

# Editorial

## History of Philosophy in Estonia

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This special issue of *Studia Philosophica Estonica* has its origins in the 4th Annual Conference of Estonian Philosophy held at the University of Tartu from 5–7 June 2008. The conference, entitled “The Roots and Offshoots of Estonian Philosophy,” aimed to bring together scholars whose research is in some respect concerned with the history of philosophical thinking in this country, but also to provide a new venue for discussions on what Estonian philosophy is. Most papers in this volume rely on presentations given at that significant meeting and focus on particular periods or thinkers. The scope is wide, ranging from the theoretical and practical philosophy of the 17th century to the features of philosophical research and teaching in the Soviet era as well as today. Thus the papers provide insights into different intellectual environments in which philosophical investigations were undertaken in various ways, circumstances and languages. While the presentation of the history of philosophy in this special issue generally follows a chronological sequence, the goal has not been to cover all periods, areas and thinkers. A thorough, systematic account of the history of philosophy in Estonia has yet to be written.

Margit Sutrop tackles the issue of what Estonian philosophy is in relation to more general questions: what is philosophy, and what might be meant by talking of philosophy as pertains to a particular region or nation? She introduces and defends a broad concept of Estonian philosophy which could encompass both philosophers of different nationalities who have lived and worked in this country, publishing and teaching in different languages, as well as philosophers of Estonian descent located wherever their careers have taken them. As part of this discussion, Sutrop gives an informed survey of philosophy done in Estonia and by Estonians, from its beginning in the 13th century up to the present time, ending with a description of current

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developments at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Tartu and other relevant institutions.

Meelis Friedenthal and Pärtel Piirimäe describe the philosophical scene at the University of Tartu during the first two periods of its existence (1632–1656 and 1690–1710). They provide an extensive overview of the philosophical disputations presented at the university in order to clarify the boundaries of, and distinctions within the discipline of philosophy as it was then taught and practiced. They discuss the influences of Ramism on teaching and on the classification of sciences, but also the endurance of Aristotelianism that was well established in the university. According to Friedenthal and Piirimäe's account, theoretical and practical philosophy as individual and coherent fields of study were only established after 1690.

Eduard Parhomenko's paper focuses on the philosophical-religious views of Immanuel Kant's disciple, Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche (1762–1842), who was professor of philosophy at the University of Tartu from its reopening in 1802 to 1838. Jäsche is primarily known as the editor of Kant's lectures on logic, which were published in 1800. Parhomenko explains how a personal supernatural experience in 1808 induced Jäsche to turn away from Kant's *rational faith* and adopt Jacobi's *philosophy of faith*.

Two articles in this volume concentrate on Gustav Teichmüller (1832–1888) who held the chair of philosophy at the University of Tartu from 1871 to his death. Teichmüller is one of the most significant proponents of the philosophical doctrine known as personalism.

Heiner Schwenke offers an overview of Teichmüller's life and works, especially in the latter part of his career after he moved from Basel to Tartu. We learn that he was a prolific scholar whose studies in ancient philosophy, history of concepts, metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of religion deserve much wider attention and recognition than they have hence received. Schwenke argues that in epistemology Teichmüller defended a proto-form of direct realism that applies to the cognition of the self and God, but not of the external world.

Gottfried Gabriel begins his article by explaining the importance of studying the history of concepts to philosophy in general, and proceeds to present and analyse Teichmüller's contribution to this field. As Gabriel makes clear, our cognition of the world is fundamentally dependent on the concepts we have, and these are products of their history. Teichmüller carried out detailed historical studies of concepts, but for him these investigations served to solve systematic philosophical problems.

Jaanus Sooväli explores the influence that Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Teichmüller's famous contemporary and colleague in Basel, has had on the Estonian intellectual landscape. The focus of the paper is on the

period between the turn of the 19th/20th century and World War II. During that time, Nietzsche's ideas had significant influence on Estonian writers and literature. The paper ends with an account of recent discussions and scholarly work concerning Nietzsche's philosophy in the Estonian context.

Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik presents an account of the career and philosophy of his father, Walther Schmied-Kowarzik (1885–1958), who lived and worked in Tartu from 1920–1927. As the first full professor of philosophy at the University of Tartu in the recently established Republic of Estonia, he laid the foundations of research and teaching in the fields of philosophy, psychology and pedagogy according to Western standards at the time. The paper expounds the features of Schmied-Kowarzik's philosophy of consciousness analysis.

The two concluding papers of this special issue describe how philosophy was carried out and taught in Estonia in the Soviet period.

Ülo Matjus offers a comprehensive survey of teaching and research in philosophy during the two periods of Soviet occupation, 1940–1941 and 1944–1991. His account concentrates on history of philosophy, aesthetics and translation of philosophical works. The paper illustrates how philosophy survived, changed and developed under ideological pressure.

Rein Vihalemm describes the characteristics of philosophical work in the fields of theoretical philosophy and philosophy of science in Soviet Estonia, especially at the University of Tartu, from 1960–1990. He also discusses the issue of the value of Soviet Marxist philosophy and whether it has anything to offer to current philosophy.

The editors of the special issue hope that this presentation of the history of philosophy in Estonia will lead to many further studies both on the local and international level.

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