

Irina Deretić*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy

DOI 10.56461/ZR_2025.KA-ToT.13D

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY FOR KSENIJA ATANASIJEVIĆ?

Abstract: This chapter provides a general discussion of Ksenija Atanasijević, widely recognized as a unique 20th-century Serbian philosopher. Her extensive knowledge of various philosophical fields, including ancient Greek philosophy, philosophies of the East, as well as Slavic and Serbian practical wisdom, combined with her critical, systematic, and resourceful mind, made her prominent in Serbian philosophy and culture. Her philosophical development occurred after the emancipation from the metaphysical thought of Branislav Petronijević, leading her to focus on more relevant questions grounded in the new tendencies of Slavic philosophy and Serbian culture. The chapter explores the relationship between the two different philosophical conceptions in her works before World War II. Despite their differences, I assume that both concepts of philosophy have something in common. This text particularly highlights Atanasijević's philosophical fragments and how, after a significant "turn," she articulated her own philosophical position based on ethics. After an overview of the fundamental claims and arguments of her ethical stance, the chapter provides a critical discussion of them.

Key Words: Ksenija Atanasijević, philosophy, intellectualism/rationalism, ethics, evil, consolation.

I

Ksenija Atanasijević (1894–1981) was a pioneer in various fields. She was the first woman to earn a doctorate from the University of Belgrade, the first female lecturer at the university, and the first woman philosopher in Serbian culture. Apart from her erudition—including her excellent knowledge of almost all periods of the history of philosophy, particularly ancient Greece, Philosophy of East and West, as well as Serbian contri-

* ORCID iD: 0000-0001-5530-8238 • e-mail: ideretic1@gmail.com

butions to philosophy and culture—Ksenija Atanasijević was a person endowed with boundless curiosity, as well as critical and systematic thought. Despite her remarkable achievements, she faced unjust treatment from her male colleagues, who expelled her from the university due to their envy and her critical spirit. Although Atanasijević rarely spoke about her sufferings, when she did, she approached the subject in a detached and dignified manner.¹ The injustices she encountered illustrate how she paved the way for future female scholars and academics. The life of Ksenija Atanasijević demonstrate that, regardless of adverse circumstances, envy, disputes, and false accusations — sometimes even because of them — one can work productively and eventually gain recognition and respect. Moreover, Ksenija Atanasijević never stopped working on a variety of philosophical issues.

Throughout her long and productive life, she produced a large number of essays and books that presented her ideas to academic institutions in Yugoslavia and across Europe, notably in France. Ksenija Atanasijević became one of Serbia's most prolific authors,² publishing books on the history of philosophy in general, and ancient Greek philosophy in particular,³ *Philosophical Fragments I–II*,⁴ as well as countless pieces on morality, religion, and aesthetics. She wrote a vast number of influential literary, cultural, and philosophical critiques, as well as feminist texts.⁵ The two volumes of her original work, *Philosophical Fragments*, will be the focus of this paper.

In this chapter, I will endeavor to explain the 'turn' in the philosophical activity of Ksenija Atanasijević. The 'turn' in her intellectual development is the result of her emancipation from Branislav Petronijević's metaphysics. I will not delve into detail about the psychological background of this transition; instead, I aim to investigate the relationship between the two concepts of philosophy in Ksenija Atanasijević's overall work: i) the former is to be characterized as intellectual, grounded in precise and stringent conceptual thinking, while ii) the latter is articulated in her philosophical meditations, with a focus on ethics. First, I will clarify how she understood philosophy in the early stages of her intellectual development, drawing on her critical review of the book *New Humanism*, in which she explicitly states what she considers to be philosophy. Then, I will assess

1 Ilija Marić wrote the best study on Ksenija Atanasijević's expulsion from the University. See Marić, 2014, pp. 39–87.

2 See Aranitović 2006, pp. 325–407.

3 Atanasijević, 1927, 2006; See also Deretić, 2019, pp. 235–237.

4 Atanasijević, 1929, 1930.

5 See my study Deretić, 2016, pp. 93–109 for more on Ksenija Atanasijević's feminist views. Plato was the first author in history, who includes women in the ruling class. Recently, Aleksandar Kandić discussed Plato's views on feminism. See Kandić, 2021., pp. 9–19.

the main points of her brief paper on teaching philosophy at Belgrade University, which, in my opinion, subtly, though partially, introduces her second concept of philosophy. Her second response to the question of what philosophy is will be elaborated in a 1928 article that assesses new philosophical orientations in Serbian philosophy. The fragments by Ksenija Atanasijević contain philosophical and emotional thoughts on God, immortality, evil, forgiveness, solace, and other subjects. These reflections could be viewed as an example of her second philosophical orientation, which I will focus upon here. I will eventually explore the connections between these two concepts of philosophy.

II

Before 1928, Ksenija Atanasijević argued that philosophy should provide a strict conceptual expression that is reasonable, credible and consistent. This commitment is visible in her works on the history of philosophy, as well as in her scathing critiques of philosophical literature. One such example is her brief and biting critique of the book *New Humanism* by Vladimir Vujić and Prvoš Slankamenac, which showcases a rigorous and well-developed approach to philosophy.

The title of the review, “Degradation of Philosophy,”⁶ immediately reveals her assessment of *New Humanism*. The real objective of this review is to defend the philosophical orientation at Belgrade University, as well as its prominent, internationally recognized philosopher, Branislav Petronijević. Although she did not mention him by name, it was evident to whom she was referring. The book’s authors criticized the rational or “intellectual” approach of the academics at Belgrade University. However, as noted by Atanasijević, the authors did not even comprehend basic philosophical concepts and arguments. Their interpretation of Bergson and James is neither consistent nor compelling, and their arguments are “sloppy” and “in conflict with logic”⁷ (Atanasijević, 2006, pp. 193–194).

Atanasijević insists that philosophical endeavors should be “precise” and “scientific.” A work is considered philosophical if it meets all three of

6 Atanasijević, 2006, pp. 193–195

7 Regarding Ksenija’s critique of the book *New Humanism*, Ilija Mari explained why, even before the “turn,” she could have acknowledged some of her opponents’ points. She did not respond to the main arguments stated by Vujović and Slankamenac. They criticized the Belgrade philosophical school on two grounds: (i) its detachment from reality, and (ii) its philosophical anachronism. Ksenija did not respond to these arguments, which Marić interprets as her belief in their correctness. See Marić 2006, p. 421.

the following criteria: (i) conceptual clarity, (ii) methodological awareness, and (iii) coherent presentation. Only well-substantiated, credible claims based on clearly defined concepts are considered philosophical. According to Atanasijević, non-conceptual, inconsistent, and incoherent thinking that deals with philosophical themes is erroneous, although it may create the impression of being philosophical.

The most significant works of Ksenija Atanasijević from the first phase include her doctoral dissertation, “Bruno’s Doctrine on Minima” (*Brunovo učenje o najmanjem*),⁸ and her study “Epicurus’ Atomism” (*L’atomisme d’Épicure*).⁹ In the 1920s, she authored many studies on ancient Greek philosophy that were well-founded and of excellent quality. Her approach to Greek Philosophy was both interpretative and critical. She was aware of historical distance, the nature of the philosophical problems she explored, and how this subject was relevant for our time. Her study of Epicurus in French is an excellent example of how to engage with past philosophy. Atanasijević begins by investigating every relevant interpretive hypothesis while critically examining Epicurus’ atomism. She highlights both its strengths and weaknesses. Her interpretation of ancient Greek Philosophy is comprehensive, consistent and plausible. It demonstrates what she considers philosophy: conceptual clarity, methodological awareness, and coherent reasoning.

The “turn” in the philosophy of Ksenija Atanasijević did not come all at once, but it appears to have been anticipated by her study of both “official” university philosophy and non-academic philosophical works that provide novel ideas. This is demonstrated by her favorable reviews of Vladimir Dvorniković (Atanasijević, 2006, pp. 219–222) and Miloš N. Đurić’s (Atanasijević, 2006, p. 235) works on the unique role that Slavs will play in culture and philosophy. In 1928, the year marking her philosophical transformation, Ksenija Atanasijević wrote “Teaching Philosophy at our University.”¹⁰ In this paper, she offers her view on how philosophy should be taught at the university level. Ksenija agrees with the “official” concept of philosophy, which investigates what can be known and the boundaries of human knowledge. She contends that universities should foster independent thinking and a critical spirit in students. Logic, she believes, should be prioritized “as a discipline of thinking”¹¹ alongside methodology. Nevertheless, she highlights the importance of studying new philosophical perspectives rather than engaging with the “dialectical games prevalent in

8 Atanasijević, 1922, 1923.

9 Atanasijević, 1927.

10 See Atanasijević, 2006, pp. 181–183.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

the rationalism”¹² of the “official philosophy” taught at the University of Belgrade during that time. Additionally, she criticized Belgrade University for having too few ethics courses, which she believes should be increased. Her philosophical writings, published soon thereafter as *Philosophical Fragments I and II*, will prioritize ethical questions.

III

In 1928, Atanasijević published “Our New Philosophical Orientation,” an article that reflects the “turn” in her philosophical approach. According to it, Serbs developed a rationally-based metaphysics, a theory of knowledge and a history of philosophy under the influence of German, French and English philosophies. She contrasts Western systematic philosophy with Slavic and Eastern thought. Formalism and “conceptual games of contemporary German trends,”¹³ she believes, have constrained Western thinking, whereas Slavic and Eastern thought often lacks conceptual articulation.

Atanasijević acknowledges the value rational Western achievements in philosophy; however, she argues that they did not provide definitive answers to all eternal questions and that “official” university philosophers have not adequately examined them. The writings of Russian philosophers and Eastern thinkers, on the other hand, are mostly unknown to Serbian philosophers, even though they are “closer to our [Slavic] soul.”¹⁴ Furthermore, she appears to believe that symbolic and elliptical formulations include cognitive content worthy of philosophical analysis.

One may object to her brief assessment of German philosophy noting, for example, Edmund Husserl is a German philosopher who created a revolutionary philosophical approach that was prominent and influential in European philosophy. Furthermore, the writings of Russian religious philosophers such as Vladimir Solovyev and Lev Shestov are not conceptually unarticulated. Nonetheless, Ksenija Atanasijević raised an important question for the Yugoslav or Serbian academic community: to what extent can derivative and responsive philosophy effectively address the ethical, cultural, and social concerns of the time?

After Branislav Petronijević retired from his position at the university, academic philosophy in Belgrade, according to Atanasijević, grew detached from its contemporary context and even from German philosophy of the time. Atanasijević argues that “official” Belgrade philosophy lacked the vigor and inventiveness needed to address developmental challenges

12 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

13 *Ibid.* p. 234.

14 Brackets in the original.

within its paradigm, no less than those posed by other traditions, philosophical ideas, or public life in its environment. Although her contribution is more critical than constructive, Atanasijević believed that Yugoslav (and Serbian) philosophy should be dynamic, capable of unlocking a person's creative potential while still being based on tradition. Such a philosophy could address more pressing humanist issues like the questions of the place of the human being in the universe, the human being's relation to God and within society, the questions of good, evil, and consolation.

IV

The two-volume *Philosophical Fragments* were the first texts, Atanasijević wrote after her "turn". At first glance, it comes across as contemplative prose, conveying fragmented¹⁵ thoughts, seemingly unrelated to one another. However, I take a different approach: by analyzing these fragments, one can reconstruct Atanasijević's unique ethical standpoint. Hence, these two volumes of fragments are not only internally consistent but also represent her most original works. These reflective meditations are interesting and thought-provoking. They were created in the middle of the crisis regarding her status at the University, and offer a fresh perspective on philosophical research. However, they are not simply a lamentation over her misfortune; rather, they are motivated by a desire to overcome the limitations of an unproductive academic environment and to explore new philosophical topics and orientations.

Ksenija Atanasijević frequently emphasized that human existence is intrinsically linked to an awareness of mortality. She noted that for some people, death is a relief from life's difficulties. If this were the case, many of us might not fear death as much. The process of dying is very difficult and can be horrifying, and it stimulates our fear of death. Atanasijević vividly depicts the dying individual, highlighting the discomfort, cramping, loss of strength, and breathing difficulties that are normal during the dying process (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 31).

In the metaphysical fragments (Volume I), she does not delve into metaphysical questions directly, but rather discusses how humans relate to them. Atanasijević refrains from providing definitive answers to profound metaphysical questions such as the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, and the reality of eternity. Logical proof of God's existence

15 In the Preface to *Philosophical Fragments*, Atanasijević writes that she chose the literary form of fragments because it is more appropriate for Yugoslavia's new philosophical orientations. She claims to be inspired by Božidar Knežević, whom she regarded as the most original Serbian philosopher (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 5).

may or may not be persuasive, but it would not satisfy our complete self. Limited human existence may make our lives appear meaningless, but possessing an immortal soul and proving the existence of God, according to Atanasijević, would not make our lives less meaningless. Therefore, she believes that our strongest proof of the existence of God is our innate desire to “cry out” to the Almighty.¹⁶ Atanasijević thinks that philosophy has the purpose is to provide solace to human beings.¹⁷ Having faith in God and in the immortality of one’s soul should bring about feelings of calm, tranquility and serenity, or, as she so eloquently puts it, “it is consoling to believe that there is infinity for us beyond his current existence” (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 17). These beliefs are not only beneficial to our human condition but also crucial for our self-awareness and our acceptance of injustice in the world. To illustrate her point, Ksenija Atanasijević poses a series of rhetorical questions: “Is it reasonable to question the existence of God when we are confronted with the constant struggle against corruption and injustice? Do we simply accept that these problems will persist indefinitely? What other options do we have” (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 14)?

The concept of immortality of the soul is tied to the hypothesis that all things in the universe possess life. The assumption suggests that that life is constantly in motion, changing its form without ever ceasing. This theory is supported by the idea that the basis of the universe is spiritual, which means that life has neither a finite beginning nor end. According to Atanasijević (1929, p. 33), the spirit is indestructible and eternal. Without something non-material, the universe would have disintegrated into its material components, resulting in its demise.

The next question, which links metaphysics and ethics, is about fate and its role in our lives. Atanasijević’s view on the relationship between destiny and free will¹⁸ is not entirely Christian. Instead, it is similar to how the Stoics viewed it. She frequently mentions that “fate determines what will happen,” and that fate is often against what we want or who we wish to be. She even equates fate with the divine, questioning its authority over God.¹⁹ Along with fate, incidents also play a role in our lives, but only in minor, everyday issues.

Atanasijević believed that while fatalism may be theoretically accurate, we act as free-willed agent in our lives. This kind of behavior is pos-

16 Cf. Atanasijević 1929, p. 14.

17 In her interpretation of Ksenija Atanasijević, Marija Petrović argues that the role of philosophy is to partially subdue the egoistic nature of humanity. Cf. Petrović (2021).

18 For more on Ksenija Atanasijević’s thoughts on fate and free will, see Atanasijević, 1928, pp. 83–89.

19 Atanasijević, 1929, p. 83.

sible because we are unlimited masters in our internal world; we create our psychic life. However, I have two objections to this account: first, our internal world is to some degree dependent on external affairs, which means that sometimes no shelter can help. Second, if we are “instruments of fate” and our souls are possibly also “instruments of fate” (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 85), then how can we be independent in making our own decisions? Despite these objections, Atanasijević accurately highlights the importance of creating our own inner life and sheds light on how we can and must do so.

V

Ksenija Atanasijević held a pessimistic worldview and believed that there were numerous injustices and evils present in the world. She expounded this viewpoint in her works, particularly in *Philosophical Fragments* and many of her papers, where she expressed her religious and political thoughts.²⁰ Atanasijević discussed various forms of evil that existed during her time and acknowledged that the “metaphysical roots of evil are deeply ingrained,” making it challenging to fully comprehend and then combat it (Atanasijević, 1930, p. 97).

Evil has been present throughout human history and manifests in different ways. Atanasijević identified some sources of evil, including the desire for revenge, selfishness, and the urge for domination. Her observations on evil in the modern world are still relevant today. She noted that material possessions, success, and well-being do not guarantee a moral and just society. Instead, our civilization continues to suffer from moral afflictions, mental disorders, and social offenses (Atanasijević, 2011, pp. 97–98).

Atanasijević seems to suggest that evil is much more prevalent in our world than good (Atanasijević, 1930), and that it appears in many subtle ways. It can manifest through the collective spirit, or in deliberate actions, such as when supposed friends act hypocritically, or when people refuse to help the poor. Choices between two evils contain evil. It can also befall people without them being the cause of it. One unique characteristics of evil is its unpredictability, making it difficult to determine its cause. The perpetrator of evil is not always the same as the cause of it, as in the case of Giordano Bruno, who was condemned by those who did not actually carry out the act of immolation. Nevertheless, she underscores that “without the rare scattered sparks of good, humanity would suffocate in dark-

20 Dragana Dimitrijević appropriately highlights the theological and anthropological components of Ksenija Atanasijević’s philosophy as crucial for understanding her ideas (Dimitrijević, 2023, pp. 169–177).

ness inhabited by terrible specters of transgression, sin and irrationality” (Atanasijević, 2011, p. 99).

Furthermore, she believed that humans are alienated from one another and frequently inflict misery upon each other. Humans are typically indifferent to fellow humans, if they are not purposely damaging. She aspires to help individuals who read her work by shedding light on parts of life’s fundamental questions, with the pursuit of discovering meaning and purpose in our existence. We must learn, according to Atanasijević, how to persevere and even thrive in a world that is frequently unfavorable to us (Jeremić, 1997, p. 124).

VI

Metaphysical truths are essentially linked with ethical ones, because they provide, among other things, solace in our lives. Atanasijević believed that reason is important not only for explaining the world but also for understanding morality and managing our lives. She agreed with Socrates that intellect is the fundamental driving force in human behavior and that intellect alone can control our vices. Therefore, she argues that a person who lacks intelligence cannot be good, and individuals with bad character are dim and stupid. Nevertheless, she does not entirely concur with Socrates’ claim that reason is the only explanation for our actions. For an understanding of human behavior, one must include emotions, spirituality, and religious views.

On the question of whether ethics should be self-oriented or other-oriented,²¹ Atanasijević says the following: “If, according to Kant, every human being should be regarded as an end in themselves and not merely as a means to an end. Only those who take themselves seriously and recognize their own worth understand that it is impermissible to harm others.”²² Aristotle argues that “self-love” is the precondition for loving others, but only “self-love” that follows reason (*nous*), which is the best part of us.²³ Individual acts should be guided by one’s conscience, and not by what others want us to do. Atanasijević seems to think that we should help others, not only because they are virtuous, but because by helping them we fight the evil that threatens everyone, including ourselves. The causal links

21 See Michaelson and Tosti-Kharas (2019) for more on self-oriented or other-oriented conduct. Susan Obdzalek examines the link between egoism and selfishness (Obdzalek, 2013, pp. 210–232).

22 Atanasijević, 1930, p. 27.

23 See Book IX of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* for more on self-love and friendship.

between negative and immoral behavior are more compelling than any other (Atanasijević, 2011, p. 101).

What did Atanasijević believe about how one should cope with evil? The answer to this question is more complex than it looks at first glance. She thinks that we should not be passive and allow evil to dominate over us or others. According to Atanasijević, one evil deed should not be returned by another, which includes retaliation against individuals who have done us harm. So, how can we combat those who purposefully or unwittingly damage us? We must actively resist evil perpetrated against us, not out of vengeance, but to eliminate evil that threatens people, society and the entire world. When threatened, one should confront evil if one is in the position to do so. Furthermore, while fighting against evil, one should strive to prevent harm rather than seek retribution. In addition, a person combating evil should not seek vengeance, but rather aim to avert damage or benefit others or oneself. Seeking vengeance for inflicted pain, moreover, is not justifiable for two reasons: one evil cannot be resolved by another, and only transcendent justice can provide equitable restitution for everyone.

Ksenija Atanasijević believed that without transcendent justice, the world would be illogical and unethical. This kind of justice punishes those who do wrong and rewards those who are morally upright and have suffered. By acknowledging the existence of transcendent justice, we can understand the meaning of our lives. Ethically, transcendent justice ensures that all wrongs will be righted in the end by guaranteeing universal retribution.

Additionally, the existence of such justice is necessary because it eliminates all injustices in the world. Often, victims are not adequately compensated for their losses, but a higher form of justice can provide them with the compensation they deserve for their suffering. Holding onto hatred and negativity will not benefit our lives. It is important to move forward with a positive attitude.²⁴ Moreover, a system that promotes worldwide vengeance for any wrongdoing will lead humanity down a path of cruelty and spiritual bankruptcy. Seeking revenge, even if it seems justified, will only cause more harm and negativity in our world. Instead, we should focus on empathy and forgiveness.

In Atanasijević's ethics, forgiveness is a crucial idea that helps us avoid many sorts of harm in our lives and serves as the foundation for interpersonal interactions. But what exactly is forgiveness? It seems to be a conscious decision to release others from the wrong and harm they have caused us. Moreover, forgiveness is associated with empathy, that is,

24 Atanasijević, 1929, p. 48.

with understanding and sharing the feelings of others. When we forgive a wrongdoer, it can awake their conscience and help them understand the harm they have caused. In other words, a person who does us damage may become conscious that what they did was wrong, leading them to modify their conduct for the better. When someone harms another, it also corrupts their own soul and diminishes their chances for a better life. Instead of taking revenge, the harmed person can focus on positive and meaningful goals, primarily consolation. Against the insurmountable ills of the world, we can utilize imagination to conquer the evils of the world, or even to forget evils done to us,²⁵ because they may become unimportant in the future, as they frequently do.

Atanasijević repeatedly highlighted that all people have a common origin and are equal in fate. Therefore, “they are all related and part of one universal principle” (Atanasijević, 2011, p. 112). Consequently, “it is their responsibility to live with kindness, forgiveness, compassion, and mercy towards one another and to continuously support each other. Both philosophy and religion present a similar path with different terminologies and a variety of evidential materials that recommend people to follow it together and identically” (Atanasijević, 2011, p. 112).

These considerations have political consequences. Humans must reject wars and conflicts because, as Atanasijević points out, they harm the divine and inextinguishable flame in humans that gives meaning and value to human existence.²⁶ The discord between people and nations not only destroys the divine in us but can also lead to the destruction of humanity and all living beings. Atanasijević’s pacifism is mostly connected with Buddhism, whose teachings she knew well. Additionally, she belonged to the pacifist movement during her life.²⁷ Nevertheless, Atanasijević considers Christianity higher than all religions, because it teaches that universal and active love is the foundation of every human being.

If we only fought against evil, however, our lives would be nothing but external and internal suffering. Atanasijević does not view our existence as endurance in the face of adversity. The ultimate goal of human existence, according to her, is *self-improvement*. Pride, dignity and gentleness are the three main virtues that promote human advancement. Pride might be characterized as awareness and a feeling of one’s own worth and value based on self-esteem. As an ethical concept, pride is associated with dignity, which represents person’s self-respect. The presence of dignity in

25 Laughter, according to Ksenija Atanasijević, is also an excellent anti-evil approach (Atanasijević, 1930, p. 41).

26 Atanasijević, 2011, p. 112.

27 Petrović provides a good assessment of Atanasijević’s pacifism (2021, pp. 105–107).

every person, even the most unassuming, results in the highest value of human existence. Everything can be taken away from a person by force, except pride and dignity, because how we esteem and value ourselves is entirely up to us (Atanasijević, 1930, pp. 209 ff.).

* * *

In examining Atanasijević's philosophy, it is crucial to explore connections between her earlier and later philosophical understandings. Her writings and books in the history of philosophy were analytic and philosophically coherent, focusing primarily on theoretical philosophy: atoms, minima, atomism, continuity, finitism, and so on.

She did not abandon the critical and explanatory approach to philosophy that she employed in her writings before 1928. Her "turn" in philosophical focus consisted of three activities: (i) expressing ethical views in the form of fragments, (ii) researching Yugoslav and Serbian thinkers and (iii) exploring the Serbian national heritage. After 1928, Ksenija Atanasijević distanced herself from her teacher, Branislav Petronijević, whom she always described positively.²⁸

Ksenija Atanasijević was not a dogmatic philosopher. By turning away from "official philosophy", she opened herself up to new themes beyond strict intellectual or rationalist ones, including the exploration of philosophical ideas within artistic forms that are not conventionally philosophical. Her use of figurative, equivocal and elliptical styles allows this type of thinking to convey the truths of the world, God, and our inner existence, which can be found in Serbian literary and cultural heritage. In her later writings, she analyzed these subjects with such conceptual clarity that can only be the envy of many. Does Ksenija Atanasijević, by considering philosophical content expressed in a non-philosophical form, depart from the strictly conceptual philosophy she once ardently advocated during her university career? Her later texts on different themes and methods certainly differ from her earlier problem-hermeneutic studies on Giordano Bruno and Epicurus. In her later work, she set herself the challenge of finding a philosophical character in something that arose from the collective national experience or religious beliefs, rather than philosophical culture. Ksenija Atanasijević managed to find threads that connect different ethical concepts with her own life experience. Achieving this required a flexible mind, refined spirit, and the ability to reconcile seemingly inconsistent thoughts.

²⁸ See Atanasijević, 2006, pp. 96–104.

The ethical thought of Ksenija Atanasijević is compelling because she lived by her principles. Her work, however, is not simply a diary because her ideas and sentiments are philosophical and serve a more general purpose. Having faith in something, rather than solely proving it, can help to soothe our spirits, as it goes beyond mere of logic. Her holistic approach to the human soul indicates that imagination, emotion and belief should be incorporated into the concept of human maturity, its ideals, virtues, and vices. Her profound understanding of the various types of evils, their origins and manifestations enabled her to categorize them dispassionately, affording tremendous insight into the human spirit, its impulses and deeds. Her philosophy is focuses primarily on ethical guidance for achieving peace and consolation. For Ksenija Atanasijević, it is primarily a consolation that helps a vulnerable human being confront his or her fragility; it reminds us that we are not alone in this world full of afflictions, and that we can actively combat evil without resorting to revenge or harming others.

References:

- Aranitović, D. (2006). Bibliografija radova Dr Ksenije Atanasijević. In Ilija Marić (Ed.), *Srpski mislioci*. (pp. 325–407). Plato.
- Aristotle (1984). *Nicomachean Ethics*. In Jonathan Barnes, Complete Works of Aristotle, (pp. 1729–1867), Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation. Princeton University Press.
- Atanasijević, K. (1922). *Brunovo učenje o najmanjem*, autorovo izdanje, štamparija „Vreme“.
- Atanassievitch, X. (1927). *Latomisme d'Épicure*. Les Presses Universitaires de France.
- Atanasijević, K. (1928). *Racionalizam i misticizam*. Srpski književni glasnik XXIV/2. pp. 131–135.
- Atanasijević, K. (1929). *Filozofski fragmenti I*. Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona.
- Atanasijević, K. (1930). *Filozofski fragmenti: II*. Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona.
- Atanasijević, K. (1933). *Hristova etika*. Časopis Život i rad.
- Atanasijević, K. (1968). *Smisao i vrednost egzistencije: aksiološka razmatranja*. Author's edition.
- Atanasijević, K. (2006). *Srpski mislioci*. I. Marić (Ed.), Plato.
- Atanasijević, K. (2007). *Antička filozofija*. I. Marić. (Ed.), Plato.
- Atanasijević, K. (2008). *Etika feminizma*. Lj. Vuletić (Ed.), Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji.
- Atanasijević, K. (2011). *Etika hrabrosti*. Lj. Vuletić (Ed.), Žene u crnom: Rekonstrukcija ženski fond: Centar za ženske studije.

- Atanasijević, K. (2020). *O meni će govoriti moja dela*. Z. Mršević & M. Jovanović (Ed.), Institut društvenih nauka Beograd.
- Deretić, I. (2013). Plato on the Social Role of Women: Critical Reflections. In *International Journal Skepsis* XXIII (2013). Academia Verlag. 152–168.
- Deretić, I. (2016). *Ksenija Atanasijević o ženama i ženskom pitanju u antičkoj filozofiji*. In *Theoria* Vol. 59 (4/2016). 93–109.
- Deretić, I. (2019). Ksenija Atanasijević o Epikuru: Atomizam i hedonizam. In I. Deretić & A. Kandić (Eds.), *Istorija srpske filozofije IV: Prilozi istraživanju*. (pp. 235–237) Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Beogradu.
- Deretić, I. (2020a). *Slovo i slovesnost*. Srpsko filozofsko društvo.
- Deretić, I. (2020b). *Smrt i besmrtnost u Platonovoj filozofiji*. Feniks Libris.
- Dimitrijević, D. (2023). *Pitanje zla u filozofiji i teološkoj antropologiji Ksenije Atanasijević*. *Theoria* 2. 169–177.
- Jeremić, D. (1997). *O filozofiji kod Srba*. I. Marić (Ed.), Plato.
- Kandić, A. (2021). *Some Remarks on Plato's Feminism*. In I. Deretić (Ed.), *Women in Times of Crises*. (pp. 9–19). Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.
- Marić, I. (2006). Ksenija Atanasijević o srpskim filozofima. In I. Marić (Ed.), *Srpski mislioci*. (pp. 419–439). Plato.
- Marić, I. (2014). *Između metafizike i dijalektike. Između ratne srpske filosofije*. Otačnik.
- Michaelson, C. & Tosti-Kharas, J. (2019). Serving Self or Serving Others? Close Relations' Perspectives on Ethics and Calling. In *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 19–39.
- Obdrzalek, S. (2013). Socrates on Love. In: J. Bussanich & N. D. Smith (Eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*. (pp. 210–232). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Petrović, M. (2021). Dealing with a Crisis: A Note from Ksenija Atanasijević. In I. Deretić (Ed.), *Women in Times of Crisis*. (pp. 101–116). Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.
- Žunjić, S. (2014). *Istorija srpske filozofije*. Zavod za udžbenike.