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Vladimir Marchenkov (2005)

LOSSKII, NIKOLAI ONUFRIEVICH

(1870–1965)

Nikolai Losskii (Lossky), a Russian religious philosopher, was born in the province of Vitebsk in western Russia. He studied history, philology, and natural sciences at St. Petersburg University (1891–1898), as well as philosophy under the neo-Kantian Aleksandr Vvedenskii (1856–1925). Losskii continued his philosophical education in Germany (1901–1903) with Wilhelm Windelband, Wilhelm Wundt, and Georg Müller. He received his master's degree in 1903, and his doctorate in philosophy four years later. From 1900 Losskii taught at St. Petersburg University, where he was appointed to a chair of philosophy in 1916. In 1921 Losskii was dismissed from the university for his religious beliefs, and in 1922 he was exiled by the Soviet government from the homeland. From 1922 to 1945 he settled in Czechoslovakia, where he taught in universities in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava. From 1946 Losskii lived in the United States and taught at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York (1947–1950).

Losskii was a systematic philosopher and prolific writer whose works have been translated into many foreign languages. His writings cover most of the traditional philosophical disciplines, though he gave special emphasis to epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. His philosophy is variously labeled as intuitivism, hierarchical personalism, or ideal-realism, depending on what part of his comprehensive system the commentator focuses on. The central idea of Losskii's philosophy is, in his own words, the insight that "everything is immanent in everything" (Zenkovsky 1953, p. 668). In his religious views Losskii adhered to Christian doctrine, though some of his views, such as his teachings about reincarnation and creation, seem incompatible with the Orthodox tradition.

In his epistemology, Losskii rejected the possibility of transcendent knowledge and affirmed that in the process of cognition, subject and object must be connected. In acts of knowing, the object of knowledge is not a representation of an entity but the actual entity itself. The subject or self becomes cognizant of the world of nonself by a special act that Losskii called "epistemological coordination." Although the object of knowledge is part of the process of knowing, the content of knowledge contains more than its own object; rather, it is the result of the subject's efforts at comparing and distinguishing. Hence, the truth that one can achieve in the cognitive process is never complete, because the process of differentiating, however strong it may be, always leaves unexplored some part of reality.

In Losskii's theory of knowledge, named "intuitivism," intuition is not merely one aspect of cognition, but permeates all cognitive processes. Though all knowledge is intuitive by nature, knowledge can be differentiated by the type of intuition. Losskii distinguished three types of intuition: sensuous, intellectual, and mystical, corresponding respectively to the real, ideal, and metalogical levels of existence.

In his ontology, Losskii defended an "organic," or holistic, worldview. In his view, any object constitutes a system by virtue of a principle that lies beyond that system. As a systemic unity, the world requires a principle that stands beyond it and represents its foundation. This principle is called "the Absolute" in philosophy and "God" in religion. No positive definition grasps the Absolute as such, but philosophers can study its manifestations in the created world.

In the created realm, Losskii distinguished three levels of reality: the real, the abstract, and the concretely ideal, the last of which consists of living agents, whom he sometimes referred to as concrete ideal entities, substances, or, more precisely, substantival agents. As compared with the abstract ideal, which includes, for instance, abstract relations, ideal entities are active agents who independently determine their own manifestations in time. The human self is one such substantival agent. As an entity that transcends space and time, it is responsible for creating psychic processes in time and realizing material events in a spatiotemporal framework.

In Losskii's view, God's creation stops with substantival agents, who are free to choose their own evolution. The original sin of self-centeredness, symbolically described in the Biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve, does not signify that humanity once attained perfection and then freely lost it. The life of the spirit has to result from efforts exercised by the creature itself; otherwise the creature's freedom is falsified. Those substantival agents who choose selfishness and prefer their own interests to God's will must continue their evolution on the lower levels of reality and are subjected to a long and difficult process of redemption.

Since the universe is an integral holistic system, an organism, all substantival agents are interconnected with each other. Their consubstantiality is crowned with and headed by the cosmic substance, which Losskii, following the Solov'evian tradition, called "Sophia." Though not identified with the Absolute, this supreme substance, like all other creatures belonging to the created realm, is perfect and unites the multiplicity of creation into one cosmic whole. The kingdom of God, led by Sophia, represents the ontological basis of absolute values and the ultimate goal for every substantival agent. The existence of the spiritual kingdom makes it possible for fallen beings to restore their original divine identities and to partake of the heavenly life. In the kingdom of God, everyone is in harmony with all, and everyone is all. In the life of the kingdom of God, headed by Sophia, every member experiences constant growth in all possible dimensions that ideally complement and enrich one another.

Though Losskii wrote comparatively little on political philosophy, in his few articles on the subject he consistently stood for democratic values. According to him, in the course of an increasingly complex social life, the state is unified more securely by the dispersion of power and by constitutional limits on the absolute power of the monarch. The ultimate choice between monarchy and republic depends on which can best balance the united will of the nation with the rights and development of its members.

See also Intuition; Personalism; Russian Philosophy; Solov'ëv (Solovyov), Vladimir Sergeevich; Sophia; Windelband, Wilhelm; Wundt, Wilhelm.

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Mikhail Sergeev (2005)

LOTMAN, IURII MIKAILOVICH

(1922–1993)

Iurii Mikailovich Lotman was a specialist in the theory of literature and aesthetics, the history of Russian literature, semiotics, and study of culture. He was born in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg). In 1939 he commenced his studies in the philology department of Leningrad University. In the fall of 1940 he joined the army and fought in World War II from 1941 to 1945. In 1946 he continued his studies at the university, finishing them in 1950. Because of the anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union, Lotman was not able to work in Leningrad and moved to Estonia. From 1950 to 1954 he taught at the Tartu Pedagogical Institute. In 1952 he defended his dissertation in philology on the ideas of A. N. Radishchev and N. M. Karamzin. In 1954 he was named docent of Tartu University, and from 1960 to 1977 he was the head of the Department of Russian Literature there. In 1961 he received a doctorate in philology by defending the dissertation titled *Puti razvitiia russkoi literatury preddekabristskogo perioda* (Paths of the development of Russian literature in the pre-Decembrist period).

FROM THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE TO SEMIOTICS

Lotman's chief historical works are devoted to the history of Russian literature from the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. He examines this literature in conjunction with other cultural phenomena, particularly philosophical thought, history, and sociopolitical life. From the beginning of the 1960s Lotman develops a structural-semiotic approach to the study of works of art, organized the publication of the series *Trudy po znakovym sistemam, Semiotika* (*Sign Systems Studies, Semiotics*), and directed regularly held "summer schools," conferences, and seminars on the semiotic study of various domains of culture. The combination of these activities, which included the participation not only of Tartu scholars but also of scholars from Moscow and other cities, became the internationally known Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics (Grzybek 1989). The first issue of *Sign Systems Studies* included his *Lektsii po struktural'noi poetike* (Lectures on structural poetics) (Lotman 1964).

The works of Lotman and those of his colleagues and followers on the semiotic analysis of various cultural texts, including artistic texts in particular, are united by the idea of "secondary modeling systems," where the text is interpreted as a unity of models of objective and subjective reality, as well as in the capacity of a sign system secondary in relation to the signs of natural languages, which represent the "primary modeling system." Headed by Lotman, the "Tartu school" of semiotics continues the traditions of the Russian "formal school," especially Iurii Tynianov, and structural linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson), taking into account the efforts to develop semiotic structuralism in various countries. However, the Tartu school does not limit itself to the study of the formal structure of works of art; it focuses primarily on the semantics of sign structures (Lotman 1970, Shukman 1977). Together with his semiotic studies, Lotman also continues his historico-literary investigations, in which he employs a structural-semiotic methodology. The novelty of his work is that he attempts to combine structuralism with historicism, the premise being that a semiotician must also be a historian. Lotman's work in the history of literature is characteristically theory-laden.

FROM SEMIOTICS TO THE STUDY OF CULTURE

At the beginning of the 1970s Lotman arrived at the view that the semiotic object must be adequately understood not simply as a separate sign but as a text existing in culture—as a text constituting "a complex device storing multiple and diverse codes, capable of transforming received messages and of generating new ones, like an information generator possessing traits of intellectual personality" (Lotman 1981, p. 132). Taking this as his point of departure, Lotman considers culture itself in its semiotic aspect, in the multiplicity of its communicative connections (Lotman 1970–1973). By analogy with V. I. Vernadskii's concepts of "biosphere" and "noosphere," Lotman introduced the concept of "semiosphere," which is characterized by the limits of semiotic space, its struc-