

Title: The Construction of a New Russian Philosophical Paradigm: From the Literary to the Anthropological

Author: Alyssa DeBlasio, University of Pittsburgh

An enduring assumption about philosophy in Russia, according to a number of Western and Russian critics, is that the discipline can be neatly divided into religious philosophy, on the one hand, and various forms of secular philosophy (i.e. everything else), on the other. Connected with the rich tradition of speculation on the concept of the “Russian idea” by thinkers such as Dostoevskii, Solov’ev, and Berdiaev, the religious subset of the above binary has long been considered the dominant of the “two narratives” in all but a few circles. It is not surprising, thus, that the discipline of philosophy is often viewed as a sub-set of the literary sphere, with little attention paid by Western scholars to trends that do not fall under the poetic rubric (e.g. epistemology, phenomenology). This paper offers an alternative to the standard conflation of literature and philosophy. It argues that, in the past five years, Russian philosophers have begun a radical redefinition of their own intellectual sphere, consciously confounding the “literature as philosophy” model through new approaches to traditional problems. Specifically, this recasting takes the form of a “new anthropology.” This anthropological shift is apparent, for instance, in the work of philosopher and physicist Sergey Horujy, whose theory of “synergetic anthropology” merges hesychasm and quantum physics, leading to an Orthodox philosophy that does not appeal to the literary, but to scientific formulas. We see a similar avoidance of the literary in the work of Valerii Podoroga, whose recent study treats Russian classical literature not as a religious manifestation, but within the framework of post-structuralism, French postmodernism, and contemporary visual theory—a combination Podoroga has coined “analytic anthropology.” This paper on the shift from a literary to an anthropological paradigm in contemporary Russian thought is the result of six months of research at the Institute of Philosophy (Moscow) in 2009.