

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE THROUGH ART IN VIACHESLAV IVANOV

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Our task in this article is to establish 1) who is the subject of self-transcendence, 2) what Ivanov means by self-transcendence, and 3) how art functions in this process of self-transcendence. For this task we shall compare Ivanov with Carl Jung, drawing parallels and especially differences between the two, because Jung provides some important scientific terms, backed by his research, which help us to grasp better what Ivanov asserts as a poet-philosopher.

For Ivanov, art in general and poetry in particular work as the most sublime means for expressing what hovers on the edge of the inexpressible, namely the mystery of the human person. For “the only task, and the only subject matter for every art, is Man, not Man’s profit, but Man’s mystery”.¹

Ivanov acutely feels that the human personality is threatened in the contemporary world. Science has lost sight of the human self as the constant element in the flow of consciousness.² The humanities have also failed to protect the human person, because individuality in contemporary culture is in danger of being “swallowed up by the Scylla of sociology or the Charybdis of psychology”.³

Ivanov, however, set forth an ontological understanding of the human personality that bears some resemblance to psychoanalysis, but goes far beyond its immanentism and offers a religious corrective to it. This article does not deal with the issue of whether Ivanov anti-

¹ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “O sekte i dogmate, in *Sobranie socinenij*. T. I-IV. Bruxelles 1971-1987 - II, 614.

² Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Ty esi” - III, 263.

³ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “The Crisis of Individualism” in *A Revolution of the Spirit. Crisis of Value in Russia, 1890-1924*, Ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal & Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, New York, Fordham University Press, 1990, p. 171.

cipated or followed some of Jung's findings, or developed his doctrine independently from them; it rather depicts Ivanov's doctrine against the background of Jungian discoveries.

Psychoanalysis sees the human personality as a complex phenomenon, in which it distinguishes the ego, i. e. "the conscious personality", and the unconscious in the soul.⁴ Psychoanalysis internalizes the human activity. In dreams, the circumstances and characters of real life are interpreted as personifications of the individual's inner drives. Biography turns into an inward state of the soul; external events, one's words and acts, together with dreams, point to the invisible life of one's soul, which often remains hidden from one's consciousness in the depth of the unconscious.

Jungian concept of Self

Carl Jung enriched our understanding of personality with his concept of the "Self", which is "the nuclear atom" in our psychic system, "the inventor, organizer and source of dream images", which means the center of our unconscious substructure.⁵ Jung's term *self* designates the "total personality", which embraces both the center of self-consciousness (the *Ego*) and the realm of the unconscious. Thus, the *Ego* is subordinate to the Self and is related to it as a part to the whole.⁶ In this field of the unconscious, Jung further distinguishes the archetypes of the *Anima*, (the feminine) in man, and the *Animus* (the masculine) in woman, as well as the *Shadow*, which personifies the dark moral side of the soul.

Von Franz, Jung's follower, further defines this Jungian Self as an inner guiding principle, which differs from the *Ego* (the conscious personality), regulates it, and brings about its expansion and maturity. This greater element of the psyche, however, emerges first as merely an inborn potentiality. How far it evolves depends on the ego's willingness to hearken to the Self's messages.⁷

⁴ C. C. Jung, *Aion. Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Tran. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1959, p. 5.

⁵ M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation", in *Man and His Symbols*. Ed. Carl G. Jung, NYC: Dell Publishing Co, 1968, pp. 161-162.

⁶ C. G. Jung, *Aion*, cit., p. 5.

⁷ M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation", cit., p. 163.

Jungian psychoanalysis thus suggests, but not without ambiguity, that there is an inner dialogue between the Self and the Ego. On the one hand, the Self can be grasped only through the investigation of one's own dreams, and the communication takes the form of one-sided messages that the subconscious (with the Self as its center) sends to the Ego through the medium of dreams. On the other hand, man has always been aware of such an inner center, or hidden person within an individual, and called it either one's inner self, or one's inner companion. Summing up Jungian studies of the matter, Von Franz submits that the ancient Greeks called this inner companion man's inner daimon. The Egyptians knew it as the Ba-soul, and the Romans revered it as the "genius" innate in each individual. The Naskapi Indians call it plainly "an inner companion", whom each Indian knows, calls "my friend", or *Mista'peo*, which means "Great Man". This "Great Man" dwells in the heart and is immortal. The "Great Man", or "inner companion" is not morally neutral. He is the guardian of a person's goodness. Lies and cruelty drive the Great Man away from one's soul, whereas generosity and love of one's neighbors and of animals attract him and give him life.⁸

This Great Man exists both within and without. Just as the Self transcends our space-time dimension, and is transcendental, i. e., abides in every person, so the Great man is simultaneously omnipresent, and manifests himself as a symbolic human being who embraces and contains the whole cosmos. It is no wonder that this figure of a Cosmic Man appears in many myths and religious teachings as the basic principle of the whole world, the beginning and the final goal of all life - of the whole creation.⁹ He appears as Adam, as the Persian Gayomart ("depicted as a huge figure emitting light"),¹⁰ or as the Hindu Purusha. The ancient Chinese believed that before creation of the world there was a colossal divine man called *P'an Ku* who gave heaven and earth their form.¹¹

Whereas in the East the Cosmic Man has been identified with Krishna or Buddha, in our Western civilization, according to Jung,

⁸ Ibidem, p. 162.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 215.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 214.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 211.

he is identified with Christ.¹² Jung submits that Christ emerges as a symbolic personification of the Self and exemplifies the archetype of wholeness in our self.¹³ He is that divine, glorified Man, “after whose likeness our inner man is made, invisible, incorporeal, incorrupt, and immortal”, quotes Jung from Origen.¹⁴ Christ exemplifies this archetype, because, in Jung’s words, He occupies the “center of the Christian mandala”, because He is “the still living myth of our culture... our culture hero”. Therefore “He is in us and we in Him”.¹⁵

Ivanov’s Concept of the Dialogical Self

We should remember, however, that for Jung this statement has nothing to do with religion, it is derived purely from “the empirical findings of psychology”.¹⁶ But these findings acquire a totally different meaning if they are placed within the perspective of Vladimir Solovyov’s doctrine of divine humanity (*bogochelovechestvo*), shared and developed by Ivanov in his theory of Symbolist aesthetics. In Solovyov’s doctrine, Godmanhood (divine humanity) is the constitutive principle of natural evolution and human history. It is the paradigm that explains the human world and gives it ultimate meaning. In Ivanov’s thought, neither Man nor God stand alone. They “belong to the same vertical line”.¹⁷ Religion, therefore, is not a passing historical occurrence, however prolonged, but an archetypal property of human nature, and is not merely to be found externally, in the phenomena of religious manifestations in history, but also within the human person him/herself. There it is found in the form of that inner dialogue which we know as prayer.

Thus, Ivanov does not merely anticipate or duplicate Jung. For Jung, archetypes belong completely to the realm of the unconscious, the individual unconscious in the soul, and the collective unconscious, detected in culture (of which mythology and religion are

¹² Ibidem, p. 215.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 208.

¹⁴ C. G. Jung, *Aion*, cit., pp. 37-38.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 36.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 40.

¹⁷ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “O sekte i dogmate” – II, 614.

essential parts). There can be no true dialogue between *the Self* (who may be exemplified by Christ in Western culture, but is not necessarily tied to him) and *the Ego* in man, as there can be no dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious. For Jung, the human being helplessly needs a psychoanalyst to become aware of the working of archetypes that dwell in the unconscious and come to the surface of consciousness exclusively through psychoanalysis. In a way, there is no room for inner dialogue, and therefore no room for religion because, in the final account, the latter operates on the rational level, and itself needs psychoanalytical interpretation.

Ivanov, on the contrary, emphasizes the dialogical nature of the personality. Man is split inwardly into “I and Thou”, dwelling within each of us in latent or actual exchange. This division within constitutes the inner dimension of man, or man’s primary mystery, revealed in religious, especially mystical, experience. The latter amounts to the internal discovery of the “Other” in oneself. Religion is exemplified in ecstasy; at its core religion is nothing but “divine possession”, that is “the filling of the human soul with the deity that enters the soul, and takes possession of it”. The inner self, split into “I” and “Thou”, is the primordial structure of the personality, and is revealed in religious experience when the human being addresses the primordial “Thou” within himself. “Religion is born from the “Thou”, which man says within himself to the One, whom he senses within himself as the existing One, be it either a transient visitor or an abiding master”.¹⁸ In prayer I address this Other, who has both a human and a divine image. It has a human image, because otherwise I would not be able to address it, and it is divine, because otherwise I would not need to address it.

Ivanov establishes this archetype as the inward Other, or inward interlocutor of the human ‘I’ in an article which he published in two versions, the first, “Ty Esi” (Thou Art), in 1907, and the second, “Ty esi – Anima”, in 1935. The supreme divine-human archetype dwelling in man inwardly is, for Ivanov as it is for Jung, Jesus Christ. Whereas for Jung, however, the Christ figure is culturally conditioned, for Ivanov it is the adequate exemplification of the universal archetype of *imago dei*, who is the “divine man” that constitutes the very foundation of human nature. The human person not only ad-

¹⁸ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Ty esi” – III, 264.

dresses God within him/herself but address Him as his/her Father, in his/her capacity as a child of God. Christ as the Son, therefore, takes the place of the archetypal divine child within the human being.¹⁹

Like Jung, Ivanov finds in the ancient myths the same divine-human paradigm that forms our inner self. Thus, the birth of Dionysus²⁰ and the resurrection of Osiris in Greek and Egyptian mythology are the cultural archetypes of the emergence of the divine man in the depth of the human soul, which “correspond, in the teaching of Meister Eckhart, to the mystical moment of the birth of Christ in the self”.²¹ Mythological images of Eros, for whom Psyche the wife and Maenad the mother long, or whose torn out limbs Isis the widow gathers, are the mythological expressions of the same primordial archetype of the Son, which the human being recognizes within himself by virtue of platonic recollection.²² Since “the Son and the Father are one”, and we pray to the Son and through the Son to the Father, Ivanov identifies this “thou” in me with Atman and the “Self” in the teaching of the Brahmins, or with the “heavens” and the “Father in heaven” of Christian mysticism. The feminine aspect of the soul, – the Anima or the Psyche of Greek mythology, – who wanders in the periphery of our consciousness, finds this self in the hypostasis of the Son.²³

Christ has become the archetypal inner center of human individuality because of His complete descent into the ontological nothingness, which is what man is. “Compared with other religions, Christianity is the most radical affirmation of the divine *kenosis* (condescension) to the point of the interment of the God-Man in the womb of the earth. ‘Who... came down from heaven, and was incarnate.., and became man... and suffered and was buried; and rose again, and ascended’ – as Ivanov quotes from the Creed. “Making oneself nothing (“self-emptying”, cf. Phil. 2:7) to the point of standing alone in the face of *nothing*, and feeling oneself, for a brief moment, equal to eternity, totally non-divine because abandoned by the Father, – such is the price of the saving resurrection and victorious return to the

¹⁹ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Drevnii Uzhas” (*Terror Antiquus*) – III, 108.

²⁰ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Nietzsche & Dionys” – I, 719.

²¹ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Ty esi” – III, 265.

²² Ibidem, III, 265; also “Poet i Chern” – I, 713; also “Drevnii Uzhas” – III, 92.

²³ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Ty esi” – III, 265-266; also “Drevnii Uzhas” – III, 108.

Spring of being". Ivanov emphasized the total compatibility of the *kenotic* descent of the Word becoming Flesh and the kenoticism of the human condition. Both the incarnate Word and Man, created by this Word, submit to this supreme law of becoming, which Ivanov finds in the testimony of the Gospel: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds"(Jn.12: 24).²⁴

The God-man Jesus who died and rose again has also emerged as the archetypal "Thou" of the human soul. The inner dialogue, the communion between I and Thou, belongs to the very substance of a person's being. In Ivanov's religious realism, Jungian archetypes appear not in a phenomenological but in an ontological light. Detected in the mythologies of different cultures, they point to fundamental patterns of the human soul. The latter is a microcosm, from which our mind has access to the real ontological drama of the macrocosm.²⁵ The connection between the two, which our mind grasps when it ascends *a realibus ad realiora* (from the real to the more real), or descends *ab exterioribus ad interiora* (from the outward to the inward things),²⁶ displays the ontology of the relations between God and creation both within and without. Our ego's falling away from the inner Son, which takes place in the microcosm of the individual human soul, corresponds to the macrocosmic fall of Satan away from God.

In the tradition of Russian philosophical poetry (Tyutchev, Solovyov), Ivanov sets forth his religious anthropology in his poem "Man". Here he draws a diagram of the human soul, which is the intersection of vertical and horizontal dialogical relations: with God and with his fellow-man. The three parts of the poem deal with these two dialogical coordinates. The first, "I AM", set forth in the first part of the poem under the same subtitle (I AM), establishes the understanding of the human person as the inner self, the center of self-consciousness, of the Self not in the Jungian but in the Fichtean sense as the beginning and the end of intelligent, self-conscious, personal

²⁴ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Discorso Sugli Orientamenti dello spirito moderno", "Raz-myshleniia ob ustanovkah sovremennogo duha," ("Reflections on premises of contemporary spirit (mind)," III, 462, 465.

²⁵ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Drevnii Uzhas" – III, 108.

²⁶ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Ideia nepriyatiya mira" ("The Idea of the Renouncement of the World"), III, 84.

existence. In its fullness, “I-AM-self-consciousness” belongs to God alone, who confers it freely on each person as an heir to His throne of eternal existence. But this self-designation can be assumed without peril only in conjunction with the recognition of God the Father as the first and true Bearer of this name “I AM”. One can harmlessly name oneself “I AM” only through acknowledging first that “My Father and I are one” (cf. Jn. 10:30). “The self-affirmation of Man as son in the Father provides him with life and liberty”.²⁷

On the contrary, when the first created person, Lucifer, pronounced “I Am” without acknowledging his unity with the One “I am”, – who as his Father, created him, – he found “the autocratic bondage of the closed ‘I’”. (Zamknutogo Ya samoderzhavnuyu nevolu).²⁸ The latter is also archetypal. The Luciferian prison of “the autocratic bondage of the closed ‘I’” awaits each one of us who confesses his own existence as independent and self-sufficient in its self-isolation, as exclusively “I and my property” in Stirner’s sense.²⁹ But this wound of fallenness can be cured. Hence Ivanov’s soteriological agenda: “Transcend oneself through love”, which he borrows from Augustine and puts into practice as an artist. In his interpretation of art’s mission, art, which was theurgic in Solovyov, acquires soteriological features in Ivanov, though he denies that art alone can save.

Transcende te ipsum through Art

Ivanov starts as a humble disciple of Nietzsche, who presented art as “the truly metaphysical activity of man”.³⁰ Art, according to Nietzsche, developed within the duality of the Apollonian principle of form and Dionysian principle of the ecstatic transcendence of form, exemplified in such nonimagistic art as music.³¹ But art’s deepest root reaches beyond the rational dictates of consciousness (the Socratic principle) into the realm of unconscious inspiration where only ecs-

²⁷ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Drevnii Uzhas” – III, 109.

²⁸ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Chelovek” – III, 202.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 204; “Nietzsche & Dionysis” – I, 723.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, Vintage Books (Random House), 1967, p. 22.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 33.

tasies lead the way. Even Apollo, “the deity of light”, in which we are able to see clearly the form of things, is also “a ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy”.³² Thus, art is metaphysical because it defies the realm of dull phenomena, taking us away into the realm of thing-in-itself.³³

At this point Nietzsche opposes the rich vigor of life, which is the source, inspiration and subject matter of art, to what he considers to be Christianity (but is in fact its Kantian reduction to rationalized morality).³⁴ Since for Nietzsche, life and art side with the inspirational and metaphysical, and what he calls Christianity – with rationalistic morality, hostile to life and art, he chooses to side with the aesthetic (and for him anti-Christian) principle, which he calls “Dionysian”.³⁵ The ‘Dionysian’, in his sense, seems to operate as a methodological, rather than religious, category in his cultural analysis.

Art is not merely “free”, but also “liberating”.³⁶ Nietzsche presents his “Dionysian”, ecstatic-aesthetic principle in soteriological terms: a new earth and a new heaven make their presence felt through it.

Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature, which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Freely, earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey of the rocks and desert approach... Transform Beethoven’s “Hymn to Joy” into a painting; let your imagination conceive the multitudes bowing to the dust, awestruck – then you will approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or “impudent convention” have fixed between man and man are broken.³⁷

Referring to the great achievements of Romantic art, and alluding to Schiller’s hymn “An die Freude”, used by Beethoven in the final movement of his Ninth Symphony, Nietzsche preaches “the gospel of universal harmony”, where each one feels himself not only united and

³² Ibidem, p. 35.

³³ Ibidem, pp. 61-62.

³⁴ Nietzsche himself acknowledged his initial dependence on Schopenhauer and Kant who determined his mode of seeing things and expressing them with Kant’s formulas. Ibidem, p. 24.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp. 22-24.

³⁶ Ivanov, “Scriabin’s View of Art” – III, 176.

³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, cit., p.37.

reconciled, but also fused with his neighbor “in mysterious primordial unity”.³⁸

Ivanov inherits from Nietzsche his preoccupation with Dionysus and further explores the “Dionysian” model, but precisely as a methodological principle. “For the Greeks”, he states, “Dionysus was a god, but for us, he is an existentially and creatively fruitful method, merely a method of rousing the state of rapture and ecstasy.”³⁹ For Ivanov, however, the “Dionysian” principle loses the Nietzschean anti-Christian ideological charge. On the contrary, as the method of rapture and ecstasy, it requires an archetypal fulfillment; it must become universal and inclusive.

Ivanov understands this ecstatic and liberating function of art within a broader personalistic and dialogical perspective. What art sets us free from is “the autocratic bondage of the closed self”. Art’s transcending power derives from its relationality. Art is relational and in this sense is akin to love, which is essentially relational: ‘I’ in love looks for “Thou”. In love, my ‘self’ transcends itself toward the object of my love who becomes “Thou”. In love, I discover my dependence on “Thou” and establish ‘Thou’ not as an object but as the subject of the double subject “I-Thou” dialogic relationship. I discover “Thou” as my primary value, and myself as an existence that derives from “Thou”.

This reaching out to the “Thou” in love is possible through our empathy with the Other (*proniknovenie*), a concept, which Ivanov coined, not accidentally, in reference to Dostoevsky. Only this empathy gives us knowledge of the Other. Ivanov compares man in his present state of a “secluded and isolated self” to a living mirror, which tends to see itself in everything. We need another mirror that would reflect into our own and correct its deformed representation. “This other mirror - *speculum speculi* - rectifying the first one, is for a cognizing person another person. Truth is vindicated only by being contemplated through the other”.⁴⁰

But how can I empathize with the Other if the Other lacks the ability to express him/herself, or this expression appears to me superficial, just a matter of saying so? It is art that gives us a compassionate

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Quoted from Olga Deschartes, *Introduction*, Ivanov’s Collected Works – I, 49.

⁴⁰ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Religioznoe delo Vladimira Solovyova” – III, 303.

insight (*proniknovenie*) into the other; it provides us with the true image of the other, who in our and his isolation remains hidden from us. Art is a special genre, which cannot be translated into a different discourse. It does not explain, it shows, it make us live through the experience of others and look at the world and even at ourselves with their eyes. Art makes us learn things through our empathy with the object of knowledge, because it can show us this object from inside, it knows how to present it as a subject. It magically transforms for us the realm of things into the realm of persons. Art is that powerful communicative and moving force that drives 'I' out of its seclusion toward the other. Thus self-transcendence is the feature that both love and art share. That is why St. Augustine's exhortation "transcende te ipsum" through love becomes an operational motto of Ivanov's aesthetics.

Art also carries out its mission within the 'I-thou' paradigm, which is also the basic paradigm of religion. Ivanov developed his aesthetic theory as the herald of a new religious consciousness, which must originate inwardly. "When the contemporary soul regains "Thou" within its own self, as the ancient soul gained it in the cradle of all religions, then it will grasp that the microcosm and the macrocosm are identical, – that the outer world is given to man solely that he may learn the name "Thou" in the inaccessible neighbor and inaccessible God, – that the world is the unfolding of his own microcosm".⁴¹ What one experiences in true personal relations in love, one also experiences in one's relations to God, who reveals himself as the eternal "Thou" of each individual human self.⁴² This inner self-transcendence constitutes the very essence of transcendence, its ontological basis. Since the locus of our ultimate "Thou", according to Ivanov, is ontologically occupied by Christ, the Dionysian method is subsumed into the more universal and archetypal Christian principle.

This "Dionysian" Christ retains the essential feature, which Nietzsche missed in Christianity as he knew it or as it appeared to him, – namely the artistic element, which Ivanov emphasized in his reading of Christianity. Art has to play a special role in his religious agenda, because "great and sublime art always has room for religion,

⁴¹ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Ty esi" – III, 268.

⁴² Cf. Olga Deschartes, *Introduction*, Ivanov I, 29.

since God and Man belong to the same vertical line”.⁴³ “But Man gives his best to His God, and when he called upon art to participate in the Liturgy, every Muse joyfully whispered: “Behold – a handmaiden of the Lord”. Thus, systems of art find their respective natural axis only in the Liturgy, and each art rotates around its natural axis and circumscribes its natural orbit”.⁴⁴

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Ivanov summons art to an applied function of crafting and decorating a religious cult in its various forms. He rather points to the religious significance of every true art taken in its own free mission. Art’s mission is to provide the channel and means for our self-transcendence. We can better comprehend its mechanism with the help of the Jungian teaching on archetypes, which connect the two realms of the unconscious: the personal and the collective.

“The concept of the archetype” – writes Jung – “which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them “motifs”; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Levy-Bruhl’s concept of “collective representations”, and in the field of comparative religion they have been defined... as “categories of the imagination”.⁴⁵

Being present as definite forms in the individual psyche, universal archetypes bridge the gap between the personal and the collective unconscious, between the outer world of religious and mythological (and thus cultural) symbolism and the inner world of the individual soul. To emphasize this connection between the two, which is far from being obvious, Jung used the concept of *synchronicity*, which is “a meaningful coincidence” of outer and inner events, which are not necessarily connected. *Synchronicity* indicates that an archetype has been activated in the unconsciousness of a particular individual.⁴⁶

Since archetypes are found as images and motifs of art, art presents one of the main fields of investigation for Jungian analysis,

⁴³ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “O sekte i dogmate” – II, 614.

⁴⁴ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Churlianis i problema sinteza iskusstva” – III, 167.

⁴⁵ “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” in C.G. Jung, *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1968, Vol.9, Part I, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁶ C. G. Jung, *Man & His Symbols*, cit., p. 226.

which appreciates the fact that religion and mythology have been intertwined with art from prehistoric times to the present.⁴⁷ As Jung traces his archetypes back to Platonic forms,⁴⁸ so does Ivanov with his concept of the symbol. Russian symbolists emphasized the rich philosophical content of the Greek word σύμβολον, which meant, among other things, a) a sign or token by which one infers a thing, b) a pledge, on which money was advanced, c) the halves of a coin, which two persons broke between them, each keeping one piece to present to the other after many years of separation. And the related word συμβολή meant a coming together, a meeting, joining, encounter, or the juncture of two parts. Symbolist poets and thinkers use the concept “symbol” to convey the meaning of the joining together of two realms, material and spiritual, visible and invisible. For Ivanov, the symbol is ontological reality, and thus cannot be reduced to a mere concept, a conventional allegory, or a hieroglyph. The symbol is multi-meaningful. It may acquire different meanings in different domains of the mind. “Like a sun ray it pierces through all planes of existence and spheres of consciousness, signifying different meanings in every plane and sphere... In each point of intersection it works as a sign, whose meaning is disclosed in a corresponding myth”.⁴⁹ The symbol works as a Jungian archetype, it binds together individual minds, that are contemplating the same objective substance, which is common for all of them.⁵⁰ Myth, on the other hand, discloses the meaning of a symbol. Symbols and myths, rightly presented, stir and inspire the human soul. They can “move us”, because, for Ivanov, mythology belongs to ontological order, because “myth is the objective truth about an existent, myth is the tool for the imaginative understanding of supersensible entities”.⁵¹ By discovering symbols in the objects of the reality around us, and representing them ever afresh, art makes this reality meaningful for us. Operating through myth, by the power of symbols or archetypes, true art must be able to move the human soul. This is art’s only justification, and,

⁴⁷ Aniela Jaffe, “Symbolism in the Visual Arts,” in *Man & His Symbols*, cit., p. 257.

⁴⁸ Carl Jung, “The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious”, in *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX, vol. 9, Princeton University Press, 1959, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁹ Quoted from Olga Deschartes’ *Introduction*, Ivanov I, 113.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

in fact, its irreplaceable function. True art is art that moves us (*iskusstvo dvigatel'noe*).⁵²

“The ascending, spiraling line, the elation and overcoming, is dear to us as a symbol of our finest self-affirmation, our ‘mighty decision: to strive untiringly to the highest being,’ writes Ivanov in an early article, in which he sets the agenda for a Symbolist art... “A soaring eagle; a breaking wave; the tension of a column and the challenge of a tower; a four-cornered obelisk reaching toward the heavenly monad, narrowing in its ascent and refracted in its supreme proximity to the boundary of the world; the mysterious ladders of the pyramids, rising from the four corners of the earth to a single pinnacle; the *sursum corda* of mountain peaks, formed by the earth’s constant flight from the worldly, the flight petrified as a snowy, radiant throne in the detached triumph of final achievement: these are the images of that very ‘sublime’ that calls to our buried self: ‘Lazarus, come forth!’, and to our limited self with Augustine’s testament: “Transcend yourself” (transcende te ipsum)... The ‘sublime’ in aesthetics, insofar as it is represented by ascent, is an essentially religious phenomenon that thereby transcends the bounds of aesthetics”.⁵³

In this text two realms are juxtaposed: the external, visible images of earthly phenomena and the invisible realm of the human self, “hidden in us”, for which the images of the visible realm can serve as symbols. Thus, the two realms are not independent of one another. The former calls, teaches and inspires the latter with its lesson of ascent and transcendence. The line of transcendence is vertical one. The world is bipolar, stretched between the below and the above, tending upwards. Perceived this way, it inspires our ‘hidden self’ to liberate itself by discovering its own bipolarity and by stretching upward.

But in order to perceive these images as symbols, our ‘self’ needs a mediating agency, which is art. It is a Symbolist art, since it reveals to us the liberating symbols of everyday reality, and thereby inspires our ‘hidden self’ for the feat of inner liberation and self-overcoming.

⁵² Ibidem, I, 49.

⁵³ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “The Symbolics of Aesthetic Principles” (I am quoting Ivanov in faithful and elegant translation of R. Bird in Viacheslav Ivanov, *Selected Essays*, Evanston 2001, pp. 5-6

The true artist, according to Ivanov, is a seer insofar as he exemplifies and exercises the human ability to perceive things and events as living symbols, or archetypes, to use Jung's language. The artist paves the way between the two realms, the external and physical, and the internal and spiritual. From visible reality the artist reaches out to what transcends it, *a realibus ad realiora ascendit*.⁵⁴ The artist as mystic is called upon to travel from the outer to the inner (*ab exterioribus ad interiora*).⁵⁵ Thus the true artist, as a seer and a prophet, erects "the ladder of Jacob", which unites the earthly and divine planes.⁵⁶

Applying the symbolism of his art to a new explanation of the world, the artist becomes the creator of myth. He expresses inner archetypes and depicts what Jung calls the synchronicity of outer and inner events. But since archetypes are collective, art is universal, and the artist is the spokesman for all mankind. In the artist, 'a single soul burns with the souls of all fires'.⁵⁷ The artist burns inside with what he sees until he succeeds in conveying this vision to others. Through his art he transcends himself toward others, but this transcending begins at the very start of his artistic knowledge. The artist must first transcend himself, and strive to become open in spirit. He "sharpens his hearing" in order to listen to what things say, he "refines his sight and learns to comprehend the meaning of forms" and the reason for phenomena.⁵⁸ Ivanov designates such art as Realist Symbolism, which presupposes clairvoyance in the artist and postulates the same clairvoyance in its viewer, reader or listener. He enlists among such Realist Symbolists the greatest artists of humanity e. g. Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Raphael, Dickens, Dostoevsky. Enlisting world geniuses as Symbolists evidently cancels out Symbolism as a poetic school, and turns Symbolism into art's method.⁵⁹

In opening our horizons to self-transcendence, art knows no limits. It extends our reach both vertically and horizontally, toward God and our fellow human being. We can transcend ourselves toward

⁵⁴ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Churlianis & the Problem of the Synthesis of Art" – III, 151.

⁵⁵ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Ideia otverzhenia mira" – III, 84.

⁵⁶ Vjačeslav Ivanov, "Mysli o simvolizme" – II, 606, also in "Perepiska iz dvukh uglov" – III, 412; also in *Simvolika esteticheskikh nachal*, I, 827.

⁵⁷ Vjač. Ivanov, "Prozrachnost" ("Transparency"), Quoted from Deschartes – I, 74.

⁵⁸ Descartes, *Introduction*, I, 114.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

the divine Thou by empathizing with another person, and even with God through the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity gave us “the most splendid tears: man’s tears over God. Splendid is the weeping of the myrrh-bearing women”.⁶⁰ This archetypal identification of the suffering God with the inner Thou in us makes religion profoundly human.

But in order to reach out to God and neighbor, we must recognize both as such. To the question of an expert in the law: “Who is my neighbor”, Jesus answers with a skillfully designed parable. (See Lk. 10:25-37). On this as well as on many other occasions, Jesus acts as a great “Symbolist” artist (to use Ivanov’s expression) “revealing in reality a reality that is even more real”. The characters of His parables, e.g. the Good Samaritan, the Unforgiving Debtor (Mt.18:23-35), the Fool Rich Man (Lk.12:16-21), The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) , are the universal symbols, in which each of us may recognize him/herself. Through His parables we (as His listeners) transcend the limitations of our individualities and see what otherwise remains invisible, including ourselves.

But Jesus is the ultimate Symbolist artist, because he Himself is the ultimate symbol. Myth, expressed by the artist, becomes “the testimony of our created nature about God’s mystery”.⁶¹ And God’s mystery, for Ivanov, is God’s presence among us in many forms; it is the divine humanity, it is the archetype of God-man, and thus of Christ, hidden in mythologies, revealed in the Gospel and present in the human soul. Thus the mirror of true art “restores the original truth” of creation. Such an art, Ivanov submits:

becomes the mirror of mirrors, – *speculum speculorum* of one symbolism of united existence where every cell of the living and fragrant tissue produces and glorifies its petal, and each petal reflects and glorifies the radial center of the inexpressible flower - of the symbol of all symbols, that is the Flesh of the Word.⁶²

⁶⁰ Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Simvolika estetičeskikh nachal” – I, 827.

⁶¹ Vjačeslav Ivanov – III, 154.

⁶² Vjačeslav Ivanov, “Zavety simvolizma” (Symbolism’s Testaments) – II, p. 601