communism«, »capitalism«, »left« and »right«, »poverty« and »inequality« mean something different from what they do for someone who has been living in Western Europe. Much of what happens intellectually and philosophically in these places is deeply marked by the haunting memory of this historical failure of grand proportions, with its accompanying sense of immense collective suffering, frustration and bitterness.

That being said, it might be precisely this failure, frustration and bitterness, that place the East-Europeans – somehow paradoxically – in a philosophically interesting and potentially creative position. It is exactly the point that Václav Havel made in a speech in 1990. For him, the failed Soviet system left behind »a legacy of countless dead, an infinite spectrum of human suffering, profound economic decline, and above all enormous human humiliation. [...] At the same time, however unintentionally, [...] it has given us something positive: a special capacity to look, from time to time, somewhat further than someone

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who has not undergone this bitter experience. A person who cannot move and live a normal life because he is pinned under a boulder has more time to think about his hopes than someone who is not trapped in this way. [...] We too can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it«.

The philosophizing that takes place in Eastern Europe is highly relevant today not only because it has gained some privileged access to the topics of historical failure and frailty, collective suffering and trauma, but also because it comes to bear a special relationship with the notions of hope and political renewal, ethical openness and the reinvention of the human.

We invite submissions dealing with the history and the current state of philosophy and the philosophically minded disciplines in the countries of the Eastern Europe, some aspects of which have been pointed to above. Interdisciplinary approaches (combining, for example, philosophy, critical theory and intellectual history) are particularly encouraged.

Here are some of the possible topics:

- (Philosophical) texts in/and their (cultural) contexts
- Lost in translation
- The traffic of philosophical ideas between Eastern & Western Europe
- Centrality and marginality in the European philosophical culture/discourse
- Canon(s) and canonization in the European philosophical culture
- Specifically East-European philosophical topics
- Making philosophical sense of (disastrous) historical experiences
- The (quite) bearable lightness of being East-European
- (Eastern) Europe as a laboratory of ideas
- Genealogies, contaminations and disseminations of ideas
- Philosophy and politics in Eastern Europe (before and after the collapse of Communism)
- Philosophy and civil society in Eastern Europe
- The tragic (East-European) fate of some (Western) philosophical ideas
- The European project, philosophically speaking
- »Le plombier polonais«, philosophically speaking

Please note that – in the spirit of *Angelaki*, a journal of »theoretical humanities« – we use throughout the term »philosophy« in a broad (Continental and interdisciplinary) sense.

Geographically, for the sake of convenience, this issue attempts to cover philosophical developments in countries that used to belong to the »Eastern bloc« and are now part of the European Union (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, the Baltic countries, Romania, etc.) or will join the EU in a foreseeable future (Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, etc.). Needless to say, as always, these are just approximations.