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The Religious-artistic Image of a Perfect Human Integrity: A.A. Ivanov's Picture "The Appearance of Christ Before People"

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The problem of the religious-artistic expression of the ideal of a perfect human being and his general meaning of life is studied in this article. The concept of human integrity is discussed. The following ideal types of people, opposite to each other, are identified: a spiritual, carnal, partial, harmonic human being. Ideals of perfect human integrity are reflected in specified visual images in every culture. These ideals are colorfully embodied by cultural heroes. Then a description of the composite formula of A. Ivanov's picture "The appearance of Christ before people" follows. This formula expresses Ivanov's idea of meaning of life of a perfect man. The authors came to the conclusion that Ivanov solved, by artistic means, the age-old religious and philosophical dilemma: what to give preference to – faith or knowledge, sense or reason? According to Ivanov, faith and knowledge must complement and balance each other in a perfect man. The artist himself appears in the center of the canvas, and he is the very focus of the mutually balanced parties of human spirit.

Keywords: integrity, a perfect human being, ideal types of people, harmony, sense of life.

First we discuss briefly the concept and typology of integrity of a person. Secondly, we describe the religious-artistic embodiment of A. A. Ivanov's formula of meaning of life, according to which faith and knowledge should be mutually complement and balance each other in a perfect man.

I. Perfect personal integrity

On the basis of Platonism Philo of Alexandria introduced the notion of a perfect (ideal) human

being and has distinguished the created man from its heavenly original: there is the fullness of the human race in Adam, and a human soul is a part of the world-soul. The following images of a "perfect man" are submitted in different worldview traditions: a holistic man, a man-microcosm as a fractal of macrocosm; a man as an image of God, etc. In the conception of nature-centrism a man is seen predominantly as a creature of nature (Democritus, Epicurus, Locke, Feuerbach, etc.), in theocentrism – as a kind of

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the temple of God (the apostle Paul, Augustine, Voyno-Yasenetsky, Seraphim Rose, J. Robinson and others), in sociocentric conceptions – as a creature that has a purely social essence (Marx, Durkheim, P. Sorokin and others).

There are three philosophical approaches: spiritualism, psychism and somatism, which are fighting with each other constantly. They have arisen due to different answers to the question, where to look for the nature and essence of a man as a person – in his spirit only, or in his soul, or in his flesh? Some authors see the system-forming power of a man in his material flesh, in physical corporeality. Others say that the soul gives an individual his life and integrity. There are authors who speak of the spirit as the main factor of the formation of integrity of a person (philosophers usually call this integral “personality”).

For example, many idealists tend to exclude the “aspect of flesh” from the idea of a human being and to reduce the essence of a person to the human spirit or soul. True materialists, on the contrary, assert view of a man as a purely carnal (material) being. Sometimes the conversation about a man substitutes for the discussion about the definition of a person, the concept of which can be defined as a stable system of socially-significant features of a man. From time to time philosophers propose projects of the description of a man as *homo compositus*, i.e they are trying to reveal the human integrity through the principle of hierarchical coexistence and mutual reflection of three aspects in one anthropic essence – spirit, soul and body. Today, under conditions of post-modernist destruction of classical anthropology, opponents of postmodernism are trying to realize such a project.

The biblical-Christian tradition (Paulinism) has played a particularly important role in the historical formation of ideas about the essence and the ideal of a man. Let’s highlight, on the

basis of this tradition, some ideal types of people, polar to each other.

1. Spiritual people (“spiritual body”) who have a totalitarian orientation with all their dignities and disadvantages. Among them, in turn, there are: a) positive-spiritual totalitarian people; the Holy Spirit or another objective spirit of good and creation dwells in their subjective spirits; b) negative-spiritual totalitarian people, seduced by evil and destructive spirits which penetrate into them. Human history knows many examples of both good and evil spiritual totalitariness. Perhaps, Anthony the Great, the founder of Christian monasticism, or Evagrius Pontic can be classified as representatives of positive pneumatic totalitarianism. Some of the top leaders of the black order of the SS in Nazi Germany (and Hitler himself first of all), on the contrary, should enroll in the category of people with satanic spiritual totalitariness. Sometimes there are transitions from the category of evil spiritual totalitariness into the category of good spiritual totalitariness and on the contrary, the bright examples of which in the Christian tradition are such cases as the transformation of the apostle Paul (Saul, the former persecutor of Christians) and the apostle Judas Iscariot (he betrayed Christ, whom he loved).

2. Carnal people (“the body of flesh”) of totalitarian orientation, the properties of whom are listed in the epistles of the apostle Paul. First of all these include egoists, pursuing material interests and completely devoid of spiritual aspiration. There are creators and destroyers among them. Many of the images of “flesh” creators (for example, the image of Stolz in I.A. Goncharov’s novel “Oblomov”) and spiritless nihilists (for example, the figure of Ivan Karamazov in the novel “The Brothers Karamazov” of F.M. Dostoevsky’s) are displayed in fiction.

3. A partial man, whose integrity is unstable and whose spirit and flesh are in weak

or uncertain cooperation. This kind of totality looks like “soma psychikos” in the typology of the apostle Paul. “Soma psychikos” is a transitional state, and it has trends to become over time either in “soma pneumatikos”, or the “body of flesh”. For example, an inconspicuous captain Tushin in L.N. Tolstoy’s “War and society” showed the sample of the highest military spirit in a deadly battle with the French aggressors. On the contrary, Salieri (in whom, according to A.S. Pushkin, the indomitable envy villain took the top), most likely could be enlisted at the beginning in the category of “soul people” of eclectic kind.

4. A harmonic man, in whom his spirit, soul and flesh are in a state of optimal and stable equilibrium. The first man Adam, lived in Eden, is considered as the most representative example of a true harmonic personality in the Christian tradition. Marx, an atheist, strongly rejecting any monotheistic faith in the reality of Adam, dreamed about the “golden age” of humanity in the distant communist future, when all real conditions for education of harmoniously developed people would appear.

Ideals of “perfect integrity” are specified in every culture with a help of visual images and are embodied colorfully by cultural heroes. One and the same integral ideal is embodied in many cultural forms; it is broadcast in a society through its mutually further incarnation in myths (Hercules, Sisif, etc.), religious examples (Abraham, Job, etc.), artistic images (prince Myishkin, Pavel Korchagin, etc.), political leaders (Alexander Nevsky, Peter I).

There were created a lot of wonderful masterpieces of painting in Russian fine-artistic culture, personifying harmonic samples of the spiritual and carnal people. The ideal of Christ, which I.N. Kramskoy has embodied in his painting “Christ in the desert”, is very attractive for the spiritually-integral people

(“soma pneumatikos”) with positive totalitarian settings. The totalitarian-negative ideal of spiritual integrity was glorified by M.A. Vrubel in his works “Demon” and “Pan”. Three different harmony courageous lives with a predominance of physical aspect are in front of the audience in V.M. Vasnetsov’s picture “Bogatyr” – Ilya Muromets, Dobrynia Nikitich and Alyosha Popovich.

B.M. Kustodiyev was a great master of concentrated expression of ideals of a harmonic integrity of life of different classes in Russian society. The artist painted different social-class ideals of a perfect man elegantly and evaluated them with subtle irony. For instance, Kustodiev has presented a spiritually-demonic ideal of a Russian revolutionary in his canvas “Bolshevik”. In the “Merchant’s wife” the artist admires, with the subtle gentleness, the ideal of carnal harmony typical for the class of merchants. The greater part of this wonderful canvas is a “conditional” (not real) portrait of a woman in a dress with a white handkerchief in her hands – a lush, young, beautiful, immaculate, peaceful and friendly woman. She is depicted in full growth and is inscribed into a narrow isosceles triangle looking at the sky. There is an orange halo around her head – this is the background of purple leaves of the powerful tree (“tree of life”). Merchant’s wife reminds schematically an Orthodox temple. A youthful merchant is located not far from this “temple” and praying to her. He is ready to sacrifice her all his money. As a symbol of “the temple of flesh”, a merchant’s wife is clearly dominates “the temple of spirit” (the Orthodox cathedral) depicted behind the merchant. It is a picturesque example of such a harmonic integrity of life, in which the fourth part of life only is given to the cult of spirit, and three-fourths of life is devoted to sacralization of earthly flesh and material values.

II. A.A. Ivanov's composite formula of a perfect man in religious art

But, perhaps, the maximum capacious image of the equilibrium of harmony of spirit, soul and flesh is realized in one of the world masterpieces – in A.A. Ivanov's work "The appearance of Christ before people". Alexander Andreevich Ivanov (1806-1858) is a great Russian artist who enriched the fine art of the 19th century with deep philosophical thoughts, compositional and painting discoveries.

Let's turn to the analysis of his painting "The appearance of Christ before people" (1837-1857), which has truly become the cause of the whole life of this genius master. It is known that Ivanov has begun to paint on the canvas with the figures of the size of one-third of their natural values when the composition of future paintings was determined in general terms. But then the artist has changed his decision. He ordered a huge canvas size 540x750 cm, on which he transfers the whole image, respectively increasing the size of each character selected for modeling. Ivanov did not destroy the picture with the same figures of the size of one third of the nature; for almost twenty years this picture remained a supporting variant for the artist (i.e. during the whole period of creation of "The Christ's appearance").

For the theme for this picture the artist chose the plot described on the first pages of the Gospel of John: "This happened in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. <...> John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, behold, there comes the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for He was before me. I did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel". In Ivanov's opinion, this event has a "global" value, because it contributes to the birth in people of faith in advance of absolute justice.

We can see the uneven part of the earth surface in the picture: closer to the audience, the soil is slightly raised, goes back, and then falls again, abruptly rises and goes into the valley, behind which the far mountain chain stretches. The painter significantly expands the spatial scope of his paintings with the help of these – up and down – movements; each actor is located in a natural posture and can be seen clearly. The canvas depicts the desert on the bank of Jordan River. You can see John the Baptist most of all, preaching and baptizing in the name of the One whom nobody of the people has seen yet. People gathered round him: naked and undressed, dressed and wearing clothes, coming out of the water and ready to dive into the water. The future disciples of the Savior stand in the crowd also. There is full assurance of faith already on the faces of the ones, doubt on the others, some oscillate, some lament and bow their heads; cardiac numbness is seen on several faces. The forerunner is taken in the moment when he, pointing to the Savior with his finger, says: "Behold, the lamb, take the sins of the world". And the whole crowd directs the eye or thought to the One on whom John the Baptist has pointed. Words and pointing gesture of the prophet are the beginning of the semantic communications of all people depicted in the painting – of that very communications, which culminated in a single response.

The main characters of the picture are, first of all, John the Baptist and the group of people behind him depicted on the principle of equality of their heads; still two human figures, going from the Jordan's waters, about to them (an old man and a boy). All seven people in the left part of the paintings are presented by the artist on the background of a huge tree. Figures of praying are vaguely visible in the distance through the crown of the tree. Actors, located to the right of John, form the second group, in which, in turn, we can allocate several smaller entities. First of all,

we see some people (a naked white-haired man and his servant are especially noticeable) sitting on the ground in the middle of the picture at the feet of John. Further – there are three naked male figures: “looking” and “trembling”. The crowd, down the hill and accompanied by riders, is the third region in the right part of the canvas. Christ also belongs to this group of characters, although the artist has separated him from all.

John, exhausted by fasting and prayer, towers over all; he turns his eyes, a flame of inspiration, to the crowd. The Forerunner holds the shaft of the cross in one hand and his other hand is raised up. Pointing to the Messiah, he calls on people being around him for attention. His figure, one of the smallest in the picture, contrasts with the figure of the Messiah. Christ goes without the slightest effort and stress. It seems as if the mountain, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, pushing Jesus forward, to people, to convince the people, looking at them, that He will bring them salvation. There are calm, confidence and perseverance in the Christ's slow gait. The future apostles, his disciples, are behind John the Baptist. Golden-haired John the Theologian, a fine young man with a tender and hot soul, makes impetuous step forward, looking in the direction of the Messiah; at the same time he impatiently stretches back his right hand. The meek and gentle old John says: “Be quiet, and listen, and follow”. A gray-haired old man with tangled hair, apparently, did not hear the words of the Baptist and because of this he is concerned. He frowns and looks in the face of St. John the Theologian, trying to guess in his eye the meaning of the events taking place.

Andrei-The First-Called is more restrained than young John the Theologian. But his figure, hand gestures and a wide confident step testify to the fact that he, not seeing Christ, firmly decided to follow Him, and nothing can force him to renounce his sudden decision. Andrew's concentrated and soft eyes are the eyes of a man

who already knows the last of the ultimate goal of his deeds. Nathanael, the future apostle, completes the group, standing behind John the Baptist. He decided not to lift his head, but at the same time he listens to the words of the prophet. Nathanael's eyes are covered and his hands are hidden in the folds of his cloak. This is the “doubting man”, as it is commonly called, – the person who hesitates to act. His doubts are the doubts in his faith.

A curly-haired youth and elder are in the Jordan's waters behind the future apostles. They have accepted baptism already. The strongest curiosity is expressed in the tense pose of the young man. Standing on all fours, he avidly absorbs the words of John the Baptist and in the same time he tries to see what the teacher says. But the old man – is the other thing. He stands quietly in the water supported by the staff of his faith, and he is not in a hurry to go to the beach. The spirit of the elder, fading at the threshold of death, requires more concentration than the living motion and the stormy manifestations of emotions.

The people, sitting directly at the feet of the prophet, have not defined their attitude to the message which the Baptist has proclaimed. Only one (out of five) – a man in a cap – listens to the John's words. The rest, as if they were ordered to do it, turned their heads to the Messiah's side. The curly-headed young man in a blue cloak looks at Christ; an old man with a long beard tries to lean on his hands, as on a staff. According to Ivanov's inscription to his sketch with the rising old man, the artist wanted, with the help of this image, to express the following idea: sorrow and memory of past are seen on the face of the old man who feels the excitement at the sight of the people's Savior.

A cheerful man is listening to the preacher carefully; he is turned back to the audience and he is looking at John. This lord cools, by mechanical gesture of the hand, the impulse of his slave who

serves him; this slave is sitting on his haunches with a rope around his neck, intently listening to the prophet's words about mercy of masters to their servants. The slave is in the impatience, he has anticipated his future release, and a smile walks on his lips. There is a naked young man ("a looker") beside him. The young man is directed to the Messiah with all his heart; and he drops, by a habitual movement, the luxury dark-red hair out from his face.

The figures of "trembling men" – a boy and his father – have quite a different meaning. If there is a triumph of flesh, joy, beauty and even effeminacy in the "looker", then, on the contrary, the bodies of the "trembling men" are shown not in a state of natural nudity; they are naked and deprived of their cover. Ivanov keenly caught and handed the difference between nudity and a state of undress. The "trembling men" tremble, and the people around them do not show signs of cold or do not feel it; this fact does not point to the weather conditions, but it points to the inner nature of a man, to his soul. Ivanov had a flair of a great psychologist and skill craftsman. He contributes the necessary and unmistakable accents to the image of the "trembling men". These accents transform the external plastic motif into the echo of internal processes, which are generated by the sudden consciousness of our own mental disorder. The themes of the fear of God and of doubt in unbelief arise.

People, going down the hill, have crowded. Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees- gray-bearded, harsh and angry – stand out among them particularly. For the most part they did not heed the teachings of the prophet, even though they came to listen to him and discuss among themselves what they had heard and seen. A young Levite in a white headscarf and the other – in red robes – turned their heads abruptly in the direction of the Messiah, as if trying to escape from the clutches of the crowd, from the grip of

the established opinions. The women are looking with their indifferent eyes at what is happening, the Roman soldiers are looking glumly. Muscular hands of the soldiers powerfully constrain the obstinate horses.

So, we see that Ivanov has managed to achieve at the level of the first layer of the intangible plan such diversity in the interpretation of the characters that it is impossible to confuse one image with the other. Each person has its past, present and future. That is, the artist understood all of them in the biographical plan, and he depicts their portraits with consideration of the specific circumstances of their spiritual life. A viewer can see different persons in the space of the painting: gusty, easily flammable people and people of the solid spirit; good, merciful people and bitter, cruel people; people who are wise, immersed in their thoughts, and simple people; dispassionate and closed, skeptical and suspicious people; watchful and puzzled people. It is difficult to enumerate all the hues of a human "I", which are reflected in this Ivanov's creation. Various emotional states of the characters are compared as if they characterize the stage of development of any one of the human feelings. Different modes of human worldview are expressed in many images within one painting. Ivanov provides his work with the plastic motifs of "shaking", "scrutinizing into the distance", "an exit out of the water", "raising", "squirming", "straightening", etc. He gives a viewer an opportunity to move naturally from the literal meaning of the motive to the ideal conception of the typical phases of human existence in general.

The wanderer with a stick in his hand is a self-portrait of Alexander Andreevich Ivanov. The artist has portrayed himself under the guise of a wanderer, nestled in among the rocks under the shade of a tree; this person is contemplating the magnificent picture of the Messiah appeared in the world. The wanderer is a spiritual self-portrait

of the artist. Being in Italy, Ivanov has studied the philosophy of Schelling – the “ruler of doom” in the environment of art intellectuals of the time. According to Schelling, an artist is a genius and a sample of the absoluteness of God, acting like nature. When an artist builds something of the matter, then he builds his own “I”.

Shades of the internal condition of the author-the wanderer, his thoughts and feelings about life and about himself radiate like waves to the left and to the right in the space of the canvas “The Appearance of Christ before people”. They are implemented in the various characters of the picture. It is he, the author, being “inside” of his own work; he is both: a prophet and a slave; a sage and a doubter; a passionate young man, interested in his subject, and a helpless old man, not capable of deep feelings; a man who is taking faith selflessly and a man who doubts in the faith. He and only he is “crouching” and “rectified”, “rising” and “sit”, “looking” and “hearten”. What is separated in the world of bodies is merged into the spiritual world in the mind of the author.

In Christianity, the geometry of the vertical figure of “eight” symbolizes the ratio of the earthly and heavenly worlds, and the point of intersection in the center of this figure is the God-man (Jesus Christ). Alexander Ivanov knew this tradition and took it into consideration. He changed fundamentally the direction and content of this geometric symbol – he put it on one side. It turns out as lemniscate, i.e. a geometric shape in a form of the mathematical sign of infinity. The center of this lemniscate is Ivanov himself. His figure is the middle (the mediator) between the circle of the Disciples of Christ and the circle of the scribes and Pharisees; it combines the contact loops of the lemniscate. The figure of Nathanael (“the Doubter”) creates the center of the left loop of this lemniscate. The figure of “the Shaky Slave”, who is ready to accept the faith, creates the center of the right loop. Although the artist is depicted

in the center of the picture, his self-portrait is dimmed and is not too catches the viewer’s eyes. The lemniscate’s loops are in full equilibrium like bowls of weights. We see John the Baptist with his disciples, the future apostles, in the left loop of the circle. They are symbolizing the world of spirit and the power of religious faith in God. The Pharisees and scribes are placed in the right circle. They are representatives of the world of science, rational knowledge. With the help of this artistic method Ivanov has reached the speculative balance of faith and knowledge, and he has found the golden mean “of true spirituality”.

The compositional formula of “The appearance of Christ before people” is not static. Its dynamism is revealed through the interaction of the image of Christ in one part of the picture (Christ is important first of all to those who lack faith) and the image of the dry branch of the tree in another part of the picture (this branch is the symbol of Christian teachings; this branch-teaching becomes yellow; therefore, Christ’s appearance is certainly necessary for the revival of the doctrine, which is perishing in its basis). The semantic pulsation of these elements causes the dynamic character of the harmony of faith and knowledge, feelings and mind. It turns out, that the artist wants to tell the audience that faith and religion should equally be complemented by doubts and scientific knowledge in a truly harmonious man. And, on the contrary, a true scientist (together with his doubts) should be filled to 50 per cent with religious faith; otherwise, the scientific knowledge is one-sided and imperfect.

However, no one artist has been able yet to portray the ideal of a perfect manfully, because every single creature bears the indelible stamp of the limited (clan, tribe, time, location, education, etc.). A comprehensive artistic ideal of humanity is inevitably deprived of its “individuality”, and, perhaps, an icon reflects its generalized face much better.

A.A. Ivanov solved, with the help of artistic means, the age-old religious and philosophical dilemma: what to prefer – faith or knowledge, a feeling or reason? The focus of the mutually balanced parties of human spirit is the artist himself, depicted on the canvas. This is the formula of the true meaning of life, which Ivanov has suggested to his audience. It is possible to agree or disagree with this formula, but we cannot ignore it today.

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Религиозно-художественный образ совершенной целостности человека: картина А. А. Иванова «Явление Христа народу»

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В статье рассматривается проблема религиозно-художественного выражения идеала совершенного человека и его общего смысла жизни. Обсуждено понятие человеческой целостности. Выделены следующие идеальные типы людей, полярные друг другу: духовный, плотский, парциальный, гармонический человек. В каждой культуре идеалы «совершенной целостности» человека конкретизируются наглядными образами, красочно олицетворяются в культурных героях. Далее описывается композиционная формула картины А. А. Иванова «Явление Христа народу». Этой формулой выражена идея смысла жизни совершенного человека. Авторы приходят к выводу, что Иванов художественными средствами разрешил извечную религиозно-философскую дилемму: чему отдавать предпочтение – вере или знанию, чувству или разуму? По мнению Иванова, вера и знание в «совершенном человеке» должны взаимно дополнять и уравновешивать друг друга. Сам художник, изображенный в центре холста, и есть средоточие взаимно уравновешенных сторон человеческого духа.

Ключевые слова: целостность, совершенный человек, идеальные типы людей, гармония, смысл жизни.
