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God, Destiny and Will in the World Image of I.A. Goncharov: an Artistic and Anthropological Aspect ("The Precipice")

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God, will and destiny, constituting concepts in the artistic world of I.A. Goncharov form the plot and determine configuration of the personosphere in his last novel. The plot of "The Precipice" can be narrowed down to the formula of "overcoming self-will" affecting the main characters. A concept-intermediary "passion" appears in opposition of destiny – an objective course of events and will – the subjective influence on events.

Destiny is generally interpreted in the novel and in religious consciousness as a manifestation of God's will; therefore refusal of the desires associated with the manifestation of pride or corporeality directs a person to humility and acceptance of traditional values.

Keywords: artistic anthropology, world image, personosphere, ethic-religious worldview, traditional values.

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Research area: philology.

Artistic anthropology is a relatively new branch of the Humanities (Savel'eva, 1999; Artistic Anthropology, 2007; Artistic Anthropology, 2011; Siniakova, 2011; Faustov, 2013). The authors of the textbook "Artistic Anthropology" note that this discipline is aimed at "comprehending, interpreting and diversifying character images that appear as a result of <...> recreating a person in the author's artistic world and the artistic texts that he engenders" (Artistic anthropology, 2007: 6). The image of a person in a literary-anthropological scientific paradigm

is presented as a vital-mental entity, a biosocial whole. The structure and image of a person are produced within the boundaries of the author's artistic world and are a projection and embodiment of both rationalized and irrationally creative impulses. The appeal of modern philology to the problem of a person as a semiotic-value universe is natural: a person in literature, at least in pre-modern and postmodern literature, acts as a "supporting structure" of a fictitious reality. A definition of a person as a natural-cultural synthesis that is common to humanitaristics can

be used for a “literary” person as well taking into account the specificity of an artistic text. This approach seems to be productive for identifying the author’s basic character strategy. In addition, it helps determine the philosophical and ethical (value) settings of the creator of the work – the concept’s carrier (see: Korman, 1971). The use of the anthropological method for the analysis of the main concepts of the artistic world is scientifically justified, since an actor-person becomes a spokesman of the writer’s creative settings. The novel work of I.A. Goncharov is not an exception. An artistic and anthropological potential of the last novel of the writer is particularly interesting.

An anthropological task of the last novel written by I.A. Goncharov was formulated in the article “Intentions, tasks and ideas of the novel ‘The Precipice’” (1872, published in 1895) and suggested the study of “all images of passions”: Working on a Vera’s serious passion, I involuntarily stirred and exhausted almost all the passion images in the novel. There was Raiskii’s passion for Vera, a special kind of passion inherent in his character, then Tushin’s passion for her, a deep, reasonably human passion based on consciousness and conviction in the moral perfection of Vera; further unconscious, almost blind passion of a teacher Kozlov for his unfaithful wife; and finally, a wild, animal-like, but persistent and concentrated passion of a simple peasant Savely for his wife Marina, this bondmaid Messalina” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 454)¹.

Having noted that the manifestations of passion outline the character composition of the novel (“The whole series of these personalities represent a certain gradation where the flawless ones stand at the height – Belovodova and Marfenka, then Grandmother and Vera, and finally descend to the extreme excessive use of a human nature – Kozlov’s wife and Marina. The latter represents the final turn of a person into an

animal” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 455)), the writer defined “three persons” as its constructive centre: Grandmother, Raiskii and Vera (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 453).

All three characters are united by a motive of temptation: Raiskii undergoes an ordeal by different “loves”²; Grandmother – by a long-bygone “sin”, Vera – by an independent search for truth (or rather a new faith)³. The psychological experience of each of them can be described as overcoming passions and accepting destiny. At the same time, both female characters bear the main storyline in the novel plot of the ordeal that is represented by an event scheme “sin – redemption – resurrection”⁴, and the narrative shift of Raiskii’s image, according to E.A. Krasnoshchekova, is associated with the novel of education (Krasnoshchekova, 2007: 370-382), and features of curiosity and active cognition are revealed in the structure of his character.

Passions are encouraged by self-will. According to V.I. Dahl, self-will is “wilfulness, arbitrariness”, while the main meaning of “will” is “the arbitrariness of an action” (Dahl, 2006, v. 4: 260). Let us pay attention to a rational-intentional component of the concept: “arbitrariness of an action given to each person; freedom, liberty of action”, “power or force, moral power, right, strength”; and especially to a “creative activity of mind” (the last meaning is given with reference to A.S. Khomiakov) (Dahl, 2006, v. 1: 402). In the anthropological aspect, will becomes the consequence of a reasonable choice and is the opposite of passion – “unconscious attraction, an unbridled, irrational desire” (Dahl, 2006, v. 4: 564). Passion is chaotic, but the will regulates the personality’s structure. Destiny is also counter-directed to will, being a “confluence of life circumstances; a course of events that is not dependent on the person’s will” (Efremova, 2000).

Evaluation of destiny a key determinant of the characters' world attitude; here the following positions are manifested: destiny – God's will (Grandmother), destiny – a search for an ideal (besides aestheticized) passion (Raiskii) – and destiny as a search for truth (Vera). In the anthropological perspective of the novel the interaction of passion (corporeality, unreason, chaos), will (reason, goal-setting) and final humility before destiny (harmonization of the spirit) sets its architectonics as a whole.

Tat'iana M. Berezhkova prefers not to interfere in the course of life, but fully accepts the traditional world order. In a self-critical article "Better Late Than Never" (1879), the writer insists that "the laconic meaning of the entire moral structure of this old woman" (Goncharov, 1980, v. 8: 124) is the "motive of obedience": "The whole point of her character is that she is an old firm, domineering, stubborn woman <...> She loves everyone to obey her... <...> This motive of obedience in her character goes through the whole novel" (Goncharov, 1980, v. 8: 124-125); as for Grandmother herself, she obeys the traditional way of life. The author quotes an excerpt from Chapter 10, Part 2: "She speaks the language of traditions, spills proverbs, sentences of old wisdom, fights for them with Raiskii, and all her external rite of life goes on according to the established rules.

But when Raiskii took a closer look, he saw that in those cases that could not somehow fit the already established rules, Grandmother suddenly got her own forces and started to act in a peculiar way.

A living stream of common sense, her own ideas and concepts made its way through the dilapidated and always useless wisdom. <...> (then – *L.S.*) she seemed to be frightened a little and anxiously sought to back them up with some previous example" (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 224).

The national language worldview is clearly represented in a phraseological body of language, the reference to which demonstrates a stable traditional consciousness of its speaker. This is incomprehensible to Raiskii who is striving for independence, who connects verbal behaviour with the world outlook in general: "How do they live?" he thought knowing that neither Grandmother, nor Marfenka, nor Leontii want to go anywhere, and they do not look at the bottom of life that he has to bear <...> No! "Rejection is God's protection!" Grandmother says" (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 224). Raiskii, on the contrary, insists on the priority of an "independent desire" (F.M. Dostoevskii) ironically objecting to Grandmother's "fatalism": "This is life: we let it be under fate, then under reason, under chance – it fits everything. Grandmother has some kind of a house spirit..." "Not a house spirit, but God and destiny," she argues (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 231).

In turn, Tat'iana Markovna, convinced that God is destiny, reproaches her grandson for "arrogance": "You are too presumptuous. Destiny will punish you for this "by all means" someday! Do not say that! And you should always add: "I would like to", "God willing, we will be alive and well..." (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 229). Grandmother's evaluation of Raiskii as an "extraordinary" and "original" man is repeated in the second part of the novel, in which the characters "take a closer look" at each other, from chapter to chapter (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 164, 176, 219, 226, etc.). "Specificity" has a value of the priority of one's will in relations with others: "...the specificity, originality is one's own custom, an independent character, a desire to do everything in their own way, and a demand from others to obey this order" (Dahl, 2006, v. 4: 261). A stronger synonym for specificity is self-will. If the specificity "is not yet a vice; sometimes it only applies to habits", then the self-will "is close to stubbornness, perseverance" (Dahl, 2006, v. 4:

261). Further, Raiskii will blame Vera for “self-will”.

For Tat'iana Markovna, life is determined by God's will, and not by a rational program of self-education, which, contrary to his irrationally sensuous nature, was adhered to by Raiskii. At the same time, he is fully aware of the difference between rational love for someone and a spontaneous belief of grandmother, for which a soul is responsible, an organ of the “invisible anatomy” that is the highest in the anthropological hierarchy (E.V. Uryson)⁶: “I fight <...> to be humane and kind: Grandmother did not think about this ever, but she is humane and good. I am incredulous, cold to people and only attracted to creations of my imagination, but Grandmother is attracted to fellow creatures and believes in everything. I <...> know that everything is an illusion, and I cannot attach myself to anything, I do not find any reconciliation: Grandmother does not suspect fraud in anything or anyone except the merchants, and her love, condescension, kindness rest on the warm trust in people and the good, and if I... can be indulgent, it is because of the cold consciousness of the principle, while Grandmother's principle is in feelings, in sympathy, in her nature!” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 231). Let us note that a soul marked by the attributes of reason and will implies a higher knowledge in comparison with the pragmatic-rational: “Reason is associated with higher, ethical concepts, such as good and evil. That is why reason appears as the supreme ability of people raising them above the rest of the world. <...> Reason presupposes more ordinary, everyday knowledge. Its volume is small, it is considered inferior and is not highly valued, because it is based on common sense and does not take into account the wealth of life” (Uryson, 2003: 32-33). Let us repeat that Raiskii's choice of “the good” is rational and loses out to Grandmother's ethical imperative as an immediate sense of life.

In addition to “humaneness” Raiskii himself consciously “nurtures” passions in himself: “Oh, God, give me passion!” he appeals to inspiration for the future novel – he needs a sensual impulse. “He decided to write it in episodes, sketching out a figure that will get his interest, <...> introducing himself wherever his sensation, impression and, finally, feeling and passion would take him, especially passion!” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 248). In a conversation with Aianov, the hero justifies a vital concept of a person, according to which “Don Juanism” is an archetypal constant of the human nature: “in the human race Don Juanism is the same as quixotism, even deeper; this need is even more natural...” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 13). “Don Juanian” intention becomes the determining factor in Raiskii's cognition of people – they are evaluated based on passion they arouse in him or are capable of.

Passion interferes with his attitude to Marfenka. “Passions, broad movements, some distant and difficult goal could not be reached (by Marfenka's re-education – *L.S.*) – it is not in her nature!” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 286). laments Raiskii who recently felt that “some kind of a passionate snake sneaked into” his feeling for a second cousin (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 251). In this case, snake semantics obviously refers to a biblical mythologeme of cognition of good and evil pointing to the emancipated will that has fallen off of God⁷.

In Raiskii's perception, dissolute Ul'iana Kozlova is associated with a statue (“No! <...> the moment has come; I will throw a stone in this cold, heartless statue...” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 90)), for her passion is manipulative and turns into violence against someone else's will. In the episode with Ul'iana, the hero compares himself with Hamlet⁸, completely rejecting “Don Juanism” and singling out the lack of will in the Hamlet text. Here, the lowest, carnal passion is contrasted with the “aesthetic” passion typical

for Raiskii: “The so-called ‘will’ pokes fun at everyone! ‘There is no will in a person’ he said (Raiskii – *L.S.*), “but there is a paralysis of will <...>! And what is called will, this imaginary power, since it is not at the disposal of a master, a “king of nature” <...> Like conscience it only shows itself when a person has already done something wrong, and even if he may have inflexible will, it is rather by chance, or when he is indifferent” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 93). Ashamed of the incident, Raiskii wants to first “drop out” “this chapter in the novel”, but then decides not to “lie, pretend or get on stilts”, but to only “soften” his work: “I will cover a nymph and a satyr with a garland...” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 93). In this episode, the carnal element is rejected by Raiskii, though inconsequently, because it supersedes will and deprives “Don Juanism” of creative options.

In the process of Vera’s “education”, Raiskii also compares himself with a satyr, because, in his opinion, “all tender feelings are only flowers under which nymphs and satyrs are hiding...,” hence his lamentation: “My nymph does not want to choose me as a satyr” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 9). The culmination of “pedagogical” exercises of Raiskii can be considered a dispute in Ch. 8, P. 3 about what is true – love (Vera’s view) or passion (Raiskii’s conviction). The latter insists that love is a lie invented during cultivation of a person, “a composed, invented ghost that appears on the grave of passion. <...> Nature has put only passion in living organisms, it does not give anything else. Love is one, there is no other loves! <...> people called (its – *L.S.*) trace a holy, sublime love, when passion has burned down and died out...” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 66). Thus, the “satyr”, carnal aspect in Raiskii’s personality temporarily prevails over his aestheticism, and his will is suppressed, since the anthropologemes of flesh and reason are mutually exclusive.

Returning back to “beauty full of intellect” (it was Raiskii who asserted that “stupid beauty is not beauty”. <...> Beauty full of intellect is an extraordinary power, it runs the world...” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 359)) became possible after someone else’s experience of passion, when he forgets about his own sufferings and looks after “someone else’s passion squirming like a “boa”... that looked out of Vera with its sharp teeth” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 230) (let us pay attention to the “snake” metaphor that reproduces the meaning of the chthonic power of passion).

“Vera lost herself to a false position by her independent and proud will,” the author explains Vera’s walk into the “ravine” (“Intentions, tasks and ideas of the novel “The Precipice”) (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 463). According to Grandmother, Vera “has her own reason... and her own will above all” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 76). Raiskii begs Grandmother “not to embarrass” Vera and give her “will”, insisting that “she will be able to manage her own destiny alone” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 78). For Vera, passion is difficult, because it is not connected with “aesthetics” like that of Raiskii, but with the pride of intellect. The desire to re-educate Mark Volokhov was due to reassessment of her moral strength. Vera reproaches Raiskii: “...Speak, teach or turn me back when I still had strength!” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 228) stating the same impotence of reason before flesh. Disharmony of passion (“And passion tears me up...” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 228)) accompanied by the “snake” semantics (having made “an invocatory sign by a head” to Raiskii, a false teacher, she “crawled into a dark alley” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 225)) makes the heroine return to higher universals – God and tradition. After the “ravine” Vera is obedient to Grandmother’s will; she admits that Mark’s life “does not have a root,” that is an orientation toward traditional values – Church and Home, above all (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 260).

Vera “cleared herself to self-knowledge and self-control through the fire of passion and testing...” Raiskii recognizes (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 333). After all, the spirit and will are priorities in the structure of Vera’s personality. Mark feels great annoyance because he “overcame imagination, perhaps, the so-called Vera’s heart, but did not overcome her mind and will” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 166).

After Vera’s ordeal by “ravine”, Raiskii, shaken in his sensually emotional world outlook, is reflecting on Vera’s love for Tushin as a “person”. Vera’s feeling for Tushin is “not an exclusive, narrow partiality, but a universal human feeling. She did not fall in love with him through passion – meaning physically: it does not depend on consciousness or will, but on some kind of a nerve (probably the most stupid one, Raiskii thought, which makes some low function, incidentally, fall in love), < ...> but she loved him as a “person” and in such way expressed to Raiskii her attraction to Tushin when they first met, that is, attraction to him as a “human being” in general” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 383). Accordingly, for Vera, Tushin

also feels “a deep, reasonably human love based on consciousness and conviction in the moral perfection of Vera” (“Intentions, tasks and ideas of the novel “The Precipice” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 454)). After Vera’s experience, the carnal principle is rejected by Raiskii for good, for it removes a consciously-willed setting and, in the end, suppresses the personality. The transformation of Raiskii’s personality begins from this moment.

God, will and destiny, constituting concepts in the world view of I.A. Goncharov that are fundamental to the religious consciousness in general form the plot and determine the configuration of the personosphere in his last novel. The plot of “The Precipice” can be reduced to the formula of “overcoming self-will”. In opposition to destiny and will, a concept-mediator “passion”, a corporal-emotional derivative of self-will appears. Passions act as a transitional instance between will as an individualizing quality of personality and destiny as a superindividual essence of human life. Destiny is identical with rejection of self-will and passions and connects a person with God (God’s will).

¹ Further references to this publication are given in the text indicating a volume and page number.

² “In Raiskii, <...> I observed <...> a curious, psychological or physiological process of manifestation... of a mobile and impressionable nature in his personal life. It is exactly how the power of imagination in artistic natures that is not directed at the urgent matter and artistic creatures rushed into life. <...> Idle fantasy in such natures often rushes into the sphere of feelings, into all kinds of *loves* (put in italics by the author – L.S.), <...> generating some kind of fever from all this, <...> something pathetic and ridiculous” (“Better late than never”) (Goncharov, 1980, v. 8: 122).

³ A quasi-religious search for Vera in an ideological dialogue with Mark Volokhov is emphasized by calling the latter a “young apostle” and a “preacher”. Vera fully understood that “all of the good and the true that was in his sermon was not new, that it was taken from the same source used by people for years, that the seeds of all these new ideas <...> were contained in the old practice” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 311). A motive for her failed independent search is indicated in the same chapter (chapters 6, part 5): “Soon she felt the aimlessness and futility of this journey through strange minds, without a guiding thread” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 308).

⁴ V.I. Mel’nik believes that the images of the main characters “are formed in accordance the evangelical model of “deification” of a person: sin – repentance – resurrection” (Mel’nik, 2015: 123). We agree with the researcher and would like to add that overcoming self-will is a psychological equivalent of repentance plotted in humility (psychological acceptance of the truth of Grandmother and the will of God) of Raiskii and Vera.

⁵ Raiskii complains that Grandmother “has the same understanding of destiny as an ancient Greek’s of fate <...> as if the embodied destiny is standing here and listening...” (Goncharov, 1979, v. 5: 229).

⁶ V.I. Dahl defines a soul as “an immortal spiritual being endowed with reason and will; <...> a person’s vital being imagined separately from a body and a spirit...” (Dahl, 2006, v. 1: 835). Iu.S. Stepanov argues that V.I. Dahl’s definition remains to be the most appropriate to this day, however, “the word ‘being’ should be replaced by the word ‘essence’ that remained terminologically unconscious for Dahl” (Stepanov, 2004: 737). The researcher adds that the spirit is male, and the soul is female, and “in accordance with the general rule of the Indo-European grammar, the former signifies something basic and dominant, and the latter, the feminine gender, signifies something derivative, private and dependent” (Stepanov, 2004: 738). “The spirit, unlike the soul, is not conceived as the center of the inner life of a person, it is not identified with a per-

sonality of a subject – it is much less individual” (Uryson, 2003: 66). Traditionally the spirit occupies the highest place in Christian anthropology (spirit – soul – body).

⁷ “...The snake is associated with “temptations” facing those who have overcome the limitations of matter and have penetrated into the reality of pure spirit. <...> physically the snake symbolizes seduction of power by matter (<...> of Adam by Eve), representing a graphic illustration of a mechanism of the involution process and how the lower can hide in the higher or the precedent exist within the subsequent” (Kerlot, 1994: 211).

⁸ “Hamlet and Ophelia! suddenly came into his head, and he went off into fits of laughter from this comparison... Ul’iana Andreevna is Ophelia! He did not laugh at comparing himself with Hamlet though: “To him, everyone seemed to be Hamlet sometimes! The so-called “will” makes fun of everyone!” (Goncharov, 1980, v. 6: 93).

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Бог, судьба и воля в мирообразе И.А. Гончарова: художественно-антропологический аспект («Обрыв»)

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Бог, воля и судьба, конституирующие концепты в художественном мире И.А. Гончарова, в последнем его романе формируют сюжет и определяют конфигурацию персониферы. Сюжет «Обрыва» может быть сведен к формуле «преодоления своеволия», затрагивающей главных персонажей. В оппозиции судьбы – объективного хода событий и воли – субъективного воздействия на события появляется концепт-посредник «страсть».

Судьба трактуется в романе и в религиозном сознании в целом как проявление Божьей воли, поэтому отказ от связанных с проявлением гордыни или телесности желаний направляет человека к смирению и приятию традиционных ценностей.

Ключевые слова: художественная антропология, мирообраз, персонифера, этико-религиозное мировоззрение, традиционные ценности.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.
