

The concept of love in the religious philosophy of Nikolay Lossky

ABSTRACT

This article devoted to the analysis of the concept of love in the religious philosophy of Nikolay Lossky. According to Lossky love is the absolute value in itself, integrating the world of values in a single axiological system, and on the other side, the main vital force unites of the social world. His doctrine of love-agape can be reconstructed from the following philosophical works: *Absolute Good* (1944), *Value and Existence* (1931), *Freedom of will* (1927), *God and suffering* (1941), *History of Russian philosophy* (1951). The authors draw the conclusion that Lossky's metaphysics of love describes in detail the ideal of goodness and love as the absolute positive values. Therefore, this kind of love is unattainable in the lives of people in the existing social world.

Keywords: Nikolay Lossky; Metaphysics of love; concept of love; russian religious Philosophy.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa o conceito de amor na filosofia da religião de Nikolay Lossky. De acordo com Lossky o amor é um valor absoluto em si mesmo, integra o mundo dos valores num singular sistema axiológico e, por outro lado, é a principal força que une o mundo social. Sua doutrina do amor-ágape pode ser construída nas seguintes obras filosóficas: *Bem Absoluto* (1944), *Valor e Existência* (1934), *Liberdade da Vontade* (1927), *Deus e o sofrimento* (1941) e *História da Filosofia Russa* (1951). A conclusão da Metafísica do Amor de Lossky descreve em detalhes o ideal de bondade e de amor como valores positivos absolutos. Esse tipo de amor é inatingível na vida concreta das pessoas no mundo social existente.

Palavras-chave: Nikolay Lossky; Metafísica do amor; conceito de amor; Filosofia religiosa russa.

* St. Petersburg State University, Russia. Email: pavenkov@yahoo.es, infosocl@yandex.ru

Introduction

N.O. Lossky is one of the rare representatives of Russian religious thought, who creating a system of philosophy, turned attention to the problem of love-agape. His doctrine of agape can be reconstructed from the following philosophical works: *Absolute Good* (1944), *Value and Existence* (1931), *Freedom of will* (1927), *God and suffering* (1941), *History of Russian philosophy* (1951)(LOSSKIJ, 1991)¹. One of the features of Lossky's approach is the emphasis on love-agape as the value and the fight against Eros, which is similar of the Platonic eros's rejection. According to Lossky love is the absolute value in itself, integrating the world of values in a single axiological system, and on the other side, the main vital force unites of the social world.

Based on the position of the Christian ethics of love Lossky criticized selfishness. "The rank of values was broken in egoistic love. This rank of values was shown by Jesus Christ when He expressed the essence of his sermon in two commandments: love for God more than yourself, and love your neighbor as yourself." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 59-60).²

In work "Absolute good", N.O. Lossky examines variety views of representatives of hedonism, eudemonism, biologism and naturalistic evolutionism in relation to love. The overcoming disadvantages of ethical theories, Lossky developed a completely original theory of the origin and formation of the love-agape. Agape-generation is not evolutionary and does not involve certain temporary stages of the formation of love. Agape-generation is not time-consuming process. It is actually one-time and immediately emerged generation, like a flash of insight, in the soul of loving. Truly agape means the highest degree of social and cultural integration, unity, more precisely the consubstantiality in love, which is analyzed by Florensky (2002)³. According to Lossky, based on the love-agape feeling of truly sympathy "means the coalescence of all beings with each other."(LOSSKIJ, 1991). This consubstantiality is the condition of intuition's emergence. Intuition means the penetration of one person in consciousness of other's needs and suffering, that leads to full taking-over of his sufferings (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 96). However, the emergence of intuitive compassion is necessary but is not sufficient condition for the generation and development of love-agape. Agape involves transferring of objective values, goals and feeling from one to another person. Love-agape, involving full unanimity and consentient, consubstantiality of people who loves with each other, is possible because people created not as separate creatures, but as ones who have abstract consubstantiality. If people do good deeds of love, if

¹ LOSSKIJ, N.O. *Uslovija absoljutnogo dobra*. M. 1991; LOSSKIJ, N.O. *Cennost' i bytie: Bog i Carstvo Bozhie kak osnova cennostej*. M., Har'kov, 2000; Losskij N.O. *Svoboda voli*. M., 1991; Losskij N.O. *Bog i mirovoe zlo*. M., 1994; Losskij. N. O. *Istorija ruskoj filosofii*. M., 1991

² LOSSKIJ, N.O. *Uslovija absoljutnogo dobra*. M. 1991. p. 59-60.

³ FLORENSKY P. *The Pillar and Croud of the Truth*. (Moscow, 2002). Orig. russian: Florenskij P. *Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny: Opyt pravoslavnoj teodicei*. - M., (2002).

their love-agape is mutual, their abstract consubstantiality will transfigure into concrete consubstantiality, agape will move to a new level of concreteness. Thus, spiritual perfection in love-agape realizes in such a way.

Understanding of love

Based on the hierarchical theory of Lossky, we will reconstruct his views on the levels of love-agape. Criterion of construction of hierarchical structure is the qualitative certainty of the subject or thing. The love for Absolute Agape is the highest form of love, which is available for a Christian person. "Christian revelation gives us information about Him as the One God in three persons." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 46). God eternally exists in Trinitarian relationships of Agape. According to both Lossky and Florensky the most fullness of agape exists between the hypostases of the Holy Trinity. They "are thought as Persons which with perfect love wholly receive all the individual Nature of each other." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 54). Involving agape in inner world of personality is possible in spiritual catharsis, in ascetic-mystical ecstasy, in unity with God's hypostasis.

Love-agape is the vital unity of spiritual personal reality, which is both absolute self-value, and its realization. Love-agape is endless in its depth and scale, transcendent for the human mind personal love. Agape encompasses the love between persons-hypostasis, between both the Hypostases of God, between human persons-hypostasis and God's Hypostases. The use of the term "hypostasis" (greek. Hypostasis - essence, base) is specified by polysemantic meaning given by representatives of different human sciences and philosophical traditions. Some theologians (SOFRONIJ, 2003)⁴ argue, that it is more effective to use for theological and philosophical analysis more monosemantic term "hypostasis". Hypostasis is not a person as "mask" and "face". It is a spiritual person living in Christian love-agape. The main theme of the theology and philosophy of the Fr. Sophrony (Sakharov) is the doctrine of Hypostasis, God as personal being and of human hypostasis. "Hypostasis-Person is primary principle and the last, an all-embracing measurement in the Divine Being; also in the human, being created in the image of God. Nothing exists without this hypostatic principle." (SOFRONIJ, 2003, p. 238). Living according to Gospel's commandments, "I am invoked to actualize, to realize personal likeness in myself, to become the person-hypostasis." (SOFRONIJ, 2003, p. 185).

Thus, love integrates various levels of being, unites scattered, discrete people's existence together in unity, which is called "the world of God" in the tradition of Byzantine thought. Force of agape is the basis of social and spiritual being. Force of love-agape is all-embracing, that is able to win hate and moral evil, integrate discrete social world. In virtue of agape social interaction can be based on the value of harmonic, solidarity creative work, which is opposite to selfish competition.

⁴ See: Sofronij, (Sabarov) arh. *Videt' Boga, kak On est'*. M.: Svjato-Troickaja Sergieva Lavra, 2003.

According to Lossky, the next level of love is the love for values. Achievement of the perfect ideal of agape supposes not only the love for other living beings, but also love for absolute values. Love for value is not determined; it is completely liberated. "Love for the value is not causatively determined by value: it is a free expression of ego. He can freely love God as the Absolute Good, deserving the highest degree of admiration; such attitude activists to God is selfless love for good because it is good." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 185). Love to value involves the relation to values not in their diversity, but consideration of value in its unity with other values. Love for values leads to acts of love-agape.

The next level of love is love for the person. A person is called by Lossky as "the substantial ego." True love between egos is possible if they have reached the knowledge of absolute values. Considering the highest level of love as the aspect of the Absolute fullness of being, Lossky gives the following definition of love-agape.

Love one person for another is the complete acceptance of other individuality and perfect giving force for this individuality. Perfect unanimity in activity is obviously impossible without mutual love and it can be achieved on condition realization of absolute values; so only positive absolute values are all compatible with each other.

Sanctity is the result of realization of absolute values in human. The ideal of sanctity is analyzed by Dostoyevsky. "Recognized the sanctity as the highest value, looking toward absolute good, and the Russian nation does not absolutize the earth relative values, such as the private property." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 231). Earth values cannot be admitted as "sacred" principles. Concrete consubstantiality, "quite realized only in the kingdom of God" (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 99) is transfiguring in sanctity.

Love-agape has a large scale of spread. Lossky wrote about in relation to the Kingdom of God. "Every member of the God's kingdom, being connected with the world by perfect love, possesses space body that is embracing of the whole world." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 62). The highest level of love does not deny low levels. On the contrary, human, achieved the highest level of love-agape possesses love of all low levels. This idea can be illustrated by the following quote: "perfect love for God, who have created the world by love, necessarily include love for all beings created by God." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 56). Lossky made the important conclusion that "the creativity of all creatures living in God must have sobornost' and have to be unanimous." (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 56). Creator is the unique and individual personality because creativity supposes individual contribution,

The degree of love-agape to one or another level of existence may be different. It affects the depth of the active contemplation. (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 56). However, it is impossible to measure using both quantitative and qualitative method the degree of love-agape.

Lossky considered transforming of personality love as the response to the "eternal questions" of morality, which resolved by each generation. Lossky in his understanding of love as the highest self-sufficient value hold the opinion of

ethical absolutism. Love-agape for the person is the kind of love for values. It embraces the whole human being. Love-agape involves the spiritual and existential unity of the two personalities, their individual existences, living in the Kingdom of Spirit. Love performs integrating moral-preventive functions.

There is not struggle for existence in this realm of being, there is no division into mine and yours; all benefits, used by the members of this kingdom, are absolute, indivisible and its equally satisfy all people and everybody; We find some resemblance of this benefit's type in our realm of existence, when a lot of people enjoy listening to beautiful music together. This realm of being can be called the Kingdom of the Spirit, or the kingdom of God. (LOSSKIJ, 1991, p. 528).

Lossky describes the axiological foundations of freedom will. A man is not "virtue's automaton." Development of the image of God in human supposes the freedom. A human is free to choose between good and evil, between the secular kingdom of hate and the Kingdom of God. In the realm of hate freedom of egos is complicated in virtue of isolation, the slavery of human, the narrowness of goals monotony of all egos and their activities. However, this difficulty does not eliminate free choose between good and evil. Isolation in the kingdom of hate has an advantage. In virtue of isolation, ego of the kingdom of hostility in a large extent protected from involuntary participation in the moral evil of other egos and consequences of this evil. Such isolation is not necessary for egos of the Kingdom of God, because all-round interpenetration life of each other is co-participation in the incarnation of absolute values. Egos of the kingdom of God unalterable elect the ideal of goodness and love.

Therefore, love-agape is deeply personal heart perception of sufferings, feelings and problems of other persons as own suffering, feelings and problems. Loving and beloved personalities can be integrated in ontological unity with each other. Love-agape of a human person is in unity with the absolute fullness of life. According to Lossky kingdom of the Spirit is the realm of the absolute values and the sphere of the realization of the highest love-agape. All relations between personalities can be penetrated by love-agape⁵. Lossky in this sense is influenced by teaching of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa about apokatastasis⁶, which is also based on the idea of the all-conquering love. Lossky in succession to Byzantine theology and philosophy, focused on the power of love-agape, which is able to transfigure even the proud person and extremely egoist.⁷

⁵ Losskij N.O. Svoboda voli // Losskij N.O. Izbrannoe, p. 528

⁶ See Григорий Нисский, свт. Точное толкование Экклезиаста Соломонова. М.: Изд-во имени святого Игнатия Ставропольского, 1997. с. 118-119 See also: Несмелов В. Догматическая система св. Григория Нисского. Казань: Типография Императорского Университета, 1887, с.591; Мейендорф И. Введение в святоотеческое богословие / Пер. с англ. Л. Волохонской. К.: Храм прп. Агапита Печерского, 2002. - С. 188.

⁷ See Лосский. Н.О. Условия абсолютного добра. М. 1991, - С. 178

N. Lossky describes the axiological foundations of free will. Man is not an "automatic virtues." Implementation of the image of God in man presupposes freedom. Man is free to choose between good and evil, between the secular realm of enmity and the Kingdom of God. In the realm of worldly enmity, freedom of active man is limited due to separation, slavery of man, the narrowness of the goals, the uniformity of all actors and their activities. However, this limitation does not eliminate our freedom of choice between good and evil. The separation in the realm of hatred has a positive side. Due to isolation, a man of the kingdom of hostility is largely shielded from inadvertent complicity in the moral evil of other actors and the consequences of it. For the Kingdom of God, such isolation is not necessary. The comprehensive interpenetration in each other's lives leads to complicity in the incarnation of absolute values. People of the Kingdom of God irrevocably elect the ideal of love and kindness.

In the realm of worldly enmity, freedom of active man is limited due to separation, slavery of man, the narrowness of the goals, the uniformity of all actors and their activities. However, this limitation does not eliminate our freedom of choice between good and evil. The separation in the realm of hatred has a positive side. Due to isolation, the man of the kingdom of hostility is largely shielded from inadvertent complicity in the moral evil of other actors and the consequences of it. For the Kingdom of God, such isolation is not necessary. The comprehensive interpenetration in each other's lives leads to complicity in the incarnation of absolute values. People of the Kingdom of God irrevocably elect the ideal of love and kindness.

Conclusion

Thus, we make the following conclusions based on the theory of love of N. Lossky. Lossky sees in Love as a force the transforming of the personality the response to the "eternal questions" of morality, which are solved by each generation as a new. In the understanding of love as the highest and self-sufficient value, Lossky keeps the position of ethical absolutism. Sacrificial love to a value is a kind of love to a personality. It extends over the whole human being. Love is a co-experience of life of the other, that is, spiritual and existential co-unity of the two persons, of their individual existences. Love performs no uncoupling, but integrating and morally features.

Therefore, in this kingdom of being there is no struggle for existence, there is no division into mine and yours; all the benefits of living members of this kingdom are absolute, indivisible and equally satisfy everyone, such as some semblance of this type of benefit we find in our realm of existence, when a lot of people together enjoy a nice piece of music. Such a kingdom of being could be called the Kingdom of the Spirit, or the Kingdom of God.

The metaphysics of love of Lossky describes in detail the ideal of goodness and love as the absolute positive values. We think in our future research it is interesting to compare the Lossky's views and the ideal of altruistic love of other

representatives of Russian philosophy – Pitirim Sorokin. Both authors see a source of love in God. However, while Lossky believes that love as a perfect concrete co-existence of two or more persons is achieved only in the Kingdom of God, Sorokin was trying to justify the possibility of realization of the ideal of altruistic love in the practice of social life and especially in family life. Based on the experience of the daily life of altruists' members of all good families, Sorokin tried to find the method of love and good works that is used as a fundamental attitude of these members to each other and to the hundreds of truly socialized relationship between actors and groups. Their therapy of overwhelming kindness was one of the main forces supporting the necessary a minimum of justice, peace, harmony and altruism in all societies and at all times. Thus, there is a discussion in Russian philosophy, which is to be the subject of further research - how a metaphysical love is feasible in our life "here and now".

References

- LOSSKY, Nicolai. *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge: An Epistemological inquiry*. Translated by Natalie A. Duddington; preface by G. Dawes Hicks. (London, 1906).
- _____. *The World as an Organic Whole*. Translated by Natalie A. Duddington. (London, [1917] 1928).
- _____. Ideal-realism, part one. *Personalist* 15 (Spring). (1934), 148-57.
- _____. Ideal-realism, part two. *Personalist* 15 (Summer). (1934), 250-60.
- _____. Our foreign letter—correspondence: Reply to Professor Flewelling. *Personalist* 15 (Summer), (1934), 265-67.
- _____. *History of Russian Philosophy*. (New York, 1951).
- Nicolai Lossky, Personalism versus materialism. *Personalist* 33 (Autumn). (1952), 366-84.
- _____. Psychology with a psyche. *Personalist* 36 (Spring), (1955), 129-40.
- _____. The conditions of the direct perception of the external world. *Personalist* 38 (Winter). (1957), 37-44.
- _____. *Vospotnaniia: Zhizri i Filosofskii put'* (Memoirs). Edited by Boris Lossky. Slavische Propyläen, 43. (Munich, 1969);
- _____. *God and the world evil*. (Moscow, 1994).
- _____. *Favourites*. (Moscow, 1991).
- _____. *Conditions of absolute good: Fundamentals of Ethics. The nature of the Russian people*. (Moscow, 1991).
- LOSSKIJ, N.O. Uslovija absoljutnogo dobra. M. 1991.
- PAVENKOV, Oleg. Metaphysics of love in russian religious philosophy (N. Berdyaev, B. Vyacheslavzev B.) "*Acta Eruditorum*" 10 (2012), 42-46; Orig. russian: Павенков О.В. Метафизика любви в русской религиозной философии (Н.Бердяев, Б.

Вышеславцев) // *Acta Eruditorum*. Научные доклады и сообщения. 2012. Вып. 10. СПб.: Изд-во Русск.христианск. гуманитарн. академии, 2012. С.42-46.

_____. Mariia Rubtcova Love as a concept in the religious philosophy of Pavel Florensky. *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofia* 33 (1), 2016, p. 163-180.

_____. Contemporary linguistic analysis of the concept "Love" // *Studia Humanitatis*. *Электронный научно-образовательный журнал*, № 4, (2014).

SOROKIN, Pitirim. *The ways and power of love*. (Chicago, 1967).