

My Ideal of a Contemporary Scientist (Personal Reflections)



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RAS Corresponding Member, Doctor of Sciences (Philosophy), Professor. Editor-in-Chief (1995–2018), Chairman of the Editorial Board (since 2018) of the journal “Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya” (Sociological Studies), Chief Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Honorary Doctor of the Institute of Sociology RAS, Honorary Professor of Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Russian State University for the Humanities. Author of the monograph “Society of Trauma: Between Revolution and Evolution (An Attempt at Theoretical and Empirical Analysis)” (2020). The scholar’s publication record (according to the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) data as of February 2026): 1,000 publications, of which 207 are in the RSCI core; over 17,500 citations; h-index – 63. He is among the top 1% of most cited Russian sociologists.

Upon first meeting V.A. Ilyin and exchanging thoughts on the current state of Russian society, I had the impression I was conversing with the director of a major industrial enterprise – the kind I had encountered before. In my mind’s eye, he embodied not only a comprehensive knowledge of virtually every significant economic and social issue but also a remarkable capacity for drawing profound scientific conclusions.

This brought to mind my own experience working as an in-house sociologist at two of Siberia’s largest enterprises: Glavkrasnoyarskstroy and the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant, each employing tens of thousands of people. Their directors – V.P. Abovsky and V.V. Strigo – were exceptional individuals who combined broad knowledge of production organization, technology, and economics with a genuine appreciation for the social dimensions of industrial life and the creative role of those working under their leadership. They were, in other words, both managers of specific industries and scientifically minded individuals, exemplifying what true leadership should look like. It was no coincidence that their teams became leaders by many measures. It was precisely in such a mold that V.A. Ilyin first took shape in my imagination.

I learned of this – the industrial chapter in V.A. Ilyin’s life – only some time later. He devoted over 30 years to working in industry, including 12 years as director of the Vologda Optical-Mechanical Plant. And in that role, I am certain, he was not limited to just technical, technological, and

organizational issues. For him, the transition to academic work became a kind of organic shift to a new field of endeavor. His arrival in science was, in my view, extraordinarily fruitful precisely because his research fused deep knowledge of real-world life with a solid grounding in the fundamentals of various disciplines: economics, sociology, psychology, law, political science, and even certain natural sciences such as geography, biology, and mathematics.

I believe the weakness and limitations of many studies in the social sciences stem from the fact that their authors often built their careers solely within the confines of their academic institutions and purely scholarly activities, with only a superficial knowledge – or none at all – of what happens in the very spheres of social life they sought to understand.

It is this organic fusion of profound knowledge of production and fundamental scientific principles that has earned V.A. Ilyin a worthy and prominent place in economic science.

V.A. is also endowed with innate qualities as an organizer. This has manifested itself both in industry and in academia: the research team he took under his wing at the start of his scientific career he rapidly transformed into a major research institute, recognized in Russia and beyond – earning the esteem of practitioners and the Russian Academy of Sciences alike, which elected him a corresponding member. It is precisely these qualities that have led V.A. Ilyin to coordinate the work of all research groups in Vologda.

Now let me turn to what draws me to V.A.'s works.

First, through the prism of regional issues, he offers a deep and thorough analysis of development trends across many sectors of the Russian economy as a whole. This approach reveals

both the possibilities and the limitations at the regional level while simultaneously channeling efforts to apply this knowledge toward achieving broader goals.

Second, he carefully and attentively examines social problems in all their complexity and contradiction. These are always given due consideration when analyzing the most diverse aspects of life – both in the region and the country at large, especially in comparison with neighboring territories in the Northwestern Federal District.

Third, economic and social issues – and to a considerable extent political ones as well – are analyzed from the standpoint of governance challenges. He offers recommendations and judgments that are clearly oriented toward practical solutions.

Fourth, V.A.'s works engage with many pioneering, contestable, and underexplored problems – such as trauma society, social health, and the social contract.

Finally, the monitoring of public opinion across virtually all spheres of life allows him to track changes taking shape in the hearts and minds of the people of Vologda, providing a foundation for informed decision-making.

I would especially like to mention the editor-in-chief's column in the journal he heads, "Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast". It is far more than a commentary on published articles – it is always a deep and thorough analysis of the state of social relations, encompassing economic, social, political, and spiritual dimensions.

I am convinced that Vladimir Aleksandrovich still has much to contribute to the scientific field – that he will continue to offer us, and especially those in governance, ideas, insights, and recommendations of enduring constructive value.