Belief: Ontology and Etymology

Roman K. Omelchuk*

*The East-Siberian State Academy of Education
6 Nizhnyaya Naberezhnaya st., Irkutsk, 664011 Russia [1]*

The etymological and hermeneutical analysis of belief was made. The difference between the ontological and gnoseological approaches to belief was shown by means of examples of outstanding representatives of Russian (P.A. Florensky, S.N. Bulgakov, A.F. Losev, N.O. Lossky) and German schools of philosophy (A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, M. Heidegger). Parallels between the philosophical conceptual apparatus and the etymological peculiarities in understanding of belief by different cultural traditions were drawn.

Keywords: ontology of belief; etymology; essence of belief; person; truth of being; Russian philosophers; German philosophers.

Introduction

First of all the ontological understanding of belief is revelation of essential description of belief as an existential phenomenon.

It is quite evident that the etymological analysis of the notion "belief" is always associated with such categories like *Logos* and *person*. It is so because *Logos* and *person* are the fields closely related to belief without which research of belief would be incomplete. On the one hand, modern linguistics-oriented philosophy develops the idea of personification of language (M. Heidegger) and on the other hand, it develops the idea of "normal", "everyday" language (H. G. Gadamer, D.L. Ostin). The former is about *Dasein*, the latter is about the medium, but in both cases it implies a man who is capable of not only speaking, but

also listening; not only changing but also be able to change (others). It is a man as a conductor, as a vector of influence, a man as a field of education and transformation that is the essence of the etymological analysis of ontology of belief in the light of the hermeneutical approach.

It will be most proper to analyze the notion of "belief" in a historical sequence. It was P.A. Florensky who in his detailed and advanced analysis of the notion "belief" pointed out that the Latin verb *credere* ("to believe") comes from Sanskrit श्रद्धा *sraddhā* – to believe or "to entrust one's heart to God" (Florensky, 1990, 69). Following the direction drawn by this Russian philosopher let us start the etymological analysis of ontology of the word belief in the light of the hermeneutical approach

---

* Corresponding author E-mail address: r.om@list.ru

from Sanskrit and end with modern English and, of course, Russian.

Belief-devotion of India

Sanskrit श्रद्धा *sraddhā* derives from *srad-dadhāna* ("trustful, faithful"), *srad-dāna* ("belief, faithfulness") that point out the essence of belief, its inculcation in a man (Monier-Williams, 1899, 1095). V.A. Kochergina's Dictionary demonstrates the affinity of *radh*, *raddha* – "to subdue", *raddhar* – "a subjugator" and *radhra* – "devoted". But on the other hand, *rādh*, *rāddha* can have the meaning "to grow, to prosper, to satisfy". So the meaning of the notion *sraddhā* can be primarily understood as trustful, faithful, devoted, and secondarily, as belief, trust, devotion, rapture, admiration, respect, esteem, desire, and need (Kochergina, 1987, 538, 544, 656). It is evident that belief and a man are considered as notions that are identical and closely associated with each other. Such belief helps a man to discover himself, connects him to the world of true values of culture and traditions. That is why the "ability to apprehend values and consider them in the act of belief is a human ancestral characteristic" (Melikov, 1999, 191). Among the available competent sources revealing the notion *sraddhā* we can point out several meanings. Thus, in the Old Indian monument of spiritual and philosophical classical literature "Bhagavad-Gita", belief is defined as accepting everything that was said by God as the truth (Prabhupada, 2007, 482). Along with this meaning A.Ch. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada defines belief as "a firm conviction in the Divine Principle" and "unshakable confidence that simply by acting in Krishna's consciousness (the mind of God. – R.O.) one can reach the highest level of excellence" (Prabhupada, 2007, 130, 254). Note that in this case we do not speak about some kind of implicit belief, since, according to the philosopher, such belief (*sraddhā*) is the speaker's acknowledgement

of the Absolute Truth with attributes inherent to a personality (Prabhupada, 2007, 21-23). Belief is a realization of the personal nature of Spirit, a humble acceptance of shelter, refuge and support. It should be emphasized that *srāddha* is also a designation of sacrifice that is done as worship to those who has already reached perfection, as well as to gods, ancestors, spirits and people. It helps to understand that sacrifice inherent to a human being is not just actualized by belief but belief (*sraddhā*) itself is an active sacrifice, dedication and worship (*srāddha*) expressed in action. In Buddhism belief (*sraddhā*) is considered among special abilities of perception (*indriya*) that are understood as means of self-perfection as well as among achievements (*sampatti*) that are attained in the process of self-upbringing and self-preparation. According to S.A. Sidorov, belief is a "support", "trust" in the Three Jewels (*Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sangha*) as a source of human perfection (Sidorov, 2005, 96, 105). The researcher points out that among so called indriyas, belief is considered to be the first as it is the first condition of self-perfection. Moreover, it is admitted that belief is the only way for people inclined to love service and personal devotion (Sanskrit: *bhakti*)" (Sidorov, 2005, 105). Such belief pervades human's life making him literally experience the truth but not just acknowledge it with intellect. Such researchers as L.Yu. Golub, O.Yu. Drugova, P.Yu. Golub point out that *sraddhā* is "a belief, devotion and sincerity that is self-reliance and confidence in others". The grounds for such belief are the authority, precedent, innate knowledge, direct intuitive perception, content of one's consciousness in a changed state. True and firm belief generates energy (*virya*) that contributes to achieving a goal (Golub et al., 2003, 213).

It is likely that Sanskrit *rad-dadhāna* was a prototype of Tibetan *dad pa*. According to the Tibetan doctrines there are four basic kinds of belief: vivid faith based on admiration

(Tibetan: *dang ba'i dad pa*), eager faith based on a passionate desire (Tibetan: *'dod pa'i dad pa*), confident faith (Tibetan: *yid ches pa'i dad pa*), and, finally, total confidence (Tibetan: *phyir mi ldog pa'i dad pa*) (Patrul Rinpoche, 1998, 171-182). Such understanding of belief reflects a Sanskrit reading of belief borrowed through Buddhism with the only difference that the Tibetan standard of belief is defined as "readiness for partnership (co-existence)", "refuge". On the whole we can affirm that the categories of "relationship", "connection", "motion", "change" that serve for description of reality as a process were more important for the eastern mentality, the Chinese one in particular, than the category of "substance" understood as a constant ground of being (Eremeev, 2005, 28). This is due to a different understanding of belief which does not deny the epistemological, religious and psychological characteristics, but it is not determined by them. As a Chinese analogue of Sanskrit *sraddhā* and Tibetan *dad pa* the hieroglyph "xin" means "faithful" and "worth of confidence" at the same time. "Xin" as it is understood by the Chinese is a belief, truth and consciousness. D. Ikeda points out that "the words "to be conscious" should be understood as deep belief" (Ikeda, 2004, 106). This thought is confirmed by E.A. Torchinov in his comments on the "Treatise on awakening of belief in *Mahayana*", where it is said that "xin xin" is translated as a true consciousness, "but the literal translation – "a believing consciousness" – would bring Christian connotations to the text which are alien to it. That is why it was decided to abandon it" (Treatise on the awakening of faith in the Mahayana, 1997, 92). It is obvious that the Chinese understanding of belief has a unique meaning that requires supplementary analysis.

Belief-sincerity of China

Xin as sincerity, conviction, courage, trustworthiness, righteousness, truth, faithfulness,

firmness is used among so-called "bases", "innate abilities", "constancies" (Eremeev, 2005, 55, 280, 282). A Chinese historian Ban Gu in the treatise "Bo hu tong" defines belief (*xin*) as sincerity equating it with veracity and specifies: "It means to give oneself up to something without deviating from it" (Ban Gu, 1990, 247).

The Chinese understanding of belief as *xin* correlates with Zoroastrian *Spenta-Armaiti* ("Holy Faithfulness", "Holy Piety") which means the need to comply with the requirements of their religion. V.E. Eremeev points out that in their doctrine the ancient Chinese "made an emphasis not on religious belief but on the understanding of "verity" (*xin*) and on "adherence" (*fu*) to ideals that are always imbued with some belief" (Eremeev, 2005, 471-473). In opinion of A.I. Kobzev, Yu.K. Shutskiy and V.E. Eremeev the hieroglyph *fu* ("faithfulness, truth") is similar to the notions of "truth" (*cheng*) and "conviction" (*xin*). So it should be considered as "the fifth *de*" (Eremeev, 2005, 466). For T.P. Grigorieva *de* is "the embodiment of *dao*", a "certain definite type of energy, personal strength", a "talent, predestination" (Grigorieva, 1992, 384). *De* is the essence of *dao* and understanding of that essence is explained by T.P. Grigorieva with the notion "Truth-Sincerity". As it has been already mentioned, sincerity is the most precise notion for the designation of belief that maintains and underlines the uniqueness of its understanding in comparison with the religious one – Zoroastrian and Christian.

So the belief and the truth are not just connected with each other, but are ontologically inseparable with a proviso that belief is more like a potential truth, the truth in embryo. A way to the truth begins with belief that is ontologically understood as sincerity. It is not by accident that T.P. Grigorieva quotes utterances of Ibn Sin (Avicenna) "I worship the Truth – the best of beliefs" and that of I.S. Lisevich: "If *dao*

is a seed then *de* is a sprout carrying a charge of energy for the future development: it is the implementation of the invisible program that is primordially put into things and phenomena..." (Grigorieva, 1992, 158, 384). Such understanding of belief (*xin*) as sincerity leading to the true, as implementation of the way of *dao* by means of *de*, as actualization of the truth lays the foundation for the phenomenological analysis of belief. The indissolubility and at the same time the uniqueness of each of these states that characterize belief in the process of making the truth, to some extent conform with existence of not only the great world *de* but also with *de* of some society, *de* of some person or *de* of some thing. In "Dao De Jing" Laozi himself explains that *de* itself is *dao*: in the vagueness of *dao* the images take shape inside of which the truth lies the essence of which is belief-sincerity (Compare: (Lao-Tzu, 2008, 182-183); (Grigorieva, 1992, 134-135)).

The Japanese hieroglyphic tradition borrowed from the Chinese characters of the 5th century has kept those meanings that were lost after the reform of the Chinese language in 1956-1986. Thus, at first sight the Japanese word "belief" consists of two hieroglyphs: 信 ("a truth", "a word", "a signal") and 仰 ("to look up", "to revere", "to ask") (Japanese-Russian dictionary of paronyms, 2000, 43, 39). But there is another level of the meaning hidden in the notion of "belief" and becomes obvious only after the detailed analysis of each of the hieroglyphs of the synonymous writings. So the hieroglyph "to believe" 信 (*shin*) that consists of two keys ("man" and "word") (Japanese-Russian dictionary of paronyms, 2000, 37, 264), in combination with 心 ("heart, soul, conscience") provides the meaning of "belief" 信心 (*shinjin*) as belief in God, religiousness; in combination with 義 ("justice, duty, honor; tie, bonds of duty; sense") it gives the meaning of "belief" 信義 (*shingi*) as loyalty, devotion; in combination

with 奉 ("sacrifice, revere, worship") it can be understood as 信奉 (*shimpo:*) loyalty, devotion, service; in combination with 条 ("clause") – as 信条 (*shingo*): religious doctrine; in combination with 念 ("thought, consciousness, feeling; attention, care; desire") – as 信念 (*shinnen*) – conviction; in combination with 仰 ("look up; respect, worship; depend on; set hopes on; ask for help, advice") – as 信仰 (*shinko*) religious belief, denomination. It is interesting that the combination of the hieroglyph 信 ("believe") with 妄 ("nonsense") and 盲 ("blind") is translated as implicit faith, and with 狂 ("to go mad, to go off one's head") – as fanaticism. It is worth pointing out that the root of such words as "signaling", "traffic light" (*shingo*), "connection" (*tsushin*), "telegraph" (*denshin*) where the presence of 信 (*shin*) is interpreted as "a message", "a signal" also explains the communicative function of ontological belief (JISHOP kanji dictionary, 2010).

Belief-recollection of Greece

In the perception of the ancient Greek belief (πίστις) is not only confidence or loyalty but also a guarantee, oath. Such belief is an obligation, a contract that regulates interactions between counterparts. In this case belief compensates for incompleteness supporting the possibility of intercommunication. But along with this interpretation there is another one: belief (πίστις) is also a doxy, opinion, image (contrary to knowledge) (Weisman, 1991, 1004). Belief as an image is a flashback, recollection. This fact points at a distinct etymological propinquity of Russian *mnenie* ("opinion") with *mnema* (Greek: Μνήμη – memory), but not with "imaginary", "illusory", "delusive", "sham". This belief corresponds to such an extent of remembering the truth that a man is currently capable of. It is also proved etymologically: New Testament's πιστός ("a believer") is pronounced and written identically to

πιστός ("drinkable", "a cup"). Such a connection points at belief not only as an ontological description of a man but also as a relativity and variability of completeness and content of belief. The need for a proper understanding of such a way of thinking of the ancient Greek was pointed out by M. Heidegger who paid special attention to the transformation of the verb "to be" into the noun "being" in the philosophy of Parmenides. The essence of being is "the truth", the essence of the verb "to be" is belief as formation and restoration of the truth. And if the ancient Greeks understood the truth as "unforgettability", then belief would be a recollection – something that just confirms the dialectical interconnection of belief and truth. Later, Plato considers that an opinion is a combination of belief and likening defining such an opinion as formation (Plato, 1998, 288). When dialectics of Heraclitus as a doctrine of eternal formation and changeableness of being and dialectics of Socrates as achieving the truth through the struggle of opinions are considered in the light of belief as πίστις, they match. Belief as an opinion has also different steps of formation in accordance with completeness of the truth and conviction.

The Romans experienced belief as *fides* that had several meanings. Latin understanding of belief *fides* as confidence, assurance and fidelity for the most part was connected with the credit of personal confidence (*credo*), reputation of bona fides and credibility (verity). Belief as "verity", "veracity" is etymologically connected with *verax* ("truthful"), *vere* ("truly", "rightly", "correctly"), *verum* ("truth", "justice") and *veritas* ("truth"; "sincerity"; "truthfulness"; "rules") (Dvoretskiy, 1996, 812-814). The obvious etymological affinity of belief with Latin *verbum* ("word", "faith") and *verna* ("slave", "servant", "minister") adds to belief a tinge of responsibility and at the same time protection, defense, hope and expectation. Such

belief is also assurance, guarantee that is like a pledge to fulfill all the commitments.

P.A. Florensky points out that "the cult sphere of the root *var* and the word *veritas* becomes obvious when reviewing the Latin co-root words" (Florensky, 1990, 19). Revealing the connection of belief with cult the Russian philosopher, however, disregarded the semantic closeness of belief with the Latin word *cultura*, that, as it is known, means not only "cultivation", "culture", "care", but also "upbringing", "education", "development", "evolution" and "worship", "cult", "reverence". Their affinity becomes most obvious in the light of *cultus* as "lifestyle", "care", "education", "upbringing", "development", "cult", "faith". In this sense belief is revealed as value penetrating all spheres of human life, the realization of which, on the one hand, is the basis of personal perfection, and on the other hand, is a foundation that determines a steady attitude towards the world.

The extension of the above etymological analysis by P.A. Florensky can be done via Latin *verti*, *verto* ("turn over", "direct", "plough up") and *conversio* derived from them ("turning to", "turning", "returning", "turning into"). On the one hand, in this case belief is looked on as a factor of the personality formation and, on the other hand, as a factor of the spirit transformation. The relational affinity with *commutatus* ("change", "converting"), *moveo* ("put in motion", "disclose", "rebuild") and *metamorphosis* ("transformation", "transition", "turning") also broadens the scope of the analysis and deepens the understanding of the phenomenon of belief not only as a communication basis of interrelation, but also as a description of human existence.

The understanding of belief in other European countries was formed under the influence of the Latin language. But there are some specific accents in each of them. For example, in German there are obvious connections between the

adjective *wahr* ("true, veritable, real") and the verbs *wáhren* ("to keep (for example, a secret)"; "protect (for example, an honor)") and *währen* ("to last", "to continue") (Big German-Russian dictionary, 1997, 566). In the context of the first connection, belief is seen as a bearer of true values, and in the context of the second as an ontological alternative of time. In addition, *glaube* ("belief, confidence") becomes related not only to *lieben* ("to love"), but also to *leben* ("to be", "to live"). The ontological nature of belief can also be seen in the verb *verstehn* ("to understand", "to make out", "to come to terms") and in the noun *verabredung* ("agreement", "contract"). Its etymological synonym that also has the root *ver* is *zuversicht* ("confidence", "faith", "deep conviction").

In German and French *konversion/conversion* means not only "transformation", but also "changing the faith". The affinity of German *treue* ("devotion", "faithfulness", "reliability", "rightness") with English *true* and *truth is also obvious*. It is important to point out that in both cases the uniformity and consistency are meant. The meaning of belief is clearly seen in French words *vertu* ("virtue", "honest", "chastity", understood as dignity, strength, quality), *vérité* ("truth", "verisimilitude", "sincerity", "trustworthiness") and English *veracity*, *veracious* ("telling the truth"), *verity* ("truth"). The multitude of various shades of belief and its various synonyms is analyzed in the next paragraph.

Expansion of the subject field of belief in German philosophy

Without limiting the philosophical and hermeneutic approaches to belief with the etymological analysis, we need to expand the subject field of belief. Untill the 20th century the study of belief was done in the light of religion and epistemology, but in the 20th century for the most part it became the subject of psychological researches. This fact, on the one hand, caused contraction and distortion of the essential description of belief, but on the other hand, the new philosophical concepts tightly connected to belief at the essential level were developed. Even at the level of everyday speech belief "has dissolved" in dozens of words that, directly or indirectly, reveal its primary description. Thus, for example, in English, belief has the meaning of 1) confession ("faith"), 2) reputation or name ("credit"), 3) acceptance ("credence"), 4) privacy ("confidence"), 5) promise, hope, responsibility ("trust"). Nowadays with such a variety of meanings of belief its original ontological characteristic is often limited to two notions: faith and belief (for example: Sidorov, 2005, 264). In the philosophical context belief has become poor and its existential and ontological essence needs restoration.

"To be" means *"to exist"*, *"to stand"*, *"to be present"* (See: Dictionary of Russian language, 1957, 159; Dal, 1989-1991, v.1, 147), but according to the Heidegger's style and logic of the hermeneutical interpretation in order to "be present" it is necessary to "be lost" (absent) and "be looked for", "to be required". Personal being in this light is a mystery, but this mystery does not means "keeping a secret", it means "the unknown" or "the unsolved" (See: Dictionary of Russian language, 1961, 452). The mystery is not cognized by the epistemological means, it is revealed as the center of experience changes its state. Slowly, with time a man finds what was lost and forgotten. In this state of forgetting that is understood as a loss of personal being, belief is born. Belief, taking intermediate position between forgetting and being, acquires the existence of being in connection with a man and his aspiration for the truth of being. M. Heidegger pointed out that ""to be" understood as "I am", i.e. as an "existential" means to dwell

in…, be confidential with…" (Heidegger, 2000, 54). For the German philosopher being and truth are merged together: to be means to be true and the trusting closeness with the truth is achieved through the personal formation that is reached by means of belief. The transition from forgetting to being ontologically means the restoration of the completeness of personal being. In Russian philosophy this transition is named by A.F. Losev as a phenomenon of *"self-recollection"* that is characterized as the complete transition to another state of being (Losev, 1990, 60, 62). Belief and *"self-recollection"* are connected with each other at the essential level. By recollecting himself a man restores what was lost. But under the influence of "forgetting" he does not know what he should aspire to and therefore acts intuitively, by instinct. In this case the only support and guidance is belief, with which a man becomes capable of seeking for and finding himself revealing the mystery of his personal being.

The mystery of personal being is revealed as vocation understood as a destination. (See: Dictionary of Russian language, 1959, 559). Here belief is a peculiar instrument of the dialogue of a man and the truth. At the beginning, belief wakes up attention and consciousness. Then it impels a man to listen and become capable of hearing the *call*. It is through belief a man becomes conscious of this *call* that always resounds and of the fact that it is meant for him. The *Call* is an appeal to, an invitation to come, to appear. And again belief as a response to the invitation plays the leading part: through belief a man finds the strength *to turn*, then to *turn around* and, at last, to *come back*. *Coming back* (returning) means "getting back to something that was interrupted" (See: Dictionary of Russian language, 1957, 188). And if such a returning is getting back of what was lost, then belief is this returning. To believe in yourself means to find yourself again, to believe – to get

back what was lost. Then to believe means *to return*. Etymologically rotation is the conversion and turning that means the eternal returning to the same subject or thinking. (See: Dictionary of Russian language, 1957, 293). Understanding of the essence of thinking by M. Heidegger in the spirit of the eternal returning of F. Nietzsche is the starting point of the hermeneutical interpretation of belief as an answer to the *call* of the truth, belief as a return, and belief as the search for one's own destiny, mission, vocation and ability (*"gift"*).

Let us try to deepen the understanding of the "eternal returning" by turning to the sources of Nietzsche's philosophy. Thus, the emphasis on eternity points to a connection with the category of time. Nevertheless, duration, uniqueness, irreversibility and continuity of this category do not prevent from reminding of temporality, perishableness, finiteness of being. A. Schopenhauer proposes to "renounce the time-form" to overcome the finiteness of the corporeal temporality of existence (Schopenhauer, 1992, 104). Etymologically the Russian word *vremya* ("time") comes from the Ancient Slavonic *vĕrtmen* ("turning") and the Ancient Indian root *vart* – "turning". And it is connected to "change" (in Russian: *smena*), "shift" (in Russian: *iz(s) meneniya*) (Tsyganenko, 1989, 72). Its Ancient Russian form was *veremya* that had a meaning close to "solstice", "repeated returning" and "eternal circulation" (Fasmer, 1996, 170-171). It is obvious, that etymologically *vremya* ("time") and *vera* ("belief") are related and this fact has a reasonable explanation: through belief something distant in time becomes unexpectedly close. Thus, *vera* ("belief") is the "compression" of *vremya* ("time"), reduction of temporal perspective up to taking the Future for the Present. But we must account for the fact that in Russian *iz(s)mena* means "a betrayal", "a disloyalty" (Dictionary of Russian language, 1957, 892) that in Russian means "infidelity, untruth" or literally "to break

faith", "to destroy belief". Thus, P.A. Florensky points out that "the power of forgetting is the power of all-devouring time" (Florensky, 1990, 18), and belief (in Russian: *vera*) is a factor of overcoming the power of time. Therefore the relationship of belief (*vera*) with time (*vremya*) is clear: time (*vremya*) is connected with periodic changes (in Russian – *vrashenie*; in English – "a turning", "a rotation", "a spin"), and belief (*vera*) is connected with the sudden transformation (in Russian – *prevrashenie*; in English – "a turning", "a converting", "a transform"). First of all, the transformation is a choice of right direction that, however, from any point of view will be looked on as a cardinal change and deviation from the periodical basis and sequence which are set by time. Belief as transformation is an interior change and return to the origin, genuineness, naturalness. "And yet time has no absolute existence, it is not a way or manner of existence of things, it is just the form in which we experience our existence and being of all things. Therefore, this knowledge is quite imperfect and limited to some phenomena". (Schopenhauer, 1992, 114). By calling belief as the "intuitive conviction" A. Schopenhauer stipulates its genesis by the fact that "for a moment time loses its power" (Schopenhauer, 1992, 127). In other words it is belief under the influence of which the time loses its power.

Belief is not "mad dream of a fanatic", but is a "personal and direct conviction" (Schopenhauer, 1992, 180). Thus, V.I. Dal defines conviction as obvious evidence that is impossible not to believe in. In Russian conviction is *ube(zh)denie* (cognate with the word *beda* – "a bad, a trouble, a misfortune"). *Ube(zh)denie*, according to "nestle method" of V.I. Dal, comes from *ubedit'* ("to persuade"), *posadit' v bedu* ("to get someone or something into trouble") (Dal, 1989-1991, v.4, 460). In our opinion *ube(zh)denie* is also connected to *ubezhishche* ("a refuge", "a cover") and *pribezhishche* ("a haven", "a shelter"). Belief as *ube(zh)denie* ("conviction") is eagerness to obtain a protection, a refuge, a haven and security by means of voluntary submission of thoughts, will and feelings to the truth.

In German philosophy there is a tendency to develop the existential and ontological problem of the truth. A. Schopenhauer's ideas of the will to live and release from finiteness and temporality had a great influence on F. Nietzsche who developed them in the doctrine of the eternal returning, will to power and superman. In his turn, F. Nietzsche had a decisive influence on the formation of fundamental ontology of M. Heidegger that, among others, includes problems of being and time that are looked on in the light of *Dasein*. The conclusions drawn by the German philosophers for the most part were anticipated by the Russian philosophers of the beginning of the 20th century who looked on belief not only as the first step to the truth, but also as a basis for achieving love. It is necessary to underline that "being of the truth" in Russian religious philosophy and "the truth of being" in German philosophy provide different interpretations of belief.

Expansion of the subject field of belief in Russian philosophy

The ontological understanding of love implies love as manifestation of being of the truth, as a personal and interpersonal phenomenon. To a man love reveals itself by means of belief. For N.O. Lossky personal love implies an "indissoluble ontological connection" (Lossky, 1992, 69). Through belief serving as such an existential connection one gets the "experience of communion" with the absolute completeness of life (Lossky, 1995, 262). For A.F. Losev "to love" means "to identify oneself with this subject and "revolve" around it in active peace of intelligentsia, as if it was you" (Losev, 1997, 151). In this case belief is a factor of self-identification of a person revealing the essence of a person and

a subject. P.A. Florensky's ontological theory of love that is based on such concepts as *edino-sushchie* (co-being in a sense of "connection", "communication", "union") (Lossky, 1992, 34-35) is also based on ontological belief. Here belief implies "co-existence" not only as coherence in time, but also as the unity of timeless essences. Belief contains an idea of pointing at moral connection between who believes and who is believed in (Florensky, 1990, 69). In this case the connection implying the unity is a true relationship of Love-Truth. Love-Truth is an attitude to the object and the object itself at the same time: "In love and only in love it is possible to understand the truth. And, on the contrary, the truth reveals itself in love" (Florensky, 1990, 74). The category Love-Truth used by the philosopher arises in a man from belief as a basis and support. For P.A. Florensky belief is a pillar of the truth and its (belief's) strengthening; due to reliance on belief, a man gets an opportunity to "survey" and "evaluate" Love-Truth reliably (Florensky, 1990, 3, 15).

Dialectics of the truth and belief has several important consequences for the ontology of belief that arise as a result of peculiar experience of the subject essence of the truth. A.F. Losev points out that "every nation and language, just as every citizen of that nation, experiences this subject differently, highlights differences depending on their interests and necessities" (Losev, 1990, 41-43). The following analysis, to some extent, is connected to the subtleties of understanding of the truth by the Greeks (*Ἀλήνεϊα*), the Russians (*Истина*), the Romans (*Veritas*) and the Jews (תמא *'Emet*) (Florensky, 1990, 16-22).

First of all, if the truth (Greek άλήνεϊα – from λήνοσ as "oblivion", "lethargy", "unconsciousness", "dream") is something unforgettable then belief is recollection, restoration, filling, awaking. In the "Philosophy of name" A.F. Losev puts the next question:

"Can we seriously think about self-forgetfulness without self-recollection and *self-consciousness*" (Losev, 1990, 60). The ontological conflict of an unforgettable truth and unconsciousness of present being can be clearly seen in that fact that a man "forgets" about himself and stops "taking care of himself" (Plato). By means of belief a man comes back to his sources, to his deepest self. Belief as *self-recollection* is supplemented and broadened with belief as *self-determination* (P.A. Florensky). In order to remember the truth, to restore the true within oneself, to awaken from the sleep of commonness, one needs to overcome all the false and the alien inside oneself. That is the exploit of belief: "for we need an effort, strain, self-denial, dropping off "the old Adam", when all given (natural, finite, familiar and conventional) attracts to itself" (Florensky, 1990, 60). So, the ontological truth is the unforgettable essence, and belief is a personal orientation to its own essence.

Secondly, if ontologically the truth is God, then ontologically belief is a man. "The notion of truth in the Russian understanding is "existent being" – "the living", "the breathing", i.e. something having essential attributes of life and existence. The Russians look at the truth as the living being" (Florensky, 1990, 17). The attitude towards the truth as if it were a person is a unique feature of Russian philosophy. It has deeply-rooted belief and devotion of Russian people. Dialectics of belief and the truth simultaneously reveals and grounds such regularity, since the axiom of the divinity of the truth implies the axiom of the humaneness of belief. P.A. Florensky, A.F. Losev and S.N. Bulgakov use such notions as "hypostasis", "essence" that fall into one category of their philosophy – "the living union of three hypostasis" or the *Name*. The *Name* differs from the word by the personal nature of the unique meaning inherent to it. The truth is perceived personally only if it is embodied in the

Name. Just like the word initiated with the true meaning is the name, a man is also initiated and induced by belief to aspire to the truth. It is belief that determines the meaning and aim of human being, so-called ""like" presence", idea (Losev, 1990, 46). Thus, the divine essence is the truth, and the human essence is belief.

Thirdly, if the truth is the spoken and unquestionable law, then belief is the silent and obedient to follow this law. P.A. Florensky when researching the origin of the Latin word *veritas* ("truth") grounds its religious, moral and legal meaning: *veritas* was used as Justice, rightness (Cicerone) and was an analogue of Russian *вера*, *верить*; the German *warhen* – to defend, to save; the Sanskrit *vra ta m* – a vow, a sacred action. Referring to the author of the Latin etymological dictionary (A. Suvorov) the philosopher points to the Russian words *govor* ("speech"), *rech* ("words") as expressing the origin meaning of the root var. It is obvious that belief and truth are connected through the existential dialogue, since if the truth did not exist, there would not be belief. The reason for the emergence of belief is the existence of the truth. Thus, the essence and ontological nature of belief and the truth reveal themselves through the existential dialogue: the truth speaks and belief listens, the truth asserts and belief obeys, the truth loves and belief serves.

Fourthly, if the truth is perceived as reliability, authenticity, immutability, then belief involves the active overcoming of doubts, the search and the inner choice. If the truth is an ideal image, a way of being, then belief is a pillar (inner support) and establishment of such perfect reality expressed in the movement, formation, possibility and actualization. Ontology of belief tightly connected to the category of the truth is presented as the *self-identification* of a person in the light of the truth. Belief in truth does not deny being of a present man, but helps to correct the present being with regard to the truth. So belief in another person contributes to drawing a boundary-line of his own "self". In this case belief is not the truth as a self-sufficient image, but a symbol bearing the meaning and serving to the image through its revealing. Thus, the truth is an authentic image, and belief as an inner pillar and establishment of this image is a symbol.

The symbolism of belief is a central part of philosophy of the name. Ontologically belief as a symbol in philosophy of the name has a number of aspects: as an ability of things to come out of themselves and be in others and, therefore, to express themselves through others; as discovering and knowledge of the meaning; as a "ladder between two worlds"; as the *recall*; as a timeless and eternal traveling companion "I"; as a world connection (Bulgakov, 1998, 106, 108, 111, 116, 144, 273). But the existential and ontological approach to the symbolism of belief also manifests itself in the original trinity that provides completeness, stability and formation of person. In our opinion, in this case it is also possible to talk about three hypostasis, where the first one (*"image"*) – similar to the eternal pronoun "I" and the spiritual Truth – is a soul; the second one (*"likeness"*) – similar to the Λóγoζ-Christ – is a man; the third one (*"unity"*) – similar to the copula "to be" (predicate's function) and The Spirit – is belief. The existential and ontological symbolism of belief lies in revealing of the sense of life and destination. By means of belief the soul awakens from the constraining pointlessness of corporeality and turns into a person. The transformation accomplished by belief expresses its existential formula of philosophy of the name: *"I am"*. In this respect belief is a fundamental and existential category, an inalienable companion of the self-seeking soul. "I am" is a stable unity of the eternal, infinite and pure hypostasis of a single essence – hypostasis of the image and hypostasis of the unity (Compare: Bulgakov, 1998, 139-140).

Particular cases of hypostasis of the likeness can be presented as: "I (am) a good (man)", "I (am) a Russian (man)" "I (am) a scientist" and so on. Integrity of soul (*"image"*), belief (*"unity"*) and that transcendental-immanent ideal (*"likeness"*) that a man heads for and that he, finally, becomes like, make up a person.

The originality of this interpretation of the formula *"I am..."* takes place due to the ontological understanding of belief that turns into the foundation and the main instrument of the formation of a person. The epistemological separation of the world into a subject and an object is overcome by the ontology of belief: belief is an existential nodal point, where the existence (personal being) and being, as well as a man and the world coexist. The "world" can be understood not only as the psychophysical reality, but also as a metaphysical one. The ontologically-understood belief, residing in a word, a man, existence as the truth, love and formation respectively, is not the blind will of A. Schopenhauer and not the temporary presence of M. Heidegger, but the personal aspiration to being of the Truth, Love, and the Absolute Completeness. The Russian philosophers understood the problem of the human existence in the world in a peculiar way. For example, V.S. Solovyev anticipated the ideas expressed in the Heidegger's treatise *"Being and Time". "The* existence is not being, but all being belongs to the existence in the same sense as we should say, for example, that a man (The Thinking Existence) is not thinking, but thinking belongs to a man*"* (Solovyev, 1990, 700). In this sense, an existential formula, *"I am..."* consists of the existence (*"I"*) and being (*"am"*), and under *"am"* V.S. Solovyev understands all actual and possible ways of being of the existence: thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. (Solovyev, 1990, 699). The idea of personality in relation to belief was also developed by a Kazan philosopher V.I. Nesmelov who was contemporary to V.S. Solovyev, but he

did it in a different direction, i. e. he reduced all the problems of philosophy to the doctrine of a man.

V.I. Nesmelov brought in an interesting example, by means of which he disclosed the alternatives of existential belief. Galileo as a religious-minded man considered the Earth as a central point of the world history. As a member of the Catholic Church he looked at it as a physical center of the Universe. As a naturalist, he considered it scientifically as one of the satellites of the Sun (Nesmelov, 1992, 14). These views on the world taken as a starting point of the person's formation are nothing else but types of existential belief. Based on the philosophical position of the Kazan thinker, personal aspirations can be of the psychological (doxy) or the metaphysical (belief) nature. V.I. Nesmelov defined belief as the intuitive cognizing of God's being and God's presence in the world, and faith – as a rationally comprehended and religious experience, freely adopted from someone else, and also as cognizing of nature and God's attitude to the world (Nesmelov, 1992, 69). Although in both cases such aspirations have religious and cognitive nature, these definitions are extremely important for the hierarchization of the levels of existential belief. Of course, there is always a temptation to divide humanity into The East and The West, belief and faith, but the metaphysical and psychological orientation can be attributed equally to the representatives of different nations, religions and cultures. Undoubtedly, the nature of belief is personal, and consequently its mechanisms are unique in each case. Belief as a personal aspiration to the Truth, Love and Absolute Completeness as a value relationship between an individual and Another one, as a sincere openness and willingness to quality transformation is always individual and depends on the consciousness of personality and its integrity. Following the logic of V.I. Nesmelov,

we can conclude that hierarchization of existential belief should be based on the levels of understanding of the real perfection of one's self. When such perfection is directly experienced, the personal aspiration to the unconditional and transcendent being of Self-Existent personality arises inevitably in the mind of a man by the very nature of his personality (Nesmelov, 1992, 65).

Conclusion

The epistemologisation of belief, transfer of this notion into the framework of the theory of knowledge caused the situation, when belief is not an actual subject of the study anymore and seems to be ontologically inessential. The weakening of the hermeneutical layers in the modern culture displaces the possible content of belief presenting itself among other modi of cognition as some empty phenomenon. Thus, in the epistemological perspective of modernity belief is presented as technical (i.e. subsidiary) characteristic of cognition.

Corresponding to the positivist realism the classical schemes of perception of the world do not propose the ontological consideration of belief. Belief in this interpretation turns out to be a totally dependent formation, instrumental epiphenomenon that in the religious aspect fixes the image of God and in the epistemological aspect – the form or the level of cognition. Such an interpretation leads to the fact that the analysis of belief and conclusions mentioned above turn out to be dependent on religious affiliation, or on understanding of the structure, forms and genesis of cognition. The language stores the meanings displaced from discourse. It is clearly seen in the contexts of meanings of the verbs that are substantiated by the notion of belief. Such a belief turns out to be an existentially important phenomenon, as it is connected to the personal being. The predicates that make belief concrete are formation, intuition, returning,

recollecting etc. They are not only special modi of belief, but also the openings of the ontological states of both the notion of belief and a man. The ontologization of belief, its transfer to the dimension of human being becomes possible and natural due to such notions as *"will to live"* (A. Schopenhauer), *"returning"* (F. Nietzsche), *"Dasien"* (M. Heidegger), *"Pillar of the truth"* (P.A. Florensky), *"Intelligentsia"* (A.F. Losev) and so on. Another dimension of the meaning of belief is fixed linguistically when a man rejects the idea of domination. Belief as listening, belief as obedience, and belief as serving implies the ways of organization of understanding, which are opposite to the individual activism and self-will. Besides, ontologization of belief implies one's own personal life and destroys classic epistemic assumptions that imply exception and reduction of belief as the existential-ontological phenomenon.

The dissatisfaction with the absolutization of the technical interpretations of belief is manifested in the actualization of the problem of the truth of being. A wide variety and incomparability of the possible interpretations of the "attendant" phenomena "concealing" belief make the classical approach to belief weakly heuristical. Belief can be of different kind (in God, in good Future, in one's strengths), but the ontology of belief bringing up the question of its essence sets all these differences aside and focuses on belief as it is.

The cross examination of the achievements of German and Russian philosophy allows to have a fresh look at belief and its importance in the formation of a person. In this case setting the question about the connection of belief to the value and meaning of human existence has a fundamental importance. The reorientation of the philosophical interest from the abstract absolute (*"Nothing"*) to a concrete person, focusing on the consciousness of a person, his destiny is the most

important step towards the ontology of belief. It is in this aspect that we allow the use of the category of belief.

These directions of the study of the truth in its ontological aspect need the substantiation by means of the *phenomenological* (levels of being of the truth), *existential* (experience of belief), *personalistic* (belief as a basis of the formation of a person) and *metaphysical* (belief as returning to a myth) approaches.

References

Ban Gu, "Bo Hu Tong", in Old Chinese Philosophy: The era of the Han, trans. by T. V. Stepunina (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 225-252, in Russian.

Big German-Russian dictionary: in 3 volumes, compilation of E. I. Leping, N. P. Strakhova, N. I. Filicheva (Moscow: Ruskiy Yazyk, 1997), v. 2, in Russian.

S. N. Bulgakov, *Philosophy of the Name* (Saint-Petersburg: Nauka, 1998), in Russian.

V. I. Dal, *Dictionary of the Russian Language: in 4 volumes* (Moscow: Ruskiy Yazyk, 1989-1991), in Russian.

Dictionary of Russian language: in 4 volumes, edit. of A. P. Yevgeniev (Moscow: State Publishing House of Foreign and National Dictionaries, 1957), v. 1, in Russian.

Dictionary of Russian language: in 4 volumes, edit. of V. V. Rozanov, I. I. Matveev (Moscow: State Publishing House of Foreign and National Dictionaries, 1959), v. 3, in Russian.

Dictionary of Russian language: in 4 volumes, edit. of L. L. Kutin, V. V. Zolikov (Moscow: State Publishing House of Foreign and National Dictionaries, 1961), v. 4, in Russian.

I. H. Dvoretskiy, *Latin-Russian Dictionary* (Moscow: Ruskiy Yazyk, 1996), in Russian.

V. E. Eremeev, *Symbols and numbers of "The Book of Changes"* (Moscow: Ladomir, 2005), in Russian.

M. Fasmer, *Etymological Dictionary of Russian language: in 4 volumes*, trans. and comm. by O. N. Trubachev, edit. and intr. of B. A. Larin (Saint-Petersburg: Terra-Azbuka, 1996), v. 1, in Russian.

P. A. Florensky, *Staff and confirmation of the Truth: Experience of orthodox theodicy* (Moscow: Pravda, 1990), v. 1 (I), in Russian.

L. Y. Golub, O. U. Drugova, P. Y. Golub, *Popular Dictionary of Buddhism and isms related to it* (Moscow: Chroniker, 2003), in Russian.

T. P. Grigorieva, *Dao and Logos (meeting of cultures)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), in Russian.

M. Heidegger, *Thesis about the base. Articles and Fragments*, trans. and afterword of O. A. Koval, preface of E. Y. Sivertseva (Saint Petersburg: Laboratory of metaphysical studies of philosophical Department of SPSU, Aletheia, 2000), in Russian.

D. Ikeda, *Believe in man: a letter of Buddhist teacher Nicherena Dayshonina* (Saint-Petersburg: Petersburg Oriental Studies, 2004), in Russian.

Japanese-Russian dictionary of paronyms, compil. of N. D. Neverova, R. B. Nozdryov, T. A. Rozanov, T. I. Tarasova (Moscow: Ruskiy Yazyk, 2000), in Russian.

V. A. Kochergina, *Sanskrit-Russian dictionary*, edit. by V. I. Kalyanov (Moscow: Ruskiy Yazyk, 1987), in Russian.

Lao-Tzu, *Book on the Way and Virtue (Dao De Jing)*, compil., trans., foreword., comments. of I. I. Semenenko (Moscow: Terra-Book World, 2008), in Russian.

A. F. Losev, "Philosophy of the name", in *Early works* (Moscow: Pravda, 1990), 24-192, in Russian.

A. F. Losev, *The Name. Selected works, translations, interviews, researches, archival materials*, compil. and edit. of A. A. Taho-Godi (Saint-Petersburg: Aletheia, 1997), in Russian.

N. O. Lossky, *Teaching on reincarnation. Intuitionism* (Moscow: Progress, VIA, 1992), in Russian.

N. O. Lossky, *Sensual, intellectual and mystical intuition* (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), in Russian.

V. V. Melikov, *Introduction to textual criticism of traditional cultures (on the example of Bhagavad-Gita and other Indian texts)* (Moscow: Russian State Humanitarian University, 1999), in Russian.

M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: University Press, 1899).

V. I. Nesmelov, *Belief and knowledge from an epistemological standpoint: reprint of 1913 edition* (Kazan: MP Vernissage, 1992). in Russian.

Patrul Rinpoche, *The words of my perfect teacher*, trans. by Padmakara Translation Group with a foreword by the Dalai Lama and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998).

Plato, *The State. The Laws. The Politics*, trans. and foreword of E. I. Temnova (Moscow: Ideya, 1998), in Russian.

Prabhupada A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, *Bhagavad-Gita as it is* (Moscow: BBT, 2007), in Russian.

A. Schopenhauer, *Selected works*, compil. and comm. of I. S. Narsky (Moscow: Prosveshenie, 1992), in Russian.

S. A. Sidorov, *Buddhism: history, canons, culture* (Moscow: Design. Information. Cartography: Astrel: AST, 2005), in Russian.

V. S. Solovyev, *Collected Works: 2 volumes* (Moscow: Mysl, 1990), in Russian.

Treatise on the awakening of faith in the Mahayana (Mahayana Shraddhotpada Shastra by Da Cheng Qi Xin Lun), trans., foreword and comm. by E. A. Torchinov (Saint-Petersburg: Bukovsky's Publishing House, 1997), in Russian.

G. P. Tsyganenko, *Etymological Dictionary of Russian Language* (Kiev: Rad. Shk., 1989), in Russian.

A. D. Weisman, *Greek-Russian dictionary (reprint of V-th edition 1899)* (Moscow: Greco-Roman labyrinth of Y. A. Shichalina, 1991), in Russian.

JISHOP kanji dictionary, electronic resource V. Smolensky (Software: Ver. 5.3, 2010), http://www.jishop-software.com/.

Вера: онтология и этимология

Р.К. Омельчук

*Восточно-Сибирская государственная
академия образования
Россия 664011, Иркутск, Нижняя набережная, 6*

Произведен этимологический и герменевтический анализ веры. Показано различие гносеологического и онтологического подходов к вере на примере ярких представителей русской (П.А. Флоренский, С.Н. Булгаков, А.Ф. Лосев, Н.О. Лосский) и немецкой (А. Шопенгауэр, Ф. Ницше, М. Хайдеггер) философии. Проведены параллели между философским понятийным аппаратом и этимологическими особенностями в понимании веры различными культурными традициями.

Ключевые слова: онтология веры; этимология; сущность веры; человек; истина бытия.