

Philosophy and Logic in a Time of War



Abstract: This interview was given by Yaroslav Shramko (b. 1963), professor of the Department of Philosophy and rector of the Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University (Ukraine). His main research interests lie in the fields of logic and analytical philosophy. He has carried out several projects on modern non-classical logic: 1996–1998, within the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellowship at Humboldt University in Berlin (Germany); 1999–2000, within the Fulbright Program at Indiana University in Bloomington (USA); and 2003–2004, as a Wilhelm Bessel Awardee at Dresden University of Technology (Germany), among others. He has been a frequent invited speaker at international conferences and congresses. He is a member of the editorial boards of several international

logic journals, such as *Logic and Logical Philosophy* (Torun, Poland), *Bulletin of the Section of Logic* (Łódź, Poland), *European Journal of Mathematics* (Springer), and *Studia Logica* (Springer). Prof Shramko is the author of “Truth and falsehood: An inquiry into generalized logical values” (Springer, 2011, joint work with Heinrich Wansing) and a number of articles on logic and analytic philosophy in peer-reviewed international journals.

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Andrew Schumann: First of all, as a person with Belarusian citizenship, I would like to apologise to you as a Ukrainian for the grief that was brought to your country from the territory of Belarus. The Belarusian society (unfortunately not the state) strongly condemns Russia’s aggression. What difficulties did you face personally as the rector of the Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University after 24 February 2022? What difficulties appeared in the organisation regarding the educational process and scientific work of the university?

Yaroslav Shramko: The 24th of February 2022 divided the life of every Ukrainian into two parts: before the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation and after it. Of course, Ukraine has been in a state of undeclared war with Russia at least since 2014, when the criminal annexation of Crimea and the invasion of the Donbas region took place. But February 24 was indeed a turning point. This day made it quite clear for the whole world that Putin and his clique do not need Crimea, Donbas, or any other separate Ukrainian territory; their ultimate goal is the whole of Ukraine. Moreover, they want to restore the Russian Empire, at least within the borders of the former Soviet Union, and to achieve this goal, they will seek to destroy the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation by all means. However, it is now evident that Putin has miscalculated and badly underestimated the Ukrainian people. We are fully committed to fight against the occupiers for our freedom and our country. It was this mood of resistance that dominated our city and our university from the very first day of Russian aggression. As for the Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, our main task was to maintain a high degree of overall organisation, to support our students, faculty,

and all staff, to provide them with a foothold in this difficult time. We also sought to contribute to the resistance against the enemy. There were days in March 2022 when the advance troops of the Russian army approached quite close to the city, and it was very important not to fall into panic. At the university, we organised a volunteer centre, where students and professors wove camouflage nets for the defenders of the city and helped to form and equip battalions for the territorial defence. At the same time, we continued the educational process at the university, although, of course, all classes were held remotely. Well, it was not easy for us then, and it is not easy now, when we have to endure constant rocket attacks on the city, although the Russian troops were driven behind the Dnipro River. But the most important thing is that we retained faith in our victory and have kept the university intact. The vast majority of students and faculty remain in place, and we continue our academic and scientific activities.

Andrew Schumann: How tangible is the support from the world scientific community and their solidarity with the Ukrainian people in the philosophical circles of Ukraine now?

Yaroslav Shramko: From the very first days of the Russian invasion, I have personally felt immense support from and solidarity with colleagues and friends from all over the world, especially from Germany and Poland, but also from many other countries. I received so many emails from logicians and philosophers, both familiar and unfamiliar, offering help, asking what they could do for their Ukrainian colleagues and expressing the strongest condemnation of the Russian imperialistic aggression. I know it was the same with many of my colleagues from other Ukrainian universities. Such support from the world scientific community has been and remains very important to us, and it helps us a lot to withstand all the challenges that we are going through right now. It is also important that we have been able to carry out some practical projects aimed at supporting Ukrainian philosophers. Thus, colleagues from the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation (University of Amsterdam) Sonja Smets and Nina Gierasimczuk contacted the head of the Logic Department at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Irina Khomenko and me with the idea of holding a special fundraising logic conference aimed at supporting colleagues in Ukraine who have been affected by Russian aggression. And such a conference, Logic4Peace (<https://events.ilic.uva.nl/Logic4Peace/About/>), was indeed organised in a very short period of time and was held online on 22–23 April 2022. Eighteen international institutions got involved in its organisation, and the conference itself was a great success. All the funds raised were directed to the charitable foundation Voices of Children, which provides humanitarian aid for Ukrainian children, as well as to colleagues at universities in Ukraine who were either displaced or have lost their homes. I think that such events are a vivid confirmation of the solidarity of the international scientific community with us, their Ukrainian colleagues, who together with the whole Ukrainian people are fighting against the Russian aggressors. I can only express my deepest gratitude to all colleagues and to the international scientific community for this support — it is invaluable.

Andrew Schumann: How is philosophical life developing in Ukraine now? Are there any new trends in philosophical reflection? How do philosophers and logicians of Ukraine manage to resist all this horror that has befallen the Ukrainians?

Yaroslav Shramko: It may seem astonishing to some, but after the Russian invasion, philosophical life in Ukraine has not only survived, but has even intensified. I think it is only natural for philosophy to respond to the most acute processes and events in life and society, to try to comprehend them, and to offer its own solutions to the most urgent problems of the day. Of course, in Ukraine the questions of war and peace now come to the fore, including those related to their ethical dimension. Sociopolitical considerations on the development of totalitarian societies, such as modern Russia, which has actually become a fascist-type state, are also very important for understanding how the situation in which we now find ourselves has become possible in the 21st century. It must be said that over the past year, scientific contacts between Ukrainian philosophers

and our foreign colleagues have significantly increased. This finds its expression, for example, in participation in various international conferences, which, thanks to the development of modern technologies, can also take place remotely. I will give just one example of such cooperation and its fruitful results. In September 2022, at the invitation of the president of the German Society for Analytic Philosophy, Prof Geert Keil, a delegation of 10 Ukrainian philosophers took part in the 11th International Congress of the Society “Philosophy and the Public” held at the Humboldt University in Berlin (<https://gap11.de/en/index.html>). A special colloquium on the war in Ukraine was also organised at the congress, with presentations by both German and Ukrainian participants. The intense scientific contacts during this event were further developed, in particular, by organising an online workshop “Ethics of the Ukraine War” (16–17 February 2023). In turn, on the basis of this workshop, a permanent philosophical seminar was established, which meets monthly online and during which presentations on topical issues of philosophy are made by Ukrainian and foreign colleagues. This involvement of Ukrainian philosophers in the international philosophical community is also helpful in our resistance against the aggressor, because we feel our direct connection to the world civilisation and our ability to contribute to its development, in particular from a philosophical perspective.

Andrew Schumann: What trends in analytic philosophy can be the most promising?

Yaroslav Shramko: If we look at the state of affairs in contemporary analytic philosophy, we can note the tendency towards the unconventional for “standard” philosophy areas, such as experimental philosophy or problems that are at the border between different branches of philosophical consideration, such as ethics, social philosophy, and epistemology (e.g., epistemic injustice or social epistemology). All of this is related to the desire for public relevance of philosophy and for demonstrating its applicability to current social problems, especially those with a moral dimension. Nevertheless, I think that applied philosophy can only have a subordinate importance. At the heart of philosophical knowledge, analytic as well, are still, as has always been, classical disciplines, such as metaphysics, epistemology, or political philosophy. Another thing is that the major breakthroughs in these disciplines seem to have occurred in the first and second third of the 20th century. Since the 1960s and 70s, analytic philosophy has developed most extensively, expanding into more and more new areas, so that it currently encompasses the entire spectrum of philosophical knowledge. I would say that we are now experiencing what might be called a kind of a “textbook period” in analytic philosophy. Over the past 20 years, a great many textbooks, encyclopaedias, guides, companions, etc. have been published on the most important topics and disciplines of analytic philosophy. There are considerably more publications of this kind at present than, say, in the 1980s. This indicates that we are currently undergoing a process of ordering the philosophical knowledge gained in previous times. I am sure that new breakthroughs lie ahead of us. Perhaps they will be linked to advances in artificial intelligence and thus will take place in the field of philosophy of mind. Maybe we can even come up with a solution to the mind–body problem. As for logic, it continues its intense development, which is associated primarily with the investigations of various non-classical logical theories.

Andrew Schumann: Could you give a popular definition for the logic of first-degree entailment that you have proposed?

Yaroslav Shramko: It would be an exaggeration to say that it was I who proposed the logic of first-degree entailment. This logic was introduced by the outstanding American logician Nuel Belnap in the 1960s. Given that the concept of consequence is at the heart of logic as a science (according to Stephen Kleene, “logic has the important function of saying what follows from what”), first-degree entailment represents this concept in its purest form, as a relation between statements that are not themselves consequences. Syntactically, first-degree entailment is an expression of the form $A \rightarrow B$, where neither A nor B contains the connective of entailment \rightarrow . Semantically, Belnap and his

student Mike Dunn have shown how this logic can be used to apply to reasoning in computer systems when our databases appear to be incomplete and/or inconsistent. I hope that I (with co-authors) have also been able to make some contribution to the study of this most interesting logical phenomenon, particularly when we are dealing not with individual computer systems, but with their networks.