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Special Understanding of Gender Issues in Russian Philosophy

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Abstract

Gender issues are actively being discussed in Western research works in different contexts: philosophical, social, political, anthropological. In Russian philosophy the theme of sex also exists. The purpose of this article is theoretical – to formulate problems which Russian philosophers tell about. In the work the method of complex analysis is used. The theoretical basis of the research is the works of N. Berdyaev, a Russian Philosopher of the first half of the XX century. The authors assume that the special nature of Russian philosophy had a great impact on the development of gender issues. As a result of the research, it has been concluded that the understanding of sex is connected with the understanding of human existence, states biological, social and space unity in philosophy of Berdyaev.

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1. Introduction

Modern science has developed different approaches to the problem of sex. We outline some of them. It is known that the word «gender» has been introduced in social science by Robert J. Stoller (1984). He used it to refer to the socio-cultural aspect of biological sex determined by psychological and cultural components. «Sex» in the interpretation of the author is determined only by biological signs – secondary sexual characteristics, the analysis of chromosomes. In modern literature there are different approaches to the interpretation of the concept. For example, Sara L. Crawley, K.L. Broad (2008) divide the researches in the field in social and feminist ones, Bird S. (2003) draws attention to the study of the masculine nature in modern practice, G. Rubin in his famous work highlights the social and political mechanisms that transform biological sex in social roles (Gayle Rubin, 1975); Butler J. argues that sex makes sense only in the case of continuous reproduction of social practices, realizing gender is possible only when there is the ability or inability to play certain social norms (Butler J., Scott J., 1992); Fraser N. analyzes gender as a political category, which allows fixing the relations of domination between groups and inequality in the distribution of resources (Fraser N., 1997).

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In our opinion, classic works in this area have not lost their influence on modernity: the work of Engels in which sex is a necessity for the reproduction of humans (Engels F., 1886); Freud's works which show the mechanisms that suppress the natural sexual urges and the formation of gender (Freud S., 2000); M. Foucault's works which develop the idea that sexuality creates different identities - both heterosexual and homosexual, sexuality is studied in the context of a relationship of power and knowledge. (Foucault M., 1978)

2. Method

This article has a theoretical purpose – to formulate ideas in the study of gender which are specific Russian philosophy. The methodological basis of this article is Russian religious philosophy of the late XVIII - early XX centuries. During this period, philosophers whose work directly develops the problem of love and sex can be distinguished: V. Rozanov, Vladimir Solovyov, Berdyaev. In this study, we will focus on the ideas of Berdyaev, because, firstly, his philosophy of sex was formed after reading the works of V. Rozanov and V. Solovyev, secondly, it developed in the first half of the XX century in the mainstream of contemporary European philosophy and, therefore, therefore experienced some influence of it.

3. Specific Nature of Russian philosophy

It should be noted that the Russian philosophical tradition has specific nature in comparison with Western philosophy. In our opinion, it is clearly manifested in the works of Berdyaev and influences his conception of sex, therefore we consider characteristics of Russian philosophy more detailed. Russian philosophy as independent thought started to form only in the XVIII century; its intensive development was in the XIX century.

Prior to this period, philosophical issues were discussed under the religious worldview. Orthodoxy played an important role in Russian culture. It was present as a way of life, as a social institution of the church, as traditions determined the life of every Russian.

According to V.V. Zenkovsky, a researcher of Russian philosophy, in Russia the state has always played the role of a censor; the churches, on the contrary, created a space for free thinking, which is a prerequisite of philosophizing. (Zenkovsky V.V., 1991) So, in Russian philosophy the boundaries between philosophy and religion are not clear. We can say that religion often was a source of Russian philosophical thought. The first manifestations of philosophical thought in Russia are associated with the emergence of Christianity in the form of sermons of priests and the elders' reflection (Gromov M.N.). Perhaps namely religiousness of Russian philosophy became the basis for criticism of rationalism of the modern age, as anticipation of antiscientist and antinationalist tendencies of the west what N. Motroshilova rightly points out (Motroshilova N.V., 1999). This fact is important in determining the identity of Russian philosophy, as it has undergone a significant influence of Western thought. The reflection of Russian philosophy for its own specific nature, understanding the "Russian idea", the process of self-consciousness of the Russian people is another characteristic of Russian philosophy. (Shestopal A.V., 2014).

Defining the specific character of philosophy by the ratio to the Absolute allows paying attention to how Western philosophy influenced the development of Russian philosophical thought. As rightly pointed by Evlampiev I.I., there are three ways of understanding the relationship of the Absolute, the world and man in European philosophy. The first paradigm: the Absolute is understood as a global mind, the second paradigm: the Absolute is unknowable, the third paradigm: man can merge with the Absolute. The first paradigm is linked to the traditions of Descartes, the second tradition was formed by Auguste Comte, the third paradigm was started by N. Cusansky, continued by Fichte and developed in Russian philosophy. (Evlampiev I.I., 2012) In the Russian tradition, it is converted to the idea of God-manhood, developed by V. Solovyov and Nikolai Berdyaev. To achieve a state of the Incarnation is possible through love and the realization of man's creative nature.

Another characteristic of Russian philosophy - concrete ideas, philosophers' desire to create not just an abstract model of reality, but a real project which may be realized, not so much the general characteristics of man and the world as a concrete representation of the nuances and details of human life. In Russian philosophy there is no separation between theory and practice; philosophical problems developed by Russian philosophy are the problems of history meaning, the problems of the relation of government and society, the meaning of human life

and its eschatology. The unity of theory and practice, ontology and epistemology, rational and mystical idealism and materialism, religiosity and atheism represent the principles of Russian philosophy. Another feature of the study of philosophy is a form of presentation.

On the one hand, there is philosophizing in the texts which are far from the philosophy – literature (for example, the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolai Gogol), political essays. Here you can find both philosophical thought and philosophical terminology and philosophical symbolism. (Suhov A.D., 1995) We consider this aspect more detailed, because, in our opinion, stylistic aspects is an important part of the philosophy of Berdyaev.

4. Berdyaev as a Russian Philosopher

The basic language principles of classical philosophy are precise and strict definitions, the gradual development of concepts, logical proof of hypotheses, a desire to create a system. Berdyaev indicates the weakness of this method of thought expressing, "But Kant's thought fouling with school-scholastic bark with complicated evidence seemed to me always harmful darkening his brilliant idea" (Berdyaev N.A., 1991).

The works of the philosopher are emotional, controversial, bombastic, affective and dogmatic. Dogmatic character based on the intuition is able to penetrate into existence and express the truth that is the essence of philosophy which is fundamentally different from science. Berdyaev describes his style in this way: "My thinking is intuitive and aphoristic. It does not have discursive development of thought. I cannot really develop and prove" (Berdyaev N.A., 1991). The form of expression which is adequate to intuition is free expression, not proof. Fragmentary nature, endless repetition - this style correlates with the image of the world and man presented by the philosopher. A key point is creativity. Creativity is the process by which a person realizes one's individuality, personality, uniqueness that can not be "put" in the framework of categorical thinking and consistent development of thought. Adoption of the unique occurs by reference to the transcendent, through joint free activity of man and God.

According to the philosopher, man unites two worlds – the world of the divine and the natural world. Berdyaev argues the concept of Incarnation - God's humanity and divinity of man. Divine love is infinite, it can not remain self-enclosed, it needs a subject for the realization. This is what for man is created. Through the freedom and creativity the two natures must unite. The goal of unification of God and man is co-creation, the result is not objectified world. Doctrine of objectification occupies an important place in the philosophy of Berdyaev. The process of objectification is alienation of artwork from the man. Objectification occurs in the process of cognition, in the creative process and in existence itself. The Result of objectification is the world of objects (things), which becomes primary in relation to the spiritual world. Initially, the creation of the world and changing it is a creative process. But over time, a person perceives the world as a primary objective in relation to itself existing independently of man. This is the basis for the opposition between subject and object. This principle is the basis for the European metaphysics and defines the need for knowledge of the external human world. The external world is perceived by the person as true and objective, internal - as deluded and subjective (Berdyaev N.A., 1937). This situation makes it possible for Berdyaev to put the correlation problem of the spiritual and technical, ethical and epistemological, true and false values, the problem of social and anthropological division (Berdyaev N.A., 1989).

5. The problem of Sex in Philosophy of Berdyaev

To overcome the dualism of existence is possible only through creativity. Creativity is the desire not only to find, but also to create the Truth; not passive contemplation, but active creation of the world. But creation in the usual sense is a process of objectification. Man must master other creativity which is joint with God. The result of this work is the assertion of the single, unique, as opposed to averaging and generalization. Such creativity is only possible if man overcomes his lower nature. At this point the question arises in the works of the philosopher: how can man overcome the natural, organic, biological in oneself, establish one's identity, realize the meaning of the existence? We point out that in the works of the philosopher, uniqueness, individuality are perceived as the appeal of man to God. One of the conditions of assertion of the Divine in man, and, therefore, the full realization

of creative intentions is sex. Understanding of sex in the works of Berdyaev makes actual the following philosophical problems: "What does it mean to be human?", "What is the meaning of life?", "What is the source of creativity?".

According to the philosopher, "it can be said that a man is a sexual creature" (Berdyaev N.A., 1989). The category of "sex" is conceptualized by the philosopher in two senses corresponding to dialectic of human existence: the personal and patrimonial. Personal component of sex is the divine in man, respectively, committed, singular and unique. Generic component of sex is man and woman relationships are manifested primarily through sexual intercourse.

Berdyaev sees the tragedy of man in this. The sexual act does not distinguish man from animal, does not distinguish one person from another. The main function of sex is procreation and an attempt to overcome its limitations and shortcomings. The philosopher presents three main viewpoints that justify sexual intercourse: procreation, pleasure, connection with loved ones. The birth of children is perceived by Berdyaev very tragic, because it is a symbol of the unity of life and death. As a result, a number of imperfect beings increase, the bad infinity continues. Delight, sexuality have impersonal nature that is the main point of his criticism for the thinker. The purpose of the pleasure is the man oneself, so in the process of sexual pleasure man does not go beyond oneself, only beyond one's desires and instincts, developing its egoism. The connection with the lover person is a key aspect in the understanding of sex for the philosopher. Only through true love reunion happens. But it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the word "reunion" in the aspect in which the thinker uses and develops it. Since the division of people into men and women is identified with the loss of personality, in order to become a personality it is necessary to overcome the division of the sexes. Thus, the ultimate goal of true love in the philosophy of Berdyaev is to overcome sex in an androgynous being. To make this idea, the thinker insists that it is not bisexuality, not the lack of sex, but the union of male and female in one being.

In the understanding of sex by Berdyaev it should be noted a peculiar form of feminism. According to the thinker, a woman, as opposed to a man, initially contains the creative metaphysical beginning. In the arguments about femininity the philosopher develops the following aspects: 1. Woman and man's roles in society; 2. Principles of the relationship of man and woman; 3. Women and men as members of the world order.

The male and female in society correlate according to Berdyaev by forms of human creativity – art and science. Art is to inspire people to create beautiful, it is aimed at the expression of the meaning of life. The aim of science is to record the facts, to formulate laws and to improve the living conditions. The main function of art is the creative, the main function of science is utilitarian (it should be noted that Berdyaev does not deny various types of work, including scientific). Then the main function of the woman in society is to inspire, the man's – to create. In this section the principles of gender relations are clarified.

The philosopher argues that women should be given all the rights that they claim, but criticizes the tendency of women to be like men and do a man's job. Perhaps in terms of modernity, here we can see the elements of discrimination against women. The philosopher argues that women will never be able to do a man's job just as well as men do. (Berdyaev N.A., 2014)

But from our point of view, Berdyaev anticipates many modern ideas about the role of women in society. He argues that women should do the job without imitating men, but bringing in it the own, female. This is especially possible in politics, where the feminine will overcome cruelty, selfishness and cynicism of male politicians.

In this context, the sex confrontation is meaningless, only the unity, cooperation and complementarily of the sexes will help transform the world. In the matter of clarifying the male and female as elements of the world we find elements of eastern philosophy and exalting femininity characteristic of some Russian philosophers (V. Soloviev, D. Merezhkovski, Bulgakov in different interpretations).

Division of sexes is specific not only for the human, but also for space. In space, the male represents an anthropological principle, female – natural. Masculine represents the active, personal, conscious. Feminine - natural, impersonal, unconscious. As for Eastern philosophy, the idea of mutual necessity of two principles is indicative for Berdyaev. As many Russian philosophers, Berdyaev understands femininity as a symbol expressing the unity of the world and the principle that orders plural in a single.

The generic component of sex is manifested in the social institution of the family. The institution of the family is considered by the philosopher as a form of slavery of man. In this context Berdyaev focuses on two forms of slavery: the natural and social. Natural slavery is sex slavery in which a person is determined by the world of things and objects, deprived of the liberty and is reduced to an animal state; public slavery manifested in the family. The philosopher perceived family as one of the many social institutions. The essence of any of them is a hierarchical structure based on power relations. The family created and maintained by society for the purpose of procreation, but as already mentioned, Berdyaev sees this as a destructive, negative component of human life relegating man to the level of animals. In addition, the institution of the family gives the intimacy of true love by presenting a general review that should be the sacrament of the relationship of man and woman. Developing the theme of social slavery, the thinker makes actual the problem of family and love. Society claims the moral duty of man to the family despite the presence or absence of love for a spouse. In this regard, the family becomes the primary compared to the love that is the subject of criticism Berdyaev. He argues that the family has a right to exist only as long as there is love between the spouses, thus insisting on the legitimacy of divorce.

6. Conclusion

1. It should be emphasized that the philosophy of Berdyaev is classified as existential. Existentialism as a philosophy system occurred after the First World War as a response to social instability in the world. One of the reasons of social conflicts from the perspective of existentialism is the assertion of universal, necessary, in spite of the single, random, subjective. In the early XX century the situation of the global crisis of culture created the need to rethink the critical moments of social and human life. In this context, sex in the understanding of Berdyaev is associated with the conflict, which man experiences in oneself, in society, in the world, the result of which should be the realization of the "I", the meaning of man's existence. In our opinion the interpretation of sex as a source of understanding the meaning of man's existence is specific to the research in this area.
2. The works of the philosopher develop the problem of understanding of male and female in the person, their properties and characteristics. Interpretation of the male and female refers to biological sex, it is hardly possible to speak of sociality of these properties (referring to the social expectations of the behavior of men and women in society). Specific nature of the male and female is clarified in the direct relationship between biological sex, gender, and social functions of its cosmic significance. Realizing male and female of the human in the present context characterizes Berdyaev as a thinker of Russian philosophy where personal judgment is possible only in its relationship with the social and transcendental.
3. N. Berdyaev's assertion of the existence of the male and female in the human can be interpreted as the influence of Eastern philosophy. This idea is developed in Western gender studies aimed at determining the specificity of the male and female. The topic of catholicity and unity characteristic for Russian philosophy manifests itself in the idea of overcoming sex, which Berdyaev develops. In our view, if we consider gender studies Western counterparts in this context, it can be argued that they promote and encourage fragmentation of the individual and of society into various micro-groups. In the philosophy of Berdyaev, on the contrary, the unity of man and society through the formation of an androgynous being is affirmed.
4. Berdyaev in the context of gender makes actual social aspects: procreation, marriage and family. It may be noted that the ideas of the philosopher on the family are in tune with the ideas of some Western thinkers on the key role of power in family relations. The specific is the negation of the social functions of the family - reproductive, regenerative, domestic, and economic and statement of love as the sole justification for the institution of family.
5. The ideas developed within the gender problems by Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev should be completed by philosophy of V. Rozanov and V. Soloviev. In our opinion, the study of this topic will help to clarify the socio-cultural aspects of the Russian mentality. Further comparison of the Russian approach to gender mainstreaming with Western studies (here the tradition is richer, so it is necessary to talk about the diversity of approaches) will help explain the differences in the understanding of pluralism genders, tolerant attitude towards it and, accordingly, to find points of mutual understanding in this area.

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