

The national mentality in the history of philosophy

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Abstract

The importance of the study discussed in the paper is determined by the fact that today the national renaissance is increasingly viewed as one of the main features of human development. There is a widespread interest in the ethnic roots of both individuals and the whole nations. This interest is characterized by different degrees of intensity: from attempts to revive ancient customs, traditions, rituals to the desire of creating independent national states. It is common throughout the world that people have a strong desire to keep the identity, emphasize the feature of the mental attitude, and the surge of unprecedented national consciousness becomes obvious. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the social and philosophical meaning of the Russian form of the national mentality, or mind set, which has been considered by the author as a distinctive hallmark and collective vision on life and the world implemented through the attitudes of being disposed to adopt certain social and cultural values and norms that affect people's behavior, social relations, and culture. The following conceptual methods of research have been used initially: the unity of historical and logical principles, the principle of contradiction, the principle of relativity. The theoretical basis of the research deals with the sociological research data obtained with the use of literature review method, primarily Russia's philosophical heritage. The study conducted made it possible to present a comprehensive philosophical consideration of 'mentality' concept, as well as the mechanisms of impact and determinants involved in the transformation of Russian tolerance. The materials of the paper may be of practical significance and can be useful in developing and implementing methods and new technologies to form adaptive moods in the modern social environment, to manage social processes at different levels, to implement mass media programs and ICT in PR-technologies, to develop tolerant ideas, to prevent and resolve national and social conflicts, to make arrangements and conduct social and political actions.

Key words: tolerance, mass consciousness, philosophical analysis, determinants of tolerance transformation, value orientations, history of philosophy

Introduction

The history of the world is the history of humanity when people with specific features of the national identity and mentality, or mindset, performed certain actions in their attempts to change their status and alter the course of the history. Predictions regarding the diminution of the national factor in connection with economic and political processes globalization did not come true, because, since the second half of the XX century, the influence of ethnic processes on the course of world history has dramatically increased. Russia is among the nations that have had the most profound impact on the course of the contemporary world history.

The current national and state crisis poses questions to be answered by social sciences and humanities, including social philosophy, to estimate deeply both the historical past of Russia and the realities of its current state (Orekhovskaya, 2011; Valcova, Pavlikova, Roubalova, 2016; Olkhovaya et al., 2016; Stur, Mitterpach, 2017; Kralik, Tinley, 2017; Pavlikova, 2017).

One of the trends in overcoming these challenges is associated with Russia's turning to the current understanding of the national peculiarities in the Russian mindset. Terms like 'soul of the people', 'spirit of the people', 'national character', and, in

recent years, 'national mentality' have been coined and used in scientific and journalistic literature to identify the Russian nation; though, in our opinion, they are very close in their content.

Theory of national mentality provides a basis to humanize the historical process and overcome the extreme vulgar-materialism approach to history with its vague and impersonal schemes of economic determinism that does not take into consideration the human with his/her inner life and problems. The historical process develops due to not only the economy and the confrontation, conflict, of the social and class interests but also due to the impact of the mindset of social groups and the national mentality. The mentality component in the historical process is essential for social philosophy if one understands and interprets philosophy as a complete and comprehensive study of the human's relation to the external world (Solovyov, 1990).

The author believes that the peculiarities of the Russian national mindset should be considered as an essential feature allowing us to penetrate deeper into the content and implication of historical events, understand the origins of the Russian statehood, strong and weak sides of the Russian nation as ethnic component conveying their state orientation. Addressing to the Russian mindset makes it possible to more clearly realize the essence and the uniqueness of the Russian culture because any national culture, in the end, is nothing but an external manifestation of its hidden inner self, i.e., the mentality of the ethnic groups and the nation. Mentality study helps in systemic analysis of Russian history and culture, as it is one of the backbone factors of the Russian society (Gardner, 1993).

Discussing this topic helps to better understand the causes of the actual failure of 'great leap forward' in Russian capitalism at the end of the XX century. Liberal market reforms, carried out in accordance with Western economic models, proved their low efficiency under the conditions of Russia because they encountered resistance caused by the national mentality (Shapovalov, 1999). There can be no effective economic policy if the mentality is not taken into consideration, nor can there be modern management based on 'human relations' which also includes the national aspect.

Hypothesis

The problem of Russian national mentality is the subject of close attention among domestic and foreign authors. However, there are researchers that consider it has not been investigated in detail from the perspective of a special social-and-philosophical approach.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of mentality in pursuit of a new national idea that would be unifying and attractive for split Russian society. Moreover, understanding the features of the Russian mentality is also relevant for the spiritual and moral development of youth.

Today's Russia is at a historic crossroads and, more than ever before, the country needs a modern concept of economic, social-and-political, spiritual and moral development. This concept should definitely correspond to the realities of today, Russia should be an open country. And, at the same time, this concept should not break with the past. During its thousand-year history, Russia has developed many values, including mental ones, which deserve becoming the property of not only the past but also the future. Mentality ensures the connection of times and the continuity of generations; it is the key factor for the Russian nation in its capability to overcome today's systemic social crisis and find the strength to take its rightful place in the world community of nations.

Research Methodology

The initial conceptual method of the study is the dialectical principle of unity of historical and logical events, the essence of which is to reveal the relationship between the historically developing object and its reflection in the theoretical consciousness. In our opinion, the use of this method makes it possible to disclose the essential qualities of the Russian mentality on the basis of a preliminary analysis of its determinative interrelation with the specific conditions of the historical existence of the Russian people (Ilyin, 2007).

Another method playing a fundamental role in the process of social-and-philosophical investigation of the Russian national mentality is the dialectical principle of contradiction, which comes from the idea of cognition of objects based on the study of their contradictory inner essence (Berdyayev, 1990). The use of the principle of contradiction makes it possible to give an objective, unflattering and balanced description of the Russian national mentality, taking into account both its strong and weak sides.

The principle of relativity according to which the features of the people's mindset are universal, and cannot be rigidly attached to one given nation is of methodological significance and, therefore, we can only talk about the intensity, the degree of the manifestation of universal mentality features as attributes of different nations. Therefore, the study of the Russian national mentality is not only of a local narrow-national but also of universal significance since through the study of its peculiarities one can better understand the universal mentality as an essential characteristic of all nations as they actively contribute to the process of historical development (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017).

The theoretical basis of the investigation is concerned with the creative heritage of Russian philosophy. In Russian philosophy, there are many topics that deserve attention under modern conditions of the world development (Gachev, 1988). Russian philosophy represents a metaphysical level of national consciousness that interprets the deep substantive background mind in the national mentality.

Results

Although it was not until fairly recently that the national mentality has been included in scientific discourse, the study of this phenomenon has quite a long history. This problem, though had different names, (*the soul of the people, the spirit of the people, national character*), was constantly present in the historical development of humanitarian, scientific thought. The national mentality is one of the essential features of national communities. The study of this phenomenon is both of theoretical and practical value and is dictated by the circumstances.

The first one considers national mentality as a dialectical unity of essence and a phenomenon when essence is understood as an ethnically colored collective, dominating in the nation, set of ideas about the world, and is associated with the people's activities, as well as expressed in the material and spiritual culture outcomes. This understanding allows us to take a fresh look at the problem of national mentality as organic integrity of the subjective and objective factors of the nations' life. Insight into the true essence of any nation reveals its internal, subjective side in the form of the most stable part (the core) of the national psychology, and as a phenomenon, it is the objectivity, i.e., objective realization of this essence through activities of the people, their artifacts (Orekhovskaya, 2009). The study of external forms of the national mentality manifestation (folklore, beliefs, the behavior of people, etc.) makes it possible to approach the understanding of its hidden inner meaning that corresponds to the dialectical principle of the movement of thought from a phenomenon to its meaning, or essence, in the process of cognition.

The second circumstance is associated with substantiating the idea of mentality as a semantic focus of civilizations which we consider as the local cultural and historical

types of society. Every culture has its own civilization; the civilization is the inevitable destiny of the culture. We endorse the view expressed by O. Spengler (1993) considering the inner essence of civilization as a cultural and historical type and the soul of culture (i.e., mentality). Since there is an independent Russian civilization, it is the Russian mentality that largely determines its deep inner meaning. As a result of this approach, humanization of Russian history appears to be not only the arena for the collision of faceless economic and class interests but also a result of manifesting the creative role of the nation's inner mental potential, or mentality.

The third is connected with the problem of the nation's essence, as well as the sources of determination of national mentality that should be considered through the prism of four main types of philosophizing dominating in these or those eras (naturalism, theocentrism, social centrism, anthropocentrism). This way deepens and updates the theory of nations (Orekhovskaya, 2011) as well as enhances the methodological importance of social philosophy for ethnic-and-social sciences.

The fourth circumstance is the analysis of the evolution of scientific and philosophical views on the national mentality. It allows to distinguish the main milestones in its development, as well as provide arguments in favor of the view on the national mentality as a modern interpretation of the problem which in the previous period was investigated through using concepts like 'spirit of people', 'soul of the people', 'national character' (Berdyayev, 1990; Ilyin, 2007). Application of 'national mentality' category in modern science, including social philosophy, expands its cognitive and methodological capabilities.

The fifth is the correlation relationship installed and showing the identity of the Russian national mentality through its three main factors: features of the natural environment, social and religious-and-spiritual life. It also provides a systemic representation of the permanent determinants as integrity reproducing specific features of the mentality of the Russian people.

Discussions

The issues related to the origin and essence of the Russian national mentality make a pronounced complex topic which manifests itself through three groups of sources at least. First of all, it is reflected in many social and human sciences: Ethnology, Social Psychology, Ethnopsychology, Sociology, History, Political science, etc. In addition to science, this topic is the subject for speculations and discussions in the Orthodox Church, literature and culture and is discussed in both artistic creativity and journalism. Finally, the theme of the unique Russian national mentality is widely represented in folklore (fairy tales, epics, myths, jokes, proverbs, sayings, particles, songs, etc.). The task of the social-and-philosophical study of this concept is to organically combine all three groups of sources and, on this basis, give an integrated picture of the Russian national mentality. In our opinion, it is the social-and-philosophical study that allows us to penetrate into the deep essence of the Russian mentality and its diverse social-and-cultural manifestations.

The scientific development of the issue of national mentality has been put forward in the philosophy of the Modern Age and contemporary science. Philosophers in many countries attempted to give definitions of national character essence (Kant, 1900), reflected on the influence of climatic conditions and political factors on features of nation's character (Montesquieu, 1955), made surveys over the manifestation of national mentality through social life features and cultural creativity of nations and peoples (Le Bon, 1896), compared characters of different nations (Hegel, 1956).

In the 20th century, the study of theoretical and methodological problems of national character and national mentality became widespread in various fields of scientific knowledge. Since the second half of the XX century, the psychologic and specific

nature of nations has been increasingly investigated using the category of 'mentality' (Gurevich, 2014).

Methodological basis for the study of mentality, its uniqueness, has been discussed by N.Ya. Danilevsky (1995). He highlights the significance of mentality in the life of nations in the world, including the Russians.

Russian national mentality comprises the semantic focus of the independent Russian civilization, and to understand it we need to study the essence of the civilizational approach and the nature of the Russian civilization (Yershov, 1990).

The Russian's mentality was developed under the powerful influence of four main forces: the natural environment, social life, Orthodox religion, and the national education with its certain features. I.A. Ilyin (2007) has considered the role of the natural factors. N.A. Berdyaev (1990), A.A. Zinoviev (1995) have described the influence of the social life peculiarities associated primarily with the authoritarian structure of state and the communal way of life. I.V. Kireevsky (1992) and M. Ioan (1995) looked into the issues of Orthodox church and the Russian people's soul. K.D. Ushinsky (2015) distinguished the features of the Russian national system of education. The works of these authors give a complete picture of the determinants under the influence of which the specific features of the Russian national mentality have developed.

The nature of the Russian national mentality is multifaceted, i.e., it is a complex combination of interrelated mental qualities. The extreme inconsistency of mentality was thoroughly investigated by F.M. Dostoevsky (1989) and N.A. Berdayev (1990); national resistance in the specific Russian form was discussed by I.A. Ilyin (2007). 'We' as psychological generalization and phenomenon of the Russian mentality was proposed in the works of A.S. Khomyakov (1994). Various facets of the Russian national mentality are reflected in the structure of the Russian language and in verbal folklore.

Modern scientists and philosophers write about the manifestations of the national mentality in various areas of modern society, raise various problems such as the development of tolerant culture (Landberg et al., 2017). A number of other researchers argue the need to support cultural pluralism (Kwan, 2018); investigate the role of tolerance in estimates of career identity and life satisfaction (Garrison, Lee & Ali, 2017) and the issues concerning the distribution of inclusion in the social community.

The study of the Russian national mentality allows us to draw conclusions about its social-and-philosophical meaning, origin and basic essential qualities including 1) paradoxical mental manifestations; 2) immeasurable life impulse; 3) the pursuit of absolute values; 4) contemplation of the heart; 5) national resistance; 6) love of freedom; 7) "we" – psychology; 8) universal tolerance. These qualities in their integral totality constitute a peculiar inner 'picture of the world' of the Russian mentality. Moreover, all of them are in a deep dialectical relationship, and each of them can be taken as an independent reference point in the study of the national characteristics of the Russian mentality.

The national mentality is considered as a peculiar internal code of the Russian society which provides continuity of historical development of Russia and in many respects programs specifics of its destiny and culture. This idea is realized on the basis of demonstration of social and cultural manifestations of the Russian mentality in various areas of the Russian reality.

Conclusion

The study concerning the Russian national mentality provided us with the following conclusion regarding its social-and-philosophical meaning, origin and basic essential qualities: paradoxical mental manifestations; immeasurable life impulse; the pursuit of absolute values; the Contemplative Heart; national resilience; love of freedom; We –

psychology; universal tolerance embracing all mankind. These qualities in their integral totality constitute a peculiar inner 'picture of the world' in the Russian mindset; all of them are in a deep dialectical relationship, though each of them can be considered as an independent reference point in the study of the national characteristics of the Russian mentality.

The national mentality is considered as a peculiar internal code of the Russian society which provides continuity of historical development of Russia, and in many respects, it is responsible for programming the specifics of its destiny and culture. This idea is realized on the basis of demonstration of social and cultural manifestations of the Russians in various areas of the Russian reality.

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