

Soviet and Post-Soviet Generations of Russian Philosophy: Framing the Problem

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a generational approach to the study of the formation of the philosophical tradition. A philosophical generation is a powerful intellectual pattern with its own optics, sets of problems, and methods of research. The author distinguishes six generations of philosophers living and working in Russia today. The specific nature of each philosophical generation is determined by its existential contribution to the philosophy of those close to each other in terms of their experience of discipleship and integration into formal and informal philosophical institutions, and by the commonality of their intellectual foundations. In the case of philosophical generations, this refers not only to the age of those “doing philosophy” but also to the emergence of a new attitude toward philosophy itself, to the production or mastery of new ideas and meanings, to new trends in the discussion of already familiar issues and phenomena, to a new social and cultural role for philosophy, to new general understanding of the world and of man, to a change in what is called “the philosophical way of life.” Studying philosophical generations is important for restoring the human context of philosophical development. The path of cognition from generational type to texts is no less important than the usual path from texts. Reading the history of philosophy as the history of generations of philosophy focuses scholars’ attention on personal connections within the philosophical community (both horizontal and vertical), which clarifies both the individual contribution of thinkers and the mutual influences that determine the birth and development of philosophical ideas.

KEYWORDS

history of philosophy;
philosophical generation;
Russian philosophy;
philosophy of the Soviet
period; Institute of
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The year 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences.¹ The founding of the institute marked the beginning of institutionalization of philosophical research in Russia. The centennial celebration inspired me to reflect on the specific nature of philosophical generations and their role in the development of philosophical tradition. 40

The philosophical generation is a powerful intellectual pattern with its own optics, sets of problems, and research methods. Studying these generations of philosophy is important for restoring the human context of philosophical development. Without this context, much remains unclear. The path of cognition from generational type to texts is no less important than the usual path from texts. Constructing a generational mythologeme is akin to constructing a philosophical paradigm. The generational approach to studying Russia's professional (philosophical) community could be described as a combination of existential-phenomenological and anthropo-socio-cultural approaches. 45 50

The term "philosophical generation" is a new one and has not yet been legitimized (one will not find it either in the philosophical encyclopedia or in dictionaries of cultural studies and anthropology). The closest analogues to "philosophical generation" are the concepts of "symbolic generation," "intellectual generation," and "cultural generation," although they all serve to reflect a different reality. 55

The necessity and timeliness of this new approach are evidenced by the demand for a number of publications in Russia leading to the concept of "philosophical generations." First among these is the recently issued two-volume collection *Philosophy in the Plural*,² which presents the original doctrines of departed Russian thinkers whose lives and philosophical work came to be professionally associated with the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Another is the popular two-volume publication *Generations of the Higher School of Economics*, where the first volume features students at the Higher School of Economics speaking about their teachers, while the second one directs attention to teachers themselves sharing memories of their own teachers.³ Also worth mentioning is the two-volume edition of *Philosophy Never Ends . . . From the History of Russian Philosophy. Twentieth Century*, edited by Vladislav A. Lektorsky. This publication, which provided an impetus for the famous 22-volume series *Philosophy of Russia in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*, presents two types of materials: One deals with the sociohistorical realities in which certain philosophers lived, while the other describes the essence of their work.⁴ Also of importance are the collection *Philosophical Consciousness: The Drama of Renewal*, edited by Nikolai I. Lapin,⁵ and the series of publications, somewhat similar in genre, by the theoretical debate club "Free Word" (1988–2008), led by Valentin I. Tolstykh.⁶ In books included in this 60 65 70 75 80

series the philosophers talk about themselves. Likewise devoted to the generational consciousness of philosophers are the recent book by Michail Maiatsky, *Decorations/Dependencies. Homage to Jacques Derrida. Sketches Towards a Self-Portrait of One Generation of Philosophers*, published as part of Logos' library series,⁷ and the long-standing debate "The Generation of the Sixties /The Generation of the Eighties" in the journal *Znanie—Sila*.⁸ 85

I believe the specific nature of a philosophical generation is determined by its existential contribution to the philosophy of those close to each other through the experience of apprenticeship and integration into official and unofficial philosophical institutions. The reason for an intuitive and mutual understanding among those who belong to the same generation of philosophy, even with a whole spectrum of diverse stylistic and ideological preferences, is a common bibliography, an intellectual foundation laid during their youth by fiction and nonfiction literature, films, and blogs, by performances, exhibitions, and plays, by poetry and music, by polemics and folklore, by social experiences and travels. 90 95

The title of Edmund Husserl's fifth Cartesian meditation, "Uncovering the Sphere of Transcendental Being as Monadological Intersubjectivity,"⁹ sounds like a formula for conceptualizing the generational myth. The philosophical generation is a spiritual congregation of self-contained individualities/monads that, being in the space of intersubjectivity, create a single transcendental field of meanings, their generational mythologeme, reflecting not the coexistence of discrete physical units but an intelligible community living in the transcendental sphere of spirit and culture. The image of the past is transformed into the intersubjective myth of a generational group, in whose memory lives the same original object and the same intention of its comprehension. 100 105

As a unique kind of intellectual activity, philosophy is impossible without teaching, personified both by thought leaders of "circles" and "schools" and by the figure of the Teacher, whose influence may not even be institutionally organized. However, along with the vertical teacher–student dimension, which permeates generations through and through, there is also a horizontal dimension enacted through communication within one's own generational community. Not only teachers but also fellow practitioners transmit knowledge and shape new ways of thinking and reasoning that open up opportunities for young people to work independently. In the discussions and debates of classmates who train each other think critically, vectors of research and topics to prioritize are forming for years to come, and friendly alliances of like-minded people take shape, outside of which philosophical work would be impossible. 110 115

Chronologically speaking, the professional hierarchy is not initially established: It takes shape in the process of live communication: in opposition to one another, in debate, in argument, in friendly conversation. Communication outside of lecture halls, the presence of like-minded interlocutors and rivals, 120

and collegial relationships are the necessary conditions for a creative, fruitful academic life. Along with Heidegger's famous question (about Adorno), "Did he study under anyone at all?" philosophical identification suggests the equally important "What generation does he belong to?" 125

The change in scientific guideposts and restructuring of the philosophical community that signify each new stage of its formation originate and mature in the intragenerational dialogue of young people, are conditioned by the presence or absence of the new generation's semantic opposition to the academic mainstream, and depend on the strength of corporate unity and generational solidarity among neophyte philosophers as they begin to cultivate their field of research. 130

Characterizing a generation of philosophy means designating its three registers. First is to name those who taught the generation and helped the incoming generation to realize their own mission, those whose experience and values were decisive at the time of the entry of the emerging generation into the profession. Second is to define the generational myth, revealing the professional credo, listing the achievements and failures, understanding what exactly the philosophical generation is capable of passing on to its successors. Third is to identify within the philosophical generation those key groups of like-minded people and opponents in whose conversations and debates the generation-forming philosophical concepts emerged. 135 140 145

For philosophers living and working in Russia today, I would identify six philosophical generations.

The oldest of Russia's still living philosophical generations are the philosophers of the fifties, those who survived and remember the war. They started their careers in philosophy during the dark times, when the philosophical community lay in ruins after Stalinist purges. Their younger efforts were given to dogmatic Marxism-Leninism, but they retained a keen critical interest in philosophy and were able to achieve professional success in their mature years. They witnessed how all current generations of philosophers have formed, being involved in the process. 150 155

In the late fifties, the totalitarian culture that isolated people within self-enclosed dimensions and shaped particular conditions for personal and social behavior and thought began to be penetrated by foreign elements that destroyed its monolithic character. A change in the cultural paradigm began: Man's socially significant personal ties in culture and history became restored, shaping a new type of human occupancy of culture. 160

The generational myth of the philosophers of the fifties was not and could not be formulated. This generation even thinks of itself as belonging to the early sixties. I would include in this group philosophers like Valentin F. Asmus, Teodor I. Oizerman, David I. Dubrovskii, Nikolai I. Lapin, Veniamin M. Boguslavskii, and others. 165

The philosophers of the sixties are a romantic generation open to the world; their characteristic features are corporatism and solidarity. Philosophers of the sixties were early to self-determine and felt confident in their circle; they were united by a jargon-heavy language and by their myths (like the myth of the Arbat). In many ways, their culture was Western culture. Their philosophy was defined by the possibility of communication; they felt themselves to be a link to the traditions of world culture. They had something to say to the world, and on an equal footing, so they felt it necessary to lift the iron curtain. Isolationism interfered with the philosophers of the sixties and oppressed them. This is a universalist generation that sincerely believed in progress, hence the popularity of Hegel in the 1960s. This generation saw its mission in cleansing Leninism of Stalinism and communism of totalitarianism. It revived modern philosophy, phenomenology, and existentialism. We associate with them a rise in the study of Eastern philosophies and the development of research on logic and methodologies of science. This was the first postwar philosophical generation to achieve professional recognition internationally. The intellectual center of the philosophers of the sixties is the journal *Voprosy filosofii* (with editors-in-chief Ivan T. Frolov, Vladislav A. Lektorky, and Boris I. Pruzhinin.)

The myth of the sixties generation, the core Soviet generation, has been developed in great detail. The philosophers of the sixties position themselves as the philosophical generation par excellence and have been universally recognized as such. I would consider Evald V. Ilyenkov, Merab K. Mamardashvili, Alexander A. Zinoviev, Abdusalam A. Guseynov, Vadim M. Mezhuev, Nelli V. Motroshilova, Erikh Yu. Soloviev, and others as representatives of the sixties generation.

The generation of the philosophers of the seventies–eighties is a generation of loners, in which each representative is autonomous and self-sufficient. The philosophers of this generation did not, in their younger years, gravitate toward forming a monolithic professional community. Each cultivated his or her own direction alone, feeling no involvement in the generation as such. They do not like to be called “philosophers of the seventies–eighties” or compared generationally to groups like the philosophers of the sixties. They suffer no illusions; they are pragmatic and opposed to the “Thaw” generation that had for a long time ignored them and shut this successor generation out of their circles. In their younger years, philosophers of the seventies–eighties felt themselves on the periphery of a professional community that still centered on philosophers of the sixties.

This was the generation that began reassessing the values of the philosophers of the sixties. Having entered the profession in the suffocating atmosphere of Brezhnev’s Stagnation, they generally sought spiritual support in a timeless Absolute outside of history. Their career advancement was difficult and slow, and the period of their heyday, with rare exception, passed them

by. Lacking the possibility of self-realization, the philosophers of the seventies left their profession early, and some died young. At the same time, the philosophers of the eighties were the first Soviet generation to be given an opportunity to train and work abroad. Philosophers of the seventies–eighties did not establish their own generation-forming journal. At their peak, many representatives of this generation founded their own individual philosophical schools and journals, including *Filosofskii zhurnal* (Andrey V. Smirnov), *Epistemologiya i filosofiya nauki* (Ilya T. Kasavin), *Istoriya filosofii* (Irina I. Blauberger), *Sinii divan* (Helen V. Petrovsky), *Logicheskie issledovaniia* (Vladimir I. Shalak), and *Filosofiya religii: analiticheskie issledovaniia* (Vladimir K. Shokhin).

While the vector of sixties philosophers was directed centrifugally, representatives of the seventies–eighties generation were characterized by centripetal motion. While philosophers of the sixties gravitated toward large-scale projects, philosophers of the seventies–eighties preferred depth of immersion in a chosen topic and attention to detail. The idea of building their own generational myth is fundamentally alien to representatives of this generation. Philosophers of this generation include Valery A. Podoroga, Vladimir V. Mironov, Alexandr L. Dobrokhotov, Vladimir N. Porus, Alexei A. Kara-Murza, Sergey A. Nikolsky, and others.

The nineties generation are the students and heirs of philosophers of the sixties. Their youth coincided with the second “Thaw,” that is, Gorbachev’s Thaws, which provided an impetus for an explosion of passion for the humanities. This generation’s entrée into philosophy took place during that short period of history called *Perestroika*, in an atmosphere of freedom and open communication. New books appeared, archives were opened, and a sense of personal involvement in history was affirmed. Silver-Age tradition was revived: open debates among people of different generations, different professions, and different beliefs, all converging in the desire for lively debate and mutual understanding. The experience of personal involvement in the cultural tradition largely determined the religious renaissance in Russia in the 1990s. During these years, there appeared a new generation of idealists who grew utterly involved in book life. They were fortunate to enter the profession during the earliest and brightest period of glasnost, a period that opened up social ties and opportunities that did not exist before. It then seemed that Russia’s history was making a new turn, determining a unique and chosen role for the generation of philosophers of the nineties. Once they received this impulse of freedom, this generation carried it through life.

Like the philosophers of the sixties, the nineties generation are romantics. They are no strangers to pragmatism, gravitating toward corporatism and intragenerational isolation, but with a focus on communication and cooperation with the world. They are open to anything new. Where the seventies–

eighties generation is anti-Soviet, the nineties generation is non-Soviet. That is, they are neither Soviet nor anti-Soviet but are simply removed from that option. 255

In their younger years, members of this generation found themselves in the information flow of foreign philosophical literature and materials from special depositories, and they realized the need to stick together, choosing a common professional track and landmarks. Current political issues occupied philosophers of the nineties much less than professionalization, which they understood as the accumulation of personal experience in the scholarly and methodological discipline. The gravitational center for this philosophical generation was the journal *Logos* (editor-in-chief: Valer'ian V. Anashvili). Like the generation of the sixties, the philosophers of the nineties were preoccupied with consistent construction of their own mythology. Representatives of this generation include Vadim V. Vasil'ev, Boris V. Mezhuev, Aleksei P. Kozyrev, Vasilii Vanchugov, Igor M. Chubarov, Elena A. Takho-Godi, Igor A. Mikhailov, and others. 260 265

The millennials are the students of the seventies–eighties philosophers, and they largely adopted their teachers' paradigm for installing themselves in the profession. This is a generation of loners and small groups of like-minded individuals who experienced the collapse of illusions on the rise. The new humanities boom never occurred; it was replaced by a commercial boom. The millennial generation entered philosophy at a time of lost hope that Russia's historical path after the collapse of a repressive regime would be a meaningful one. This generation accepted the logic of events and submitted to the objective course of things. Many representatives of this generation remained in philosophy, devoting their lives to the proliferation of knowledge, while forgetting all about wisdom, that is, about the existential understanding of that knowledge. Some gravitate toward such nuanced description of the object of their research that it sometimes loses its transparency for the uninitiated. Others, on the other hand, have abandoned trivial knowledge that had become a blind barrier between them and their lives. A line of schism divides this generation into supporters of analytical and continental traditions of philosophizing. The idea of the journal as a generational corporate center is fundamentally alien to this generation. The millennials are a unity of the dissimilar, distinguished by their lack of inclination toward generational reflection and by their focus on individual professional growth. Representatives of this generation include Aleksandr Yu. Antonovskii, Alexei G. Zhavoronkov, Aleksandr V. Pavlov, Artem P. Besedin, Andrei V. Prokof'ev, Sofia V. Pirozhkova, and others. 270 275 280 285 290

The philosophical generation of the first decade of the twenty-first century inherited from the philosophers of the nineties an intuition of the identity of culture and life, of tradition and freedom, of European history and Russian specificity. The hallmark of this generation is openness to interaction. This is 295

a bright and close-knit generation that feels equally at home within Russian philosophical space and outside of it. This generation is brilliantly educated, free, professional, working for pleasure, and success-oriented. The journal *Finikovyi kompot* (editor-in-chief: Evgenii V. Loginov) might serve as an expression of the spirit of this generation, which gravitates toward various forms of joint work and considers philosophy a collective effort. The mythology of this generation is taking shape before our very eyes. I would include among this generation Nikolai B. Afanasov, Artem T. Yunusov, Daniil O. Aronson, Stanislav Yu. Rykov, Natal'ia D. Safronova, and Anna M. Winckelmann, among others. 300

My classification of the six generations of contemporary Russian philosophers is just a proposal, a dynamic construction, a “model for assembly.” Any structuring presupposes a deliberate simplification of reality, and it depends on what exactly to highlight. By the fifties generation I mean the generation that entered universities after the war but studied philosophy according to the prewar paradigm. In my understanding, the sixties generation is made up of those whose university years coincided with the Khrushchev reforms. The philosophers of the seventies–eighties represent a long-term generation that started their journey into philosophy in the late sixties and right up to the beginning of Gorbachev’s *Perestroika*. What I call the nineties generation are those who studied philosophy at the dawn of *Perestroika*, between the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The millennials are those in their late forties who entered the profession in the second half of the nineties or later, just as the generation of the 2010s, the “grandchildren of *Perestroika*,” are around the age of thirty, plus or minus. However, in any conversation about philosophical generations, biological age is obviously only a label, and not the most appropriate one, I admit. It is justified only by the absence of an accompanying value label. 305 310 315 320

These generations could be also given different names: the generations of late Stalinism, Thaw, Stagnation, *Glasnost*, Market-Reform, and the Protest generation currently taking shape before our very eyes . . . Or even: the generation of Marxist–Leninist philosophy; the generation of reformed Marxism, Hegel, and Sartre; the generation of Kant and Derrida; the generation of Nietzsche, Foucault, Berdyaev, and Vl. Solovyov; the generation of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Ivan Ilyin; and the generation of Deleuze, Dennett, Meillassoux, and Harman . . . Or they could be labeled in this way: the generation that spoke in dogmas, the generation that spoke in its own jargon, the silent generation, the generation that translated into Russian, the interpretive generation, and the generation that translated into English . . . Many other versions are possible. At the same time, anyone proposing their own periodization or renaming the existing ones will clearly do so from the reference points of their own generation, using their own optics, focusing attention on what is proximate to them and like-minded philosophers. 325 330 335

The complexities of schematizing a generational history remind me of an old joke that beauty must be measured in meters: Everyone seems beautiful at a safe distance, but the closer one gets, the more one sees flaws, and the true beauties become fewer and fewer. Similarly, it is much easier to generalize events of distant years that have lost their nuance, highlighting only the most significant markers: Partial differences may appear insignificant at a distance, dissolving in the memory until they become indistinguishable. A long-past life seems purified; its problems are not immersed in the mundane world of everyday life. This allows us to see the things important for today more clearly. The reality that is currently emerging before our eyes is replete with so many everyday details and vivid distinctive features that it is harder to resist the desire of highlighting and taking all of them into account. This clearly demonstrates the difference between the generational historical–philosophical approach and the linguistic approach based on the analysis of the reflection of collective memory in language. Research conducted at the Higher School of Economics has shown that the use of the adjective “distant” with the names of decades does not yield the expected result, where the farther away an era is from us, the more distant it should appear in the language. In fact, the word “distant” is used often in relation to the 1980s and far less often in relation to the thirties or forties. It turns out that “in practice, the thirties are ‘closer’ to us than the eighties. The reason is the severity of the events we have experienced: terror and war still rattle public memory, and the eighties simply ‘drowned’ in the nineties.”¹⁰ In the landscape of collective memory, there are “peaks” and “valleys”; that is, there are decades vividly remembered, and there are years that are almost invisible. Among the “valleys” of Russian history are the fifties, the seventies–eighties, and the first decade of this century.

There is another difficulty, as well. While the pattern of generations that entered philosophy over the last century has more or less taken shape, the corpus of written texts has become representative, and their lives continue along well-worn grooves, is it reasonable to speak of a generational phenomenon for those who still have a long way to go? I believe that, yes, not only is it possible, but quite urgent! The formation of a philosophical generation (or, to use Kantian phraseology, their emergence from the state of non-age) occurs during their college and postgraduate years and ends by the age of twenty-five to thirty. By this time, the generational myth had already been defined and their agenda had taken shape. What follows is its more or less successful unfurling over time, its realization. That said, it often happens that people who otherwise belong to a particular generational group in terms of age feel like strangers within it and gravitate toward those who are older or younger. This is absolutely natural since what we are discussing is not purely about age or social guideposts.

The basic novelty of trying to comprehend the history of philosophy as a chronicle of philosophical generations consists in the fact that when analyzing the content of philosophical paradigms, we foreground an autobiographical excursion into the history of their authors' professional establishment and the personal testimonies of contemporaries. I would assign particular importance to the study of generational myths: the existential markers, jargonish formulations, trigger events, and key concepts that define each philosophical generation from within. It is also important to draw parallels between the areas of interest of Russian and European generations of philosophers. 385 390

I imagine that there are quite a few skeptics within the philosophical community who will question the generational approach to the history of philosophy. They may make an exception for a single generation; hardly any scholars would deny the unique identity of the generation of the sixties during the Soviet period. 395

The main argument "against" the concept of philosophical generations is that "generation" is a sociological concept and, by virtue of this, not applicable to philosophy, which is understood as an exclusively personal, subjective matter, as a unique way of life in the space of self-sufficient thinking. After all, a philosopher is a loner striving to emphasize his individuality, to distinguish himself from everyone else (which could also be said about generations of artists, musicians, or athletes). It could thus be concluded that "generation" as a category could not serve as a working tool for analysis. It would not be applicable to people whose profession is philosophy since they do not represent a significant social phenomenon and they distance themselves from socially significant events, "retiring into the shell of their thoughts." 400 405

A second objection is that an actual philosophical generation represents only the few who are summoned by their time, that "fresh starts" in tradition that delimit generations are too rare, that "silent generations" do not count, that the formation of a generation requires a sense of vocation, of mission. 410

A third doubt might be raised by the fact that sociological and biological generations take shape in the struggle between "children and fathers," while the philosophical community has been characterized by continuity and mutual respect. A change of philosophical generations would not imply a process by which a new generation overcomes the ideas of the previous one. For philosophical generations, Alexis de Tocqueville's formulation, "each generation is a new people," would be incorrect. On the contrary: It is a community of people whose profession is philosophy (as well as the scientific community as a whole), aimed at blurring the boundaries between generations. Scholars with completely different levels of status see each other above all as colleagues, as fellow workers at the workshop. 415 420

All these objections would be well founded if applied to the concept of generation as it is used in everyday life, with its traditional connotations. However, the concept of “philosophical generation” is in equal measure not identical to the biological, genealogical, or sociopsychological understanding of generation, nor to the understanding of generation in the archaic Biblical sense. A different optic is used when looking at it. The classical metaphors of “caravans” or “waves” do not work for the concept of philosophical generations. However, two well-known concepts are partially applicable. These are the classical sociological approach of Mannheim (primarily the concepts of “social entelechy” and “spirit of the times” (*Zeitgeist*)) and Ortega y Gasset’s understanding that “contemporaries” are not “coevals.” To a certain extent, the contemporary theory of generation is also useful, namely, one that uses a sociological interpretation of generation that unites an indefinite set of individuals based on their age, specific model of consumption, and media preferences. In this very sense, they speak of generations like “boomers,” “generation X,” “millennials,” or “zoomers.”

In the case of philosophical generations, this refers not only to the age of those “doing philosophy” but also to the emergence of a new attitude toward philosophy itself, to the production or mastery of new ideas and meanings, to new trends in the discussion of already familiar issues and phenomena, to a new social and cultural role of philosophy, to new general understandings of the world and of humans, to a change in what is called “the philosophical way of life.”

Another important feature of philosophical generations is associated with intergenerational relationships. In philosophy, intergenerational polemics do not constitute “agonal dialogue.” Intergenerational connections can be as strong as the commonality among people of a single generation: Philosophical generations do not oust one another from the historical stage but echo each other, constantly supporting intergenerational debate. Philosophical generations live together and interact. The ideas of bygone generations do not disappear but acquire new relevance.

I realize that the phrase “philosophical generations” may raise questions not only about the concept of “generation” but also about the word “philosophical.” In this case, however, the answer is simple. The focus of this discussion is professional philosophers, those who have been initiated into the academic hierarchy, who have mastered a certain amount of information, logic, theory of argumentation and rhetoric, who use specialized terminology and methodology, and who follow the ethical norms and rules of citation accepted within the scholarly community.

I might be reproached for arbitrarily giving an ordered form to diversity, for appropriating the role of an observer and randomly sorting philosophers into generational niches. In my defense, I can say that in my classification I not only rely on my own intuition, but also take into consideration the

judgments and opinions of distinguished philosophers about myself and my time. Obviously, philosophical generations do not exist as homogeneous entities; each has its own standout group of thinkers who color our idea of the generation as a whole. These are philosophers who expressed their time in language, united by common existential experiences, not by historico-socio-political characteristics. These are people with a shared pool of references: destinies, characters, book genres, and bibliographies

I consider that the main marker of the generational paradigm shift is the answer to the question of whether professional philosophers are engaged in philosophy together or alone. An attitude toward philosophical work as an exclusively personal, subjective affair that compels a unique way of life in the space of self-sufficient thinking is characteristic of those generations that entered philosophy in the 1950s, the 1970–1980s, and the 2000s. On the other hand, for most scholars of the 1960s, the 1990s, and the 2010s, philosophy is a communal, collective affair.

This cyclical picture of generational dynamics may elicit a sense of inevitability associated with the change of seasons; however, it is important to emphasize that, for philosophical generations, the length of time during which one generation or another prevails differs significantly from the guideposts of sociological generations. This is not a case of automatism or “arithmetic inevitability” (Schlesinger). There can be no indicative time frame for the main stages of the generational pathway in multiples of fifteen or twenty years in the case of philosophical generations. For example, the era of the “philosophers of the seventies–eighties” stretched for almost three decades, while the time of the “philosophers of the nineties” lasted a maximum of five to six years.

Recording key events in the intellectual history of each generation of philosophers, as reflected in their personal experience, and interpreting generational myths are essential for structuring the chronicles of Russian philosophy. Studying the birth and development of philosophical ideas within philosophical generations, based on research into the interpersonal, existential communion of authors, will provide a more substantial and accurate understanding of the meanings of philosophical conceptions.

Will the concept of “philosophical generation” enter scholarly use? Will it become the key to interpreting the history of philosophy? Only time will tell. I believe that reading the history of philosophy as the history of philosophical generations will help change the usual optics and focus the attention of scholars on existential, personal connections within the professional community (both horizontal and vertical connections), which will clarify both the individual contribution of thinkers and the influences that determined the birth and development of philosophical ideas, possibly identifying new landmarks along philosophy’s historical route.

Notes

1. The Institute of Scientific Philosophy was established in August 1921 by the People's Commissariat of Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Initially, the Institute of Scientific Philosophy was affiliated with Moscow University. The institute separated from Moscow State University in 1926 and became part of the Russian Association of Scientific Research Institutes of Social Sciences. That same year, a Philosophy Section was established at the Communist Academy of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union. In 1928–1929, the Philosophical Section and the Institute of Scientific Philosophy merged into the Institute of Philosophy of the Communist Academy. After the liquidation of the Communist Academy in 1936, the institute became a part of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, now the Russian Academy of Sciences. 515
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