

Ontological essence of Vyacheslav Ivanov's symbolic hermeneutics in the context of Martin Heidegger's philosophy

Albina Mazgarovna Sayapova and Elena Fridrikhovna Arsenteva

Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya Str., 18, Kazan, 420008, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia

Abstract. Vyacheslav Ivanov's works devoted to Goethe's creative activity and interpreted from the point of view of comparative studies allow us to start the research concerning resonance harmony between Ivanov's symbolic interpretation of Goethe's creativity and Heidegger's philosophy. On the one hand, hermeneutic interpretation of some theoretical propositions of Ivanov concerning symbolism in the light of Heidegger's ontological philosophy gives us the opportunity to establish essential comprehension of symbolic images. On the other hand, Heidegger's ontological concept "non- secrecy of being" may be comprehended through the method of symbolic interpretation worked out by Ivanov.

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Introduction

Goethe's genius, realized in "Faust" at most, makes us reread this masterpiece again and again. No wonder that Ivanov wrote in his work "Goethe on the boundary of two centuries": "... undoubtedly, in the twenty's century people will reread this Goethe's creation and extract something new in comparison with those in the previous century" [1:268].

The article deals with the problem of Ivanov's interpretation of symbol (based on the symbolic interpretation of Goethe's Faust) in the context of Heidegger's ontological concepts through which it is possible to reveal the character's essential (worldless) "I" of symbolism as a human being is the essence of the world, a part of the Whole, and only as such realizes his being (Sein) in existence. Heidegger, one of the most original and important philosophers of the 20th century, was mainly interested in ontology, or the study of being. His fundamental treatise "Being and Truth" is the attempt to access being (Sein) by means of phenomenological analysis of human existence (Da-sein) [2]. In his works Heidegger places an emphasis on language as the vehicle through which the question of being can be unfolded [3,4,5]. His philosophical texts, in which he frequently turned to Hölderlin's works, [6] (Heidegger considered that his language was more philosophical than that of many other poets) are characterized by some features of poetic discourse, and the style of his writing is considered to be "mythological". "High artistic value" of Heidegger's philosophical style is based on the etymological play with words-images, which enables the philosopher to work in "boundary

zones" of philosophy and poetry as two forms of human thinking about just the same: a human being and the world perceived by him, the former one is understood in the ontological essence. Human existence (Da-sein) is determined by Heidegger in respect to its temporal and historical character (German Da-sein, according to his definition, is here-existence, being-in-the world). Researchers and critics of his works pay special attention the place of his philosophical views in the "history of being" and to his existential analysis of Da-sein [7,8]. Young wrote: "Heidegger's philosophy has a great deal to say about the first and last things that confront each of us as we attempt to live our lives as best we may" [8:4].

Main part

Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics (as having much in common with Ivanov's hermeneutics) gives us the opportunity to reveal the essence of Faust's symbolic interpretation by Goethe as the expression of essential (Da-sein) substance of human life.

Ivanov's hermeneutic perception of Goethe's creative activity in the context of realistic symbolism as well as Heidegger's pre-understanding as "poetic touch of truth" brings us to the interpretation of Faust's life as a search for truth and "return home" (Heidegger). Revealing of resonance harmony between Ivanov and his interpretation of symbol in realistic symbolism, on the one hand, and Heidegger as a philosopher with his understanding of universal essence ("worldly character") of the human world, on the other hand, is based on the detection of something kindred in the type of artistic

way of thinking of these two poets-symbolists. The unifying starting point of this is Goethe's power as a genius: Ivanov saw in him a predecessor of poets-symbolists, Heidegger in his turn applied to Goethe's works in order to solve many ontological problems.

According to Heidegger, the search for truth comes to human existence understood as some place in which the world and existence come to light in some special way ("being-in-the world" as "the fundamental constitution of Da-sein"). While commenting on some Heidegger's philosophical statements Mikhailov points out that his human being is such a place in existence ("spaciality of Da-sein") which, "being in existence, entails existence – is anxious about it, takes care of it, puts a question about it, and asks it". A human being is understood not as an individual but as an ontological phenomenon, a place in existence. Consequently, a human being is not a casual element of the world as a whole, "he is co-reflected with the whole – first of all, with the surrounding world. But existence also finds in it its inseparability and its sense" [9:XXII]. If we compare Michailov's words with Heidegger's we'll see that "The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its truest possibility. Da-sein is always its possibility" [2:40].

Ivanov's starting point in understanding Goethe's creative activity is determined by symbolism. It's a well-known fact that Ivanov divides the art of word in the language of symbolism into idealistic (phenomenological) and realistic symbolism. According to him, both features of realistic and idealistic symbolism are revealed in new poetry.

Using Baudelaire as an example of distinguished pioneer of the latest symbolism, Ivanov distinguishes the main credo of realistic symbolism: "Proclamation of the objective truth as such can't but be considered realism" [10:151]. The theoretician of symbolism sees in the work of literature, which is considered to be a realistic symbolism "a mystic investigation of the concealed truth about substances, revelation about substances which are more substantive than substances themselves (*res realiores*), about the perceived mystic cognition of existence which is more essential than essence itself" [10:152].

We are inclined to think that Ivanov's notion of "realistic" realism has something in common with Heidegger's understanding of the product of creation (*Geschöpf*). The existence of essence as an objective truth of human life is also the initial notion for him in the definition of *creation* as well as in the definition of the *efficiency of*

production. It is quite clear that the notions *creation* (*Geschöpf*) and *production* (*Erzeugnis*) are differentiated by Heidegger, still they are united by the "existence of essence" in human mind.

Starting from Goethe's statement that nature and idea can't be separated without destroying either life or art (sketch about "Miron's Cow") Ivanov gives his own definition of creation: "An artist should concentrate on the depiction of reality, from which he should develop ideal (i.e. reveal the idea of reality, its most real content, the symbolic sense of the object depicted as a representative of the eternal type, eternal "idea-energy" of universal soul)" [1:259]. According to Goethe, as Ivanov understands it, the idea "is seen everywhere where there is a plant", i.e. where there is something that is alive for a human being, and that determines his world. It is crucial for us to stress the fact that, to speak about Ivanov's symbols of ideas and ideas-symbols is to speak about the "initial phenomena" [1:258], i.e. to speak about Heidegger's "universal essence of things" in the context of distinguishing analogous features in the types of philosophical way of thinking of both Ivanov and Heidegger.

Ivanov's understanding of symbol as a representative of "eternal type" with "initial phenomenon" in its basis, in fact, has something in common with Heidegger's ontological definition of the world and its expression in "creation" as, according to Heidegger, to be creation is to create your own world (*seine Welt herstellen*) as an ontological content of art [4].

Ivanov considers that the work of art also possesses *its own world, its own independent being*. Following Goethe, Ivanov states that real poetry is created by the artist who perceives nature as a single whole which presents "creating form" for "created form". Ivanov's "created form" is the work itself "as thing – *res* – in the world of things", and "creating form" – "exists before the thing as a form *ante rem* (pre-thing – Lat.), as an effective prototype of creation in the mind of creator". "It is not a conception understood as intention, and it is not even a conception as an attraction of fantasy by some distant image which is still vaguely distinguished through a magic crystal. <...> No, it is already *independent being*, which took shape before the existing dependence on the artist himself, and some clever force, which began to seethe in his "pregnant" (according to Plato's brave expression) soul and faultlessly knows its own ways, ordering matter its own law of necessary realization" [11:231].

So, according to Ivanov, as life in nature is determined in a living organism by the presence of

its “eternal idea” with the “primary phenomenon” as its basis that constitutes its vital energy and the principle of its development, so art also does not exist if the depicted forms are not organic, i.e. are not based on the unity of form and content, - “idea is not incarnated, and matter has not become idea” [1:259]. Only thanks to it art acquires the character of *independent being* (*eigenständiges Da-sein*).

It is no coincidence that Ivanov agrees with Goethe: “As nature discovers only God in its diversity, so a single spirit, a single sense of eternal type breathes creatively in the space of art. This is the feeling of truth which is embodied only in the beautiful and bravely rushes to meet the last clearness of the brightest day” [10:152]. Just this “feeling of truth” is the basis of Ivanov’s interpretation of Faust’s image in the limits of “realistic symbolism” in which “symbol is the aim of artistic exposure” [10:155].

It is important to notice that Heidegger’s interpretation of art with its essential content as event thanks to which “the world appears” as the ontological content of *creation*, and Ivanov’s understanding of art as *independent being* have much in common with Bakhtin’s *eventful unity* as a result of the “events emotional experiences – meditations” matter of art.

Summing up general considerations concerning symbol in Ivanov’s “realistic symbolism”, let’s mention one more common feature in the comprehension of art by the Russian symbolist and the German philosopher. In Ivanov’s interpretation of symbol as “any thing because it is a concealed reality” there is something resembling Heidegger’s definition of essential as “universal essence of things”. In “realistic symbolism” of Ivanov, symbol is a “mystic contemplation of objective essence which is common for everybody” [10:155]. It is evident that Ivanov came to this definition being influenced by Goethe’s creative experience, first of all, by his “Faust”. On the other hand, in Heidegger’s arguments the idea concerning a human being who is considered to be a “being-in-the-World”, and as such a bearer of essential truth, *disclosedness*, is expressed only with the language of symbolism, though there is not such a term in Heidegger’s text. At the same time his term *unconcealment of being* contains some symbolic content in point of fact. Thus, trying to confirm readers in his rightful statement, Heidegger addresses Goethe’s dictum containing the essential subject-matter of symbolic in his work “Art and Space”: “Ontologically, *Da-sein* is in principle different from everything objectively present and real. Its “content” is not founded in the substantiality of a substance, but in the “self-constancy”

[*Selbständigkeit*] of the existing self whose being was conceived as care” [5:281].

Hermeneutic comprehension of Faust’s life as a search for truth, which a person can serve all his life is indicative of the fact that Faust covered a difficult and discrepant path of comprehension typical of the Western way of thinking. He sought after truth in something, which is dependent on a person’s intellect and will. Being put by rational thinking in the center of the universe, ignoring any transcendental will, and laying claim to the role of a superman Faust gets into argument with the Spirit of the Earth (Nature) and craves for the alteration of the world and man in accordance with the notions of “those having the right”, if to use the terminology of Dostoyevskiy. But Faust was crushed by the Spirit of the Earth. Having made a lot of mistakes which resulted in the sufferings of many people, and having experienced both earthly love of Gretchen and “divine” sublime love to Helen, Faust half-opens the truth which is in the existence itself, and it promotes the formation of the object-image Eastern way of thinking: in the contemplation of “The old hut, all the trees around, The crumbling chapel...” [12: Act V, Scene III]. the essential content of being, its *hidden essence* (Heidegger), which doesn’t depend on human being, comes to light. And Goethe only half-opens this hidden essence to his hero in a presentiment about his approaching death.

But under the influence of Mephistopheles - the embodiment the civilized evil of the Western mankind, Faust

“This splendid fortune you embrace
With wrinkled brow, and gloomy face!
Your noble wisdom has been crowned,
Sea’s reconciled with solid ground” [12:

Act V, Scene III].

He is again within the limits of rational thinking, of “proud mind”. By ignoring the transcendental will of the Spirit of Earth – Nature he remains in the center of the universe. And again he feels his bifurcation as a burden. “ – that accused here! - cries Faust in a frenzy while evaluating his activity but at the same time he is proud of his talent of governing people. This bifurcation is the eternal insoluble dialogue between the conscience and soul of the Western human being in whom the voice of conscience dominates, and the intuitive feeling of *hidden essence* is being suppressed. The dominating voice of conscience dictates Faust to implement the following:

“The old ones up there should yield,
I want the limes as my retreat,
The least tree in another’s field,
Detracts from my whole estate” [12: Act V,

Scene III].

Faust's last monologue:

"Yes, I've surrendered to this thought's insistence,

The last word Wisdom ever has to say:

He only earns his Freedom and Existence,

Who's forced to win them freshly every day" [12: Act V, Scene VI] confirms his devotion only to what was created by his "proud mind". But Faust pronounces his monologue being blinded which means that he does not fully understand the reality of life (thus the ditch which is being delved by order of his, as Mephistopheles thinks, is likely to become his grave), and this makes his words pitiable and ridiculous. This monologue expresses Goethe's attitude to the modern life of technologies which remove human being from his essential content. Goethe's genius starts to speak what Heidegger calls the threat of the age of planetary civilization (planetary Gestell).

If Faust when claims to be a superman needs truth which could serve him, he later (in the second part) searches for truth which he could serve his whole life. He can't find it during his life. But The Mater Gloriosa calls Faust's soul to follow her to the eternal spheres, and, as Ivanov writes, only after death "the superior and the purest image of the Eternal Femininity may be opened to him at some highest level of being" [1:267]. (Goethe once told Rimmer, his secretary, that he could imagine something ideal only in the female image) [13:617].

The tragedy finishes with the words of a mystic heaven's choir about symbol:

"Rock, Desert

All of the transient,

It parable, only" [12: Act V, Scene VII]. In order to understand what Goethe perceived as "symbol", let us refer to his understanding of it: "Truth which is identical to divine can never be comprehended directly, we see it only in reflection, in some example, in symbol" [13:617]. It means, using Heidegger's terminology, that the *hidden essence* of being as *truth*, which is equal to divine is always incomprehensible due to its *concealment*, only in symbol it gets its openness, which always remains mysterious. And this *hidden essence* of being, "the last essence" and real essence exists only, as the choir sings, in heaven.

Hence, with the denouement of his tragedy containing the monologue about symbol and Eternal Femininity, Goethe proves that the process of human cognition of the world is its spiritual understanding (which is beyond rational comprehension) rather than the analysis of its properties. Heidegger speaks about the same as the essential content of being which is inaccessible for sciences and, on the whole, for human mind. Goethe's creative intuition brings

him to the comprehension of the Eastern human being consciousness matrix (his application to Hellenic world in search of the Beautiful is of no wonder), which is orientated to the comprehension of oneself as a part of the Whole, and, consequently, to the alteration of the human being as a part of the world in correspondence with the primordial intention of Nature.

There is some transcendental will in Eternal Femininity, which, according to Goethe, determines the essence of the universe, and a human being, in his search to discern it, should "enter" it and create it as his own, and in this way overcome the finiteness of his existence. This is, according to Goethe, the way of human being perfection, which corresponds to the Eastern man way of thinking. It is no coincidence that orientalists see Sufism roots in the image of Eternal Femininity because, as Kessel writes, "Goethe conceived Sufism as consonant to some extent to his own philosophical system" [14:77].

Conclusion

To sum it up, the comprehension of philosophical reading between the lines of Ivanov's symbolic interpretation of Faust which has something in common with some ontological propositions of Heidegger gives us the opportunity to apply to Heidegger's ontological notions in the essential definition of Faust, and to disclose the main hero's "path" as a complicated and controversial one. It is the path of a Western human being who has created some rational world but who, in the end, is striving for the house of his own inborn "I".

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Sayapova, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya Str.,18, Kazan, 420008, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia.

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