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Love, Will and Becoming in Vyacheslav Ivanov and Mikhail Bakhtin

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the ideas of the poet Vyacheslav Ivanov and the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. Compared mostly with regard to the Dostoevskian novel, these two authors prove to be connected by a more complex intellectual relationship, as the commentators of Bakhtin's *Collected Works* have demonstrated. The present paper continues this broad-context discussion by revealing the principal difference between Ivanov's and Bakhtin's worldviews as it stems from the different orders of dependence of love and volition. The framework for comparison is provided by Max Scheler's essay 'Love and Cognition'. The primacy of the will causes constant becoming of the human subject in Ivanov's poetic universe, mostly presented as self-surpassing. The primacy of love in Bakhtin's philosophy of the deed results in the 'becoming' of the other, primarily in the form of the growing value of the beloved, rather than in the form of his or her internal existential transformation.

KEYWORDS

Bakhtin; Vyacheslav Ivanov;
love; volition; Scheler;
becoming

Introduction

It seems an established fact in the Russian history of ideas that the works of the poet and critic Vyacheslav Ivanov had an important influence on the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, as an intellectual impetus for Bakhtin's own thought. The discussion of diverse links with Ivanov's ideas occupies a significant place in the commentary part of Bakhtin's Russian *Collected Works* (vols. 1–2). The Bakhtin scholar Matthias Freise issued a tentative remark, albeit not developed, that 'Bakhtin [had] found more stimulus for his aesthetics in Ivanov's 'mystical realism' than he [had] wished to admit on the occasion of his argument with Ivanov's Dostoevsky essay in *The Problems of [Dostoevsky's] Art*'.¹ The critic Lena Szilard forthrightly suggests that Bakhtin 'translated' Ivanov's ideas into 'the language of the next generation' of Russian intellectuals.² Besides, Bakhtin himself, in the lecture on Ivanov, calls him a 'mentor' who had a 'colossal significance'.³

At the same time, it has been recognized that numerous parallels obvious in these authors' texts should not conceal the essential difference of their systems of ideas.⁴ The present study seeks to contribute to this statement by pointing up the discrepancy that underlies the ways in which Ivanov and Bakhtin tackled the key themes on the intellectual

horizon of their epoch. I set out to demonstrate that this divergence mostly consists in the different orders of dependence of love, cognition and volition and in the different interpretations of becoming. The framework of this inquiry is Max Scheler's study on the primacy of love, cognition or volition in some of the world's most significant meta-physical systems.

Becoming of the self vs. becoming of the deed

Bakhtin's explicit polemic with Ivanov on the issue of Dostoevsky's novels determines the focus on the issues of poetics and of the history of ideas in the comparisons of these authors. However, it seems useful to look at a different passage in Bakhtin's 1929 book than where he mentions Ivanov. Bakhtin addresses here the issue of *becoming* in Dostoevsky's novels, which is the starting point of our discussion.

Not a single novel by Dostoevsky depicts a dialectic development [becoming] of the unified spirit; there is no becoming there at all, no growth, in exactly the same way as there is nothing of this kind in the tragedy (in this respect, the analogy of Dostoevsky's novels with the tragedy is correct). Each novel portrays the opposition, unresolved dialectically, of many consciousnesses that do not merge into the unity of the becoming spirit. [...] Neither does the author's spirit develop, develop [become] within the novel itself, but, like in Dante's world, it either contemplates or becomes one of the participants. In the novel, the characters' worlds engage in eventful mutual relationships, but these relationships, as we have already said, least of all can be presented as those of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.⁵

While the immediate purpose of this fragment is to refute Boris Engelhardt's suggestion that there is a dialectic development in Dostoevsky's novels, the concept of becoming is the major theory whose relevance to the Dostoevskian novel Bakhtin rejects in the opening chapter of his book, and his polemic involves a broader circle of authors. Apart from the evident reference to the Hegelian dialectic, Bakhtin also indirectly points to Goethe, with his predilection for linking ideas as subsequent stages of a single development, in Bakhtin's own characteristic.⁶ The remark about the analogy of Dostoevsky's novels with the tragedy transparently alludes to Ivanov's essay 'Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy'. Ivanov, who had a reputation of Goethe's 'spiritual disciple', gives much attention to becoming in both his poetry and the critical essays, a fact foregrounded in Bakhtin's lecture.⁷ In this context, Bakhtin's remark that neither the novel nor the tragedy depicts becoming aims also against Ivanov's argumentation.⁸ It is therefore advantageous for the further discussion first to discriminate between Ivanov's and Bakhtin's views of becoming.

In Ivanov's oeuvre, the Classical opposition of Being⁹ and becoming receives the modern tenor. It is primarily visible in his formula '*fio, ergo non sum*' ('I become, therefore I am not'), which first appeared as the title of a two-stanza poem in the poetic collection *Transparency (Prozrachnost)*.¹⁰ The essay 'Athena's Spear' ('*Kop'e Afiny*') transforms the poem's intuition into a prosaic text:¹¹ 'Who wills his own *self* knows that he has not gained it. *Fio, ergo non sum*. I become – thus, I am not. Living in time is dying. Living is a chain of my doubles that deny, mortify one another'.¹² Ivanov's polemic with the Cartesian principle '*cogito, ergo sum*' appears to build considerably on Nietzsche's refutation of

the solidity of the self. One could take as an instance this passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

When I disassemble the process expressed in the proposition 'I think', I get a number of venturesome statements that are hard, perhaps, impossible to substantiate: for example, that it is I who thinks; that there must be something at all that thinks ...¹³

Consequently, Ivanov's coinage conveys, as he also expands in the later essay 'Thou Art' ('Ty esi'), that the epistemological search has resulted in the dispersal of the self,¹⁴ which can be now represented only as a stream of autonomous acts of consciousness that infinitely replace each other without effecting any positive change.

Along with this 'horizontal' and chiefly negative becoming, the poet moves on in the next paragraph to the image of a scant being (*me-on*) seeking to attain a fuller existence.

There is no need for an excessive predilection for a metaphysical way of thinking in order to expose life as becoming and consequently non-Being; [...] to realize that Being is the synthetic condition of becoming and that there exists, for those who search, [...] a certain Self¹⁵ inside me, as the postulate of my non-self, or the self of the me-on.¹⁶

In this text, Ivanov uses the word 'synthetic' in the Kantian sense of 'synthetic proposition' and thereby means that Being is something essentially different from and extrinsic to becoming. That is why Ivanov argues in 'Thou Art' that becoming in the negative aspect constitutes the precondition for the search for the Self of the macrocosm, which identifies with the entire Being because of its distinguished ontic nature.¹⁷ As a result, the aspiration towards Being in this religious-metaphysical meaning promises to revive and positively transform the subject, which allows Ivanov to use the Platonic metaphor of *ascent* to convey this gradual passage from non-Being to Being. It should be generally kept in mind that Ivanov's poetic universe mostly occupies the sphere of non-Being, between the ancient syncretism and the anticipated future synthesis; that is why becoming is a pervasive and traumatic experience here.

Bakhtin's usage of the word 'becoming' is remarkably less frequent. Beside the refutation of its relevance to the Dostoevskian novel, its terminologically significant occurrence in his early oeuvre is virtually limited to the first pages of the preserved fragment of the essay 'Toward a Philosophy of the Deed'. In this text, the usage of *stanovlenie* [becoming] and its verb form underlines Bakhtin's desire to oppose the dynamic nature of the actual deed to the static nature of its 'theoretical' representations. The word reaches its conceptual peak in the expression 'answerable risky open becoming-deed'.¹⁸ In the same context with Bakhtin's crucial concepts 'answerable' and 'open', becoming has a distinctly positive meaning.

If one looks to explain why the value of becoming in Bakhtin is at variance with Ivanov's construal, one should consider the notions with which becoming combines in Bakhtin's text – they are *deed*, *Being* and *event*. In Ivanov's texts, inversely, the word is most likely to refer to the human subject: 'I become', which is never the case in Bakhtin.¹⁹ The difference in usage reveals that in Bakhtin's philosophy the subject does not become, but rather participates in the 'eventness of Being'. The shift from the becoming of the self to the becoming of the event dismisses the relevance of the distinction between the 'horizontal' and the 'vertical' becoming foregrounded in Ivanov's work. Bakhtin stresses that an acting consciousness acts *entirely*: any deed is 'actually approximated to the boundaries of

Being-event'.²⁰ In other words, the deed belongs to the whole Being rather than to only one 'level' or aspect of it. This idea implies that any spiritual growth and development of the self, a person's transformative aspiration to a higher existence expressed in the word 'ascent', is for Bakhtin no more than a specific activity, which happens within the boundary of Being.²¹ That is why an independent interest in becoming is absent from his work: in a rational, non-mystic form, becoming is equal to the act of *decision-making* based on introspection (for instance, artistically represented in Leo Tolstoy's 'dialectic of the soul') or remembering (including Plato's *anamnesis*). In any case, Bakhtin's phenomenology never construes becoming as the movement from non-existence to existence. A few pages further, the philosopher also argues that the action in certain literary genres, especially the tragedy and Dante's *Comedy*, is also 'approximated to the ultimate boundaries of Being'.²² This explains the absence of becoming from both the tragedies and the Dostoevskian novels, which Bakhtin reiterates in his 1929 book. Critics who either perceive a hierarchy of levels in Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoevsky's world by analogy with Ivanov²³ or criticize him for the lack thereof²⁴ miss Bakhtin's crucial idea that the deed is located in the entirety of Being.

Further discussion shows that the hierarchized structure of Ivanov's poetic universe immediately requires becoming and predetermines his interpretation of love as a vehicle of the aspiring will. Inversely, the entirety of the deed in Bakhtin's philosophy is closely associated with the primacy of love in his philosophy.

The primacy of the will in Ivanov's poetic universe

Max Scheler's essay 'Love and Cognition' constitutes the framework within which Ivanov's and Bakhtin's ideas are compared in this discussion.²⁵ Scheler overviews the ways in which the large metaphysical systems, Hinduism, Classical Greek culture and Christianity, view the essential relations among three categories: love, cognition and volition. He points out that the Oriental and the Classical metaphysics champion spontaneous self-salvation by means of acquiring knowledge. That is why, in particular, Classical philosophy reduced love to a vehicle of cognition, which is especially manifest, as Scheler reminds, in the Platonic figure of the philosopher inspired by erotic love and aspiring to divine wisdom. The philosopher is opposed to both the ignorant person and the sage both of whom, though for different reasons, do not need knowledge and *therefore* cannot love.²⁶ On the contrary, early Christianity stressed the primacy of love.²⁷ Scheler maintains that 'religious cognition is in the first place no longer a spontaneous act of the individual, but that the first impetus for it comes from *God himself*'.²⁸ It follows that 'all crucial knowledge about God is brought by the *act of love* of his self-revelation in Christ as the creative ground of this act'.²⁹ That is why ideas, laws and reason were viewed as based entirely on the proactive divine deed of love.

Even though this early Christian perception was never to be developed into a system of philosophy, it informed the doctrine of Augustine who, as Scheler insists, considered love primary to *cognition* and *aspiration*.³⁰ In the further development of the historical Christianity, however, this initial perception was drastically re-interpreted by means of the concepts of the Greek metaphysics, with its inherent idea of ascension to the 'highest Being'. As a result, late medieval theology, represented by Thomas Aquinas, no longer considered love as an 'elementary fundamental spiritual act, but only [as] a particular activity of the

soul's *aspiring* and willing aptitude for action'.³¹ In brief, the relationship in which love for God implies love for other people and creatures ('to love the world in God', '*amare mundum in Deo*') was replaced by the idea of aspiration and ascension.³² This re-interpretation partially restored the significance of cognition and made love dependent on it; but still to a greater extent it stressed the primacy of volition, with the result that love was now viewed as a force that leads one *above* the community rather than extends and deepens one's relationship *with* it.

Scheler connects the growing dominance of the will in European culture with the influence of the 'working spirit', *Arbeitsgeist*, of the 'emerging bourgeoisie' in its competition with the 'priests' caste' and its contemplative-intellectual proclivities.³³ The 'working spirit' achieves a vigorous artistic representation in Goethe's *Faust*, from which Ivanov borrowed the expression, 'zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben' ('to aspire incessantly to the highest being'; *Faust*, part 2, act I, 'A Pleasant Landscape'), which he frequently quoted in his essays of the 1900s.³⁴ The nature of this aspiration is different from the ancient Greek ethos, where the erotic love is ultimately directed at the ideal Being, identical to complete wisdom, and potentially ceases when the 'aspirant' achieves this Being. Inversely, Goethe's protagonist is driven by the will that largely contains its impetus *in itself* and that therefore cannot cease even when he attains the celestial realms.

In Ivanov's perception the will is 'the personality's metaphysical core',³⁵ while cognition and love are viewed as its dependent functions. Despite his self-pledged predilection for Classical culture, Ivanov no longer prioritizes cognitive motivation as the driving force of love and becoming. The rejection of pure cognition as 'idealism' and the promotion of 'realism' based on the will is a dominating theme of Ivanov's meditations. In particular, 'Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy' contains the following assertion: 'Realism [...] is primarily an activity of the will, a qualitative disposition of its tension (tonos), and only partially certain irrational cognition'.³⁶ He decisively transplants the Platonic self-salvation process onto the volitive ground: 'The autonomy of the "practical reason", in the sense of the self-determining ultimate human will, is the starting point of all mystic energeticism, ditto, eroticism in the innermost meaning in which Socrates calls the philosopher an "eroticist"'.³⁷ As a result, the topographic metaphors 'horizontal' and 'vertical', 'ascent' and 'descent' no longer signify the objective dimensions of the world, as they did in Antiquity and especially in the Middle Ages, but rather seem to indicate the dimensions of power.

Ivanov explains such prominence of the will as early as in the poem 'Fio, ergo non sum'. Its lyric persona dramatically lacks and therefore desires ('wills') his own existence: 'Po sebe ya vozalkal' ('I have become an hungered for myself').³⁸ The non-self does not lack Being completely: the will to existence is the vital force³⁹ that the human subject retains after his selfhood and the very existence have been called in question. That is why volition is considered to be the only faculty that is able to surmount the disintegration and 'differentiation' of the self and to restore its original unity. Another line, 'Kto vladeet vlastnym slovom?' ('Who possesses the powerful word?'), indicates that the speaker wants the divine authority, symbolized by the 'powerful word', to arrest the dispersal of his self. Otherwise, as Ivanov stresses in the Dostoevsky essay, one's 'metaphysical feebleness [*slabovolie*]', manifested in the impotence to assert and accept 'God's will' and simultaneously in the intellectual hubris, leads one to a 'metaphysical crime', as is exemplified by the fate of Ivan Karamazov.⁴⁰

Love in Ivanov's poetic universe functions as the *link* between the self's will to its own existence and Being largely identical to the divine will. This function is evident in the way the self asserts the existence of a nearest being, a beloved person, as is described in the following frequently quoted fragment of the essay 'On Novalis' ('*O Novalise*):

For it is by love alone that we truly ascertain the reality of what is not our *self*. [...] [A] being whom I love is in front of me. I love means I first of all know that it exists and I want it to exist with all my will. But my love is not satisfied by the affirmation of this being's profound existence; it also asserts all its membranes. [...] Thus, by asserting the existence of the beloved person, not in her essence alone but in the entire appearance, I restore *through her* and through *her* alone my own integrity, justify my terrestrial existence ...⁴¹

Love is closely associated with the will: 'I love means [...] I want it to exist with all my will', and serves as its instrument: 'it is by love alone that we truly ascertain the reality of what is not our *self*'. The self eventually benefits from 'ascertaining the reality' of the other because this helps the self to overcome its prior dispersed state and to reinforce its own existence, as the full version of the *thou-art* thesis explicates: '*es, ergo sum*' ('thou art, therefore I am').⁴² However, it is only the intermediary stage: the productive relationship of self and other ultimately points to God who is 'postulated' in their unity. Love for God derived from this love unity and more originally from the two subjects' will to existence paves the way to the divine will, which ascertains the existence of the loving couple in response.⁴³

Ivanov employs a similar idea to elucidate Dostoevsky's creative process:

Dostoevsky's realism was his faith that he found as he lost his soul. His insight [*proniknovenie*] in another person's self, his experiencing of another person's self as an original, fathomless and sovereign world contained the postulate of God as the reality more real than all these absolutely real beings [inner beings of his characters], to each of whom he spoke, with all the will and understanding: 'thou art'.⁴⁴

The word 'postulate' conveys that the reality in the highest degree, associated with God, is the fundamental ground that allows for experiencing another self as valuable and 'sovereign'. However, the same word reduces the divine being to an entity that simply *serves* to the ultimate cause of Dostoevsky-the-author's redemptive process (he 'lost his soul' and 'found faith') after he has asserted this being as self-evident by means of his 'will and understanding'. Even though God is attributed ultimate reality, Ivanov's texts often give an impression of God's passivity in contrast to the human subject's passionate activity.⁴⁵ To be sure, the poet readily admits the divine formative activity in the correspondence with Mikhail Gershenzon: 'Not only has God created me, but is creating continually, and will keep creating'.⁴⁶ But he adds, 'God cannot abandon me unless I abandon Him',⁴⁷ thus maintaining that the human volitive effort is at least a precondition for the action of the divine will.

The controversial nature of the self's spontaneous will to existence in Ivanov's construal becomes clearer when compared with Nietzsche's concept of 'the will to power'. On the one hand, Giorgio Pasini refers the experience of the human subject in Ivanov's poetic universe to the 'theocentric' self-transcendence,⁴⁸ whereas Nietzsche's will to power would be closer to the 'egocentric' one in the same paradigm. In the 'theocentric' case, God initially conditions the human volition and therefore it ultimately aims at him. For instance, in the poem *Chelovek (Man)*, which provides a full-scale view of Ivanov's metaphysics, Man

was originally given free will and is expected to use this freedom to reunite with his divine creator at the end of history.⁴⁹ On the contrary, the Nietzschean will to power finds the source of its growth exceptionally within itself. As Heidegger comments, 'The will to power is the essence of power. It indicates the unconditional essence of willing, which, as the pure will, wills itself'.⁵⁰ For this reason willing has nothing to do with aspiring towards something extrinsic to the will and therefore with any aspiring at all. 'The will to power', Heidegger continues, 'does not have its ground in the feeling of deficiency, but rather it is itself the ground of the most superabundant life'.⁵¹ Nothing seems more antithetical to the focus on aspiration and growth in Ivanov's hierarchical universe.⁵²

On the other hand, *self-transcendence* proper is an essentially volitive activity, whatever the initial impulse may be. It requires infinite self-overpowering and self-surpassing – *Selbstüberwindung*, as a title in the second part of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* indicates. Vladimir Bibikhin suggests that Nietzsche is the source of Ivanov's view of 'human life as becoming that always only begins and never achieves the form of full existence'.⁵³ Indeed, the volition-driven human subject in Ivanov's universe keeps establishing and re-establishing his relation to Being. God and the other frequently appear to be only hinges of such ongoing transformation, despite that Ivanov makes every effort to emphasize the independent reality of these subjects.

It is noteworthy that becoming, synonymous with development and the ascent, is but one part of this process. The descent, the opposite self-sacrificial movement, requires a stronger will and more vigorous self-overpowering. As an example, Nietzsche's protagonist declares: 'The devotion of the greatest is daring [*Wagniss*] and danger, and playing dice for death'.⁵⁴ Ivanov seems to allude to this assertion when distinguishing ascent and descent:

Danger and daring [*derznovenie*] are integral to both movements; but a greater danger and a greater daring is in the descent rather than in the ascent. For that, the former, when it is right and true, is both more sacrificial and more graceful.⁵⁵

The word 'daring' emphasizes the role of the will both in becoming and the sacrificial act.

Subjected to volition, love functions as a second-order principle, and its nature – either erotic (*ascent*) or charitable (*descent*) – is contingent on the particular intentional direction of the will. This dependence is especially evident in Ivanov's expression 'daring love', which may be explained so: 'Ask what your ultimate *self* wants – and love, like a planet loves the sun that creates it, like the sacrificially bleeding generous sun loves'.⁵⁶ It is remarkable that the aspiring love of the 'planet' and the sacrificial love of the 'sun' are both contingent on what the self 'ultimately wants'.

The primacy of love in Bakhtin's 'philosophy of the deed'

This part of the discussion aims to demonstrate that Bakhtin's 'philosophy of the deed' embraces a different order of dependence – the one that posits love as the foundation of volitive and cognitive acts. Implied in the vast research on Bakhtin,⁵⁷ this proposition has not been put forward directly. Bakhtin's broad interpretation of the deed – 'everything, even thought and feeling, is my deed'⁵⁸ – corresponds to the deed's relation to the entirety of Being, as has been pointed out above. The preserved fragment of the essay 'Toward a Philosophy of the Deed' is mostly dedicated to the refutation of the

misconceptions that preclude one from perceiving the real nature of the deed, that is, from grasping how exactly the deed is connected with Being. It is the specific issue that the following discussion is to deal with.

The criticism of 'theoretism', that is, the attempts to establish the human consciousness on cognition, constitutes a prominent theme in Bakhtin's work; in this regard, his critical intention generally coincides with Ivanov's. He contends that the theoretical truths constitute only the meaning, or the content, of the deed and therefore cannot be taken for the deed in its entirety: 'This sense-facet is perfectly indifferent to the individually historical side – the author [of the deed], his time, the conditions and the moral unity of his life'.⁵⁹ In doing so, Bakhtin disproves the primacy of cognition. In particular, the philosopher maintains that Plato's *eidos* in its capacity as a real entity is different from the modern concept of the mathematical, logical or scientific truth because *eidos* also involves the human loving, cognizing, affirming, and interested attitude to the truth. He gives the following example:

The common contrast of eternal truth and our vicious temporality has a non-theoretical meaning; this statement includes a certain evaluative tinge and is complemented by an emotional-volitional attitude: here is the eternal truth (and it is good); here is our transient vicious temporary life (and it is bad).⁶⁰

Consequently, the epistemological truth, which tends to exclude any 'subjectivity' that would obscure its theoretical validity, excludes the volitive and emotional charge that turns truths into actually asserted values.⁶¹

The proof that the intellectual faculties are not the primary foundation of the human consciousness is nonetheless not yet the evidence of the primacy of love. Indeed, Bakhtin introduces the 'emotional-volitional tone' that renders deeds dynamic; the very word 'tone' underlines force, dynamism and volition. As Bakhtin writes, 'The emotional-volitional tone, which encompasses and permeates the unique Being-event, is not a passive psychic reaction, but a certain compelling, morally significant and actively responsible attitude of the consciousness'.⁶² The words 'morally significant' and 'responsible' indicate that Bakhtin's meaning of 'tone' differs from the activity of the will, the vehicle of 'irrational cognition' in Ivanov's understanding of *tonos*. Bakhtin's usage of *tone* primarily implies the musical aspect, tonality, and the tone of the human voice, *intonation*, which expresses an interested and evaluative, but also personal and responsible attitude towards the object. However, volition alone is not likely to create such an attitude: like emotions, it is ultimately an *impersonal* category. Strong emotions and an exerted will admittedly can deepen one's connection with oneself (as, for instance, the Existentialist experience has demonstrated), but they are unable to constitute the essential quality of the deed – its absolutely personal nature.

The ultimately determining aspect of the deed in Bakhtin's philosophy is *uniqueness*, on which an individual's emotions and will are based. Defining uniqueness, the philosopher argues that one's singular position in time and space is not sufficient to create it,⁶³ these dimensions have but an instrumental nature: 'I master the techniques of time and space'.⁶⁴ Uniqueness rather manifests itself in the involvement and the value perspective of a participant of an event:

He clearly sees these individual unique persons whom he loves and the sky, and the earth, and the trees, <9 words illegible> and the time; besides, he perceives the value, the concretely and actually affirmed value of these persons and these objects; he also intuitively their inner lives and

desires; he also clearly sees the actual and compelling meaning of his interrelationship with these persons and objects, the actual truth [*pravda*] of these specific circumstances, and the ought of his deed – not its abstract law, but the actual concrete ought conditioned by his unique place in the given context of the event.⁶⁵

Unlike in Ivanov's worldview, the participant of an event whose perception Bakhtin describes evidently possesses the full ontic value from the outset. This participant's attitude towards the surrounding persons and objects does not seem to be primarily a volitive act; despite that he actively affirms the value of the persons and objects, the will is instrumental to the deed, but is not its principle. The phrase 'he loves' has a prominent meaning for the entire passage: the concreteness and uniqueness, manifested in the reiteration of the words 'actual' and 'concrete', refer to the distinctive properties of love. The enumeration of the loved persons and objects ('the unique persons', 'the sky', 'the earth', 'the trees') makes Bakhtin's argument compatible with the view of love as the way to 'strengthen and deepen the relationships' with the world in the early Christian experience, as revealed by Scheler. The German theorist argues:

It is quite self-evident that when love belongs to the essence of God and the entire religious salvation process has its point of departure not in the humanly spontaneous activity, but in the divine love, the love 'for God' must at the same time include *loving* [*Mitlieben*] *people and even all creatures together with God* – an *amare mundum in Deo*.⁶⁶

It could be argued that the vision of the positively valuable and unique persons and objects in Bakhtin's text is also predicated on the experience designated as '*amare mundum in Deo*'.⁶⁷

If we wish to understand the origin of uniqueness, it is unavoidable to speak of the figure of Christ in the philosopher's perception, although we should keep in mind the pre-eminently philosophical nature of Bakhtin's thinking, which always 'poses the dogma as a problem'.⁶⁸ The reference to Christ in 'Toward a Philosophy of the Deed' describes him as the 'greatest symbol of activity' and as the absolutely concrete person whose 'life and death as fact and meaning' cannot be represented in abstract thinking.⁶⁹ This statement correlates with the emphasis on active intuiting and perceiving as well as with the contrast between an impersonal 'abstract law' and the personal 'actual concrete ought' in the above-quoted passage. In the essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', the theorist dedicates an entire page to Christ, within the historical overview of the perception of the human body.⁷⁰ Bakhtin argues that the figure of Christ for the first time synthesizes a rigorous 'ethical' self-valuation and the 'ethical-aesthetic goodness' towards others; the profound selfhood is combined with the affirmation of the full value of the other. At the same time, God is not experienced as 'the voice of my conscience, [...] the purity of the penitential self-renunciation of everything given inside me', but as the 'father in heaven' who is able to justify the self that cannot do so of its own accord.⁷¹ The statement, 'What I must be for the other, that is God for me', explicates the connection between goodness towards the other and the new perception of divinity; and even though Bakhtin never says it directly, it is implied that the source of this goodness is no longer the spontaneous emotional activity of the self, but that goodness derives from the surplus of the divine proactive love. Scheler underlines this dependence to a larger extent: 'And as the *person* of Christ [...] is the first religious object of love, so an ontically real person, the person of God, is the origin of the emotion of love'.⁷²

The Christian affiliation has three crucial consequences for Bakhtin's 'philosophy of the deed'. *First*, uniqueness, never essentially a physical property, stems from the perfectly personal nature of proactive love, which 'assigns' a participant his or her unique place in the event. *Second*, this place is primarily defined by the clarity and concreteness of the participant's active vision. To explain, since the only true form that love can take from now on is '*amare mundum in Deo*', Bakhtin never perceives God as an *object* of aspiration or the *aim* of cognition or spiritual ascent. Rather, love works through the person, who presents a site of love's activity directed at things and other persons. *Third*, and most important, love is rather a 'movement' (as Scheler reiterates) proceeding from the subject, which seems to condition Bakhtin's reference to Christ as the 'greatest symbol of activity'.⁷³ The ultimate aim of the deed of love is the 'growth' of the other, not in the sense of the other's existential transformation, but in the sense of his or her *increasing value* thanks to the inner activity of the self.

Bakhtin's aesthetic theory reveals the foundational position of love to the full extent.⁷⁴ In the essay on the deed, the philosopher described an intentional act of directing attention at an object, the elementary origin of aesthetic activity: 'Experiencing an object, I thereby fulfil something in relation to it; it enters the relationship with the dynamic orientation at the aim [*zadannost'*], grows in it through my relation to it'.⁷⁵ This relation, Bakhtin adds, is 'not an indifferent but an interested-active' one.⁷⁶ The idea seems to build on the Augustinian claim⁷⁷ that an intellectual act is primarily an act of taking an interest in the object.⁷⁸ In particular, Scheler reminds that in Augustine's view it is loving or hating the object, rather than a pure intellectual activity, that primarily helps us to 'conceive' of it.⁷⁹ The distinctive trait of aesthetic activity, as the essay 'Author and Hero' specifies, is a loving interest in the object, or 'artistic goodness', in Bakhtin's own words. It imitates the Christian 'ethical-aesthetic goodness' and retains its intentional nature: 'Artistic objectivity is artistic *goodness*; goodness cannot be objectless, cannot have weight in emptiness; the other must be counterposed to it'.⁸⁰ The philosopher's idea that the author aesthetically 'redeems' the hero⁸¹ is related to the Augustinian statement that objects, for instance plants, arrive at their full value and existence only through the loving human regard that 'redeems' them from their 'particular, closed-off existence'.⁸² The 'redemption' of the hero in Bakhtin's aesthetics thus presents the 'movement of love', in which the hero's value increases by virtue of the author's activity rather than thanks to the hero's internal development and improvement.

The primacy of love does not disappear in the Dostoevsky book. Ruth Coates maintains that 'the privileging of love as a value is decisively retained from "Author and Hero" whilst its mode of expression is radically altered in accordance with the new privileged values of freedom and dialogue'.⁸³ It could be suggested that the new 'mode of expression' consists in the *intensification* of the significance of love. Polyphony is arguably Bakhtin's most controversial concept.⁸⁴ On the one hand, the 'unredeemed character' of Dostoevsky's novels represents the lonely modern individual uprooted from the stable social and familial connections and seeking primarily the 'unity and internal concord with himself'.⁸⁵ On the other hand, Bakhtin's reader inevitably gets the impression of polyphony as a positive phenomenon: it is a way of 'strengthening and deepening ties with the community' (Scheler) by virtue of each concrete person being 'involved in interactions with other persons'.⁸⁶ The negative view of polyphony is mainly brought about by interpreting it from the perspective of the 'crisis of authorship'⁸⁷ that Bakhtin brings up in 'Author and

Hero' and defines as the situation when 'life becomes understandable and eventually weighty only from inside – only where I experience it as the self, in the form of my relation to myself'.⁸⁸ However, it would be more useful to apply the 'reverse perspective' of Bakhtin's wartime notes 'Rhetoric, in the Measure of Its Falsity ...' ('*Ritorika, v meru svoei Izhivosti ...*', 1943), which in many respects revise his own early aesthetic theory. The philosopher argues:

Love alone is able to discern and portray the inner freedom of its object. [...] The absolute inconsumability of the object reveals to love alone; love leaves it entirely outside itself and beside itself (or behind). Love cherishes and caresses the boundaries; the boundaries become meaningful in a new way. Love does not speak of its object in its absence, but it speaks about the object with the object itself.⁸⁹

From this point of view, polyphony is associated with the increase in love and the reduction of volition. Bakhtin vigorously argues against becoming in the Dostoevskian novel because becoming is traditionally predicated on cognitive and volitive activities. The value of Dostoevsky's characters grows in the author's loving regard – that is primarily why they become more independent and freer. Despite that the inner dissonance of the characters also means the openness into the future and the opportunity of transformation outside the novels' boundary, it is the author's loving attitude that keeps the novel focused on the characters meanwhile.

Conclusion

The presented analysis has revealed that the will in Ivanov and love in Bakhtin constitute the principal internal activity of the human subject. However, in the relationship based on the will, as Ivanov understands it, the loving human subject primarily strengthens his/her own existence, while in Bakhtin's construal it is the beloved that 'grows' in the loving attitude of the self.

This discrepancy is predicated on the different relations to Being. In Bakhtin's 'philosophy of the deed', uniqueness establishes a new form of this relation and in this capacity can be contrasted to Ivanov's preoccupation with becoming. As we have seen, the self in Ivanov's universe is always only on the way to its actual existence. Love is reduced to an instrument that the will uses to 'increase' the lover's position in Being, inasmuch as the lover discovers the divine will as his/her own mysterious essential core. On the contrary, for Bakhtin uniqueness, as a basic ontic category, is already always given and exists as the point of *departure*, not as a destination, of our deeds. It presents the foundation for one's inescapable and indestructible presence in the world, as well as for the 'irreversible division' between self and other. To be sure, uniqueness can be obscured and even directly disregarded in theoretical thinking, but it can never be annihilated in reality.⁹⁰ In brief, uniqueness always *is* – it does not have to be attained or regained by a special activity or special effort, such as spiritual growth, exertion of the will or affirming someone else's existence. It is on this solid ground that our deed – and the other – can 'become' on the open horizon of our minds.

Notes

1. Freise, *Michail Bachtins philosophische Ästhetik*, 240. All the texts, Russian and German, are cited by the original sources and are translated by the author of the article.

2. Szilard, *Germetizm i germenetika*, 25.
3. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 318.
4. Critical perspectives on the complex relationship between the two authors range from championing essential correlativity of their ideas (Igeta, "Ivanov – Pumpyanskii – Bakhtin"; Jovanović, "Vyacheslav Ivanov i Bakhtin"; Kotrelev, "K probleme dialogicheskogo personazha (M. M. Bahtin i Vyach. Ivanov)") to emphasizing more or less radical divergence (Bird, "Understanding Dostoevsky"; Grabar', "Mikhail Bakhtin i Vyacheslav Ivanov"; Kliger, "Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy"; Tamarchenko, "*Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*" M. M. Bakhtina; Terras, "Bakhtin or Ivanov?"). Bocharov ("Kniga o Dostoevskom na puti Bakhtina"; "Neiskuplennyyi geroi Dostoevskogo"; "Bakhtin-filolog: Kniga o Dostoevskom") takes a more balanced approach and effectively demonstrates how Bakhtin reworked some of his elder contemporary's insights.
5. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 34.
6. Ibid., 37.
7. Ibid., 319, 322.
8. Cf. especially the essay "On the Russian Idea," explicitly employing the dialectical triad (Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 321–38).
9. Due to the lack of distinction on the level of word forms in English, the capitalized *Being* is used to refer to *bytie*, *Sein* and *being* to *sushchee*, *das Seiende* throughout this paper, including the Russian translations.
10. For a detailed analysis of the poem's imagery see Malmstad, "O, Sick Children of the World."
11. John Malmstad appropriately claims that Ivanov was "a poet above all" (ibid., 176), but it does not seem right to reduce his essays to simply a commentary on his poetic insights. The borderline between the artistic imagination and analytical thinking rather runs *through* his entire oeuvre than *between* the books of poetry and the essay collections. I view the essays as part of the "purely systematic unity" (Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 321) of Ivanov's poetic outlook in a broad sense.
12. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 732.
13. Nietzsche, *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, JGB-16. Nietzsche dedicated numerous fragments to the problem of the human subject; characteristic examples include NF-1887 10[158], NF-1887 11[113], NF-1885 38[3], NF-1885 35[35], NF-1887 9[98] etc. Most of these fragments appeared in the posthumous compilation known as *Der Wille zur Macht* [*The Will to Power*] (1901, 1906).
14. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 263.
15. The original 'I' is rendered as 'self' everywhere in Ivanov's texts.
16. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 733.
17. Ibid., vol. 3, 264.
18. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 13.
19. In the phrase 'ya stanovlyus' ('I become') in Bakhtin's texts, the verb does not have an independent ontological meaning and either functions as a link verb in a complex predicate (for instance, 'I become responsible') or has a different meaning, such as 'I enter [a certain relation]'.
 20. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 48.
21. It therefore seems too schematic to discriminate between Ivanov's and Bakhtin's systems as respectively 'vertical' and 'horizontal', as Lyudmila Gogotishvili does in her commentary on 'Toward a Philosophy of the Deed' ("Preamble," 406). Bakhtin's Being-event is not only horizontal, or limited in any other direction; it is related to the entire Being and always contains the possibility of development as one of its particular elements.
22. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 50.
23. Kotrelev, "K probleme dialogicheskogo personazha," 99.
24. Terras, "Bakhtin or Ivanov?" 345.
25. Scheler had an acknowledged influence on Bakhtin (Poole, "From Phenomenology to Dialogue"; Wyman, "Bakhtin and Scheler"), who refers to his major studies *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* and *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* in the 1929 Dostoevsky

book (Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 60). Besides, extensive extracts from the book on sympathy are contained among Bakhtin's working notes (ibid., 657–80). Poole argues for Bakhtin's 'systematic' borrowing from the German author, while the commentators of Bakhtin's *Collected Works* cite evidence that the ideas that Bakhtin arguably found in Scheler belong to the broad context of the European philosophy of that time ("Kommentarii," 499–503). There is no documented proof of Bakhtin's familiarity with Scheler's essay on love and cognition.

26. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 83.
27. The German theorist also dedicated a separate chapter of his essay on the Ressentiment to the contrast between the Classical (as a means) and the Christian (as an end in itself) perceptions of love (Scheler, "Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen").
28. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 88–9. Emphasis belongs everywhere to the authors quoted unless otherwise indicated.
29. Ibid., 89.
30. Ibid., 94.
31. Ibid., 92.
32. Ibid., 90.
33. Ibid., 94.
34. Ivanov also calls it his personal motto in the private correspondence with his second wife, Lidiya Zinov'eva-Annibal (*Perepiska*, 83).
35. Ghidini, "Literaturnaya kritika i germeneytika," 197.
36. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 420.
37. Ibid., vol. 3, 134–5.
38. Ibid., vol. 1, 741.
39. Ibid., vol. 3, 264.
40. Ibid., vol. 4, 424–6.
41. Ibid., 268–9.
42. Ivanov's discourse is often ambiguous. Consider, for instance: 'Under the condition of the complete assertion of another person's Being [...] this Being ceases to be alien to me; "thou" becomes for me another designation of myself'. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 419. This leads Natan Tamarchenko in '*Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*' M. M. Bakhtina, 245–7, to doubt that Ivanov actually takes the existence of two 'sovereign' subjects for granted.
43. Maria Cymborska-Leboda illustrates how it happens with examples from Ivanov's poetry in *Eros v tvorchestve Vyacheslava Ivanova*, 39–50.
44. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 420.
45. Vladimir Bibikhin ("Ty esi," 289–98) underlines a similar fact in his analysis of Ivanov's poem *Chelovek (Man)*. In the second part 'Thou Art', in the 'Acme' melos, the lyric persona, this time representing the entire humanity, comes to God in search of his own existence. Man and his divine addressee exchange the appeals 'thou art' on a par, thereby asserting each other's existence (Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 213–14). Bibikhin notes here the particular care that God in Ivanov's poem takes to grant existence to the human subject (Bibikhin, "Ty esi," 283), while the latter keeps courteously rejecting any claim to Being: 'Sushchii – Ty! A ya, – kto ya, nichtozhnyi?' ('Thou art Being! And I – who am I, a non-being?').
46. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 384.
47. Ibid., 384–5.
48. Pasini, "Dukhovno-antropologicheskoe izmerenie," 808.
49. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 741–2.
50. Heidegger, "Nietzsches Wort," 235.
51. Ibid., 237.
52. Cf. Ivanov's own delimitation of his views from Nietzsche's in the essay "Nietzsche and Dionysus" ("*Nitsse i Dionis*") in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 715–26.
53. Bibikhin, "Ty esi," 294.
54. Nietzsche, *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Za-II-Ueberwindung.
55. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 634.
56. Ibid., 135.

57. Most notably in the works by Ruth Coates: *Christianity in Bakhtin*; "The First and the Second Adam." Despite that, the researcher maintains that love is a 'state of will' in Bakhtin (*Christianity in Bakhtin*, 44).
58. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 10.
59. Ibid., 8.
60. Ibid., 15.
61. Ibid., 9.
62. Ibid., 35.
63. Ibid., 328–9.
64. Ibid., 183.
65. Ibid., 30–1.
66. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 90.
67. Caryl Emerson, revealing the roots of Bakhtin's philosophy in Orthodox Christianity, stresses the 'obligatory social dimension', that is, communication, as a distinctive feature of both ("Russian Orthodoxy and the Early Bakhtin," 114).
68. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 328.
69. Ibid., 19.
70. Ibid., 133.
71. Ibid.
72. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 89.
73. Cf. Bakhtin quotes from Dostoevsky's notes that in order to choose a truly moral conduct one must ask oneself if Christ would act in the same way (Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 68).
74. For a nuanced discussion of the religious underpinnings of Bakhtin's philosophy see Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin*.
75. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 32.
76. Ibid.
77. Bakhtin read Augustine and referred to him in the lecture on religion and personalism (Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 341–2).
78. Alan Jacobs remarks that the importance of 'loving attentiveness' in Bakhtin might stem from Augustine ("Bakhtin and the Hermeneutics of Love," 25–45). However, the researcher evidently embraces the primacy of the will in the deed of love: 'For Augustinian Christians, and I suspect for all Christians, charity [*caritas*] flows from a properly oriented will, and is thus in the etymological sense voluntary, not just given' (ibid., 27).
79. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 95–6.
80. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 256.
81. For redemption in Bakhtin, see Bocharov "Neiskuplennyyi geroi Dostoevskogo," 523–5.
82. Scheler, "Liebe und Erkenntnis," 97.
83. Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin*, 97.
84. Coates analyses the contradictions that Bakhtin had to face in *Christianity in Bakhtin*, 91–8.
85. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 173–4.
86. Ibid., 41.
87. Ilya Kliger follows this line of argument in "Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy," 80–4. He maintains that for Bakhtin 'Dostoevsky's novels are a response to the crisis of authorship' (ibid., 81), which chiefly means that 'the author's recognition of the hero's full independence presupposes that the hero [...] is capable of initiating action' (ibid., 80). As a result, Kliger interprets polyphony as 'a togetherness in isolation, an agonistic unity, a discursive struggle' (ibid., 82).
88. Bakhtin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 258.
89. Ibid., vol. 5, 66.
90. Ibid., vol. 1, 13.

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