Section Four
COSMOLOGY IN PERSONS

Nikolay Lossky's Cosmology

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The paper focuses on cosmological ideas of a twentieth-century Russian philosopher Nikolay Lossky (1870-1965). It specifies the place of these ideas within the entire framework of his philosophical views, as well as in the context of his topology of philosophical systems, in particular — the discrimination between organic and non-organic worldview. A historico-philosophical analysis of Lossky's cosmology allows revealing the interaction of gnoseological and ontological principles of his system, e.g. explicating the difference of Lossky's intuitionism from the one of Bergson. The key section of the organic worldview is the doctrine of the hierarchy of substantival agents: the hierarchical personalism, as well as the notions of transcreation, dynamic understanding of matter, and the doctrine of free will closely related to it. The paper specifies the peculiarities of Lossky's interpretations of panvitalism and panpsychism, as well as the doctrine of reincarnation, which has a particular place in his system. The final stage of Lossky's cosmological ideas development is his ontological aesthetics: on this stage he understands the world as an embodiment of beauty. The conclusion is drawn that Lossky's cosmological doctrine is Christian and metaphysical in its nature.

Keywords: beauty, freedom, intuitionism, metaphysics, organic worldview, personalism, substantival agent, Nikolay Lossky.

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Introduction

Among the host of Russian philosophers, Nikolay Onufrievich Lossky (1870-1965) is notable for his striving for systematising of his ideas. Three basic components of his system – gnoseology, ontology, and ethics – represent themselves a firmly made construction, which took quite a long time to be built. Vasiliy Zenkovskiy, however, points out that although Nikolay Lossky was probably the only Russian philosopher, who had constructed a system of philosophy in the precise meaning of the term, his system was a combination of internally various ideas and principles, an organic synthesis of which he did not wholly succeed to achieve [see Zenkovskiy, 1991: 205, 207]. Although, it should be acknowledged that Lossky constructs all the components of his system basing upon one and the same primary intuition. Moreover, for Lossky himself, the notion of organic synthesis (or, to be more precise, of organic worldview) has always been of primordial importance, and his cosmological constructs are no exception.

Nikolay Lossky's cosmology stirs up certain interest of contemporary philosophers and scientists. Alexandr Spaskov and Olesya Kozyna, for instance, believe that the notion of substantival agents' union, developed by Lossky, is "a good expression of the idea of universal substantival connection, which is fundamental for the universal unity and diversity" [Spaskov & Kozyna, 2016: 130]. Nikolay Lossky's conception is represented as one of the leading constructions of Russian organicism [Masloboyeva, 2011]. Another testimony of certain scholarly interest to Nikolay Lossky's personality became a conference held in 2016 in Drohobych, Ukraine [Vozniak, 2016]. On the other hand, it would be not untrue to say that the philosophical system of Nikolay Lossky still has not been sufficiently examined, nor has its value been fully reckoned.

The Types of Worldview: Organic and Non-Organic

In 1931, Lossky proposed his own classification of philosophical worldviews. Having rejected the common understanding of the pair "materialism / idealism," Lossky constructs a more sophisticated scheme for correlation of various metaphysical systems, depending upon their relation to the ideal (super-time and super-space) and the real (space-and-time) being. He discriminates the *substantialism* (recognising the ideal being only as a substance); the *ideal-realism* (recognising the ideal being as in a form of substances that is the concrete-ideal being, so in the form of relations, order, form, etc. that is the abstract-ideal being); and *actualism* (rejecting completely the idea of substance, and developing a doctrine of the world as a timely process). Moreover, in each of these three metaphysical positions Lossky distinguishes yet one more prevailing partition that finally turns to be the key one: the fundamental partition between organic and non-organic worldviews.

This distinction, according to Lossky, consists in different understanding of relation between the world's whole, on the one hand, and its parts and elements, on the other. Non-organic worldview states, therefore, that "elements are something *principal*, *basic*, as the whole is something *secondary*, *derivative*, having emerged of elements. The elements, then,

are considered to be something *independent*, which is fully (or, at least, in compare to the whole) irrelative; the whole – on the contrary is fully *dependent* on its elements, existing only in *relation* to them" [Lossky, 1931: 17]. In its turn, the organic worldview states that the whole is rather more primary (of course not in a chronological sense) than its elements, the whole is basic as the elements are derivative [Lossky, 1931: 18]. Such a distinction between the non-organic and organic worldview Lossky makes (referring to particular cases from the history of philosophy upon which we shall not pause here) in substantialism and actualism; what about the ideal-realism, there, according to him, should rather be said about the degree of development of organic worldview, and in this sense the *concrete* ideal-realism (unto which he says he belongs himself to) should be preferred rather than the *abstract* ideal-realism [see Lossky, 1931: 21].

The "concreteness" of Lossky's ideal-realism becomes evident, first of all, in his vision of the basic structure of the world: he believes it consists in hierarchical correlations of organic wholes of various level and order. Considering the interest taken by representatives of both social and natural sciences in "units of the higher order of life," he writes that philosophy "for a long time has already been developing conceptions on the world's structure according to which every single organism is an element of a something else, more complex organic whole, which, in its own turn, is a part of a higher living unit, and so on up to the world's whole, which is the all-embracing, universal living being" [Lossky, 1928b: 11]. Among his forerunners, in this respect, Lossky lists Aristotle, Plato, *Giordano* Bruno, Leibnitz, Gustav Fechner, *Wilhelm* Wundt, *Eduard* Hartman, William Stern.

The Intuitionism and the Organic View of the World

Philosophical way of Nikolay Lossky himself began with psychology and gnoseology. Alternatively, to be more precise, it began with his primary philosophical intuition: "everything is immanent to everything." It seems significant that the intuition emerged – as Lossky tells himself in his *Vospominaniia* (Memories) [Lossky, 2008: 93–94], – as a result of – which might appear – a natural phenomenon: a thick fog. It is clear that there had rather "worked" an active intention to finding the way how to break the epistemological deadlock, created by the contraposition of the subject and the object of knowledge. Later Lossky wrote, "…the new philosophical science gnoseology (the theory of knowledge)" was in the second half of the nineteenth century "the major obstacle to building a harmonious and solid worldview" [Lossky, 1991a: 339]. Saying this, he had in mind, first of all, the neo-Kantian theory of knowledge. His own discovery, which had given a powerful spur to the *Obosnovanie Intuitivisma* [Lossky, 1919], Lossky, certainly, believed to be a completely new approach to the subject.

Lossky's intuitionism should not be confused with, for instance, the one of Henry Bergson. His gnoseological conception bases on a few statements, which we apparently shall not find in Bergson. Lossky's intuitionism has founded on idea that the object of knowledge is immanent to the process of knowing. The considered object is in the world of not-I, but the consideration is a part of the sphere of I. The object is transcendent to the knowing I, but immanent to the process of knowing. Intuition, therefore, "*does not mean* in my system the *irrationality* of contemplated (Bergsonian intuition)," – it means "*immediate vision*, immediate *contemplation* of the object by the knowing subject" [Lossky, 1995: 137]. "What is present in knowledge is not a copy, symbol, or appearance of the thing that is to be known, but the thing *as it really exists*" [Lossky, 1919: 82].

Meanwhile, in Bergson, according to Lossky, intuition loses its meaning of a gnoseological tool, which should correlate anyhow with rational knowledge: it has primarily

been conditioned by Bergsonian anti-substantialism (or anti-Platonism). Many a time Lossky draws the line of demarcation between his own understanding of intuition and the Bergsonian one. He emphasised, in particular, that Bergson "did not regard all cognitive acts as intuitive." For Bergson, the same as for Kant, "scientific knowledge expressible in rational concepts was for him a subjective construct of our reason and not contemplation of reality" [Lossky, 1952: 703]. For Lossky himself intuition – as a grasp of the object of knowledge in the original – means, *per se*, any cognitive act, which may differ merely in respect of awareness and recognition, dividing into sensible, intellectual, and mystical intuition.

Contemplation of other entities such as they are in themselves is possible because the world is a definite organic whole, as the knowing subject is a super-temporal and super-spatial being, closely connected with all the world. External objects coordinate with the knowing personality in their wholeness and in all the endless plurality of their content (Lossky calls it "epistemological coordination," i.e. "a peculiar non-causal relation between the conscious subject and the object of which he is conscious" [Lossky, 1928a: 10]), but all the diversity connects with a human I but subconsciously. We know (recognise) only those facets of an object, which are of interest to us.

In time, Lossky arrived to a conclusion that the pure gnoseological substantiation of intuitionism was insufficient. As a result, there appeared an ontologico-cosmological substantiation of the system: a book titled *Mir kak orhanicheskoe tseloe* (The World as an Organic Whole).[1] In his future works, Lossky has developed this substantiation in a number of respects: ontological axiology, ontological ethics, theodicy, ontological aesthetics, and the doctrine of reincarnation. The gnoseological component of his system also got its future development. However, fundamentally, Lossky did not revise his views anymore.

The Hierarchy of Substantival Agents

Nikolay Lossky is usually ranked among Russian neo-Leibnizians. Indeed, being influenced by Alexey Kozlov's panpsychism, he refers to Leibnizian theory of monads – the *units of being*, created by the Absolute (God). Lossky's monads, however, interact with each other; in contrast with the ones of Leibniz, the monads of Lossky *do* have windows and, moreover, their true essence is clearly manifested in the active interpenetration and mutual commitment. Such an ontological viewpoint Simon Frank suggests that it should be called a *personalist philosophy of community*: "His personalism opposes any individualism; personality from the very beginning grows on free community and love, and in them only it embodies itself" [Frank, 1936: 634].

Nikolay Lossky constructs his representation of the world as a set of super-spatial, super-temporal, and metapsychophysical entities – the *substantival agents* of various level of development. Substantival agents – even the elementary ones are free and relatively self-sufficient beings. Lossky distinguishes five kinds of substantival agents: pre-biological, biological, social, planetary, and divine or super-biological. The unity of being enables him to speak about forerunners of moral behaviour in the pre-human nature. He shares, in particular, Peter Kropotkin's idea that the common support, and not the common struggle for existence, is the major factor of evolution. "All the nature is the one organic whole, which is constructed hierarchically" [Lossky, 1991b: 82].

[1] First the work was published during 1915 in a series of articles in the journal *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*; the first Russian edition as a separate book issued in 1917. The first edition of the English translation saw the light in 1928 [Lossky, 1928a].

Lossky, however, emphasised (as if to anticipate famous Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem) that any system cannot be explained from itself. "<…> where a *system* is there must be something super-systemic" [Lossky, 1991a: 385]. Within the framework of his organic worldview, which he also called the absolute philosophical theism, this principle meant acknowledgement of the Absolute – i.e. God – as the *super-organic beginning*. Although claiming his theistic position to be rather more consistent than tending to pantheism the philosophy of all-unity, Lossky developed quite a specific understanding of the idea of creation.

According to Lossky, the first act of creation is the creation of substantival agents, which had been done before the *Six days*. God, according to Lossky, does not create the world as a set of events (such understanding, on his opinion, would lead to pantheism), but as "a set of creatures who themselves – independently on God and each other – *create events*, entering into relationships of either love or enmity with each other" [Lossky, 1991b: 53]. However, their independence is relative, since they are *abstractly-consubstantiate*: they are bearers of the *identical* ideal principles of time, space, and other common forms of the world. Here reappears the general principle which is basic for both Lossky's ontology and gnoseology: "everything is immanent to everything". Immanency as interpenetration does not mean confounding – if substantival agents are consubstantial in their forms, then, the "content of their own actions each agent creates independently by its own individual creative might; it can harmonically combine with contents of other beings, but it also can oppose them" [Lossky, 1991b: 55].

Substantival agents of any level are successors of God's work of creation: they are creators or co-creators who are evolving themselves (creating their own disposition, making their own way), and *de facto* continue the work of the world's creation in the whole range of events and things (we shall observe that Lossky developed a dynamical conception of matter: he did not considered matter as a substantial stuff, but as a result of efforts, first of all, a force of repulsion, which creates the relation of impenetrability). Monads, as potential personalities, evolve to higher, human forms: thus, along with the conception of creation, Lossky introduces the conception of *transcreation*, i.e. a supplementary creative act of God that raises the soul from being a creature to the dignity of human being, making a potential personality to become the actual one.

"As bearers of creative powers substantival agents are distinct and independent, but as bearers of basic abstractly ideal forms they are identical and form one being; therefore even in their independent aspect they are mutually co-ordinated to an extent which ensures the possibility of intuition, love, sympathy (in the true sense worked out by Max Scheler), i.e., of direct intimate communion" [Lossky, 1951: 255]. Abstract consubstantiality of substantival agents is, therefore, a prerequisite of achieving the particular consubstantiality, their catholic creativity and entering in the Kingdom of God. There are enmity and rivalry that rule in the material world, but the enmity and personal impenetrability that depends upon it are relative. A few agents joined together in order to achieve their goals is the way to achieve more complex stages of existence – hierarchies of unities (from an atom to the Universe), where every subsequent stage is directed by an individual of the higher stage of development.

The Doctrine of Reincarnation

Thus, in this peculiar panvitalistic version of personalism, the central ontological element of the world is a substantival agent – or a potency of personality, or an actual personality. At the same time, a human being is an aggregate of agents (potential personalities, constituting,

for instance, his body) and an independent agent – the human *I* in this sense does not coincide with body or soul of the particular individual, since it is a metapsychophysical entity, though it is tightly knit together with its spatial and temporal manifestations: *I* is not mere being, but the *being-for-the-self*; actions of the *I* exist for itself as *its experience*: *I* is immanent to all its manifestations and so tightly knit together with them that they always become something super-temporal-temporal and super-spatial-spatial" [Lossky, 1991b: 55]. Nevertheless, human *I* falls into the category of substantival agents, which Lossky calls the *actual personalities*: "The words 'actual personality' should signify an entity that is aware of absolute values, i.e. the values that have a positive meaning for all, – such values are the truth, moral good, freedom, beauty, God" [Lossky, 1994: 323].

Life is a union of agents in existence that submits to a principal agent, who defines the goal of the existence (from an atom to the Universe). Precondition for possibility of the union is the abstract unity of their essences and particular involvement of inferior beings into the higher life, i.e. an effort to attract them to the higher objective values, which are achieved by the higher agent. Correspondingly, the death is the corporal break-up of the union: "<…> Death is the separation of our *I* from the union body, but it is not the loss of ability to produce spatial acts" [Lossky, 1995: 302]. Individual agents do not die, but continue in reincarnations. Death is not the destruction of substantival agent, but only of his body, which is united by that union of substantival agents. *I* itself remains forever, being eternal.

Here we encounter one of the most controversial – at least if you bear in mind his declared adherence to Christian teaching – side of Lossky's philosophical system, and namely his doctrine of reincarnation. This doctrine, however, only develops and supplements his substantival pluralism and his conception of hierarchical personalism. Being created by God, substantival agents are eternal (or, to be more precise, super-temporal), but they are not preset or given once and for all. They are full of changes and life; moreover, they are continuously interacting, and this interaction brings forth various unions ("union bodies") of substantival agents that, in their turn, are participating in the limited time. A particular human being, *per se*, is a "union body," in which various (including those that are hierarchically of different levels) substantival agents join together for a limited time; this union body, the same as the material body in which it is embodied, is corruptible, but the substantival agent, around whom it aggregates, is super-temporal, and therefore is able, after "the death of the body," to make a new "union" and to reincarnate becoming a new man.

We might say that the doctrine is a peculiar form of panvitalism – moreover, Lossky himself says it: "every agent is a living and animated being" [Lossky, 1992: 25] – but this would be an insufficient characteristic. Lossky states an ontological version of personalism; activism, intentionality (purposiveness), and creative activity of substantival agents – all these are the ontological features of substantive-plural being. Within the framework of this system, human being is a very important section, first of all, since a human is not a potential but an actual substantival agent, who is a fruit of certain development, evolution (not as much in biological sense as in a sense of the development of – created in the beginning – super-spatial and super-temporal substantival agent). However, a human being as a developed substantival agent and a human being as a particular individual are definitely two different personalities that exist in different dimensions: the super-spatial and the spatial, the super-temporal and the temporal.

Lossky's doctrine of reincarnation has undoubtedly had very intimate and romantic nature, for instance, when he is saying: "That, who feels to a person truly individual affection, creating with her the indissoluble (ontological) ties of being. After death, in a new incarnation

these ties continue to exist, at least in a form of an unaccountable sympathy to the individual if there is no remembrance of the past. Moreover, at a higher stage of development, all the past stages of life can be called to mind and then there becomes possible the conscious communion with the person whom we once loved truly, i.e. with the everlasting love" [Lossky, 1992: 69]. However, there can emerge a feeling that in this "everlasting life", which does not know the death of substantival agent who is now and again incarnating in various people, there is so little left of the ordinary, earthly, human affection and love.

The World as the Embodiment of Beauty

In *Mir kak orhanicheskoe tseloe* (The World as an Organic Whole) Nikolay Lossky states that the universal (cosmic) order is morally meaningful as the work of Providence. "Thus the incorporatedness of each event into the all-embracing world's union <…> is not a blind chance, but contains the deepest meaning, being a matter of moral necessity" [Lossky, 1991a: 458]. Nevertheless, he rejects the subjectivism of Kant ant neo-Kantians, according to which it is namely the activity of transcendental subject that brings the unity and connection into the variety of sensual impressions.

Super-temporality of substantival agent defines its freedom of its own past as well as of the laws of temporal process. Criticising Bergsonian anti-substantialism, Lossky states that the "super-temporal beginning, namely, along with the temporal process make possible the continuous *regeneration* of the real being" [Lossky, 1991a: 551], i.e. super-temporality is only the source of creativity and freedom. In a more complex respect, it is said of the freedom of substantival agents from the laws of nature. Nikolay Lossky refers here to dynamic understanding of matter ("matter is not a substance, but a *process*"). Distinguishing between the laws of ideal forms (e.g. in mathematics) and "the rest of natural laws," he states that the later "*do not have absolute power over our behaviour*" [Lossky, 1991a: 555]. In his reasoning we may discern the logic of Leibniz's distinction between the Truths of Reasoning and the Truths of Fact [see Leibniz 1710: 460], as well as Leibniz's understanding of nature as "only a custom of God's" – or the notorious laws of nature – "which he can change on the occasion of a stronger reason than that which moved him to use these regulations" [Leibniz, 1710: 415]. Lossky distinguishes between the law of nature that expresses the necessary connection of events, and a dynamic aspect of the law that is created by voluntary activities of substantival agents. This dynamic aspect as a "passage from super-quality power to its qualification and manifestation in acting," though being repeated for many a time, can never become an automatic, abstractly defined law, since the mode of behaviour set autonomously by a substantival agent can likewise be autonomously revoked by the same agent [Lossky, 1991a: 558].

The accomplishment of Lossky's system of organic worldview may be regarded his book *Mir kak osuschestvlenie krasoty* (*The World as an Embodiment of Beauty*) that saw the light only in 1998. The book is based on a course of lectures he delivered in the late 1940s at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York (in *Vospominaniia* Lossky says it was a course on *Christian aesthetics* [Lossky, 2008: 262]). In the book Lossky develops his conception of the objective being of values, and in the present case – the value of beauty. Beauty is an absolute value, i.e. it possesses a positive meaning "for all personalities who are able to perceive it." The unity of absolute values is the perfect beauty containing in itself all absolute values, but at the same time it is an independent value that consists in their sensual embodiment" [Lossky, 1998: 18–19].

Certainly, absolute beauty is an ideal, accessible only for God-manhood and in God's Kingdom: stating this Lossky remains on the grounds of mystical experience, mystical

intuition. On the other hand, the contents of perfect beauty can at least in part and imperfect forms be perceived in forms of daily experience, sensual and intellectual intuition. It is said, in particular, that beauty "is always spiritual or mental being that is embodied sensually, i.e. insolubly knit together with the life of body" [Lossky, 1998: 28]. It should be noticed that the word *body* has in Lossky two meanings: an aggregate of spatial processes of a certain substantival agent (i.e. the material body), and a *union* of substantival agents, united under the guidance of a hierarchically higher agent that is the "union body" of which it has already been said above. This is, so to say, an "ideal-real" body. Expressions of beauty of material body "have value not only in themselves, as life's blossoming, but also because they are *expressions* of the life of the soul" [Lossky, 1998: 29], and in this sense they are the expressions of ideal-real beauty.

The principle of axiological unity – the unity of values – also is manifested in the following: Lossky explains the violation and going astray from the beauty in material world by deviations of substantive agents from absolute good, from the movement to God, and eventually by their self-love. Lossky also argues against the opinion of the majority of aestheticians, who "believe that only 'higher' sensual qualities, perceived by vision and hearing, are important for the object beauty," he defends the "aesthetic value" also of our *inferior* sensations (taste, smell, etc.), which are too closely connected with our biological needs. The earthly beauty in all its manifestations is eventually defined by the fact that "soul and spirit are always incarnated; and they become the actual in no other way than in particular, singular events, spirit-and-body or soul-and-body" [Lossky, 1998: 31]. Self-love of substantival agents defines deficiency of the earthly beauty. At the same time, Lossky emphasises ontological, metaphysical nature of beauty: "The beauty is the objective value that belongs to the most beautiful object; it does not emerge initially in psychological experience of a subject at the moment of time when he perceives an object" [Lossky, 1998: 44].

Conclusion

Nikolay Lossky's philosophical system, undoubtedly, can be considered as a cosmological one. Ontological understanding of the world as an organic whole intertwines in this system with gnoseological immanentism – a specific version of intuitionism and a conception of epistemological coordination. The central place in Lossky's organic worldview belongs to the doctrine of substantival agents – super-space and super-time active centres, creating the world, *per se*, in its eventfulness and objectivity. Lossky's cosmology is explicitly religious, though his philosophical theism can hardly remind of any apologetics. Argument for the existence of God is constructed as a rational and logical principle: the necessity of acknowledgement of a super-system beginning in order to understand any system; in the present case – the acknowledgement of the Absolute as the super-organic beginning, necessary for understanding of the organic wholeness of the world. The Embodiment of Beauty in the world also has religious and metaphysical explanation, based on acknowledgement of the ontological nature of absolute values.

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