

VJAČESLAV IVANOV AND ACMEISM:  
LITERARY POLEMICS OF 1912-1914

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In a previous article I have spoken of some aspects of the complex relationship between Vjačeslav Ivanov and the leading figures of the Acmeist movement: Achmatova, Mandel'stam and Gumilev.<sup>1</sup> Here I shall discuss the events that followed upon the founding of the first "Cech Poëtov" ("Guild of Poets") at the apartment of poet Sergej Gorodeckij on the 20th of October, 1911. This event marked the differentiation of Acmeism as an independent literary movement, although the very name "Acmeism" was only introduced somewhat later.

If Gumilev wisely limited himself to attempts to develop the aesthetic concept of Acmeism, while recognizing to a certain degree his genetic tie to Symbolism, then Gorodeckij, who owed his notoriety wholly to Symbolism and Vjačeslav Ivanov in particular, felt that aesthetics alone was insufficient. He aspired, no more and no less, to the creation of a new world-view. Obviously Gorodeckij was not up to such a task, and Acmeist claims to a new world-view soon came to nothing. Admitting his failure, Gorodeckij wrote in 1918, as if in self-justification: "V étoj neposil'noj dlja molodoj školy zadače – obosnovat' mirovozzrenie – byla glavnaja ošibka akmeistov, vpolne, vpročem, ob"jasnjaemaja zadorom molodeži" ("This task – of grounding a world-view – was beyond the powers of the young movement and was the main error of the Acmeists, although it is fully explained by the zeal of youth").

Subsequently, Osip Mandel'stam spoke of this matter also with an apologetic note:

Городецким в свое время была сделана попытка привить акмеизму литературное мировоззрение, “адамизм”, род учения о новой земле и о новом Адаме. Попытка не удалась, акмеизм мировоззрением не занимался [...] Литературные школы живут не идеями, а вкусами.

(“Gorodeckij once made an attempt to graft onto Acmeism a literary world-view, ‘Adamism’, a kind of teaching on the new earth and the new Adam. The attempt was unsuccessful, and Acmeism did not occupy itself with a world-view [...] Literary movements live not by ideas but by tastes.”)<sup>2</sup>

This quotation contains a hidden but surprising admission that Acmeism had no ideas, and that the principal distinction can be reduced to a distinction of tastes. “It was not ideas, but tastes that proved fatal for Symbolism.”<sup>3</sup> One might dispute the justice of this claim with respect to the reading public, but this opposition of “ideas” and “tastes” might actually have proved a decisive factor in Vjačeslav Ivanov’s attitude towards Acmeism, although in a paradoxical sense, opposite to that meant by Mandel’štam. For his part Gorodeckij might not have even been fully aware of the irony of his comment that the attempt to ground a world-view was the main error of Acmeism.

The year 1912 saw “Adamism” on the offensive, and this is when the second round of the Symbolist-Acmeist conflict took place.

The main difference in the distribution of forces with respect to the first round was the noticeable cooling of the romance between Vjačeslav Ivanov and Blok, who was generally experiencing a period of doubt over Symbolism and who was prepared to recognize Gumilev as “his own”.<sup>4</sup> As a result Blok to all intents and purposes declined to participate in the new dispute, despite pressure from Belyj, with whom Ivanov had then formed a close alliance.<sup>5</sup> The second change was a consequence of the appearance of the “Guild of Poets”, which had fortified the positions of young Acmeism, the leaders of which made their first public declaration of their negative attitude towards Symbolism at the meeting of the “Obščestvo Revnitatej Chudožestvennogo Slova” (The Society of Lovers of the Artistic Word) on February 18, 1912, after Vjačeslav Ivanov read his ‘Mysli o simvolizme’ (‘Thoughts on Symbolism’) and Andrej Belyj – his paper ‘Symbolism’.<sup>6</sup>

In Nikolaj Nedobrovo’s report of the meeting we read: “Apropos of these speeches some members of the meeting noted that the main significance of V.I. Ivanov’s and B.N. Bugaev’s papers was their great repellent force, due to which they might aid the next regrouping of poetic forces.”<sup>7</sup> And further Nedobrovo writes: “apropos of the repellent force of some points contained in the papers, V.I. Ivanov declared that he had intentionally introduced this force into his thoughts.”<sup>8</sup> In his letter from April 16, 1912, Blok reproached Belyj for conducting polemics with Gumilev

“between the lines”. In spite of Blok’s admission, “can I not know the depths of his personal truths”, this letter contains quite sharp attacks on Ivanov. Such hidden polemics were undoubtedly present in the papers, although it is not the main content of ‘Thoughts on Symbolism’.

The object of the polemics must have been comments made in the papers and in discussion of topics which became the leitmotifs of later Acmeist manifestos, which appeared only in 1913. Ivanov opened polemics in two directions. Firstly, he defended symbolist art in his own interpretation: “Ja ne simvolist, esli slova moi ravny sebe, esli oni ne écho drugich zvukov, o kotorych ne znaeš’, kak o Duche, otkuda oni prichodjat i kuda uchodjat” (“I am not a Symbolist if my words are equal to themselves, if they are not an echo of other sounds, about which, as of the Spirit, you do not know whence they come and whither they go”).<sup>9</sup>

This is a direct negation of Gumilev’s basic thesis that “the word must mean only what it means”.<sup>10</sup> If the question is posed in this way the Acmeists’ subsequent declaration, “that means we are not Symbolists”, seems quite just. Secondly, Ivanov speaks against attributing to Symbolism features that it does not exhibit in its true, “realistic” incarnation:

Истинному символизму свойственнее изображать земное, нежели небесное: ему важна не сила звука, а мощь отзвука [...] Истинный символизм не отрывается от земли [...] Он не подменяет вещей и, говоря о море, понимает земное море, и, говоря о высях снеговых [...] понимает вершины земных гор.

(“It is more characteristic of true Symbolism to depict the earthly than the heavenly: it considers the power of the echo to be more important than the volume of the sound. [...] True Symbolism does not tear itself from the earth [...] It does not falsify things; when it speaks of the sea it means the earthly sea, and when it speaks of the snowy heights [...] it means the peaks of earthly mountains.”)<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, judging by Gumilev’s subsequent theoretical writings, it is precisely this point that he did not want or was unable to assimilate.

Blok found that in ‘Thoughts on Symbolism’ Ivanov made exclamations about catharsis “in exactly the same tone in 1912 as in 1905”.<sup>12</sup> This accusation of Ivanov’s repeating himself is unjust. Blok also was unable or unwilling to see that ‘Thoughts on Symbolism’ was one of Ivanov’s most profound contemplations of this subject. Moreover, ‘Thoughts on Symbolism’ is distinguished by the introduction of new accents, themes and ideas, absent in his ‘Zavety simvolizma’ (‘The Testaments of Symbolism’), although rooted in his meditations on drama and choral action from the first decade of the century, which were now presented in another key of the Sym-

bolist teaching and concerned a rethinking of the interrelationship between the creative and receptive agents. The lyrical incantations of the first section shift the focus from “poet, singer and sage” to “listener”. Further, Ivanov writes:

Символизм означает отношение и само по себе произведение символическое как отделенный от субъекта объект, существовать не может [...] О символизме можно говорить, лишь изучая произведение в его отношении к субъекту воспринимающему и к субъекту творящему, как к целостным личностям.

(“Symbolism denotes a relation [which one might add should be seen in the wider context of ‘sobornost’ – V.B.], and a symbolic work cannot exist by itself, as an object removed from the subject. [...] Symbolism arises only when one studies a work in its relation to the integral personalities of the perceiving subject and the creative subject.”)<sup>13</sup>

From this follow important conclusions. Firstly, “Symbolism lies outside of aesthetic categories”,<sup>14</sup> representing not a literary movement, but an attitude towards the world. Secondly, “every work of art can be evaluated from the viewpoint of Symbolism”.<sup>15</sup> Here we see the full theoretical grounding of the hallowed Symbolist tradition of seeing Symbolists in such distant figures as Aeschylus or Dante. Thirdly, “Symbolism is tied to the integrity of the personality, both that of the artist himself and that of the person experiencing the artistic revelation”.<sup>16</sup> Here art is postulated as “syzygy”, to use one of Ivanov’s favorite words, combining souls like Plato’s Eros. Moreover, insofar as “Symbolism denotes the relation of the artistic object to a double subject, creative and perceiving”, each of these elements of “syzygy” is equally dependent on whether the given work of art is indeed symbolic or not. Here we are dealing with a formulation of the very essence of Ivanov’s critical method, in other words with an affirmation that a work may be symbolic regardless of the intentions and aspirations of its creator, and that therefore the critic must use various kinds of analysis, including an analysis of his own perception, to discover this symbolic nature. Ivanov consistently applied this method to such dissimilar artists as Goethe, Dostoevskij and Lermontov.

One cannot but be amazed at the revolutionary nature of this approach, and its similarity to certain recent trends of post-modernist and post-structuralist poetics. The difference, of course, is that the latter rest on the belief in a relative and arbitrary sovereign consciousness, whereas Vjačeslav Ivanov based himself on absolute categories that are maximally transcendent, and he did not tolerate reticence on this account. Thus he immediately corrected the afore-mentioned thesis concerning the possibility of defining a work as symbolic on the sole opinion of its perceiver with the following antithesis: “S

drugoj storony, issledujuja otnoženie proizvedenija k celostnoj ličnosti ego tvorca, my možem, nezavisimo ot sobstvennogo vosprijatija, ustanovit' simvoličeskij karakter proizvedenija" ("On the other hand, by studying the relationship of a work to the integral personality of its creator we can establish the symbolic character of a work independent of our own perception").<sup>17</sup> The synthetic definition of symbolism as "creative interaction"<sup>18</sup> represents the basis of Symbolism as a world-view, the kind of theoretical achievement that the Acmeists were unable to achieve with respect to their own movement. As we shall see, an elaboration of this idea would later allow Ivanov to include Acmeism, and also even Futurism, into his universal doctrine of art.

The positions of the Acmeists and Symbolists were consolidated in March and April of 1912. The journal *Trudy i dni* was initiated as a fundamentally Symbolist organ in opposition to the more "Acmeized" *Apollon*.<sup>19</sup> On the Acmeists' side, a program was announced at the March 1, 1912 meeting of the "Guild of Poets", a program aimed at a break with the Symbolists. Michail Kuzmin, who was present at this meeting, noted in his diary: "Gorodeckij and Gummi pronounced theories [that were] not completely articulate."<sup>20</sup>

This second round of the conflict between the Acmeists and Symbolists was essentially cut short by Vjačeslav Ivanov's unexpected departure for Italy in May 1912. Ivanov's absence, however, seems to have allowed the Acmeists to unleash a feverish activity. In his review of Gorodeckij's *Iva*, Gumilev first used the word "Acmeist" in print.<sup>21</sup> October saw the publication of the first issue of the journal *Giperborej*, conceived of and produced as an exclusively Acmeist organ, despite the editors' assurances to the contrary. The "Guild of Poets" gradually replaced the "Academy of Poetry", which had faded after the departure of its head. Ivanov's absence also seems to have paralyzed Blok, who soon began to feel annoyance at Acmeism. On November 21, Blok noted in his diary that he had spoken about this to Gorodeckij "openly, cursing and not taking seriously what he [Gorodeckij] considers a serious and important matter".<sup>22</sup> Later, on December 17, Blok writes: "I shall have to do something about this impertinent Acmeism and Adamism."<sup>23</sup> Two days after this notation Gorodeckij read his scandalous address in the "Brodjačaja sobaka", sermonizing the "birth of Adam". Aleksandra Čebotarevskaja belatedly informed Ivanov of this in a letter from March 3, 1913:

Городецкий, кроме того, что он ведет кампанию за акмеизм, позволял себе неоднократно вылазки чисто личные против Вас, Блока, публично. В подвале, читая об акмеизме, он разбирал один Ваш сонет из 'Золотых завес', на каждом шагу

спрашивая, “что это значит”, “какой тут смысл”, а также одно стихотворение Блока, над которым прямо издевался.

(“Gorodeckij, as well as carrying on a campaign for Acmeism, has repeatedly permitted himself purely personal attacks on yourself, Blok, – in public. When reading about Acmeism in that basement, he analyzed one of your sonnets from ‘The Golden Veils’, asking on each step: ‘what does this mean’, ‘what is the sense of this’, and also a poem of Blok’s whom he simply ridiculed.”)<sup>24</sup> Further she informs Ivanov of an occurrence of February 1913, when Dmitrij Filosofov was invited by the Acmeists to chair one of their meetings, at which they “began to curse Symbolism and its representatives so indecently” that Filosofov “indignantly told them that they were dishonorable people who themselves had grown up in Symbolism and now, due to some personal ‘psychology’, profit, etc. were attacking an utterly innocent movement; he refused to serve any further as chairman and left”.<sup>25</sup> The Acmeist movement enjoyed a definite success, however, about which Vasilij Gippius, a constant participant in the “Guild of Poets”, recalled:

Публика [...] посмеялась над словами “цех поэтов”, “акмеизм” и т. д., но, в общем, приняла новаторов с сочувствием куда более искренним, чем их учителей символистов. Это и понятно. Уклон к реализму был публике по душе: символизм с его религиозным и мистико-философским одушевлением должен был остаться поэзией для немногих.

(“The public [...] ridiculed the words ‘Guild of Poets’, ‘Acmeism’, etc., but in general it welcomed the innovators with much more sincere sympathy than their teachers the Symbolists. This is understandable. The [Acmeists’] tendency towards realism was closer to the public, and Symbolism with its religious and mystico-philosophical animation was fated to remain poetry for the few.”)<sup>26</sup>

By this time the two major Acmeist manifestos had been published in the first issue of *Apollon* for 1913: Gumilev’s ‘Nasledie simvolizma i akmeizma’ (‘The Heritage of Symbolism and Acmeism’), and Gorodeckij’s ‘Nekotorye tečenija v sovremennoj russkoj poézii’ (‘Some Tendencies in Modern Russian Poetry’).<sup>27</sup> Both manifestos undoubtedly contain a certain amount of theoretical muddle. Thus, for example, Gumilev’s text makes clear that, despite Ivanov’s exhortations in articles and lectures, he still did not have a correct understanding of the theory of correspondence that lay at the basis of “realistic Symbolism” and which was tied to the famous slogan “a realibus ad realiora”.<sup>28</sup> Thus we read, for example:

Французский символизм, родоначальник всего символизма, как школы, выдвинул [...] пресловутую “теорию соответст-

вий". Последнее выдает головой его не романскую, и следовательно, не национальную, наносную почву; [...] Символическая слиянность всех образов и вещей, изменчивость их облика могла родиться только в туманной мгле германских лесов.

("French Symbolism, the forefather of all Symbolism as a doctrine, put forth [...] the so-called 'theory of correspondences'. The latter utterly gives away its non-Romance, and therefore non-national, imposed soil [...] the symbolic unity of all images and things, the variability of their appearance, could only be engendered in the nebulous gloom of Germanic forests.")<sup>29</sup>

Of course there can be no question of any "symbolic unity of all images and things" or "variability of their appearance" in Ivanov's Symbolism. In variability, "illusionism", Ivanov recognized the pathos of "idealistic Symbolism, for which 'all phenomenal' is the illusion of Maya".<sup>30</sup>

To characterize the theoretical level of Gorodeckij's manifesto it is sufficient to cite his declaration that Vjačeslav Ivanov consistently "introduced into Symbolism mystical experience, religion, theosophy and spiritism".<sup>31</sup> As a literary curiosity one might point to a claim Gorodeckij made in his 1926 memoirs of Esenin, that the latter was "a fully consistent pupil of Vjačeslav Ivanov": "Esenin's death was a practical application of Vjačeslav Ivanov's formula 'a realibus ad realiora', – from the real to higher reality, that is from the earth to the other world."<sup>32</sup> Much more significant was Mandel'stam's article 'O sobesednike' ('On the Interlocutor'), the main thesis of which – "there is no lyricism without dialogue"<sup>33</sup> – could be included fully into Ivanov's context. Mandel'stam was developing a train of thought parallel to that of Ivanov, leading to the conclusion that "poetry as a whole is always directed towards a more or less unknown addressee, whose existence the poet cannot doubt without doubting himself".<sup>34</sup> A more interesting formulation is the following: "the taste of communicability is inversely proportionate to our actual knowledge of the interlocutor, and directly proportionate to our desire to interest him in ourselves."<sup>35</sup>

Only on a superficial level does this seem to contradict what Ivanov had written in 'Mysli o simvolizme' ('Thoughts on Symbolism'): "So, we, Symbolists, do not exist – if there are no Symbolists listening."<sup>36</sup> For if Symbolism is conceivable as an eternal world-view, the Symbolist artist, striving to "interest [the listener] with himself" cannot doubt the existence of this interlocutor (one of Ivanov's favorite words), without "doubting himself". This is what Ivanov is essentially claiming in 'Thoughts on Symbolism'. "Is Symbolism dead?", our contemporaries ask. 'Of course it is dead!' answer some. It is for them to know whether Symbolism has died for them. We, however, the dead, bear witness by whispering to those feasting at our funeral repast that death does not exist."<sup>37</sup>

Mandel'shtam's second article in 1913, 'François Villon', contains Acmeist positions, primarily the stress on architectonics, in such a general tone that it is impossible to consider it polemical. *Apollon* published in its third issue a wide selection of poems by Gumilev, Achmatova, Zenkevič, Narbut, Gorodeckij and Mandel'shtam, as a presentation of the new Acmeist movement. Another selection with a similar goal of presentation was published in the May issue of Ivanov-Razumnik's journal *Zavety*, which generally held an anti-Symbolist orientation.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the entire July issue of *Giperborej* was devoted to the publication of Gumilev's single-act play *Akteon*, which, as Michael Basker has shown, was also conceived as a kind of Acmeist manifesto, although there is no proof that anyone perceived it as such at the time.<sup>39</sup>

Vjačeslav Ivanov remained abroad until the autumn of 1913. Gorodeckij visited him in Rome, whether to seek reconciliation or for reconnaissance. In Petersburg, Blok's irritation with the Acmeists continued to grow, but neither he nor his Symbolist circle undertook any discernible anti-Acmeist acts. Judging by several diary entries, it is not out of the question that this caused him to see Ivanov's presence as desirable: "Vjačeslav Ivanov has not returned, is translating Aeschylus in Rome [...] My impressions of recent days: hatred for the Acmeists."<sup>40</sup> With regard to Gorodeckij's return Blok wrote: "I asked him about Vjačeslav Ivanov, about Italy [...] Vjačeslav Ivanov cursed him even more [in Rome] than I."<sup>41</sup>

There are grounds for believing, however, that during his stay abroad Ivanov's own interests changed somewhat. He returned to serious scholarly work, forming the foundation of his future study *Dionis i Pradionisijstvo* (*Dionysus and Predionysianism*).<sup>42</sup> He returned not to Petersburg, but to Moscow, which gathered a new circle of people around him, in which philosophical and religious, rather than literary interests were dominant. Ivanov's next works were devoted to the underlying issues of creative psychology ('O granicah iskusstva' ['On the Limits of Art']) and his redoubled interest in the mystical dialectics of emotional life and the synthesis of arts ('Čurljanis' ['Čurlionis']), possibly under the influence of his friendship with Skrjabin.

All of this leads one to suspect that by this time Ivanov had inwardly resolved his relationship with the young literary movements, putting them in the context of the ideas expressed in 'Mysli o simvolizme' ('Thoughts on Symbolism'). He put the aspects of Acmeism he found constructive to a Symbolist interpretation, discarding the rest as superfluous. Moreover, one feels that his view of the problem of Symbolism attains its final form, which explains his gradual shift away from its thematics.<sup>43</sup> This was the situational and ideological context of his speech on Symbolism at the Kalašnikov Exchange on January 20, 1914.

We have a stenogram of this address, published in the afore-mentioned journal of Ivanov-Razumnik *Zavety*.<sup>44</sup> Ivanov reworked his speech for the



excursus 'O sekte i dogmate' ('On Sect and Dogma'), appended to 'Thoughts on Symbolism' in the collection *Borozdy i meži* (*Furrows and Boundaries*), and excluded several interesting nuances present in the *Zavety* text.

The dispute of January 20, 1914, was apparently seen originally as a somewhat belated reaction by the Symbolist camp to the noisy and partly unanswered appearances of representatives of new literary groups throughout the previous season. One feels that, despite Blok's departure from literary polemics and Ivanov's long absence, by the end of 1913 Symbolism had slowly but surely mobilized sufficient strength. This was done, however, largely due to the zeal of secondary figures like Anastasija Čebotarevskaja and Georgij Čulkov, who seemed to be rushing into battle in order to revive the polemic with the Acmeists and Futurists. According to a newspaper account, in the discussion following Čulkov's polemic lecture in Tenišev College, entitled 'Are we waking or not',<sup>45</sup> "Mssrs S.M. Gorodeckij, N.S. Gumilev, and O.Ė. Mandel'stam broke their spears in defense of Acmeism, delimiting themselves [...] from Symbolism and Futurism, but the limits of Acmeism in their accounts seemed symbolic."<sup>46</sup>

The Symbolists, however, seemed less concerned with Acmeism than with Futurism, which greatly influenced the conception and conduction of the dispute, which turned from being a "summing-up" to a much more programmatic event. Thus, for example, Anastasija Čebotarevskaja wrote to Ivanov in her invitation letter of December 16, 1913: "The ideological goal is to formulate the positive contribution made to literature by the so-called Symbolist movement, a contribution that is now being partly silenced in the general muddle or being 'expropriated' by the Mssrs Futurists."<sup>47</sup> Later, however, she informs Ivanov that "it has been decided to reject that term 'summation'".<sup>48</sup> Moreover the wide publicizing of the dispute was bound to lend it a somewhat commercial status in the eyes of the public; a recent commentator has noted that "the notices for the dispute [...] looked like advertisements for a parade of Symbolists".<sup>49</sup>

It is significant, however, that Vjačeslav Ivanov had to be persuaded to participate in the dispute. Apart from the two afore-mentioned letters, we know of at least two other letters from Čebotarevskaja and an analogous letter from Sologub.<sup>50</sup> It is likely that the deciding factor in Ivanov's agreement to participate (which he gave on January 8, 1914) were Merežkovskij's renewed attacks, touching upon the artist's social responsibility, a subject important to both.<sup>51</sup> He refused to serve as chairman, however, giving this privilege to Sologub.

The note on the dispute published together with the stenogram of Ivanov's speech in the journal *Zavety* tells us that essentially "there was no dispute, only the exposition of the Symbolists' own opinion of Symbolism from various points of view",<sup>52</sup> and the newspaper *Novoe vremja* characterized the event as "a thorough muddle". The speeches, however, must have made an

impression on the opponents, as the anti-Symbolist journal *Zavety* noted: “The thoughts on Symbolism of such major representatives as F[edor] Sologub and V[jačeslav] Ivanov cannot help but be profoundly interesting and instructive [...] even if one must disagree with them.”<sup>53</sup>

Although it is natural to ask whether the dispute marked the success or failure of the Symbolists, from the very first lines of the stenogram of Ivanov’s speech it becomes clear that this question is posed incorrectly. He begins with the paradoxical declaration that “ja vynes to vpečatlenie, što bol’šej čast’ju nas, simbolistov, chvalili, provozglašali naše napravlenie pobedonosnym. Ja ne znaju ničego po éтому povodu. Čto kasaetsja simbolizma ne našego napravlenija, [...] to on pobedil” (“I have formed the impression that we Symbolists have mostly been praised, our movement declared victorious. I know nothing on this account. As far as the Symbolism of the opposing movement is concerned, [...] it has won”).<sup>54</sup>

Further Ivanov develops intuitions expressed already in his early articles and clearly formulated in ‘Thoughts on Symbolism’. This is the central part of the speech which Ivanov laid at the basis of the previously mentioned excursus ‘On Sect and Dogma’:

Итак, Данте символист! Что это значит в смысле самоопределения русской символической школы? Это значит, что мы упраздняем себя как школу. Упраздняем не потому, чтобы от чего-либо отрекались и думали ступить на иной путь: напротив, мы остаемся вполне верными себе и раз начатой нами деятельностью. Но секты мы не хотим; исповедание же наше – соборно.

(“So Dante is a Symbolist! What does this mean for the self-determination of the Russian symbolic school? It means that we are abolishing ourselves as a school. We are abolishing ourselves not because we have disavowed something and have decided to set upon a new path: on the contrary, we remain fully true to ourselves and the activity we have begun. But we do not want a sect; our confession is catholic.”)<sup>55</sup>

Then Symbolism is postulated as an artistic world-view independent of artistic movements and history:

В самом деле, прямой символист заботится, конечно, не о судьбе того, что обычно называют школою или направлением, определяя это понятие хронологическими границами и именами деятелей, – он заботится о том, чтобы твердо установить некий общий принцип. Принцип этот – символизм всякого истинного искусства. Мы убеждены, что этой цели достигли, что символизм отныне и навсегда утвержден, как принцип всякого истинного искусства, – хотя бы со вре-

менем оказалось, что именно мы, его утвердившие, были вместе с тем наименее достойными его выразителями.

("Indeed, a sincere Symbolist is concerned, of course, not with the fate of what is usually called a school or movement, defining this concept by chronological limits and the names of those active in it; he is concerned with establishing some general principle. This principle is the symbolism of any true art. We are convinced that we have achieved this goal, that Symbolism is from now on affirmed forever, even if with time it turns out that we who affirmed it were at the same time its least worthy exponents.")<sup>56</sup>

Then Ivanov compares Symbolism as the basis of all true art to the formulation of Church dogma. Those who pronounced Orthodox teaching looked on their predecessors "as teachers who had long marked and prepared the true confession, or else who had held to it in silence". Thus Aeschylus, Dante and Goethe are understood as Symbolists, and thus Ivanov can proclaim: "It is not our school, not our skills and canons that I defend, but I consider that by praising Symbolism I am proclaiming a dogma of artistic Orthodoxy."<sup>57</sup> The text of the stenogram then contains a portion dropped in the printed 'Excursus':

Но после того, как утверждено искусство как символизм, должны были прекратиться все толки о том, кончилась школа или не кончилась, каков специальный канон символистов и т. п., ибо если самое искусство символично, то может быть символизм футуристический, если футуризм окажется чем-нибудь достойным внимания.

("After art is affirmed as Symbolism, all talk about whether the movement has ended or not, what the particular canon of the Symbolists was, etc., should have ceased, for if art itself is symbolic, then there can be classical Symbolism, Romantic Symbolism, even Futurist Symbolism, if Futurism turns out to be something worthy of attention.")<sup>58</sup>

Further Ivanov declares: "Nado različat' vozraženija, napravlennye na školu, ili na ee predstavitelej, i vozraženija, napravlennye na samyj dogmat, samyj princip, inače my budem putat'sja" ("One has to distinguish objections directed at the movement or its representatives from objections directed at the dogma itself, the very principle; otherwise we shall get confused").<sup>59</sup>

In this light Ivanov's final view of Acmeism is clarified: together with "Idealistic Symbolism" he understood it as an "aesthetic heresy".

By this time the Acmeists' failure to create a "new world-view" had become self-evident. They did not offer any new ideas capable of challenging the "principle" of Symbolism on a fundamental level (let us recall Mandel'stam's opposition of "ideas" to "tastes"), and therefore they ceased to present any theoretical or polemic interest for Ivanov. The criticisms of the

Acmeists were understood to refer only to a technical aspect of poetry without presenting any danger for the dogma itself:

Перестать быть символистом для того, чтобы сделаться наивным и жизнерадостным акмеистом, которые говорят, что если вы рассуждаете о Боге, о душе, то это плохо, а если о каких-то экзотических странах, то это хорошо, – это простое ребячество.

(“To stop being a Symbolist in order to become a naive and buoyant Acmeist, who say that it is bad if you talk about God and about the soul, but good if you talk about some exotic countries, – this is simply childishness.”)<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand Ivanov creates a situation in which the best representatives and works of the Acmeist movement could be found commensurable to the Symbolist Symbol of Faith. Blok once asked Gorodeckij: “Why do you want ‘to be called’ something? You are no different from us,”<sup>61</sup> and this opinion was supported by many contemporaries.<sup>62</sup>

It is characteristic that both in the stenogram and in the ‘Excursus’ more space is given to the “utilitarian heresy” of Vladimir Merežkovskij than to the “aesthetic heresy” of Acmeism. Merežkovskij’s writings presented not a harmless attack on Ivanov’s dogma, but an attempt to distort this dogma by substituting a mortal and human cause for the “immortal and divine cause” that Symbolism “craves”.<sup>63</sup> Ivanov’s entire chain of reasoning serves to suspend dialectically the entire matter of the “crisis of Symbolism”.

Naturally, later, in conditions of revolution, war and destruction, Ivanov could wistfully say to his Baku Eckermann, Moisej Al’tman: “Ach, kak vremja vse obernulo. Kogda my, simvolisty načali, nam predstavljalos’ soveršenno inoe. I vot nas uže ob”javili otošedšimi” (“Oh, how time has upset everything. When we ‘Symbolists’ began we saw everything in another light. And now we have been declared passé”).<sup>64</sup> But this did not prevent him, even in Roman exile on the verge of another world catastrophe, from retaining faith in the main work of his life and “foreseeing in the distant or not-so-distant future and in new forms a purer appearance of “eternal Symbolism”.<sup>65</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Valerij Blinov, 'Vjačeslav Ivanov i voznikovenie akmeizma', *Cultura e memoria: atti del terzo simposio internazionale dedicato a Vjačeslav Ivanov*, a cura di Fausto Malcovati, 2 vols., Pavia 1988, 2, pp. 13-25.
- <sup>2</sup> O.Ė. Mandel'stam, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 4 vols., New York-Paris 1966-1981, 2, p. 299.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, p. 299.
- <sup>4</sup> See diary entry for April 17; A.A. Blok, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 8 vols., Moskva-Leningrad 1963, 7, p. 140. Hereafter quoted as SS. For an analysis of the relationship between Ivanov and Blok see E.L. Bel'kind, 'Blok i Vjačeslav Ivanov', *Blokovskij sbornik*, Tartu 1972, 2, pp. 365-384.
- <sup>5</sup> Blok, SS, 8, pp. 383, 386; see also Aleksandr Blok, 'Novye materialy i issledovanija', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 92, 3, Moskva 1980, p. 382; hereafter quoted as LN.
- <sup>6</sup> Both articles were published in the first issue of *Trudy i dni*.
- <sup>7</sup> *Trudy i dni*, 2, 1912, p. 27. See also an entry in Kuzmin's diary from the day after the meeting: "There was a scandal in the Academy. Whom shall I choose? The Symbolists or the 'Workshop'?", A. Morozov, 'Mandel'stam v zapisjach dnevnika S.P. Kablukova', *Vestnik RSCHD*, 129, Paris 1979, p. 145.
- <sup>8</sup> *Sobranie sočinenij*, p. 27.
- <sup>9</sup> Vjačeslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 2, Brussels 1974, p. 609; hereafter quoted as Ivanov, SS.
- <sup>10</sup> See also Blok's diary entry for April 17, 1912 in Blok, SS, 7, p. 140.
- <sup>11</sup> Ivanov, SS, 2, p. 611.
- <sup>12</sup> Afore-cited letter to Belyj; Blok, SS, 8, p. 386.
- <sup>13</sup> Ivanov, SS, 2, p. 609. A kind of response to this train of thought might be contained in Mandel'stam's article 'O sobesednike', *Apollon*, 1913, no. 2, pp. 49-54.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 610.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> See the introduction by Ol'ga Deschartes in Ivanov, SS, 1, 818. *Trudy i dni* did not last long in this role.
- <sup>20</sup> Morozov, 'Mandel'stam v zapisjach dnevnika S.P. Kablukova', p. 145.
- <sup>21</sup> N. Gumilev, *Sobranie sočinenij*, 4 vols., Washington, 1962-1968, 4, p. 308. Hereafter quoted as Gumilev, SS. The review was printed in *Apollon*, 1912, no. 9.
- <sup>22</sup> Blok, SS, 7, p. 181.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, p. 193.
- <sup>24</sup> LN, p. 413.

- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415.
- <sup>27</sup> Nikolaj Gumilev, 'Nasledie simvolizma i akmeizm', *Apollon*, 1913, no. 1, pp. 42-45; Sergej Gorodeckij, 'Nekotorye tečenija v sovremennoj ruskoj poëzii', *ibid.*, pp. 46-50.
- <sup>28</sup> See Nadežda Mandel'stam's words *in sancta simplicitate*: "As is often the case, he spent much time studying the articles and theories of the Symbolists, and he kept on thinking that he was not fully grasping something in them," Nadežda Mandel'stam, *Vtoraja kniga*, Paris 1972, p. 38.
- <sup>29</sup> Gumilev, *SS*, 4, p. 172.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>31</sup> Gorodeckij, 'Nekotorye tečenija', *Apollon*, 1913, no. 1, p. 46.
- <sup>32</sup> Sergej Gorodeckij, 'O Sergee Esenine: vospominanija', *Novyj mir*, 1926, no. 2, p. 143. This might confirm Nadežda Mandel'stam's claim that Gorodeckij experienced a premature "marazm", see N. Mandel'stam, *Vtoraja kniga*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>33</sup> Osip Mandel'stam, 'O sobesednike', *Apollon*, 1913, no. 2, p. 51. Mandel'stam's immediate target was Bal'mont, and Ivanov could not have but agreed with this polemic with an "idealistic Symbolist".
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>36</sup> Ivanov, *SS*, 2, p. 610.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> See Blok's notation on March 10, 1914; in Aleksandr Blok, *Zapisnye knižki*, Moskva 1965, p. 215.
- <sup>39</sup> Michael Basker, 'Gumilyov's "Akteon": A Forgotten Manifesto of Acmeism', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 63, 1985, pp. 498-517.
- <sup>40</sup> Diary entry of April 12, 1913; Blok, *SS*, 7, p. 207.
- <sup>41</sup> Diary entry of April 20, 1913, *ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Ivanov, *SS*, 1, p. 141. The fundamental article 'On the Essence of Tragedy', published in the November-December 1912 issue of *Trudy i dni* is a natural parallel to this work.
- <sup>43</sup> The Symbolist aspects of his subsequent works and addresses (the lectures 'On the Limits of Art' on January 22 and 'The Aesthetic Norm of the Theater' on January 30; see the commentary in Ivanov, *SS*, 2, pp. 820, 689) do not appear to develop the Symbolist doctrine, with Symbolism present in them only insofar as it might be relevant to the main theme.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Simvolisty o simvolizme', *Zavety*, 1914, no. 2, pp. 80-84.
- <sup>45</sup> Later published as the article 'The Justification of Symbolism'.
- <sup>46</sup> *LN*, p. 429.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* See also Blok's notation from January 20, 1914, Blok, *Zapisnye knižki*, p. 202.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

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- 51 *Ibid.*; see the quotation from Čebotarevskaja's letter of January 6 and also Ivanov's letter to Anastasija Čebotarevskaja from January 3, 1914; Vjačeslav Ivanov, 'Pis'ma k F. Sologubu i An.N. Čebotarevskoj', *Ežegodnik Rukopisnogo otdela Puškinskogo Doma*, Leningrad 1976, pp. 145-146.
- 52 *Zavety*, p. 71.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 55 Ivanov, *SS*, 2, p. 613.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 In the stenogram this phrase is much harsher: "I [...] am not inclined to defend our movement" (*Zavety*, p. 82).
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 61 Blok, *Zapisnye knižki*, Diary entry from April 20, 1913.
- 62 See the letter to Gumilev from one I.M. Šapiro from January 5, 1914: "I am only unable to understand why this is not Symbolism but Acmeism [...] I see nothing that I could call Acmeism [...] I sincerely request that you not refuse to send me a detailed explanation: what is Acmeism?" (Gumilev, *Neizdannoe i nesobrannoe*, Paris 1986, p. 143).
- 63 Ivanov, *SS*, 2, p. 614.
- 64 Entry from 17 January 1921; M.S. Al'tman, *Razgovory s Vjačeslavom Ivanovym*, St. Peterburg 1995, p. 27.
- 65 Ivanov, *SS*, 2, p. 667.