

The Revolution and Intelligentsia in G.G. Shpet's *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*

Революция и интеллигенция в «Очерке развития русской философии» Г.Г. Шпета*

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Оригинальная исследовательская статья

Аннотация

В статье анализируется понимание Октябрьской революции в «Очерке развития русской философии» Г.Г. Шпета. Автор рассматривает теорию типов интеллигенции (церковной, правительственной и оппозиционной) Шпета и показывает, как в ней проявилось отношение к Октябрьской революции, которую Шпет оценивает исходя из некоторого идеального представления о революции, призванной дать важный импульс к развитию культуры. Доказывается, что, согласно Г.Г. Шпету, бывшая оппозиционная интеллигенция, которая сформировала правительство в новом советском государстве, в своем отношении к культуре идентична царской правительственной интеллигенции, что означает фактическую реставрацию политики царизма в сфере культуры в советской России. На этом основании автор делает вывод, что Г.Г. Шпет понимает революцию как упущенный шанс изменения отношения государства к культуре в России. Исходя из концепции Шпета, можно заключить, что политические события 1917 года невозможно считать в подлинном смысле революционными, поскольку идея революции предполагает радикальную смену существующего общественно-политического строя, о чем сложно в полной мере говорить в случае «революции 1917 года». История противостояния оппозиционной интеллигенции и правительства в эпоху царизма оказалась аналогичной тем общественным процессам, которые были связаны с развитием диссидентского движения и вызвали крах СССР. В статье уделяется особое внимание интерпретации Шпетом творчества Н.Г. Чернышевского. В статье показано, что Шпет обоснованно связывает творчество Чернышевского с европейским Просвещением XVIII века, уподобляя русского мыслителя Вольтеру. В этом отношении Шпет отождествляет русскую оппозиционную интеллигенцию Просвещению. В статье используется традиционный инструментарий истории философии: герменевтический, компаративистский метод, метод исторической реконструкции.

Ключевые слова: Г.Г. Шпет, революция, оппозиция, революционные демократы, интеллигенция, культура, философия истории русской философии.

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The Revolution and Intelligentsia in G.G. Shpet's *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy**

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Original research paper

Abstract

The article analyzes G.G. Shpet's understanding of the October Revolution, as reflected in his *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*. The author examines Shpet's theory of the types of intelligentsia (ecclesiastical intelligentsia, ministerial intelligentsia, and oppositional intelligentsia) and their attitude to the Russian Revolution, which Shpet treats as an ideal notion aimed at promoting cultural development. The author maintains that, according to Shpet, oppositional intelligentsia, forming the new Soviet government, and the former ministerial intelligentsia treated culture similarly. Thus, in the sphere of cultural development, Soviet Russia abode by tsarist cultural policies. This enables the author to conclude that Shpet views the Russian Revolution as a wasted opportunity to change the relationship between government and culture. Having analyzed Shpet's ideas, one can conclude that the political events of 1917 cannot be truly considered revolutionary, since the idea of a revolution implies a radical change of the existing political order, something which can hardly be said in case of the "Revolution of 1917." The history of opposition vs. government confrontation in the tsarist epoch appears to be similar to the social processes associated with the dissident movement in the USSR. The article gives special attention to Shpet's interpretation of N.G. Chernyshevsky's work. The article shows that Shpet rightly links Chernyshevsky's creative work with 18th-century European Enlightenment, comparing Chernyshevsky with Voltaire. Shpet believes that Russian oppositional intelligentsia can be associated with the Enlightenment. The article uses a range of traditional methods of history of philosophy: hermeneutics, comparative method, and historical reconstruction.

Keywords: G.G. Shpet, revolution, opposition, revolutionary democrats, intelligentsia, culture, philosophy, history of Russian philosophy.

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Introduction

In a letter to F. A. Stepun, a famous Slavist and historian of Russian philosophy, D.I. Chizhevsky described the first part of G.G. Shpet's *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* as "a pamphlet against Soviet philosophy, dressed in the form of history of Russian thought" [Yantsen 2006, 364] (1). Such a negative assessment of Shpet's work was not formed by Chizhevsky immediately. In his review in 1924, speaking about the merits of Shpet's work, Chizhevsky writes that "it is not a mere *An Outline of the development of Russian philosophy* but a great, colorful and vivid journalistic work, written in accordance with the noble traditions of philosophical journalism" [Prokofiev 1924, 454] (2). Chizhevsky says that Shpet's *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* reflects "philosophy of the history of Russian philosophy" and even "philosophy of Russian destiny." One can agree that *An Outline* is a kind of *philosophy of the Russian culture* aimed at understanding the present within the framework of a living historical tradition. The Russian revolution and the new Soviet culture constituted the present for Shpet. The comprehension of the Russian revolution and its consequences becomes the most important element of the conceptual skeleton of Shpet's *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*. In the introduction to his work, Shpet explicitly states that "the revolution is the result, which can also be a criterion and an end in the light of which it is perfectly permissible to consider any, including ideological, material of our history. The context I spoke about lies within the framework of philosophy and culture, and methodologically this is not a narrowing of the horizon, but only its definition" [Shpet 2008, 43].

Shpet, as is known, considered himself to be a supporter of "pure philosophy." But the "purity" of philosophy did not presuppose for him the exception of the general background of philosophy and, the more so, the departure from reality. On the contrary, Shpet believed that reality in its concreteness and wholeness is the true subject of philosophy, which distinguishes it from private scientific knowledge. That is why you can compare philosophy only "with knowledge that is also aimed at cognition of the whole, complete, and concrete. Whatever theme philosophy researches, the theme, even if it is specific, becomes general and essential" [Shpet 1916, 429]. *An Outline of the Development of Russian*

Philosophy, which was originally expected to contain three parts, contains only one. It serves as an example of philosophical comprehension of concrete reality, first of all, the reality of a new Russian state that arose from the flame of the revolution.

**The philosophical context of the concept of revolution:
the main ideas of G.G. Shpet's**

An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy

An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy is an exclusively philosophical work, not a historical-philosophical one. All concrete assessments of individual philosophers and philosophical trends are introduced by Shpet into the conceptual framework of several ideas and initial assumptions, which he adhered to throughout his entire philosophical biography. A number of recognized Russian thinkers received rather critical and harsh assessment (that is why V.V. Zenkovsky noted the doctrinaire tone of Shpet's work [Zenkovsky 2001, 31]), yet this was not irrational voluntarism or a bad taste, but a consequence of the author's philosophical position, which makes him not an outside observer of the history of philosophy (a kind of indifferent chronicler of philosophy) but a subject of an *intellectual dialogue* with the thinkers he researches and philosophical traditions he explores. Therefore, these thinkers and traditions cease being alien and external. Shpet adopts them to enrich his own philosophy.

In *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*, Shpet clearly distinguishes between three groups of key ideas that determine the philosophical framework of the book. The first idea focuses on philosophy as *pure knowledge*, i.e. knowledge for the sake of knowledge, which has its own subject and method (the subject is the concrete and integral reality, the method is dialectical) that are not reducible to anything else and cannot be borrowed from other areas of cognitive activity. As Shpet writes, "philosophy always studies the beginnings, its subject is 'principles' and sources; philosophy is always and essentially the first philosophy" [Shpet 2014, 24–25]. Philosophy in the form of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, in the form of a simple joy of thought, is understood by Shpet as the highest achievement of culture. So, philosophy in the sense of Aristotle's first philosophy is the quintessence of Europe as a phenomenon of culture. In his article "Wisdom or Reason?" Shpet writes: "Pure Europeanism was awakened at the moment when the first ray of reflection illuminated man's own experiences. Europe is a mental strain, which is not work, but 'leisure,' delight and celebration of life; the most valuable thing for philosophy is the creativity of thought; and no power, whether sword or morality, could destroy European people's passion for thinking. Europe had as many fairy tales and myths, as much wisdom and as many revelations as the East, but Europe does not only feel them, but also re-thinks them" [Shpet 1994, 229]. In contrast to this mental strain, in culture there are also more primitive forms of reflection: wisdom, mysticism. Such forms are especially characteristic of the East. Wisdom is defined by Shpet as moralizing, the formulation of absolute rules of life, but for Shpet wisdom, like mysticism, is a pre-philosophical way of thinking.

Explicating his understanding of pre-philosophical forms of thinking, Shpet points out two major negative characteristics: *subjectivity* and *utilitarianism*. “In particular, with regard to philosophy, the perception of it as wisdom and morality is utilitarian (philosophy must teach to live wisely, both in the broadest and the narrowest sense of practical life). The understanding of philosophy as metaphysics and worldview evokes a more subtle and sublime view of its usefulness (philosophy is aimed at saving the soul, solving the mysteries of the meaning of life, justifying the world) but basically it also generates a utilitarian attitude toward it. It is necessary to go deeper into the idea of philosophy as pure knowledge, so that the perception of it and science as such ceased to be utilitarian and expressed itself in pure, ‘disinterested’ Eros. Wherever these three philosophies can be found, one can find three different ways of subjective experiences of philosophy” [Shpet 2008, 73–74]. Thus, philosophy in its development and self-realization undergoes three stages: philosophy as wisdom, philosophy as metaphysics, philosophy as pure knowledge. And only the latter is philosophy in the proper sense of the word; it reaches this degree of maturity in European culture exclusively. The appearance of philosophy in this sense is, as V.K. Kantor correctly writes, “‘an indicator of maturity of national culture as such.’ That is, the emergence of philosophy, the very possibility of philosophy is a test of whether culture has turned from ethnographic material into an independent subject” [Kantor 2006, 272]. In understanding of philosophy as pure knowledge one can see the influence of Husserl’s phenomenology on *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* [see also: Cassedy 1997].

For Shpet, understanding philosophy as wisdom or metaphysics is subjective and immature. It accounts for Shpet’s belief that spiritual growth consists in gradually overcoming *ignorance (neveglasie)*, which is characterized by dominance of the utilitarian attitude to knowledge and science and, consequently, forms a *pre-scientific* and *pre-philosophical*, i.e. *non-cultural* stage of the development of both individual consciousness and collective consciousness of people. Accordingly, Shpet also presents *An Outline* as gradual rejection of ignorance. Therefore, his approach is *progressive*. However, Shpet believes, as we will see later, that the history of progress, or movement toward pure philosophy is a *wasted* opportunity for Russia. This is the most important conclusion of Shpet’s work.

The second main idea of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* is the concept of *change concerning the types of intelligentsia*. While the definition of true philosophy as pure knowledge turns out to be a kind of constant of Shpet’s philosophy expressed in many of his works, the idea of changing types of intelligentsia found its fullest and clearest embodiment in *An Outline*. T.G. Shchedrina convincingly demonstrates that sketches of this concept originated in Shpet’s works long before his work on this book, as early as in 1912; Shpet reflects on the idea of changing types of intelligentsia in Russian history, for example, in a letter to N.K. Guchkova of August 22, 1912 [see: Shchedrina 2008]. Nevertheless, this idea is fully

revealed in *An Outline*, where it acquires additional semantic nuances and is built into the general vision of the development of Russian culture. Shpet himself calls this idea fundamental to his work (cf.: [Shpet 2008, 41]).

The philosopher considers intelligentsia to be an inseparable part of any people, the spokesman of its culture, and the attitude of intelligentsia to science and philosophy is a litmus test of culture and spiritual maturity of people. Shpet singles out three historical types of Russian intelligentsia: *ecclesiastical*, *ministerial*, and *oppositional*. This idea clearly contradicts the generally accepted belief that intelligentsia is exclusively oppositional (see the *Vekhi* (“Landmarks”) collected essays (1909)). In this sense, Shpet’s *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* can reasonably be considered a continuation of the discussion about the Russian intelligentsia and Russian nihilism, which originated in the late 19th – early 20th century and remained relevant in the first post-revolutionary years. We venture to assert that *An Outline* is the answer to the authors of *Vekhi* (“Landmarks”) and *Iz Glubiny* (“From the Depths”).

According to Shpet, *ecclesiastical* intelligentsia is the first type of the Russian intelligentsia, which encompasses Russian educators of the past up to the 17th – early 18th centuries, especially teachers of Kiev-Mohyla Academy, educators of the Slavic Greek Latin Academy, the Likhud brothers, Symeon of Polotsk, Fedor Polikarpov, Feofan Prokopovich, Stefan Yavorsky, etc. The *ministerial* intelligentsia replaces the ecclesiastical intelligentsia. Shpet writes, “Since Peter the Great’s time, the government itself becomes the Russian intelligentsia and retains this role for more than a hundred years. ‘The authority of hierarchs’ is to submit to ‘the authority of the tsars’ and to become its obedient organ. <...> The clergy has new educational problems to solve” [Shpet 2008, 54]. During this period, the intelligentsia is inseparably linked with the history of university and spiritual-academic philosophy in Russia. However, since the Russian intelligentsia speaks on behalf of the government, the government itself becomes an intellectual authority. The success and the failure of the ministerial intelligentsia are associated with the Minister of National Education Count S.S. Uvarov with his triple formula of “official nationality,” and with such professional philosophers as A.A. Fisher, I.G. Mikhnevich, O.M. Novitsky, S.S. Gogotsky and other professorial staff of theological academies and universities working during the “reign” of Count Uvarov.

The 19th century is characterized by a conflict between the ministerial and oppositional intelligentsias, which originated in the depths of free thought of the 18th century and fully revealed themselves in the 19th century in the form of the so-called revolutionary-democratic movement. The oppositional intelligentsia is represented by V.G. Belinsky, N.A. Dobrolyubov, D.I. Pisarev, N.G. Chernyshevsky, G.V. Plekhanov, and others. The list includes only leaders whose ideas were adopted by large groups of Russian society. By the way, researchers of Shpet’s works pay almost no attention to the fact that within the third type of intelligentsia, the philosopher singles out *four subtypes*, dating back to the Russian culture of the 18th century.

Analyzing the works published by T.G. Shchedrina (some notes and a blueprint version of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*), we can conclude that during writing the second and third parts Shpet intended to develop this division. The four subtypes of the oppositional intelligentsia are represented by four “free” thinkers of the 18th century (the forerunners of the oppositional intelligentsia of Russia of the 19th century): N.I. Novikov, M.M. Shcherbatov, A.N. Radishchev, and G.S. Skovoroda.

It is important to note that Shpet also sees a similar phenomenon (changing types of intelligentsia) in the history of Western culture [see also: Steiner 2003]. Western culture, according to Shpet, serves as a kind of background for Russian cultural history. Shpet believes that the origins of European philosophy lie in antiquity and Plato can symbolize philosophy. “Like everything else in the world, the concept of philosophy is developing and undivided, and Plato is its embodiment” [Shpet 1916, 428]. In history of Europe, philosophy undergoes a series of transformations in which the ancient heritage develops and transforms. The change of types of intelligentsia in Europe as a whole is associated with these transformations. Shpet distinguishes between four types of intelligentsia in history and, accordingly, four stages of the development of culture. First of all, we have *the clergy* associated with the Middle Ages. They “conservatively guided education of the Middle Ages” [Shpet 2008, 70]. Then there is the *aristocracy* that created the culture of the Renaissance and thereby awakened Europe to its second (original) birth. There are also *ideologists and carriers of the Enlightenment*, who replaced “the revival of ancient traditions in sciences and arts by false classicism, blasphemed over its spiritual work, and erected scaffold for the aristocracy before they were destroyed, crushed by a soldier’s boot.” [Shpet 2008, 70]. Shpet associates the Enlightenment with imitation, nihilism and negative philosophy, which are the origins that are opposite to the true culture revealed by the Renaissance. Finally, the fourth historical type of Western European intelligentsia is the *nationally conscious intelligentsia of the 19th century*, which led to the most complete and brilliant development of culture in the new European history. As a result, Shpet provides such a schematic model for the development of European culture: 1) the birth of a genuine culture in the period of antiquity, 2) the dominance of Orthodox religiosity and the suppression of culture in the Middle Ages, 3) the Renaissance as a second and true birth of cultural Europe, 4) the Enlightenment and decadence of culture, 5) the new Renaissance in philosophy and culture of the 19th century. It should be noted that Shpet’s high appreciation of the Renaissance and the negative interpretation of the European Middle Ages and the Enlightenment make his ideas closer to historical views of such Russian thinkers as A. Herzen, V. Solovyov, L. Karsavin, E. Trubetzkoy, and S. Trubetzkoy.

Viewed against this background, Russia demonstrates significant differences from Europe. Shpet states that in Muscovite and Petrine Russia, under the domination of the ecclesiastical and ministerial intelligentsias, there was no creative (artistic) intelligentsia. However, in Western Europe,

as Shpet maintains, creative intelligentsia was represented by the aristocracy of the Renaissance. Shpet regards the creative intelligentsia as the most adequate expression of the very essence of culture. Shpet sees the emergence of the creative intelligentsia in Russia only in the 19th century. First of all, this happens in literature and in works of its brightest representative A.S. Pushkin. It is with Russian literature and its “Pushkin’s origin” that the philosopher associates the possibility of developing a truly free cultural creativity. “Karamzin, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Pyotr Vyazemsky, and all those of Pushkinian spirit enabled us to develop a positive, not nihilistic culture, ‘the literary aristocracy’ in Pushkin’s terms, enabled us to form a new intelligentsia” [Shpet 2008, 276]. The historical misfortune of Russia, according to Shpet, is that “the order of Pushkin was rejected.” “As a result, the gap between Pushkin and Uvarov,” continues the thinker, “was occupied by the chaos of Belinsky and by the entire rejected literary aristocracy” [Shpet 2008, 277]. The suppression of free creativity and the desire to guide thought, characteristic of the government, gave rise to the protest movement of the new intelligentsia. Here lies the weird rivalry of the two complementary parties (the state and the oppositional intelligentsia), whose confrontation has been haunting the political and intellectual history of Russia ever since.

Shpet does not express any sympathy for the oppositional intelligentsia. Its main characteristic is *nihilism*: Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Chernyshevsky, and many other writers turn out to be surprisingly close in their attitude to culture to the official structures which they oppose. “The government,” argues the philosopher, “is essentially conservative; it represents people’s instinct of self-preservation and therefore cannot be creative. Nihilistic intelligentsia opposes the government. But nihilism comes from the word *nihil*. And now everywhere in history there is a struggle between culture (because culture is essentially free) and the state (because the state is essentially conservative and bounded). In Russia this struggle takes a paradoxical form of squabbling between the ignorant state (embodied by the government) and the free culture of ignorance (embodied by the oppositional intelligentsia). The cultural peculiarities of Russian history can be accounted for by the fact that aristocracy was replaced by bureaucracy and opposed by nihilism” [Shpet 2008, 70–71].

Russian culture and philosophy found themselves in a difficult situation, between the hammer of governmental repressions backed up by the incompetence and futility of official philosophy aimed at justifying an autocratic ideology of the Holy Alliance and the anvil of intellectual terror of the “enlightened intelligentsia”, who viewed Pushkin as useless and futile” (D.I. Pisarev). According to Shpet, this identity of spiritual attitudes observed between the government and the oppositional intelligentsia is fundamentally important. At this point, we come to a third idea of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*, which is the most important in Shpet’s philosophy of Russian cultural history.

“The oppositional intelligentsia,” writes Shpet, “turns out to be no better than the ministerial intelligentsia” [Shpet 2008, 75]. The ecclesiastical,

ministerial and oppositional intelligentsias treat knowledge in a utilitarian way, which makes Shpet speak about *'neveglasie'* (ignorance) as a constant characteristic of Russian history. The main thing in the characterization of the oppositional intelligentsia, according to Shpet, is that "it does not differ from the first two types of the Russian intelligentsia. Its mission is enlightening but not ensuring creativity, it focuses on preventing dissidence, it aims at training rather than education, it suppresses nonconformity and treats science and philosophy as phenomena aimed at serving people" [Shpet 2008, 71].

Shpet had plenty of evidence of the similarity of the old and new intelligentsia. There are examples of educational policies of the early years of the Soviet regime, of the era of the "triumph" of the oppositional intelligentsia, with its goals achieved. First and foremost, philosophical faculties were transformed into social science faculties (humanitarian knowledge was banned from universities, let alone higher school reforms of the late 1930s [see: Pavlov, 2003]). For Shpet, there was an obvious analogy with the reactionary policy of Nicholas I. There was the same crude propaganda of utilitarianism of science, used as a principle educational policy of the young Soviet state. The Soviet regime adopted the attitude to culture characteristic of the oppositional intelligentsia, which, in its turn, had adopted the attitude to culture characteristic of the tsarist government and the ministerial intelligentsia; gaining power, new intelligentsia did not create a "new world" but recreated an *inverted Russian Empire*. Shpet writes: "People were proud of their semi-knowledge, camouflaging their ignorance. Nihilism was treated as a moral merit. 'Good' people wanted to command smart people. Russian people could no longer see the difference between Gogol and Belinsky, Tolstoy and Tkachev, Rozanov and Chernyshevsky, Pisarev and our times. Science was expected to serve people's needs" [Shpet 2008, 72]. Bolshevism valued the utilitarian nature of science, the new Soviet state sought to put science into the service of people. For Shpet, this means a distortion of the true meaning of science and culture as a whole. Shpet believes that the reasons for such an outrageous restoration of the past, which occurred immediately after the revolution, are in the development of the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century and in its *revolutionary triumph*.

Wasted opportunity of the Russian revolution

In *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*, Shpet directly links the history of the Russian oppositional intelligentsia with the revolutionary events of 1917. Planning the third part of *An Outline* (chapter 19), Shpet places the concepts "intelligentsia" and "revolution" together: "*Bankruptcy* (that is, intelligentsia – revolution)" [Shpet 2009, 23]. However, even in the published part of *An Outline*, there are many indications of the connection between the oppositional intelligentsia and the Russian revolution of 1917. In the preface, Shpet argues that the revolution is a consequence of development of the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century [Shpet 2008, 42]. He believes that the revolution triggers off the disintegration of the

intelligentsia: some people reject the revolution, believing it to be a mistake, others form the government. The ideological emptiness is the essence of the ideology of the oppositional intelligentsia. Shpet shows that both the philosophy of populism and the philosophy of the opposition are futile. He maintains that the ministerial intelligentsia is as nihilistic as the oppositional one. That is why Russian history of the 19th century is a senseless struggle for falsehoods which prove to be futile after the victory of the revolution. Russian history followed its own tracks, which only seemed different.

It seems that Shpet is optimistic about the birth of new healthy intelligentsia, which, according to him, can be found among Russian literary aristocracy of the 19th century, such as Pushkin, Zhukovsky, Vyazemsky, Dostoevsky and also the Slavophiles and the representatives of “pure” philosophy, starting with V. Solovyov. But it is important to understand that Shpet writes here about the *forthcoming philosophical-cultural revolution* and expresses a hope that this can really happen in his time, as a result of which Russia will experience a new Renaissance. However, the surrounding reality, which indirectly makes its way to the pages of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*, convinces its author in the opposite. Here is a vivid statement, testifying to Shpet’s pessimism about what is happening with Russian culture: “I am writing these lines and the scythe of fate has already cut the young sprouts of culture. The soil is uncovered, and our ignorance has revealed itself as an endless hollow” [Shpet 2008, 77].

Thus, it can be argued that Shpet sees no cultural revolution in the events of 1917. Shpet believes that the way the Soviet state treated culture was no Renaissance, but a *restoration* of the former regime. In this sense, the chance to create a new creative intelligentsia the Slavophiles dreamed of, which originated in Russian religious philosophy of the beginning of the 19th century and which Shpet extols in the pages of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* is *lost* (at least it was lost when his work was written). It is the wasted chance that becomes the main theme of *An Outline*. This work is not so much aimed at criticizing the revolution as it proposes to accomplish a *genuine* revolution that would give birth to the Russian Renaissance, or at least not hinder the movement of free philosophy that is inherent to Russian culture (see also: [Shchedrina, Pruzhinin 2017]).

Shpet considers that the tradition of Russian religious philosophy is the highest manifestation of Russian intellectual culture. *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* is based on the idea of gradual progress of Russian philosophy from ignorance and imitation to the formation of independent philosophical creativity and genuine creative intelligentsia, gradual progress that has to struggle against the pressure induced by the government and Russian “enlightenment” à la manière de Tchernychevski. Planning the second part of his work, Shpet devotes to Solovyov a section of his chapter entitled “On Our Own Feet.” This title shows that Shpet highly values Solovyov’s work. Shpet, as we know, distinguishes between

“positive” and “negative” philosophies. The latter, he believes, is associated with skepticism, positivism, materialism, and metaphysics. It goes without saying that his own project of philosophy is associated with the tradition of positive philosophy as he understands it. In his speech preceding the defense of his doctoral thesis *History as a Subject-Matter of Logic. Part I*, Shpet gives a brief explanation of this matter. In this context, we should remember that philosophical traditions of the oppositional intelligentsia serve, according to him, an example of negative philosophy, while philosophies of P. Yurkevich, V. Solovyov, S. Trubetzkoy, L. Lopatin, and other thinkers belong to the opposite tradition of genuine, positive philosophy. He sees a direct connection between himself and these thinkers [cf.: Shpet 1916, 438–439]. In his speech, Shpet considers himself to be a continuer of genuine philosophy, based on integral and genuine knowledge. The tradition of positive philosophy serves, according to Shpet, as a basis for a potential spiritual Renaissance in Russia.

However, the revolution promoted the “enlightenment” of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, the restoration of tsarism, rather than Solovyov’s philosophy. In *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy* we read: “Vladimir Ilyich corresponds to Nikolai Pavlovich” [Shpet 2009, 523]. Apparently, in this Shpet saw the tragedy of Russian history. The victorious philosophical tradition hindered cultural Renaissance promoting but a primitive Enlightenment. Shpet associates Chernyshevsky, one of the leaders of the oppositional intelligentsia, with philosophers of the Enlightenment. In his brilliant but unfinished research *Sources of Chernyshevsky’s Doctoral Thesis*, the text of which was to form the basis for the section on Chernyshevsky in the second part of *An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy*, Shpet shows this “master of minds” of the intelligentsia of the 1860s–1870s as a superficial journalist, devoid of understanding of true tasks of science and using references to it only to give his judgments some credibility. Shpet concludes that “it will be possible to assert the exact opposite of what Chernyshevsky himself says about his research career: his very essence contradicts and resists it, and if something is done by him, it is due to purely external and formal circumstances. <...> He believes that to lose a university *post* (but not university science) is not a great tragedy. This cherished dream, the purpose and meaning of his life is not research in any field of knowledge, not the discovery of the so-called scientific truths, but the transformation of all human life, the beneficence of mankind, where science is only a means, a modest means” [Shpet 2009b, 406]. This is the same utilitarian worldview, which “contaminates” the ministerial intelligentsia. We see here a change in the external form, but no change of the essence: Chernyshevsky’s views are in tune with the views on science of, for example, Peter I or Count S.S. Uvarov.

The same goes for Chernyshevsky’s philosophical “preferences”: the same utilitarianism and dependence. Shpet convincingly debunks the myth of the Feuerbachian nature of Chernyshevsky’s early works and the academic community’s indifference to his works, refuting the assertion of Chernyshevsky’s radicalism during that period of his life.

Who was the real Chernyshevsky according to Shpet? Who were his readers? “In Russian literature,” writes Shpet, “Chernyshevsky is often described as an ‘enlightener’” [Shpet 2009b, 408]. Chernyshevsky, according to Shpet, is a *Russian Voltaire*. His superficial enlightenment, with its noble morality and aggression, rests on an illusion of absolute reasonable rightness and a desire to annihilate everything that contradicts this “reasonableness.” So, for Shpet, Chernyshevsky is not so much a revolutionary democrat as a type of *un publiciste bourgeois*. The triumph of this type of intelligentsia explains the failure of the revolution as a cultural transformation. As a result, the revolution brought about only external changes, but did not ensure any cultural renovation.

Conclusion

An Outline of the Development of Russian Philosophy can be understood as a direct response to the events of 1917. There is every reason to consider Shpet’s work to be an attempt to digest the failure of the Revolution. Shpet advocates the formation of creative intelligentsia in Russia, which would create a genuine philosophy on the basis of the world culture (European culture, primarily) perceived through the prism of philosophy of reality. Shpet highly appreciates Solovyov’s philosophy and Russian religious philosophy in general. Nevertheless, strange though it may seem, the new state, created by the Russian oppositional intelligentsia of the 19th century, was a tragic copy of tsarist regime and readily sacrificed spiritual to mundane. The Russian intelligentsia was dismally reduced to imitating the European Enlightenment, which, probably, accounts for the fact that the Soviet State followed the tracks of its predecessor, attempting, on the one hand, to rigidly control science and philosophy and, on the other hand, adopting fashionable American and European ideas. Russian history of the 20th century shows that Shpet’s reflections on the Russian intelligentsia have not been accepted and understood by the new officials. It accounts for the collapse of the Soviet system, which was in many ways provoked by the same reasons as the collapse of the tsarist regime at the beginning of the 19th century.

NOTES

(1) The publication of V. Yantsen is the most important analytical material, which describes the thoughtful polemic between D.I. Chizhevsky and G.G. Shpet on the understanding of the history of Russian philosophy.

(2) In the same work, V. Yantsen also publishes the second, previously unpublished, book review by Chizhevsky, which, however, repeats and develops the assessment given in the cited work.

(3) Modern studies in the field of the history of science also prove the fact that the Soviet state imitated the approach characteristic of the tsarist regime in its university politics. See: [Ivanov 2012].

(4) An identical understanding of the 1917 events is also held by modern historian A.Yu. Dvornichenko, who is generally inclined to call these events the new Time of Troubles. See: [Dvornichenko 2018].

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