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MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND
RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST PHILOSOPHY

ABSTRACT. In this paper Russian Symbolist philosophy is represented primarily by Viacheslav Ivanov (1866–1949), but its conclusions are intended to be valid for other philosophers we classify as Symbolist, including Nikolai Berdiaev and S. L. Frank. It is posited that, by comparing Ivanov's cosmology, aesthetics, and anthropology to those of Martin Heidegger, one can reconceive of Symbolist philosophy as an existential hermeneutic. This, it is claimed, can help to identify a common basis among the Symbolist philosophers, and also to place Russian thought in the context of modern European philosophy and *vice versa*.

KEY WORDS: existentialism, hermeneutics, humanism, Martin Heidegger, N. A. Berdiaev, Russian religious thought, S. L. Frank, Symbolism, V. I. Ivanov

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1906, the Russian Symbolist poet and thinker Viacheslav Ivanov gave the following characterization of the philosophical identity of his age:

[I]n the realm of philosophy, the reaction against habits and methods of thinking characteristic of a critical era has overcome idealism itself and manifested a tendency toward primitive realism. Nietzsche is not the only one who has felt closer to Heracleitus than to Plato. But it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the near future will create types of philosophical creativity close to the types of the pre-Socratic, pre-critical period, which Nietzsche called "the tragic age" of Hellenism (II 90).¹

Anyone familiar with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger would acknowledge the prescience of Ivanov's conjecture. This raises the question of how far the Symbolists themselves went toward creating a new type of "philosophical creativity," and to what extent this achievement might be comparable to Martin Heidegger's philosophical project.



The purpose of this essay is to present a preliminary consideration of the relationship between the thought of Martin Heidegger and that of the Russian Symbolist philosophers (the latter understood in a sense I shall define below). The somewhat unexpected juxtaposition of the two kinds of philosophizing opens up shared ground and allows for new questions to be posed concerning both objects of comparison. Our provisional thesis is that an explication of the ways these quite different thinkers approached similar problems can help to conceive of Russian Symbolist philosophy as a coherent whole, and also to gain a fresh perspective on Heidegger himself. Neither part of this thesis, however carefully it may be stated, will find easy acceptance, but it is to be hoped that by posing the question and indicating possible answers one might stimulate productive discussion of the issues.²

II. HEIDEGGER AND THE SYMBOLISTS

There are obvious similarities between Heidegger and the Symbolists that beg investigation and interpretation. Both Heidegger and the Symbolists engaged the totalizing systems of German Idealism and the nihilism of Nietzsche as a problematic heritage that had to be assimilated and overcome. Both sought to do so by turning from the epistemological concerns that dominated philosophy in their day to a more direct account of the ontology of historical life, combining a naive realism with a privileging of aesthetics (as intimated by Ivanov's aforementioned reference to the tragic nature of pre-Socratic thought). Both begin with temporal existence and reach religion "from below," so to speak, while endorsing a religious hermeneutic toward ostensibly secular texts (mainly poetry). The ontologization of thought tends to depersonalize the Absolute (what in clearer ages could simply be called God) and defamiliarize the objects of everyday life, despite a shared commitment to concrete 'things.' Moreover, in advocating such a convergence between transcendent and immanent realms, both Heidegger and some Russian Symbolists entered upon questionable, if ambiguous political associations with movements which they understood to be historical projections of underlying being. These similarities establish Heidegger and the Russian Symbolists as roughly contiguous

in background and tendency. In order to achieve a more substantial comparison of the basic intents and presuppositions underlying this superficial kinship we shall review the history of the problem and then proceed to a comparison of works by Martin Heidegger and Viacheslav Ivanov, whom we take to be symptomatic of Symbolist philosophical thought.

Heidegger and certain members of the Symbolist movement were distinctly unappreciative of each other. Of all the influences admitted by Heidegger, from Heracleitus and Meister Eckhart to Nietzsche and Laotse, Orthodox theology and modern Orthodox thought are conspicuously absent.³ Although his students Paul Tillich and Hans-Georg Gadamer both valued their exposure to Russian émigré thinkers in the 1920s and 1930s,⁴ and despite the prolific publication of Russian philosophy in German translation beginning in the 1920s, Heidegger seems to have remained oblivious to the very existence of a vibrant Russian philosophical revival. This is despite his citation, in a central passage of *Being and Time* (1993a: 254; 1962: 495 n. xii), of Tolstoi's "The Death of Ivan Il'ich" as an example of inauthentic attitudes towards death, and despite an interest in Dostoevskii and Goncharov (Petzet 1993: 84, 120). It is indicative of the level at which Heidegger engaged Russian culture that he is said to have experienced a poetry reading by the popular but idiosyncratic poet Andrei Voznesenskii as "living contact with the real Russia" (Petzet 1993: 120).⁵

For their part, those representatives of the Russian philosophical revival who managed to react to Heidegger's *Being and Time* were almost uniformly negative.⁶ Viacheslav Ivanov commented:

Modern philosophy is the philosophy of fear. Kierkegaard was the first to point to fear as a gloomy shadow inseparable from the negation of God. Heidegger, the most renowned of contemporary philosophers, makes fear the center of his speculations. But for him fear is a herald of the true transcendent, which is nothing. Being, of which time is an essential attribute, boils down in his opinion to phenomena; in the end being becomes just as boring as these phenomena. Why shouldn't one prefer and seek nothing? [. . .] Still, just a single step separates such contemplation of the transcendent from so called negative or apophatic theology, from the doctrine of the mystics who speak to us of the darkness of God; a single step, but this step becomes an abyss if it implicates the initial determination of inner will [si tratta della determinazione iniziale dell'intima volontà] (III 476 [Russian translation: 481–482]).

The reactions of Nikolai Berdiaev and Semen Frank were consistent with Ivanov's, even down to their wording. As Ivanov's reaction indicates, it was not so much the agnostic tone of Heidegger's early ontology, which could be interpreted in terms of apophatic theology, but the sense of human loneliness in the cosmos that the Symbolists took exception to. Symbolist thought, genetically tied to Solov'ev's philosophy of all-unity, sought to ground phenomenal existence in a common, suprasensual source. The emphasis, however, was not on the transcendent source itself, but on the way that it formed the underlying identity of immanent phenomena. Thus the Symbolists tended to be critical of attempts either to remove a feeling of transcendence from the world (what they called transcendentism) or to deny the relevance of transcendent reality (immanentism). Both transcendentism and immanentism in their radical forms were understood as forms of atheism, or else as the denial of underlying unity. Berdiaev's first response to *Being and Time* placed Heidegger in the context of the Slavophile interpretation of Protestantism, as an attempt to disassociate God and the world that ends up denying any connection whatsoever and accepting the empirical world as the basis for all value: "One can establish a certain kinship between the tendencies of Heidegger's philosophy and the theology of [Karl] Barth. In Heidegger the absolute transcendentism of Barthianism turns into atheism, into a doctrine of abandonment as the essence of the world" (1930: 121).

It must be kept in mind, however, that both Heidegger and the Russian philosophers I unify under the name of Symbolism were dynamic thinkers whose conceptions and very conceptual framework changed significantly throughout their lives. In Ivanov's case, the aforementioned passage was written in 1933 at the age of 67, at a time when he was reinterpreting previous ideas in the light of a Catholic, humanist ideal, and was therefore less receptive to thinkers who were not explicitly Christian. Around the same time Heidegger himself was undergoing what is often called a 'turn' away from systematic analyses towards a more poetic and intuitive style, away from fundamental ontology to a hermeneutic philosophy that would read phenomenal being back to its transcendent basis.

It is not unlikely that Ivanov and Berdiaev would have adjusted their opinions of Heidegger, had they lived to see his post-war pub-

lications (Berdiaev died in 1948, Ivanov in 1949). This is suggested by the case of S. L. Frank (1877–1950). As late as 1942, S. L. Frank concurred with Ivanov in his negative view of Heidegger:

[Heidegger's] 'ground' is not a true ground which one can stand on. It is like a rock onto the edge of which you can cling while in full view of the abyss. I always ask: Why fear – and not trust? Why should anxiety be an ontologically-grounded state, and trust just accursed theology? (Boobbyer 1995: 183; translation adjusted according to Plotnikov 1994: 123).⁷

In 1950, however, Frank wrote jubilantly in response to Heidegger's *Holzwege*:

You know what repelled me from Heidegger: the idea of the isolation of the soul, 'existence' as it were in a vacuum – the opposite to my metaphysical life-picture. Now, the whole meaning of the new book is that Heidegger has broken out of this prison and has found the way to freedom, to true being. [...] Nothing could be more meaningful and joyful for me than that, at the summit of my life, I discover that the greatest German thinker comes on his own ground to the conclusion which as a fundamental intuition, as it were as a revelation, has guided all my creative work for 40 years. [...] Should European culture be on the road to destruction, then Heidegger's last book will be its best word of parting, although only for those with ears to hear (Boobbyer 1995: 219–220; translation adjusted according to Plotnikov 1994: 125).⁸

Frank's "fundamental intuition" is apparently the idea of "divine humanity as what is human in humanity," which Frank found echoed in Heidegger's view that (in Frank's words) existence "has meaning and fulfillment only in relation to Being that is revealed to him and accomplished within him" (Binswanger 1954: 38). Whether or not this characterization of the late Heidegger is accurate, the fact that a leading Russian philosopher perceived it to be so is itself grounds for consideration of the problem. As Binswanger put it, "If Frank is excessive in identifying Heidegger's basic intention with his own, it is still extremely important to see that this convergence [*sblizhenie*] is possible, and in what precise manner" (1954: 39).

Any comparison of Heidegger and the Symbolists must attempt to deal with a complex body of thought *in statu*. Heidegger's path away from 'rigorous' philosophy toward intuitivistic and even poetic 'thinking' mirrors – that is, matches in reverse, – a general movement in Russian thought from the poetic word and toward an explication of its significance in philosophical terms of increasing

sophistication. Due to these chronological considerations we shall take as the basis of comparison works from the middle part of each thinker's career: Ivanov's articles "On Action and the Act" and "The Crisis of Humanism" date from 1919, while Heidegger's "On the Origin of the Work of Art" and "On Humanism" were written in 1936 and 1947 respectively.

III. PRELIMINARIES

First of all it is necessary to present provisional definitions for central terms that have already been broached. Most importantly, what is Symbolist philosophy? In the most limited sense, Symbolism refers to the poetry, prose, and literary theory of a group of Russian writers from approximately 1890 to 1920. While as a literary movement the various Symbolist writers present an identifiable whole, the most refined philosophers among them, Viacheslav Ivanov and Andrei Belyi, are actually contiguous to other groups of philosophers whose participation in the Symbolist literary movement was either incidental or fleeting: Belyi found himself most closely allied to the Neo-Kantian group around the journal *Logos*, while Ivanov was most akin to the group of religious philosophers united by their commitment to Sophiology and all-unity: Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Vladimir Ern, Semen Frank, Lev Karsavin, and Aleksei Losev, as well as lesser lights. The common moniker of this group is "Russian religious philosophy," but this definition is both too general (encompassing many other thinkers) and too vacuous, revealing nothing of the content or character of these thinkers' activity. Symbolism is a better philosophical tag since it implies the central notion of an existential duality bridged primarily through aesthetic phenomena and creativity.⁹

Although the lack of contiguity between literary and philosophical Symbolism in our definition may seem odd, several weighty factors support our proposed delineation of Symbolist philosophy as distinct from Symbolist literature. The basic belief of all these thinkers was that "everything immanent in its underlying essence is nothing other than the revelation of the Transcendent in another kind of being" (the words of Ludwig Binswanger apropos of Frank [1954: 33]). These philosophers were therefore unanimous

in assigning aesthetics and aesthetic expression a privileged place in the range of human experience. When they turned to aesthetics, moreover, they were all likely to formulate their key ideas in ways derived from or consistent with Ivanov's aesthetics, which enjoyed added respect on account of Ivanov's status as both practitioner and authoritative interpreter of Russian metaphysical poetry. It was for good reason that Ivanov's renowned aesthetic formulas, such as "realistic Symbolism" and "a realibus ad realiora" were widely adopted by his philosophical brethren, as was the complex of interpersonal and religious relations denoted by the god Dionysus and the phrase "Thou art."¹⁰ Ivanov will be the central concern of this paper, but our entire line of thinking is also relevant, *mutatis mutandis*, to an entire range of philosophers contemporaneous to him.

Another important preliminary matter is the very nature of Ivanov's philosophy.¹¹ Of all the cited philosophers Ivanov was the least systematic, which prevents one from distilling his final conclusions into a digestible and inwardly consistent philosophical worldview. However this very drawback can turn to one's advantage when seeking to identify the mainsprings of Symbolist thought. In Florenskii's insightful phrase, Ivanov's thought is always "near the origin" ("*okolo rozhdeniia*"; Shishkin forthcoming: 390), and in the words of the Hölderlin poem quoted at the end Heidegger's essay on aesthetics, "Reluctantly that which dwells near its origin abandons the site."¹² Indeed, Ivanov never really committed the full breadth and depth of his basic intuitions to a coherent system. Taking Ivanov as a point of departure for considering the relationship between Heidegger and a broadly defined Symbolist philosophy allows one to remain near the poetic, non-discursive source of the latter, and to avoid attaching excessive significance to any one of its particular conceptualizations. The poetic basis of Symbolist thought determined the two central spheres of its activity: cosmology and aesthetics. In both areas distinct parallels between Ivanov and Heidegger can be observed.

IV. IVANOV'S PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

a. *Cosmology*

As was intimated in the quotation at the beginning of this essay, Ivanov's attitude toward philosophy betrays a desire to engage ontological and cosmological problems more directly than had been the rule in the 19th century (with the notable exception of Schelling, whose influence on Kireevskii, Solov'ev, and all subsequent Russian thinkers can never be underestimated).¹³ In a nutshell, Ivanov's cosmology was pantheist or cosmotheist: he took the cosmos to be the immanent facet of the divine being, a multistoried World Soul, which as it descended through ontological stages was identifiable with the being of God, Divine Sophia, the Universal Soul, Earth, the human soul, and matter (II 165–167). Although he speculated that the origin of the divine cosmos lay in the separation of God from His being, the masculine counterpart to the feminine cosmos rarely appears as transcendent God; more often Ivanov speaks of Logos or seminal logos (*lógos spermatikós*) as the source of supra-personal will that enables humans to act for the restoration of divine unity. The heroic, suffering gods that occupied Ivanov throughout his creative life, most notably Dionysus and Prometheus, are manifestations of this masculine principle, which remains immanent to the cosmos and, therefore, subordinate to the feminine All.¹⁴ *The Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God*, in which Ivanov viewed the travails of the masculine principle as the model of religious experience, asserts the primacy of the feminine cosmos in its concluding sentence: "the religion of Dionysus is the religion of the divinely-suffering Earth" (Ivanov 1918: 228).

Although Ivanov's cosmological scheme owes much to Solov'ev's *Lectures on Divine Humanity* (Solov'ev 1995: 77–174), as well as to German sources from Boehme to Schelling, its immediate roots can be discerned in Ivanov's own poetry. As Ivanov articulated his poetic vision in philosophical terms he makes a series of improbable speculative leaps (e.g., the chronological derivation of the earth from the preeternal fall of God's being or Sophia), but his cosmology yields a quite straightforward intent: the divine is manifest to man in the world, and man's worldly being is integral to the reconstitution of cosmic unity. It is the lack of this cosmic

vision, and not the lack of a God, that caused Heidegger's ontology to seem like an 'abyss' to the Symbolists. God was largely beyond the horizon of Ivanov's own thinking, and in some early works the purely transcendent plays no noticeable role at all. One result of this is that Ivanov encountered difficulty in providing philosophical account of his Christian beliefs.

Since Ivanov's immanent orientation rendered him unable to invoke transcendent sanction, he based his conception of proper and improper attitudes of human existence on the ideal of cosmic unity. Ivanov's cosmology can be called ontological monism:¹⁵ things *are* to the extent that they partake of the divine cosmos, whereas things that are alienated from the cosmos cease to be. For Ivanov, phenomenal being arises as a consequence of alienation from the cosmos; indeed, humans attain physical existence precisely due to individuation, as Ivanov often called it. Partaking of the divine cosmos entails a rejection of physical being and an accession to the suprapersonal will (the masculine cosmic principle). Embodying this will, humans elevate the being of the world, revealing the Edenic, non-physical earth that abides beneath. In a sense, the categories of 'existent' and 'holy' are conflated: anything existent embodies the divine, and anything bereft of sanctity is thereby non-existent. The eternal and fallen states of the cosmos correspond to the suprapersonal and individuated sources of will, so that Ivanov's cosmology can be seen in the form of a tetrad of perfect and fallen masculine and feminine, active and passive principles.¹⁶

Since positive action on the part of fallen humans accentuates their selfhood, any act of self-initiative incurs guilt.

At the basis of any action there lies an inner contradiction, an ambiguity and self-negation of action, and, therefore, an acceptance, whether conscious or unconscious, of guilt and punishment by the guilty one (II 156).

Ivanov's early enthusiasm for 'theomachic,' guilt-ridden action as a means of revealing and surmounting the cosmic divide (e.g., his 1904 tragedy *Tantalus*) faded somewhat over the years. However, theomachy for Ivanov was never an ideal in and of itself, but only because it heightened the tension between the individual and the divine, making it inevitable that the former relinquish his fight in suffering. In Ivanov's understanding, cosmic reunification is always experienced as suffering, since it entails the rejection of false self-

hood and the acceptance of an impersonal, divine, logos-bearing self. An acceptance of suffering and rejection of false 'mercy' are therefore central to Ivanov's ethical stance.

In a broad sense, Ivanov's cosmology can be understood as an antinomial philosophy of the ethical act:

Each act, just like each individuated birth, conceals the sting of death that is pointed inwards. The death of action is its disintegration: it turns into its opposite [...] while primordial will is reborn in another action, which for its part passes through the same circle (II 159).

[E]verything that is overcome is overcome in its extremity. And let every new overcoming be new guilt incurring new punishment: there is such a limit of overcoming [...] that forces redemption (II 165).

This cyclical process, "this slow redemption of the deed and the doer" (II 159), leads to the death of the alienated personality and its rebirth with a new willing. Physical death completes the return to the womb of Mother Earth, the element of suffering, love, and will. In other words, the ecstatic religion of Dionysus, based on the veneration of the feminine cosmos, can be interpreted as a religion of death. The spiritual death of the self-willing individual is the only immediate proof of immortality.

At this point a number of parallels between Ivanov's cosmology and Heidegger's ontology can be indicated, in order at least to establish the validity of their comparison. Despite the colorful theosophical speculations, Ivanov's basic anthropological emphasis is largely analogous to the prioritization of *Dasein* in Heidegger's ontology. The prominence of death, whether the symbolic death of the alienated self or physical death, is also reminiscent of Heidegger, namely of the anxiety toward death that Heidegger identified as a central existential condition in *Being and Time*. Ivanov's view of human existence was capable of anticipating some of Heidegger's key formulations of authentic attitudes. Thus, for example, one finds *sobornost*' defined as "the principle of inwardly subordinating one's individual will to universal feeling and care [*popechenie*]" (IV 283). The cosmological parallels strengthen if one turns to Heidegger's works after *Being and Time*, for example his "On the Origin of the Work of Art." Here Heidegger introduces into the existential ontology of *Being and Time* the concept of earth, as the abiding 'ground' and 'shelter' of all that arises. By the early 1950s Hei-

degger began speaking also of the ‘fourfold’ of sky and earth, mortals and divinities, which corresponds roughly to the tetrad of principles we identified in Ivanov.¹⁷ In other words, the attempt to elucidate a basis for ethics and values brought both thinkers to the earth as the principle of life, the door from the human world to a different kind of existence that lies beyond. For our purposes here, the key difference between Ivanov’s and Heidegger’s cosmology is that, in addition to anxiety or, as he termed it, “ancient terror,” Ivanov identified positive forces that attract individuals to the dark basis of being, foremost among which was a “love that does not know fear” (III 96).

b. *Aesthetics*

Before turning squarely to Ivanov’s anthropological concepts, it is necessary to indicate how his cosmology translated into aesthetics. Ivanov’s earliest aesthetic writings (e.g., “The Symbolics of Aesthetic Principles,” 1905) stem directly from his cosmology. The aesthetic act – whether of creation or participation – is in effect the direct experience of the divine-feminine cosmos and an opening of the psyche to the suprapersonal will. Tragedy characterizes this stage in his aesthetics; the sublimity of the encounter with the divine is manifest in the suffering of the individual. Based as it is on the event, this aesthetic starkly problematizes the objective and communicative nature of the artwork, just as Ivanov’s cosmology problematizes the physical existence of the world. Positing a three-fold aesthetic principle of the sublime, the beautiful, and the chaotic, Ivanov actually bases his aesthetic on a single principle of sublimity in chaos, signified by Dionysus.

The next stage in Ivanov’s aesthetics, characterized by theurgic Symbolism, can be seen as an attempt to conceptualize the integration of this dynamic event into an objective form. The creative act not only opens the individual to the divine other, but also communicates this other to worldly reality. In “The Testaments of Symbolism” (1910) Ivanov views this as the communication of being from experience to the object and then to the beholders of the aesthetic object (II 594). While this binds the energy of the creative act to objective things, it also tends toward a kind of wizardly alchemy that obscures human creativity and appreciation. Throughout the

1910s Ivanov explored the relations between the aesthetic object and the human psyche. Ivanov's last major statement before the 1930s, the 1913–1914 "On the Limits of Art," provides his most balanced picture of the artist's ecstatic creative act (the charging of reality with transcendent energy) and the epistemological import of the artwork for all beholders, including the artist himself, who is called to learn from his works. The three stages of Ivanov's aesthetics present a picture of his theoretical development, moving from a revelatory and self-creating act to the objective creation, and then to the appropriation of the latter by human subjects.

c. Anthropology

Ivanov's final aesthetic formulations are so clearly directed toward elucidating the ethical and spiritual role of art in the spiritual evolution of humans that it can be called a personalist aesthetics. As such, it provided him with the opportunity to integrate his cosmology with a rudimentary theory of knowledge. The final step in this direction is accomplished in the 1919 article "On the Crisis of Humanism":

[A]ll phenomenal being, as an image, engenders within us an image of its image, entering as it were into marriage with our inner essence. The inner form of an object is its interpretation and transformation within us by the active content of our emotional powers. The charm of an artistic reproduction of reality inheres precisely in the revelation of its inner form through the mediacy of the artist-depicter, who returns it to us in his emotional reworking, changed and enriched (III 370).

The inner form (entelechy) of objects is revealed by a labor of the artist and by its "interpretation and transformation" among the beholders.

Ivanov's epistemological utterances were usually intended less as an account of the entire human psyche than as a description of how he as a poet experienced reality. In the context of the age, Ivanov was most concerned with elaborating his experience of the immanent divine in Kantian terms. In particular, Ivanov sought to identify a force capable of uniting distinct knowing subjects with each other and with the world outside them. Although, as we have seen, he often posited love as just such a force, in philosophical terms one should be wary of identifying love or eros as an independent cosmic force in Ivanov's thought. Instead, it should probably be seen as an

aspect of a single energy binding the universe together, a force that is capable of breaching the divide between individual subjects and providing authentic knowledge of reality. This energy provides the basis of the primitive realism that Ivanov anticipates in the quotation cited at the beginning of our essay. In defining this unifying force Ivanov wavered between different resolutions of the Kantian dilemma. His most developed theory, which first appeared in print in 1905 and was repeated as late as 1914, postulated an active capacity in the mind that transforms sensory data in accordance with in-born intuition in order to produce ‘aspects’ – true but partial apprehensions of things.¹⁸ If one links this capacity to will, Ivanov can be seen squarely in the voluntaristic tradition stretching back to Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevskii, who saw the will as a means of explaining the ‘integral’ perceptions of spiritually organized people.¹⁹ In one place Ivanov ties the restoration of spiritual wholeness to cognition to Kant’s second *Critique*, of practical reason, which Ivanov feels should have been founded on “the axiom of immediate consciousness: *sum, ergo volo*” (III 134–135; cf. III 89; West 1986: 318–319). In effect this is a defense of the unity of moral knowledge and theoretical knowledge (or of nocturnal and diurnal consciousness, as Ivanov terms them). The view that knowledge is irrevocably tied to the moral personality has deep roots in Orthodox anthropology, and at the same time is consistent with what one recent scholar has called the “ontology of moral action and human creativity elevated to their genuine ontological meaning,” which he finds typical of post-Heideggerian thinking in the West (Chernyakov 1996: 34).

The postulate that individuals inform reality with a unifying energy was stated in many different ways depending on Ivanov’s immediate context: in the Schopenhauerian-Nietzschean mood that dominates his early works Ivanov invariably talks of will, which “itself is cognition, while cognition [...] is itself life, and life is ‘faithfulness to the earth’ ” (II 89). Otherwise will can be called faith. Ivanov claims that “the means by which we affirm ourselves beyond the bounds of our *I* is faith,” which allows Nietzsche’s subordination of truth to the will to be termed “a principle of faith” (I 721).²⁰ In a Platonic mood Ivanov would identify will with Eros,²¹ in a tragic mood it would be suffering (III 371), but when concerned to establish dialogue with Neo-Kantians, Ivanov discussed the onto-

logical nature of any assertions of fact, since these necessarily expend a portion of divine-human energy in reinforcing cosmic unity (II 593–594).²² It appears to be characteristic of the will to transmutate into various forms; already in the Slavophiles the will is identified with faith, and Frank's aforesaid call to incorporate trust as well as anxiety in philosophy can also be interpreted as a manifestation of this widespread tendency to identify a moral aspect in knowledge.

V. HEIDEGGERIAN PARALLELS

a. *Aesthetics and Hermeneutics*

Heidegger's post-1935 works can be seen as an attempt to modify the general picture of *Being and Time* in a way that is more or less consistent with Ivanov's aesthetics and anthropology. Both elements of this two-pronged effort are evidenced in "On the Origin of a Work of Art." The introduction of earth as the concealed and self-concealing source of human-cultural worlds allows Heidegger to identify the work of art as the instigation and accomplishment of strife between the concealed earth and the manifest world. The concreteness of the work is based in the dynamic of this strife, the setting-to-work of truth (1963: 38; 1993: 175). In Heidegger's image, the work is a clearing in which truth comes to being. "Earth juts through the world and world grounds itself on the earth only so far as truth happens as the primal strife between clearing and concealing" (1963: 44; 1993: 180).

Several analogies can be made between these definitions and Ivanov's aesthetic theories. The word 'strife' is familiar from Ivanov's early aesthetics as the separation of the individual from the world in the Dionysian experience (*razryv*). This is the condition for the aesthetic event that is, in effect, harnessed in Ivanov's concept of the symbol, similar to the dynamic repose that obtains at the heart of the artwork for Heidegger (1963: 37; 1993: 173). The third stage of Ivanov's aesthetic can be seen as the gathering of humans around the clearing of the symbol in order to grow in its light. The following quotation from Heidegger demonstrates this plausible congruity: "Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the [art]work is the instigation of the strife in which the unconcealment of being as

a whole, or truth, is won” (1963: 44; 1993: 180). Translated into Ivanov’s language, this could be taken to mean that the artwork establishes symbolic reality and communicates experience of the divine cosmos, thereby displaying the disjuncture between the world and the cosmos and providing direction to the will. Heidegger allows that the shining of self-concealing Being can be called beauty, which “is one way in which truth essentially occurs as unconcealment” (1963: 44, 67–68; 1993: 181, 206). If one allows that the strife itself could be called ‘sublime,’ the general scheme becomes quite similar to Ivanov’s: the sublime ascent to the other resolves in the partial – aspectual – revelation of beautiful truth in its unique and necessary expression. The beautiful and sublime are categories not unique to Ivanov, but the clear primacy of the sublime in Heidegger and its unconcealing-concealing function are definitely reminiscent of Ivanov’s Dionysian Symbolism.

The second element introduced in “On the Origin of the Work of Art” is an essentialist view of human nature. The presencing of the earth in the work not only sets up a historical world, it also illumines the essence of humans who gather around it. As Heidegger writes, “Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are” (1963: 41; 1993: 178). Like Ivanov, Heidegger stresses the ecstatic nature of this experience of essence as other, linking it with the will: “Knowing that remains a willing, and willing that remains a knowing, is the existing human being’s ecstatic entry into the unconcealment of Being” (1963: 55; 1993: 192).

Both Ivanov’s and Heidegger’s aesthetic and anthropological views place a premium on temporal existence, since the transcendent (earth) can only come to be in the immanent (world). Truth becomes the history of truth, God the history of divine manifestations or epiphanies. Language, as the concretization of human consciousness, becomes the “house of being.” Ivanov wrote, with Heideggerian overtones:

Language is the earth; a poetic work grows out of the land. It cannot raise its roots into the air. How are we, however, to strive forward in the rhythm of time, which tosses us up and pulls us apart, to surrender ourselves to the call of universal dynamism, and at the same time remain “tied to the earth,” true to our nourishing mother? This task is apparently insoluble, and threatens poetry with death. But what is impossible for people is possible for God, and there might occur the

miracle of a new recognition of the Earth by her late offspring. If we fall lovingly to the heart of our native tongue, this living verbal earth and maternal flesh of ours, we might suddenly hear in it the beating of new life, the tremor of an infant. This will be a new Myth (III 372).

If the significance of such parallels for Heidegger's thought may seem of small consequence, they allow one to gain a new appreciation of Ivanov's aesthetics as a hermeneutic philosophy. The various stages of Ivanov's aesthetic coalesce into an exploration of the manner in which the artwork, by revealing itself, reveals the truth of being. Ivanov's hermeneutic is consistent with the christological model of the word as Logos, as spirit-bearing matter. Ivanov himself defined his hermeneutic method as an elucidation of the primordial myth (*pramif*) at the basis of any text, i.e., of the incarnation of transcendent reality that bore the pre-discursive revelation contained in the text.²³ What the Heideggerian parallel elucidates is the significance of this ontological epiphany for the existent individual: the work as such not only remains embedded in temporal existence, but is itself constitutive of time and space. As we have stated, although this aspect of Ivanov's thought was arrested in its development, his aesthetic did move toward a personalistic stance cognizant of both the limits of art and the non-aesthetic needs of humans.

b. *Anthropology*

The christological model proved productive for Ivanov's Symbolist aesthetics, but it also proved a stumbling block in his anthropology. Whilst the formula of "two natures neither confused nor divided" allowed him to preserve the tangibility of things and their revelatory capability, the fact that Christ became man, and not any other thing, means that humanity could not simply be treated like an artwork or even an icon. Humans are the agents of cosmic transfiguration. For Ivanov this was a self-evident fact. Heidegger was prone to attribute their special calling to the fact that humans are the only beings to "experience death as death" (1971a: 215; 1971: 107). In either case, the luminosity of the epiphanies both thinkers explored merely cast the problems of human existence in an even more mysterious light.

Given the importance of human action and historical being, it is not surprising that both Ivanov and Heidegger develop a political philosophy that seeks to promote the presencing of the transcendent

within history, resulting in a critique of the social ideal of modernity, which is based on an empirical concept of humanity. Ivanov wrote in 1919:

A new feeling of divine presence, divine fullness, and universal animation will create another worldview, which I am not afraid to call mythological in a new sense. But for this new conception man must broaden the limits of his consciousness so far into the whole that the former measure of humanity will seem to him a tight cocoon, just as it seems to the butterfly escaping its cradle captivity.

This is why what we now call humanism, a word that foreordains the measure of humanity, must perish . . . And humanism is perishing (III 372).

Ivanov's anti-humanist stance flows quite directly out of his earlier writings, as is evidenced by a further passage in the same work:

The principle of cleansing, initiation into mysteries, and rebirths from the womb of Persephone, poses the dynamic problem of spiritual growth in place of the insistent humanistic self-affirmation of the human individual ("*homo sum*"); the mysteries, this preparatory school of death, address as it were the personality with a summons that Goethe would later repeat: "die and become" ("*stirb und werde*") [. . .]; and finally with the prophecy that man is something within us that must be superseded and overcome, as Nietzsche announced so recently with such solemnity as if he were proclaiming the final result of man's final freedom (III 375).

Heidegger's "On Humanism" also seeks to reestablish a humanism that "thinks the humanity of man from nearness to Being" (1967: 173; 1993: 245), in its "ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being" (1967: 157, 161; 1993: 229, 233). "Humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough" (1967: 161; 1993: 233–234). The regrettable political consequences of Heidegger's philosophy are well known, and it is understandable that today there is much resistance to what Ivanov termed "the vatic blindness of the mythological worldview" (III 77), with its utopian ethic.²⁴ Still, the critique of humanism is an engaging part of both thinkers' attempts to encompass the full breadth of existential experience in discursive concepts, raising questions that have yet to be addressed fully by their philosophical successors.

VI. CONCLUSION

The preliminary nature of our consideration of parallels in the thought of Viacheslav Ivanov and Martin Heidegger precludes any firm conclusions. We have noted several points of contact that raise important questions for the future. First, we have suggested that Ivanov's thought might profitably be seen as an attempt to grasp abiding reality beyond the limits of traditional Western metaphysics. The basis of his thinking is a pre-rational intuition into the meaning of human existence in its orientation towards death, and an elucidation of the cosmic forces that transform ancient terror into new life. The aesthetic symbol may also be interpreted in a Heideggerian sense as an aperture on an elusive transcendence, a clearing where things may come to pass, if humans prove receptive. The very plurality of philosophical constructs in Ivanov's thought indicates their relativity, and outside of the rudimentary guidelines we have set, it might indeed be folly to try to identify a more coherent system; perhaps his various articles are best seen as paths into the forest that establish self-enclosed clearings for thought.

Regarding Heidegger, we have essayed a view that his later writings might not be as incompatible with Russian Symbolism as they immediately seem. Heidegger's cosmological fourfold and his use of epistemological categories such as will approximate the general contours of Ivanov's thought. This tentative conclusion might, in turn, serve as evidence in favor of a significant change in Heidegger's thought after *Being and Time*, a point of some controversy in philosophical literature.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that both Ivanov and Heidegger elucidated a cosmology that shifted ontological primacy from the opposition of immanent/transcendent and subject/object to an in-between realm in which the transcendent ground is expressed as immanent, the other as self. All phenomenal being reveals a basic metaphoricality, referring to some unspeakable basis common to all things, which in turn allows for judgments on things' identity and difference. Aesthetics is a key means of interpreting this realm, providing the most direct access to the transcendent enclosed within. Yet, despite the apparent theologization of life, the Absolute itself remains beyond the pale of thought. It is this hermeneutic turn towards existential situations that bears the most promise for future

thought, as well as for the reintegration of Russian and Western philosophy.

NOTES

¹ References to Ivanov 1971 are given in the text by volume (roman numeral) and page (arabic numeral). Compare this ‘conjecture’ to Ivanov’s description of the “barbarian renaissance” of Wagner and the Russian Symbolist poets (II 74).

² For existing works mentioning both Symbolists and Heideggerian thought see Binswanger 1954; Cassedy 1990; Chernyakov 1996; Plotnikov 1994, 1995; Slesinski 1984: 83. See Caputo 1982 for a model of how Heidegger’s thought can be used to discover new answers in religious thinkers (in this case, St. Thomas Aquinas).

³ Cf. Chernyakov 1996: 31: “[A]lthough Heidegger placed the Western theological tradition within the European metaphysics which he sought to overcome, the more striking element is his movement in the direction of the principal insights of the Eastern Christian world.” A passage in his correspondence to Erhart Kästner suggests that Heidegger’s knowledge of Orthodox theology was superficial, but sympathetic: “Gern hätte ich an jenem Münchener Abend mit Ihnen noch mehr über die Theologie der Ostkirche gesprochen, für die doch die *Trinität* wesentlich vom hl. Geist her und nicht aus der Christologie bestimmt ist. Hier – in der vom hl. Geist bestimmten Trinität – sehe ich, wenn überhaupt, eine verborgene Quelle der Erneuerung des theologischen Denkens; aber die heutigen Theologen meinen, sie müßten ihre Geschäfte mit der Psychoanalyse und der Soziologie machen” (Petzet 1986: 22–23). Kästner’s books on Mount Athos and Byzantine culture betray the influence of modern Orthodox thought, even Sophiology (Kästner 1956: 116–119).

⁴ Gadamer met Fedor Stepun in Freiburg in 1923, and they remained in contact until the latter’s death in 1965 (see Gadamer 1977: 31–32; Bird 1996: 330 n. 62). In a letter to Ol’ga Shor (Deschartes) of 28 February 1933 Evsei Shor claimed that he had told Heidegger of Florenskii’s Philosophical analysis of truth, that Heidegger had expressed great interest, and that he had proceeded to use Florenskii’s arguments in his own lectures without attribution (Rome Archive of Viacheslav Ivanov, reported to the author by A. B. Shishkin).

⁵ In his works Heidegger often identified ‘Russia’ as a leading proponent of the technological civilization he abhorred (e.g., 1959: 37, 45–46).

⁶ Non-Symbolist philosophers who reacted to Heidegger include V. Sezeman, who in a review of *Being and Time* sought to coopt Heidegger for his own, Neo-Kantian philosophy (1928), and Boris Jakovenko whose plan to write on Heidegger apparently remained unrealized (Rizzi 1997: 461, 463 n. 3).

⁷ See Russian translation in Binswanger 1954: 34–37 and “Chétyre pis’ma iz perezpiski: A. Binswanger – S. Frank,” *Logos* no. 3, 1992, 264–268.

⁸ See Binswanger 1954: 38. Plotnikov calls Frank’s reaction a misunderstanding

of Heidegger (1995). For more perspective on Frank and Heidegger see the former's "Mistika Reiner Marii Ril'ke," *Put'* August 1928, no. 12, 47–75; October 1928, no. 13, 37–52.

⁹ On Berdiaev and Symbolism see Sigeti 1994. The question of whether Vladimir Solov'ev should be considered a Symbolist philosopher is more complex. While he first broached many of the ideas taken up by the Symbolists, from Sophia-Divine Wisdom to theurgy in aesthetics, the Symbolists often found his rationalistic *manner* of philosophizing unacceptable to their religious-existential thought. Both the similarity and the contrast between the Symbolists and Solov'ev are seen, for example, in the latter's article "Beauty in Nature," where the mystical ideal of theurgy is supported by a consideration of evolutionary biology. Ivanov wrote that the "chaotic nature" of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii made them closer to the age than Solov'ev's consummate "icon of Heavenly Aphrodite" (III 298). He was particularly critical of Solov'ev's prescriptive ethics in *The Justification of the Good* (III 298).

¹⁰ Actually coined by Belyi in a 1904 review of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* ("Vishnevyyi sad," *Vesy* no. 2 [1904]. 45–48), "Realistic Symbolism" was popularized by Ivanov in his 1908 "The Two Elements of Symbolism" (II 537–561), which also contains Ivanov's first use of "a realibus ad realiora" (553, 561). "Thou art" was introduced in a 1907 piece (III 263–268), but was developed in a less 'immanentist' and more religious vein in later articles (III 303–304; IV 448–450, 460).

¹¹ Terras (1986) identifies a wide array of influences on Ivanov's aesthetics, establishing the predominance of German Romantic and Idealist sources for his thought. West (1970, 1986) has concentrated on the Kantian heritage in Ivanov's aesthetics, demonstrating that Ivanov undeniably works within the Kantian framework, albeit in a negative fashion.

¹² "Schwer verlässt was nahe dem Ursprung wohnt, den Ort" (Heidegger 1963: 65; 1993: 203).

¹³ It would be possible to approach the Symbolist-Heidegger juxtaposition in terms of their shared interest in and borrowings from Schelling, but the broad historical range necessary for such an analysis exceeds the scope of the present expeditionary essay. Andrew Bowie (1993) has suggested several key respects in which Schelling's philosophy proves relevant and even decisive to post-Heideggerian thought: the recognition of the necessity of a ground in order for identity and difference to be asserted; the central role of art (or 'metaphor') in disclosing this ground; and the consequences of the unthought ground for temporal existence. Each of these points provides fruitful avenues for the comparison of Heidegger and Russian Symbolist thought.

¹⁴ Sometimes the suprapersonal will or Logos appears to abide within the individual; see "Thou Art" (III 263–268).

¹⁵ In emigration, concerned to appear in agreement with Catholic doctrine, Ivanov insisted on his "[ontological] dualism of God and Creature" (Segal 1995: 333–334), but such protestations cannot outweigh the monistic nature of all Ivanov's major ideas.

¹⁶ In his cosmological writings Ivanov is susceptible to the accusation of Gnosticism that Hans Jonas made with respect to Heidegger and other modern philosophers (1963: 320–340).

¹⁷ The German words Heidegger uses for “das Geviert” or “Weltgeviert” are “die Erde,” “der Himmel,” “die Götter,” and “die Sterblichen”; see 1993: 351).

¹⁸ On Ivanov’s theory of aspects see West 1970: 82–84; Davidson 1989: 167–173. See also Heidegger 1985: 55–56.

¹⁹ “[T]he ultimate meaning of any philosophy lies not in individual logical or metaphysical truths, but in the relationship in which it places man in respect of the ultimate truth which he seeks, in the inner imperative that dominates the mind imbued with it” (Kireevskii 1911: I 236); “the will is born in secret and is educated by silence” (ibid.: I 67; cf. Ivanov 1971: III 89–90); “[W]ill is the inalienable property of reason. Anyone who has grasped the idea of energy as a universal, as *all-energy*, will understand the logical certainty of will [...] *freedom in the positive manifestation of energy is will*” (Khomiakov 1900: I 275–276). Cf. Dostoevskii 1972: V 115; Berdiaev 1996: 85.

²⁰ Cf. the identification of will and faith in I 730.

²¹ In “On Daring Love” Ivanov denies that he is a voluntarist since his concept of will is complemented by that of eros (1906: 237). In fact, these are two aspects of a single capacity that establishes an essential connection between subjects. In the book publication of this essay Ivanov removed his denial of voluntarism, and the relevant passage reads: “The autonomy of ‘practical reason,’ in the sense of the self-determining ultimate will of man, is the point of departure for any mystical energetism, which is also eroticism in the esoteric [*sokrovennyi*] sense in which Socrates calls the philosopher ‘the eroticist [*erotik*].’ By this nothing is affirmed of the will theoretically; its primacy is merely proclaimed for the realm of practical reason. Ask what your ultimate *I* desires, and love, as a planet loves the sun that creates it”; “Will contains in itself an intuition of the *I* [*ia*] of the microcosm. [...] Through love man ascends to the *I* [*Ia*] of the macrocosm – God” (III 134–135). For other metamorphoses of ‘will’ see “The Idea of the Non-Acceptance of the World”: “The mystical will [...] is not only autonomous, it is itself inner freedom. If it becomes conscious of itself as faith in God, it becomes inner reason” (III 83).

²² In a 1922 article Ivanov even appropriates the phenomenological term ‘eidetic’ for knowledge that “invariably manifests the idea, understood as prototype, in [things],” which definition he applies to Pushkin’s artistic vision (IV 636).

²³ See Szilárd’s groundbreaking discussion of Ivanov’s hermeneutics (1993: esp. 177–180).

²⁴ For a critique of Ivanov’s political thought see Dmitriev 1988. One of the best studies of Heidegger’s political thought in the context of his philosophy remains Harries 1976.

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