

IN MEMORIAM

(NOT) A MODERN PHILOSOPHER TOUCHES TO THE PORTRAIT OF KAREN SVASYAN

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These reflections do not pretend to analyze the philosophical works of Karen Svasyan. Such work is still waiting for its researchers. These are memories of a man and a philosopher who was around for many years. An attempt to sketch a portrait in order to understand and accept a simple but deep thought close to him: “The world thinks by man, by his philosophy!” And I would add: “The philosopher, rising to the heights of spirit and wisdom, raises each of us with him, at least, points the way as a pioneer.”

When a year ago I had the opportunity to contact Karen (I can't seem to mention him by his patronymic; I think it was right and convenient how it happened when we met) I was not able to overcome the feeling of uneasiness to remind about working together and open a new page of communication. Being the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, head of the Department of Philosophy of the V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, I had the idea to organize his on-line meetings with teachers and students, but my scrupulousness did not allow me to take advantage of the fact of working together for a request. Now I realise how wrong I was, especially since even personal experience shows that people on this scale are more open than we think about them.

With my reminiscences, I will try not only to express what I did not have time to say at the right time, but I will fulfill my moral duty towards an older comrade. It is difficult for me to say how he influenced me, but it is quite obvious that this influence was and has become a part of

my destiny.

Aura

The first and main point should be the atmosphere at the Institute and in our department of dialectical materialism and cognitive theory. It was headed by Professor, Doctor of Philosophy, later Academician of the Armenian Academy of Sciences – Gamlet Ambakumovich Gevorgyan. I want to note an extremely important fact, which immediately indicates the uniqueness of this person and the aura that he managed to create in the team. This was probably the only case in the Union when such a position was held by a nonparty. His authority as a scientist was so high that the proper authorities tried not to notice this ideological inconsistency. A gentle, conflict-free, intelligent man, he was a model of scientific exactingness. The depth and breadth of his encyclopedic knowledge and his professionalism were well known outside the republic in the community of philosophers whose names were widely known at that time in the country. He was not loud and public, but I think that everyone who had the opportunity to communicate with him will remember him with warm words. And by the will of fate, I was lucky and honored to be his disciple.

From the height of my years, I am only now beginning to realise how lucky I am to be in a community of wonderful people. Georgy Bar-seghyan is a God given logician. Gamlet Ambakumovich's friend and eternal opponent is acad-

emician G.A. Brutyan with his theory of argumentation. Grant Arakelyan is a philosopher whose works, in my opinion, are still underestimated. I am referring to his work on the philosophy of physics on fundamental constants. Once I found myself at his house and was surprised by his reverent love of classical music. He collected records with concerts of world masterpieces. Natasha Abramyan, whose philological professionalism was so high that it was recognized by everyone, even when the delights of Karen's literary style came into conflict with her sense of devotion to the spring purity of the Russian language. Her knowledge and sense of language (not only Russian) allowed her to be a subtle author of philosophical studies. Alexander Manasyan (later an academician) is a deep methodologist who had a lot to learn from. Ida Arakelyan studied philosophy of science. Anaid Galoyan was present at all our meetings during the turnout days. I do not remember her official status, but she shone with her subtle, precise, but always friendly utterances more than remarks. She was Karen's wife, his intellectual squire.

The sad news about Karen prompted me to go to my bookshelves and cupboards and collect the books of my colleagues in the department and the Institute, look into them. To recall every discussion of manuscripts and how, even I, a novice researcher with very little knowledge in philosophy at that time, was given the opportunity to express my opinion. Then the books were published, and the authors generously gave them, first of all, to their colleagues. It was a good tradition. And I did not think to take autographs because of my youth and the sense of ordinariness. And now almost all of Karen's books published in Yerevan and presented by him are on my desk. The only exception is the book about the symbol (his doctoral thesis, which he defended at the age of 33, which was incredible at that time in the USSR). It was published before I started working at the institute in a small edition and immediately became a rarity.

I have already mentioned that there was a mandatory procedure for discussing articles and books by all employees. There were no exceptions even for the work of the head of the department. Of course, Karen's books were also discussed. Like any author, with his fervor, covered by good upbringing and emphasized intelligence, it was difficult for him to listen to com-

ments on his work. After all, every line and the thought cast in it was suffered by him, nurtured in his style and could not be changed without affecting the book he created. He really created them, and did not conduct scrupulous scientific research.

Karen, of course, was internally exploding from the fact that he was misunderstood again. He did not appear on the next day of the turnout. Anaid came, assessed the situation, brought to us what we had underestimated and missed in the discussion. I only now realise how much Karen needed her: loving and understanding. We transmitted our explanations through her, and peace reigned in the department again. To give Karen his due, he could neither intrigue nor feud. It's not about him at all, and a miss.

Counterpoint

Hardly anyone will dispute that Karen Svasyan is an original philosopher. I have to write with sorrow – “was”.

Thinking about the fate of the philosopher, I noticed that one feature in the fate of Karen was repeated several times. It was as if he was late to be in the right place at the right time. This was not his fault, this was how historical time developed, which flows regardless of our destinies. But it was precisely this untimeliness of personal existence in the space of a particular culture that dialectically confronted the contradictions from which the thinker was born.

Karen's Armenian identity was founded by his Tbilisi birth as an origin. He was born at the sunset of the phenomenon of Tiflis Armenians, which reached its cultural apogee in “Vernatun” (“Mansard”) Hovhannes Tumanyan, this Pushkin of Armenian literature. Half a century before Karen was born, the entire color of Armenian culture gathered in the “Mansard”, which set the vector of its development for the entire twentieth century. Although Karen was caught in the cultural decline of the Tiflis Armenians, it seems to me that his formation absorbed a lot of it. It is difficult to seek direct influence. But, of course, the very spirit of the circle was close to him in terms of personalities.

The Armenian community of Tiflis-Tbilisi was full of this spirit for many more years. It was created by writers, artists, teachers, musicians

who knew European languages, lived and t there in Europe. It was natural for them, following Herzen, to create their own “Gnchak” (“Bell”) or discuss Rimbaud’s “The Drunken Ship” at their meetings.

Karen received higher philological education at Yerevan State University. And while he was rapidly and almost independently mastering the art of love of wisdom, Soviet time was running out. At the turning point, in the late 80s and early 90s, he reached his ακμή. In his translation, Nietzsche’s two-volume book with its introductory article and notes was published. Probably, neither earlier nor later could this work appear as it was published by Karen.

By this time, he had already written and published books in Yerevan:

- The Aesthetic essence of A. Bergson’s Intuitive philosophy (1978);
- The Problem of the Symbol in Modern Philosophy (1981);
- Voices of silence. Rilke, Valerie, Blok, Charents, Narekatsi, Goethe (1984);
- Phenomenological cognition. Propaedeutics and criticism. (1987);
- Goethe’s philosophical worldview. (1983);
- The philosophy of symbolic forms by E. Cassirer. Critical Analysis (1989).

This list is important not only to indicate with what philosophical, and more broadly spiritual preparation, he came to Nietzsche, but also to realise who exactly he would invite to his “Mansard” if fate gave him such a fantastic opportunity to move people into his world through time and state borders. To this circle, chosen by himself, Spengler, Steiner, Hartmann, Steiner were eventually added. Plato and Aristotle, Origen and Thomas, Abelard and Descartes, Leibniz and Kant, Valerie and Rilke, Blok and Charents and, of course, Narekatsi would be treated with respect and reverence here. Here are the thinkers and milestones – their works, which were in Karen’s teachers and spiritual mentors. Why it was important to note this was because, reading them, Karen looked at them as in a mirror. Some features became close to him, recognizable as his own.

After Goethe, Husserl, Cassirer and Nietzsche, in my opinion, it was quite natural to turn to Spengler and his main work “The Decline of Europe”. He seemed to return to encyclopedism,

not as knowledge collected in one edition by French enlighteners, but in the ability to discover new things without dividing into natural science and artistic knowledge. Here, of course, Goethe was Karen’s senior teacher and friend.

I remember how inspired he could talk about him. In his vivid monologues, it was difficult to distinguish where Goethe’s science ends and poetry begins. This counterpoint became the main method of Karen Svasyan’s philosophy. Moreover, he himself became the ontology of this counterpoint. Goethe was a German poet, playwright, novelist, encyclopedic scholar, statesman, theater director and critic. How could Karen not take a closer look at this person and get to know himself better? Hence the thoughtful reading of E. Husserl’s phenomenology and E. Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms. They were necessary for him, “as a means to break into other perspectives”. This is his confession about the phenomenology of E. Husserl can be rightfully attributed to almost all philosophers, poets, musicians, in general, to all the geniuses with whom Karen Svasyan established a philosophical – intellectual, artistic and spiritual – connection.

An important story happened to me with Karen’s translation of “The Decline of Europe” by Spengler. Knowing that I was a mathematician by training, Karen invited me to his home to discuss some “mathematical passages” that were not entirely clear to him. Such an offer, of course, flattered my ego, and I readily agreed. Karen and Anaid greeted me joyfully. Karen and I went into the room, and Anaid went to make coffee for us. I still remember Karen’s warning not to hit my head on the shelf that hung low over the coffee table where we sat in the armchairs. Karen asked questions, I tried to answer, we had coffee. The time passed quickly. I don’t think my explanations really helped Karen. It seemed to me that he was good at everything and did not need my help. Later, I realised that he had developed such a way to test his philosophical guesses and discoveries: to ask people about certain issues of interest to him - ματευτική on the contrary. If for Socrates, maieutics as a method of questioning the interlocutor helped to give birth to the truth, then for Karen it was necessary to confirm the grain of wisdom he had already found.

Homeland and Destiny

The question of whether Karen Svasyan was a Soviet, Russian, German or Armenian philosopher is in the plane that does not intersect with his philosophical fate. It lies in other dimensions, in which Christian Armenia, the first to adopt this religion as a state religion, is proud of the ancient temple of Garni and the Neoplatonist David Anakht.

Karen called himself a Russian Armenian. Actually, his formation as a philosopher took place in the context of that Soviet philosophical tradition, which went from Losev to Averintsev, Pyatigorsky, Mamardashvili, Ilyenkov, Gaidenko, Tavrizyan and others commensurate with talent, knowledge and love of philosophical reflection. What is important here is not that they formed some kind of continuity, a school, but that they, as countries, recognized mutual sovereignty, philosophical self-sufficiency.

His formation took place, as we have already noted, in the circle of great and outstanding creative people, in the context of the Russian Soviet (by time) philosophical tradition and ... German philosophers.

Nevertheless, he remained an Armenian. This manifested itself at the level of somatics. His body language, gestures, intonation of voice and even his writing in Russian were from his Armenian heritage. It is this somatics that makes him an Armenian philosopher, if we follow his own Svasyan method of determining the important, the main thing, the authentic in the reaction of the body, which becomes ontology – the last philosophical foundation. Such Armenian heritage is indestructible. It stayed with Karen forever.

As a rule, he avoided discussing current political issues, but nevertheless understood that Armenia, if it tends to Europe, should look for its own format of communication with it. Europe is rapidly deteriorating, and it can simply drag Armenia down with it, destroying its traditional culture. He did not give prescriptive answers on how the Armenian government should act, but as a philosopher he outlined the parameters within which they should be sought. These answers do not lie in the Euclidean plane of political evidence and polar confrontations. They require a different, more complex geometry.

If someone wants to accuse Karen Svasyan of

leaving Armenia, then let them remember that he left back in 1991. I think in the beginning it was a desire to take advantage of the opportunity to work in Europe, to plunge into its intellectual atmosphere. And then, actually, there was no place to go back to. I realised this on my last visit to the Institute of Philosophy. Formally, it still exists, but it has already lost its topos, the place of its former spiritual and intellectual power; the house where thought was born and lived. Perhaps someone thinks that Armenia lacks investments in the economy, the power of the army, and new politicians, then they are mistaken. It lacks philosophers. Including people like Karen Svasyan. And those who are divided, confused, crushed by the current problems of survival.

Karen, like all of us, fell into the abyss of change. Time itself will determine his place in culture. He belongs to that world in whose historical memory he will remain longer. Whose history would he be needed for, and most importantly, why? Wherever Karen lived, he was at home. The question is, where was he his own?

Language and Style

Each accomplished philosopher develops his own language of expression of thoughts, forms his own style. Karen has developed his own – Svasyanovsky.

Reading his books in manuscript, a neophyte from philosophy, I was not ready to accept such a non-strict, figurative language for me. I joked about his “miscarriages of the untold.” Moreover, sometimes the very construction of the sentence, in my opinion, was not Russian. Russians do not speak and write like that. Not because it violated the norms of the Russian language, but because Russians do not speak and write like that. Russian classics, including philosophical ones, have convinced me of this over and over again after reading a mountain of Russian classics, having lived in a Russian environment. It is an impeccably literate, sometimes ironic, but constructed language.

Karen perceived both Russian and Armenian as his native languages. He said it himself, noting the difficulty of translating “from native to native language” in an essay about E. Charents. Over the years, German was added, which he probably knew better than Armenian, wrote a number of

his works in it, and then translated into Russian. But he called Armenian his native language. It was this intersection of languages, and, consequently, cultural worlds, that gave rise to Karen Svasyan's writing style, misticius turned out to be charming, and infused with great philosophical erudition, it became unique and personal.

Artistic, in fact, it became not only a tool, but an integral essence of his way of philosophizing. It was it that opened up the opportunity for him to make the breakthrough he had indicated to a new synthesis, which modern science lacks. It has become emasculated in its endless fragmentation, in its inability to become wisdom, that is, human. It was precisely this that Goethe struggled over, Husserl despaired of "philosophy as a strict science", and E. Cassirer tried to link it in mythology in the "philosophy of symbolic forms". I repeat, this is why Karen Svasyan was interested in the morphology of O. Spengler's culture.

Having translated the first volume, he was unable to continue working on the second one. He himself admitted that the issue was an elementary Darwinian survival. At that time, he moved to Europe and had to settle into a new environment.

I think it was only after a while that it was discovered that he was late again. The death certificate of Europe, issued by O. Spengler, turned out to be correct. Karen did not find the Europe that had formed in his imagination. In the spiritual desert, he might have found some sphinxes from philosophy, but with their noses already broken off, so that they would not poke where they should not, and even more so they would not climb into the first ranks of the elite. Philosophers and philosophy have stopped generating meanings and ideas that would captivate others. European philosophy has lost its projectivity. The ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers set the vector of development for centuries, the ideas of Karl Marx changed the European and even the global geopolitical landscape for almost the entire twentieth century. And at its end, there was

nothing productive left, a complete deconstruction of any narratives and meanings. If God died, then the philosopher, as the author, ordered to live long.

Even from Karen's public appearances, you can hear his bitter cemetery disappointment. After the Second World War, Germany not only lost its political subjectivity, it lost its philosophic character. According to Karen Svasyan, Europe is philosophically sterile. It was difficult for him to recognize even the right to be called philosophy for postmodernism. He found the last consolation in his commitment to Steiner's anthroposophy. The Gethenaum is the world center of anthroposophy, located in the Swiss city of Dornach, perhaps Karen's last hope for the opportunity to preserve the human in man.

It's hard not to agree with Karen with his appeal to a man who is aware of his humanity. This conclusion is even more significant right now in the face of the threat of World War III and changes in human nature itself.

Karen's hope for Russia is that it will be able to withstand the Apocalypse and stop its four horsemen. The first rider is a Plague on a white horse (Covid and other similar threats). The Second Horseman is the War on the red horse (SWO and the threat of World War III)... Karen Svasyan believed that Russia's abduction of Europe is a hope for Europe itself. Russia has a remarkable experience of the 19th century, when it demonstrated the ability to create its own world cultural phenomena on European grounds. Repetition is possible and desirable

I am impressed by Karen Svasyan's lack of modernity, especially since I myself came to the thoughts close to him from a completely different, opposite side – from Science, in which there is no place left for Humanity. If we do not find a solution to put together the disintegrating puzzles of historical challenges and the answers to them in the person himself and with his help, then we are doomed. The hope is that the world will stand and God did not die and will give us a chance.