ABSTRACT. This article is devoted not only to Losev’s philosophical works, but also to his fiction, which he created during 1930s and 1940s. Losev’s eight books of the 1920s (his “octateuch”) combine into a single whole that amounts to his philosophy of life and history depicted in expressive images. At the same time Losev’s “octateuch” strikes one as having been written at a single sitting and in a single style, in a genre that can be identified as the “philosophical novel” having as much right as Spengler’s opus to be called an “intellectual novel.” In his prose of the 1930s and 1940s Losev tries with artistic methods to resolve the philosophical problems which he raised in his works of the 1920s. Losev’s “octateuch” and his fiction are directed against those contemporary materialists who seek to embody Plato’s Republic, whom he christens “soil-less nihilist idealist utopians.” All of this leads to the conclusion that Losev’s intellectual novel belongs to a definite and more specific subgenre. It is undoubtedly an anti-utopia, full of the grotesque. In addition to its scientific and social orientation, Losev’s anti-utopia is also religious in nature. Thus Losev not only depicts the real consequences of utopian dreams, but also turns to the “life of the artist,” which is far from any technological or social utopias but is filled with another, no less terrifying or nihilistic utopia: that of the non-religious existence of the human person. Losev preserved his anti-utopian and anti-nihilist views through his late period (1950s–1980s), despite the care he took not to cross Soviet censorship. Losev’s anti-utopia is the kind of Christian realism to which he appealed throughout his life.

KEY WORDS: Christian anti-utopia, intellectual novel, materialistic utopia, philosophical fiction, philosophy of history, philosophy of life, Russian philosophy

In the 1930s and 1940s A.F. Losev worked extensively in a genre that is unusual for such a born philosopher, that of fiction (see Takho-Godi, 1999). Analyzing his stories and novellas of this period one notes a striking pattern. Losev’s protagonists are always subject to suffering and tragedy, they are threatened by separation, sudden death, violence, madness, prison camp, in a word, all conceivable and inconceivable nightmares. One is led to ask why this is so.

Of course one may explain this pattern with a biographical interpretation. In 1930 Losev was arrested for making additions to his

book *Dialektika mifa* (The Dialectic of Myth) after it had been approved by the censor. After seventeen months of imprisonment he was transferred to a camp for the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. The conditions in the camp were such that, as Losev wrote to his wife, “many of us recall Butyrki [the notorious Moscow holding prison] with nostalgia” (Losev, 1993b: 391). Although he had “not the slightest chance of writing” nor even of “noting the simple scheme of a story,” Losev thought through the plot of his stories. In a letter to his wife from 30 June 1932 Losev admitted to being tormented “by the irresistible need to write” (Losev, 1993b: 410). After being transferred to the status of hired worker at the camp in December 1932, Losev composed a series of stories and novellas, and he continued to write after release from the camp. He wrote another wave of stories after another catastrophe in his life – the destruction of his home and library in the first months of World War Two. It is therefore not surprising that tragic or nightmarish plots predominate in his stories, since their author, as he wrote in his letters from camp, felt that his soul was “horrified [. . .] and throbbing in nightmares” (Losev, 1993b: 392). It seems quite obvious that this lifelong nightmare simply found its dénouement in literary work.

However, this purely biographical explanation cannot be considered exhaustive. There is another explanation that rests on a philosophical and literary basis. Losev’s stories and novellas fall into two interrelated groups. The works of one group (the story *Mne bylo devjatnadcat’ let* [I Was Nineteen], the novellas *Trio Chaikovskogo* [Tchaikovsky’s Trio], *Meteor*, *Vstrecha* [Meeting], and the novel *Zhenshchina-Myslitel’* [The Woman Thinker]) are connected by a common plot. The protagonist is a passionate aficionado of music and falls under the spell of a stunning singer or pianist. Losev studies his characters’ psychology through music because “music is the most intimate and most appropriate expression of the element of emotional life” (Losev, 1995: 480). Thanks to music Losev discovers that “everything simple and clear in emotional experience is linked by profound mystical roots to the World Soul which beats in each small human person,” while “our hatred, evil and ugly, suddenly conceals within it infernal possibilities and infernal past” (Losev, 1995: 318).