

«THE TASK OF LIFE» IN V.F. ODOEVSKY'S «RUSSIAN NIGHTS»**Mesyats Kirill Vladimirovich**

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The modern researches of Russian philosophy of the XIX century almost don't show the deep ontological senses of creative legacy of one of the most prudent Russian thinkers of his time V.F. Odoevsky. Many of his ideas have not lost their importance even today. In his main work «Russian Nights» Odoevsky raises a lot of philosophical problems like possibility of understanding, correspondence of thought to the word and the question about the task of life. N.A. Kotlyarovskiy wrote about this book: «The illustrious idealism of the forties did not create anything more beautiful, more thoughtful and artistically integral than these "Nights", which absorbed all the wisdom of their century, they are thoroughly saturated with romance and metaphysics and never this Russian romance and metaphysics were not as beautiful and eloquent as on the eve of their death in this book». [2, p. 151-152].

Finding solutions to the question of the task of life in «Russian Nights» is constituted by existence of the fundamental human need to answer it: «The equal is embraced by the equal; if there is an attraction, then there must be an attracting object, an object of the same affinity with a human that gravitates to the human soul, just as objects on the earth's surface are gravitated to the center of the earth; the need for complete bliss testifies to the existence of this bliss; the need for bright truth testifies to the existence of this truth, as well as the fact that darkness, delusion, doubt are contrary to human nature» [3, p. 192].

V.F. Odoevsky in «Russian Nights» creates a situation of maieutic understanding and leads the reader to an independent, the only possible, according to Odoevsky, solution of the task of life: «Why do we live? – you ask. It's a hard and easy question. Perhaps it can be answered with one word; but you will not understand this word if it does not pronounce itself in your own soul» [3, p. 14]. Odoevsky prefers a dialogical setting in the solution of the task of life due to the difficulty of considering the human himself: «a human is a handwritten notebook, written in a language little known and all the more difficult because neither a dictionary nor a grammar has yet been compiled for him» [3, p. 178].

Odoevsky is not inclined to a naive or «apophantic» [1, p. 17] positioning of the truth and the task of human life. He affirms the incomplete correspondence of thought to the word and actualizes the existential moment of thinking, leaving schematism and categorization out of scope. Odoevsky writes: «It seems to me that we are like wanderers who entered an unfamiliar land at night, about which they have information that is both indeterminate and incomplete; in this land they must live and therefore study it; but in this moment of searching, any systematism would be for them a work beyond their strength – and, consequently, a source of mistake; all they know about this country is that they don't know it» [3, p. 133].

As an epigraph to the «Russian Nights» V. F. Odoevsky offers us the following phrase from Goethe's novel «Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship»: «Lassen sie mich nun zuvörderst gleichnissweise reden! Bei schwer begreiflichen Dingen thut man wohl sich auf diese Weise zu helfen». The solution of the task of life in his work is going with the help of a parable because of the special attention to the personal beginning of a human and incomplete correspondence of thought to the word. This is seen as an influence of Plato who used the mythological form of presentation when describing the ultimate concepts like the process of cognition or the immortality of the soul.

The form of the parable-myth proposed by Odoevsky has a certain negative, apophatic character: the task of life is highlighted through consideration of a life devoid of fullness. The tragedy of the nameless Dead Man in «The Brigadier» fragment and Liza in «The Dead Man's Mockery» is a romanticistic tragedy between the individual and the universal, the sacrificing the personality of feeling and thinking in the name of «demonic» specious virtue and blind public acceptance. The stories of Cipriano in the fragment «The Improviser» and even Bach are presented in an opposite way: their creative genius, elevated to the absolute, led to the impossibility of understanding and sympathy from other people, and, as a result, unbearable loneliness.

In the epilogue to «Russian Nights» Odoevsky identifies four elements that are some fundamental forces of the spirit and common to all people: the need for truth, love, reverence and strength, or power [3, p. 133]. All human actions are determined by these elements, by a certain proportion between them. He also writes: «Be that as it may, when there is no balance and harmony between the elements, the organism suffers; and such is the pedantry in this law that nothing saves from this suffering: neither the development of the will, nor the gift of creativity, nor supernatural knowledge – be it a country that has all the means of power, be it called Beethoven, Bach – the body suffers, because it has not fulfilled fullness of life. A luxurious cactus, captured by frost, sometimes reaches the level of a fragrant flower – but then instantly dies» [3, p. 139-140]. It can be argued that the task of life in the most general sense, according to Odoevsky, is to find and maintain a balance between these elements which is a condition of its fullness.

At the same time, it should be noted that Vladimir Fedorovich Odoevsky's attitude to the life balance is comprehended by him in a dynamic way it cannot be reducible to some passivity, the «hiddenness» of life: «Human life is a continuous battle: a battle with nature, with other people, battle with yourself» [3, p. 194]. These types of battle, according to Odoevsky, are science, art and love, and at their foundation lies belief in their very possibility [3, p. 194]. They represent the main spheres of human realization and conditions of the «alive life» itself in their most general formulation.

References:

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