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# Viacheslav Ivanov in the 1930s: The Russian Poet as Italian Humanist

Emily Wang

In recent years, the word “humanism” has become suspect: at best, it is considered a vague indication of humane values, and at worst, a generalizing term that erases politically significant differences like race, gender, and class by overemphasizing presumed commonalities. This anti-humanist trend arguably began with Friedrich Nietzsche and his notion of the *Übermensch*, or “superman”; it was subsequently developed by thinkers like Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze, who associated humanism with the Enlightenment’s anthropocentric worldview—one they considered outdated and reactionary.<sup>1</sup> Their social significance notwithstanding, such criticisms nevertheless ignore both the origins of the term and the heated disputes that surrounded it in the twentieth century. When applied to Petrarch—often credited as the “founder of humanism” and the Italian Renaissance—humanism designated a dual intellectual allegiance to Ancient Roman literature and contemporary Christian culture. While in Italy humanism had a particular *national* character, founded as it was in rediscovering Ancient Roman literary culture, in western Europe generally, humanism became a *transnational* movement that united scholars through a shared interest in culture and the common language of Latin.<sup>2</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, it became the subject of fierce political debate. Recent scholarship has demonstrated how Martin Heidegger’s famous “Letter on Humanism” (written in 1946 and published the following year), a foundational text for subsequent intellectual developments, emerged from German polemics of the 1920s-1930s on the meaning of “humanism.” Some scholars insisted the term should be understood transnationally, in a way that was consistent with its Renaissance origins, but those

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1. For an overview of anti-humanism, see Elizabeth Kuhn, “Toward an Anti-Humanism of Life: The Modernism of Nietzsche, Hulme, and Yeats,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 1–20. In the 1980s, French thought saw a backlash against anti-humanism, described by Jean-Jacques Thomas in “Post-Structuralism and the New Humanism,” trans. Jeff Loveland, *SubStance*, 21, no. 2, Issue 68 (1992): 61–76. While contemporary scholars of race and gender often reject humanism because it has traditionally (and restrictively) implied a straight, white, male subject, some have repurposed the term because it also implies an ethical responsibility towards all human beings. See, for example, Ann V. Murphy, “Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism,” *Hyapatia*, 26, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 575–90.

2. For more on Petrarch and the Italian humanist tradition, see Collen E. Quillen, “A Tradition Invented: Petrarch, Augustine, and the Language of Humanism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 2 (April-June, 1992): 179–207, and Rocco Montano, “Italian Humanism: Dante and Petrarch,” *Italica* 50, no. (Summer, 1973): 205–21.

*Slavic Review* 75, no. 4 (Winter 2016)

closer to Nazism called for a nationalist and racist understanding of human achievement.<sup>3</sup> It is symptomatic of this first group that the celebrated philologist Ernst Robert Curtius, who was a friend and colleague to cosmopolitan writers like T. S. Eliot, called for Germans to remember the fundamentally international nature of European culture in response to Third Reich nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

The borders of this controversy extended well beyond Germany, including to humanism's birthplace in Italy. There, the fascist government regarded humanism, along with the other cultural achievements of Ancient Rome and the Renaissance, in nationalist terms.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, anti-fascist thinkers engaged with humanism's legacy, which they understood quite differently. The great secular idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce, although he did not identify himself as a humanist *per se*, valued Petrarch's independence from dogmatic scholasticism, and considered his movement a crucial development for human freedom, a notion that held profound philosophical and political relevance for him. Even religious Italian anti-fascists shared Croce's allegiance to humanism and freedom and opposition to dogma for political reasons.

In these circumstances, Viacheslav Ivanov occupied a unique position. An internationalist who exerted great influence on his friend and colleague Curtius, yet one who nevertheless also valued national specificity in general and Italian culture in particular, he brought to this western European discussion the ideas he had developed as a religious symbolist in Russia.<sup>6</sup> In addition to revealing an intriguing extension of Russian symbolist thought into a new political and literary context, Ivanov's intervention into the humanism debate tests its fault lines along the issues of religion and transnationalism. This article will examine how Ivanov engaged with (and was interpreted by) Catholic, secular, and fascist thinkers, as well as how he responded to them. A consideration of his Italian period complicates our understanding of Russian emigration generally and, more specifically, of Ivanov's role within it. He made an effort to leave behind his Russian identity by presenting himself not just as a transnational Catholic humanist, but also—quite surprisingly—as a national Italian one.

3. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism,'" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, (New York, 1993), 239–76. For more on the polemics surrounding humanism, see Katie Fleming, "Heidegger, Jaeger, Plato: The Politics of Humanism," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 19, no. 2 (June 2012): 82–106, and Anson Rabinbach, "Heidegger's Letter on Humanism as Text and Event," *New German Critique* 62 (Spring-Summer 1994): 3–38. Heidegger eventually rejected both positions described here as politically suspect, and went on to deny humanism entirely (Rabinbach, "Heidegger's Letter on Humanism," 22).

4. See Ernst Robert Curtius's discussion of his 1932 "polemical pamphlet" "Deutscher Geist in Gefahr (The German Spirit in Danger)" in the foreword to *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 2013), xxiii–xxiv. See also Colin Burrow's introduction, xi–xx.

5. Unsurprisingly, this perspective was not popular in Germany. See Rabinbach, "Heidegger's Letter on Humanism," 15.

6. For more on Ivanov's own relationship and correspondence with Curtius, see Michael Wachtel, "Vjačeslav Ivanov als 'missing link' in der Kulturphilosophie von Ernst Robert Curtius," *Die Welt der Slaven* 37 (1992): 97–106.

Viacheslav Ivanov's émigré period brought about a striking shift in his cultural self-identification. After leaving Soviet Russia in 1924, he took an unusual path: rather than following his predecessors to Germany or France, he settled in Italy. This geographical reorientation brought a more profound spiritual one in its wake: in 1926, he adopted Roman Catholicism, doubly estranging himself from the broader émigré community.<sup>7</sup> However, Ivanov avoided the word "conversion" and saw his acceptance of Catholicism not as a betrayal of Orthodox Christianity, but as a synthesis of the two churches. In his 1930 public letter to French Catholic thinker Charles Du Bos, Ivanov explained this decision. The revolution made him recognize that both his country and its religion were doomed. By following the ecumenical teachings of his mentor, the religious philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev, he was symbolically reuniting the eastern and western churches, thereby joining a united European Christian community. For Ivanov—and here he left Solov'ev behind—this cosmopolitan spiritual community was strong enough to withstand Soviet atheism.<sup>8</sup> In other words, his understanding of internationalism and religion were ineluctably linked.

Turning aside from the internecine squabbles of Russian émigrés, Ivanov sought a place for himself in the western European intellectual community. Yet while assuming this transnational European Catholic identity, he simultaneously presented himself as a nationalist by assuming the role of a latter-day Italian humanist thinker. Although Ivanov saw no contradiction in his attempt to be simultaneously national and transnational (after all, humanism and Catholicism originated in Italy but strove to be universal), both fascist and liberal Italian intellectuals interpreted his efforts to position himself in their country in political terms.<sup>9</sup>

7. For more on the issues facing Russian Catholic converts in émigré circles, see Katharine Davies, "A 'Third Way' Catholic Intellectual: Charles Du Bos, Tragedy, and Ethics in Interwar Paris," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 4 (October 2010): 637–59, as well as Caryl Emerson, "Jacques Maritain and the Catholic Muse in Lourié's Post-Petersburg Worlds," in Klára Móricz and Simon Morrison, eds. *Funeral Games in Honor of Arthur Vincent Lourié*. (Oxford, 2014), 196–267, and Héléne Iswolsky, *Light Before Dark: A Russian Catholic in France, 1923–1941* (New York, 1942), especially Chapter 1 and Chapter 5. See also Iswolsky's letter to Ivanov, published in Julia Zarankin and Michael Wachtel, "The Correspondence of Viacheslav Ivanov and Charles Du Bos," in Daniela Rizzi and Andrei Shishkin, eds., *Russko-italianskii archiv III: Viacheslav Ivanov—Novye Materialy* (Salaerno, 2001), 497–505.

8. For the French original and a translation by Olga Deschartes, see Viacheslav Ivanov, "Lettre à Charles Du Bos," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. Olga Deschartes, vol. 3 (Brussels, 1979), 417–30. A more precise Russian translation was published as Viacheslav Ivanov, "Pis'mo k Diu Bosu," ed. with commentary and notes by D. V. Ivanov in L. A. Gogotishvili and A. T. Kazarian, eds., *Viacheslav Ivanov: Arkhivnye materialy i issledovaniia* (Moscow, 1999), 81–92. For more on Ivanov's relationship to Du Bos and the Christian humanist community, see the introduction to Julia Zarankin and Michael Wachtel, "The Correspondence of Viacheslav Ivanov and Charles Du Bos."

9. For a recent discussion of transnationalism in Russian literature, see Maria Rubins, "Transnational Identities in Diaspora Writing: The Narratives of Vasily Yanovsky," *Slavic Review* 73, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 62–84.

## Viacheslav Ivanov and the Histories of Humanism

Before examining Ivanov's own humanist writings, it is worthwhile to consider what "humanism" meant in the various contexts in which he operated. Humanism is a crucial term for intellectual history: from the neo-humanism of Soviet socialist realism to Christian humanism in France and beyond to the post-humanism developed in Heidegger's wake, iterations and responses to humanism have defined much of twentieth-century thought. During the 1920s and 30s, the word had several meanings with various political connotations. Russia did not significantly engage with the original Renaissance movement; its discussions of this term tend to emphasize the "humane" and "human values."<sup>10</sup> Petrarch's original religious understanding of humanism, however, did find echoes in the thought of theologian Nikolai Berdiaev, who wrote about the religious awakening of the early twentieth century as a "Russian renaissance" in which the spiritual life of the individual became more important than his role in society.<sup>11</sup>

Besides Berdiaev, Silver Age writers generally used "humanism" as a synonym for "individualism," although many also drew on its historical meanings. In 1919, Aleksandr Blok and Ivanov both published essays about humanism tangentially related to the original movement, "The Destruction of Humanism" (*Krushenie gumanizma*) and "On the Crisis of Humanism" (*O krizise gumanizme*), respectively.<sup>12</sup> For Blok, humanism had been a positive movement in line with the "spirit of music," or the invisible elemental force driving history, during the Renaissance. Later, however, it became separated from "culture" and associated with the negative, degenerate force of "civilization," a force that the recently awakened masses and the "spirit of music" would destroy.<sup>13</sup> Ivanov, meanwhile, saw both civilization and culture as positive elements that had become distorted as society became more mechanized and individualistic. This debate was a significant moment in Russian literary

10. For more on a general understanding of humanism as "secularism" or "centering on the human" in Russian philosophy, see G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, "Introduction: The humanist tradition in Russian philosophy," in G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, (Cambridge, 2010), 1–23.

11. See Nikolai Berdiaev, "Russkii kul'turnyi renessans nachala XX v. i zhurnal 'Put' (K desiatiletiiu 'Puti),' " *Put'*, no. 49, (October-December, 1935): 3–22.

12. See Aleksandr Blok, "Krushenie gumanizma" ("The Destruction of Humanism," 1919), in V. N. Orlov, A. A. Sokurov, and K. I. Chukovskii eds., *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, (Moscow, 1962), 93–115, and Viacheslav Ivanov, "O krizise gumanizma. K morfologii sovremennoi kul'tury i psikhologii sovremennosti," in D.V. Ivanov and Olga Deschartes, eds. *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Brussels, 1979), 367–82.

13. For a useful discussion of Blok's eccentric understanding of humanism, including its socio-political dimensions, see Ilona Svetlikova, "'Mest' Kopernika': Kommentarii k poeme A. Bloka 'Vozmezdie,'" *Die Welt der Slaven* 2 (2015), 300–18. She argues that Blok conflated humanism with the historical Renaissance and bourgeois culture, antithetical to both Christianity and the revolution, which represented a true opportunity for mankind's rebirth.

culture of this period and, as we shall see, it continued to resonate in Ivanov's own thought.<sup>14</sup>

In the Soviet Union and in Europe, humanism also became a key term for Marxist thinkers, who associated it with secularism and anti-fascism.<sup>15</sup> Katerina Clark's recent book, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941*, explores how efforts to connect with "world culture," and especially with the heritage of classicism and the Renaissance, characterized the first part of Stalin's rule.<sup>16</sup> The 1930 edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia explicitly associates the Renaissance movement and its legacy not only with elitism, but also, more positively, with enlightenment and the end of medieval scholasticism, asceticism, and feudalism.<sup>17</sup> Georg Lukács, in particular, considered the cultivation of the fully-formed human being, which had been fragmented under capitalism's division of labor and focus on wealth production over personality, one of communism's primary aims.

As an émigré, Viacheslav Ivanov had little knowledge of the debates raging in the USSR. However, he was well aware of western European developments, especially those taking place in Italy, where secular humanism found its leading representative in Benedetto Croce. Although a major influence on the leftist Antonio Gramsci, Croce was a moderate thinker, an atheist opposed to both communism and fascism. In the early twentieth-century, he was Italy's most prominent intellectual, the culmination of a long tradition of anti-clerical Neopolitan thinkers that began with Giambattista Vico, one of Europe's first sociologists, and leading up to Francesco De Sanctis, a major

14. Osip Mandelstam also entered this debate: see Tom Dolack, "Mandelstam's Petrarch Translations and his Humanist Archaeology," *Annali d'Italianistica* 26 (2008): 187–201. For a more extensive discussion of Blok, Ivanov, and humanism, see Avril Pyman, "U vodorazdelov mysli: krizis ili krushenie? (tema 'gumanizma' u Viach. Ivanov, A. Bloka, o. Pavla Florenskogo)" in K. Iu. Lappo-Danilevskii and A. B. Shishkin, eds., *Viacheslav Ivanov. Issledovaniia i materialy* (St. Petersburg, 2010): 122–132. See also N. Salma, "Krizis gumanizma i 'realisticheskii simvolizm' V. Ivanova," *Dissertationes Slavicae: Slavistische Mitteilungen. Materialy i soobshcheniia po slavianovedeniiu. Sectio historae litterarum* 17 (1992): 197–214. For a more general discussion of "humanism," broadly defined, in Silver Age culture, see T. Elshina, *Russkii kul'turnyi renessans. Issledovanie problemy gumanizma v kontekste literatury XX veka* (Kostroma, 1999), 5–26. A discussion of Blok and Ivanov appears on 153–172.

15. See Rabinbach, "Heidegger's Letter on Humanism"; see also the definition "the Leninist concept of the humanism of socialist revolution" in P. I. Bokarev, *Gumanizm velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1987), 8–9.

16. Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011). Interestingly, although Clark describes what this article defines as one expression of humanist culture, and even discusses the term's usage among the anti-fascist movement (see especially 155–56), she herself avoids the term because of its "vagueness"—a common issue as discussed in this article's introduction. Clark elaborates on this book in "Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* and the Renaissance: An Example of Soviet Cosmopolitanism?," *Slavic Review* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 49–69.

17. See O. Iu. Shmidt, ed., "Gumanizm," *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1930), 19:792–97. This is not to be confused with the subsequent entry of the same title, which refers to a trend in "bourgeois" pragmatist philosophy (798).

figure in Italy's unification, a prominent literary critic, and Croce's immediate intellectual predecessor.<sup>18</sup> Both De Sanctis and Croce valued Italy's historical humanism for introducing an immanent alternative to the Church's transcendent worldview, although Croce's own philosophy diverged in significant ways from these early thinkers—for example, he did not believe that humans differed significantly from other animals.<sup>19</sup> In the 1930s, however, he was the latest and most prominent in this line of secular humanist philosophers.

Closest to Ivanov was the Christian humanism associated with Catholics around Europe, many of them converts, united like their original historical counterparts into a transnational community with common religious and philosophical convictions. This group, which includes Jacques Maritain and Charles Du Bos in France and Ernst Robert Curtius in Germany, became politically identified with a "third way" between Communism and Fascism.<sup>20</sup> In Italy, a similar strain of Catholic humanism emerged in the writer Alessandro Pellegrini's circle, which in turn was nevertheless loosely associated with Croce by virtue of their shared liberalism. By becoming a Roman Catholic, Ivanov also adjusted his classically-based "pagan" symbolism into a reiteration of the Christian humanism of the Italian renaissance, which the poet embraced with typical zeal, becoming a more dogmatic believer than those who had been born into his new religion.<sup>21</sup>

Though chronologically a bit later, Christian humanism also connects the French Existentialist tradition to Ivanov's thought, through Gabriel Marcel; he introduced an excerpt from Ivanov's Dostoevskii book, which would later be published in English as *Freedom and the Tragic Life*, in the important Italian journal *Convegno*.<sup>22</sup> Marcel's own manifesto "On the Ontological Mystery" recalls Ivanov's thought in its concern for humanity's experience of living in an increasingly disorienting technological society.<sup>23</sup> Though Marcel was ambivalent towards the secular developments of French Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre nevertheless invoked him in his 1945 speech "Existentialism is a Humanism." Responding primarily to communists (who often identified themselves as "secular humanists"), Sartre defends his philosophical movement against the reproach that it was anti-human and encouraged "quietism

18. See Edmund Jacobitti, *Revolutionary Humanism and Historicism in Modern Italy* (New Haven, 1981), 1–56.

19. See Marcello Mustè, *Croce*, (Rome, 2009), 146–47.

20. See Davies, "A 'Third Way' Catholic Intellectual," 637–59.

21. For the development of Ivanov's humanism, see Pamela Davidson, *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C. M. Bowra: A Correspondence from Two Corners on Humanism* (Birmingham, 2006), 5–22, and Robert Bird, *The Russian Prospero: The Creative Universe of Viacheslav Ivanov* (Madison, 2006), 227–40.

22. Gabriel Marcel, "L'interpretazione dell'opera di Dostoevski secondo Venceslao Ivanov," in Alessandro Pellegrini, ed., *Il Convegno: Rivista di letteratura e di arte. Venceslao Ivanov* XV, no. 12 (January 25, 1934): 274–80. Available online at [http://www.v-ivanov.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/il\\_convegno\\_1934\\_text.pdf](http://www.v-ivanov.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/il_convegno_1934_text.pdf) (last accessed October 11, 2016). This article will consider *Convegno* in greater detail further on.

23. Gabriel Marcel, "On the Ontological Mystery," in his *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari. (London, 1949). It is worth noting that the first editions published in England of both this book and Ivanov's Dostoevskii monograph were released by the same press, Harvill.

and despair”—a charge with clear political implications immediately after the Second World War.<sup>24</sup> Like Marcel, he understands humanism as human beings’ universal potential to understand one another, although Sartre focuses explicitly on overcoming ethnic and national differences, and opposes his “humanism” to a fascist “humanism” that unquestionably glorifies human endeavors.<sup>25</sup> This speech, in turn, helped motivate the Heidegger essay, in which the German philosopher tries to differentiate himself from Sartre and come to terms with his Nazi past by rejecting humanism entirely.<sup>26</sup>

To understand Ivanov’s contribution to the humanist current of intellectual history, it is essential to consider his time in Italy in greater detail. On the one hand, his turn to devout Roman Catholicism represented an attempt to become part of a transnational Catholic community; on the other, he also wanted to reach a secular Italian audience. As a result, the poet found himself suspended between ecumenical transnationalism and nationalism: when he tried to enter a new community by converting and presenting himself in the Italian idiom, this embrace of the national culture endeared him to the Fascist poet Francesco Pastonchi.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the liberal Croce rejected this apparent nationalist declaration and refused to engage with the religious emphasis the Russian poet was trying to restore to his country’s humanist tradition.

In two important but neglected Italian-language articles, “Discorso sugli orientamenti dello spirito moderno” (Discourse on the Orientations of the Modern Spirit, 1933 with 1934 as the date of copyright) and “Il lauro nella poesia di Petrarca” (The Laurel in the Poetry of Petrarch, written in 1931 and published in 1932), Ivanov reverently describes humanism as an artistic conduit towards God. As such, it resembled his version of symbolism. In both works, Ivanov’s insistence on a religious understanding of both humanism and freedom—a word with not only theological but also political implications

24. Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in his *Existentialism is a Humanism*, ed. John Kulka, trans. Carol Macombe; introduction by Annie Cohen-Solal; notes and preface by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre (New Haven, 2007).

25. See Marcel, “Ontological Mystery,” especially 10–11, and Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” 42–43, 52. Sartre qualifies his use of the term “humanism” in the conversation that followed the speech (54–72).

26. On Heidegger, Nazism, and humanism, as well as his intellectual legacy, see Fleming, “Heidegger, Jaeger, Plato,” and Rabinbach, “Heidegger’s Letter on Humanism.” For a discussion of the links between Ivanov and Heidegger, especially their philosophical parallels, see Robert Bird, “Martin Heidegger and Russian Symbolist Philosophy,” *Studies in East European Thought* 51, no. 2 (June 1999): 85–108. Though Ivanov mentions Heidegger briefly, and negatively, in “Discorso,” an essay that will be considered here, it is not clear how familiar he was with the German philosopher’s work. Bird, 103n4, discusses potential links between Heidegger and Ivanov’s friends Fyodor Stepun and Evsei Shor. Shor also discusses Heidegger in a letter to Ivanov from January 24, 1930. See the online version of the Viacheslav Ivanov Archive, Op. 5, k. 12, p. 03, f. 03, at [www.v-ivanov.it/archiv/opis-5/karton-12/p03/op5-k12-p03-f02.jpg](http://www.v-ivanov.it/archiv/opis-5/karton-12/p03/op5-k12-p03-f02.jpg) (last accessed October 11, 2016).

27. Though this article will focus on Ivanov and Italy, Ivanov tried to fashion himself as western European in other countries as well. His focus on distancing himself from his Russian background was so strong that he initially refused even to give permission for his letter to Charles Du Bos to be translated from French into Russian; see the introduction to the updated Russian translation cited in n8, 82.



for Croce—led to a debate with dangerous overtones that the Russian poet, an impoverished writer of dubious legal status, very much wanted to avoid.

### Ivanov's Political Background

Here one must note that, despite his rejection of communism, Ivanov did not officially sever his ties with the USSR until a few years after publishing these texts. In order to leave his home country, Ivanov promised Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii (an old friend) to remain politically neutral abroad. An alleged anti-Soviet outburst from Konstantin Bal'mont immediately after arriving in Europe had complicated Ivanov's petition for an exit visa.<sup>28</sup> The official reason for Ivanov's departure to Italy was to investigate founding a Soviet academy in Rome similar to the research centers sponsored by Great Britain and Germany, and perhaps even an Italian center for Slavic Studies.<sup>29</sup> Though Ivanov's primary goal was to take up indefinite residence in Italy, he also had real plans for this center. In 1929, however, Lunacharsky was removed as Commissar, and Ivanov received a notice from the Narkompros informing him that he had overstayed the appropriate length of time for a business trip outside the USSR.<sup>30</sup> Though Ivanov ignored this message, up until that point he had continued to receive some limited financial support from the Soviet government. Moreover, even after Ivanov became an Italian citizen in 1936, he was reluctant to discuss politics publicly. In a posthumous article on his friend Ivanov, the journalist and writer Giovanni Cavicchioli recalled the poet's hesitation to participate in a private interview in 1941 about the disintegrating relations between Russia and the west.<sup>31</sup> Cavicchioli also touched on the general suspicion with which Russians in western Europe were regarded during this period. The Ivanov family, burdened by illness and underemployment, could not afford to risk its host country's ill-will.

These circumstances at least partially explain why Ivanov limited his public utterances to themes like the eternal value of culture, even when he may have been thinking about more pressing political issues. Moreover, culture did indeed play a crucial role in his religious understanding of humanism. He first began developing these ideas in *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov* (Correspondence from Two Corners), his 1920 epistolary exchange with the Russian philologist and historian Mikhail Gershenzon. Following Rousseau, Gershenzon believed that mankind should abandon culture as a burden too heavy to bear

28. See Robert Bird, "Ivanov i sovetskaia vlast'," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 40 (1999): 305–21, for a detailed analysis of Ivanov's earliest attempts to travel abroad for the sake of his family's health, including a letter from Ivanov to Nadezhda Krupskaiia in which he declared his loyalty to the state. Of particular interest here is a skeptical response from the Cheka official to whom she forwarded the missive that addresses the Bal'mont situation.

29. *Ibid.*, 315.

30. See Shishkin, "Ivanov i Italiia."

31. See Stefano Garzonio and Bianca Sulpasso, "'Cresce la messe di cui Ella sarà falciatore.' Lettere di Giovanni Cavicchioli a Vjačeslav Ivanov," in Cristiano Diddi and Andrej Shishkin, eds., *Archivio Russo-Italiano VIII*, (Salerno, 2011), 141–84.

in a rapidly changing world; revolution provided an opportunity to embrace the freedom of a golden age before civilization. Ivanov countered that one could only be truly free by submitting to the divine, an experience that classical culture could facilitate.

### ***The Correspondence from Two Corners and its European Reception***

In the *Correspondence*, Ivanov describes his understanding of cultural tradition as “humanist.”<sup>32</sup> It is worth emphasizing that at the time of composition, Italian culture and its humanist tradition were specifically on his mind: Ivanov and Gershenzon were translating Petrarch, and Ivanov himself was working on a Russian verse edition of Dante’s *Purgatorio*, as well as thinking of returning to Italy.<sup>33</sup> Partially as a result of Ivanov’s focus on Europe in this text, *Correspondence* went on to form the cornerstone of Ivanov’s reputation in the west.<sup>34</sup> Du Bos, Curtius, and Croce (not to mention Susan Sontag) all encountered Ivanov through this epistolary philosophical text.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Olga Resnevich-Signorelli’s Italian translation came out in 1932, immediately preceding “Discourse” and “Laurel.”

An important admirer of *Correspondence* was the aforementioned fascist poet and critic Francesco Pastonchi. He ran the popular state-sponsored “Literary Mondays” (*Lunedì letterari*) lecture series at the Casinò Municipale in Sanremo. This program, initiated in 1931 by his friend, the fascist futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, boasted a fashionable venue and an enormous audience. It also compensated its speakers with the princely sum of two thou-

32. For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of Ivanov’s humanist ideas and their connection to contemporary western European thinkers, see Konstantin Lappo-Danilevskii, “Evropeiskii gumanizm kak zhivaia sila. Viach. Ivanov o nauchnom nasledii Vilamovitsa-Mellendorfa,” *Simvol. Zhurnal khristianskoi kul’tury* 53–54 (2008): 168–85, and “Primechateni’nye metamorfozy. (Viach. Ivanov o evropeiskom gumanizme)” in Lappo-Danilevskii and Shishkin, eds., *Viacheslav Ivanov. Issledovanaiia i materialy*, 99–121. For a discussion of Ivanov’s evolving worldviews, see Alexis Klimoff, “Dionysos Tamed: Two Examples of Philosophical Revisionism in Vjačeslav Ivanov’s ‘Roman Diary of 1944’” in Fausto Malcovati, ed., *Cultura e memoria: Atti del terzo Simposio Internazionale dedicato a Vjačeslav Ivanov*, vol. 1 (Florence, 1988), 163–70.

33. See Robert Bird, commentary to Viacheslav Ivanov and Mikhail Gershenzon, in Robert Bird, ed., *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov* (Moscow, 2006), 93, 98. At this period Ivanov had also contributed to Russian translations of Dante’s *De Monarchia* and *Convivio*, and after starting at Baku State University in 1920, he proposed a course on Dante and Petrarch. See K. Iu. Lappo-Danilevskii, “Rimskie poety v traktate Dante ‘Monarkhiia’: neizvestnyie perevody Viacheslava Ivanova,” *Russkaia literatura* 2, (2013): 173–79. For more on Dante’s influence on Ivanov, see Pamela Davidson, *The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov: A Russian Symbolist’s Perception of Dante* (Cambridge, 1989).

34. See *ibid.*, especially 129–53. See also Bird, “Sovetskaia vlast’.”

35. Susan Sontag mentions it in a piece she wrote a few weeks before her death. Her recollection was admittedly imperfect, as she considered the work to be a “novel.” See Susan Sontag, “A Report on the Journey,” *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, Feb. 20, 2005, at [www.nytimes.com/2005/02/20/books/review/a-report-on-the-journey.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/20/books/review/a-report-on-the-journey.html) (last accessed August 5, 2016).

sand lire.<sup>36</sup> The location was so chic that when Ivanov was invited, Signorelli had to assure her friend that he did not need to purchase a new suit for the occasion.<sup>37</sup>

Intrigued by the *Correspondence* volume, Pastonchi commissioned Ivanov to write an elaboration on *Correspondence*, to be titled “Orientations,” addressing the spiritual crises of modern man. At this time, the crisis and even the end of civilization was being discussed by prominent figures all over Europe, including Benito Mussolini, who had presented fascism as a solution to western Europe’s decline in a 1932 speech.<sup>38</sup> Pastonchi may have chosen Ivanov not only since he had previously addressed the question of cultural decline in *Correspondence*, but also because he perceived a connection between Ivanov’s works and his own ideas about using art inspired by ancient tragedy to awaken mass religious fervor.<sup>39</sup> Recent scholarship suggests that Ivanov’s perceived Italianness, as well as his growing reputation in France and Germany, contributed to Marco Spainì and Pastonchi’s selection of him for a state-sponsored lecture series.<sup>40</sup> Ivanov eventually presented the speech as “Discorso sugli orientamenti dello spirito moderno” (Discourse on the Orientations of the Modern Spirit), on April 10, 1933, at the beginning of Holy Week.<sup>41</sup>

36. Signorelli recalls that one lecture attracted an audience of 900–1000 people. See her letter from March 16, 1933 on 382–384, in Ksenija Kumpan, “Troinaia perepiska: Viach. Ivanov i Ol’ga Shor v perepiske s Ol’goi Resnevich Signorelli (1925–1945),” 382–84. Commentary by A. d’Amelia, K. Kumpan, D. Rizzi, in Elda Garetto, Antonella d’Amelia, K. A. Kumpan and Daniela Rizzi, eds. *Archivio Russo-Italiano IX, Ol’ga Resnevič Signorelli e l’emigrazione russa: corrispondenze* (Salerno, 2012), 251–426, 382–84. On compensation, see Giuseppina Giuliano, “Il Sole, il ‘signore del limite.’ La corrispondenza di Francesco Pastonchi e Vjačeslav Ivanov,” in Diddi and Shishkin, eds., *Archivio Russo-Italiano VIII*, (Salerno, 2011), 132. Ivanov’s friends Marco Spainì and Cavicchioli, whom he knew through Signorelli, also helped organize this program: see Kumpan, “Perepiska,” 363n1. According to police records consulted by d’Amelia, Kumpan, and Rizzi, Spainì had “fascist sympathies” but never joined the Party (*ibid.*, 361–62n5). Spainì, an anthroposophist, became good friends with the Ivanov family after Signorelli showed him the French translation of *Correspondence*.

37. See her letter from March 23, 1933, *ibid.*, 387–88.

38. See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the Third Way,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 2 (April 1996): 296.

39. The Italian *Correspondence* volume included Olga Deschartes’s (Shor’s) essay on Ivanov’s ideas about mythopoesis, a topic that also interested Pastonchi, who was a follower of the decadent (and fascist) writer Gabriele D’Annunzio. See Giuliano, “Il Sole,” for a discussion of Pastonchi’s pseudo-Greek tragedy *Simma*, which Giuliano reads as influenced by Ivanov’s work. Although in a letter to the author Ivanov called the work “un’opera grandiosa e bella” (*a great and beautiful work*), (*ibid.*, 134), this “religious” play was not successful. Significantly, Luigi Pirandello, another participant in the “Literary Mondays” series, was likewise thinking about political mythopoesis during this period. In particular, his play *The Giants of the Mountain* (*I giganti della montagna*), which the author was still writing when he died in 1936, presents a mythologized vision of the fascist era that may be read as critical of the regime. Thanks to Simone Marchesi for drawing my attention to this work.

40. See Giuliano, “Il Sole,” 121, 123.

41. Pastonchi suggested this significant date. See Giuliano, “Il Sole,” 132.

Although Pastonchi understood this speech as a Christian apology for fascism, Ivanov's participation in this series was no firm indication of his political allegiance.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the nature of Italian intellectual life in the 1930s was such that it is difficult to categorize many of its most important participants as exclusively associated with one side or another.<sup>43</sup> Mussolini began his career as a socialist. Croce initially supported the Mussolini regime in the belief that it was a less dangerous than communism. Ivanov himself had close ties to his translator Signorelli, who had powerful friends of all political stripes and protected the Ivanov family from deportation when Italian-Soviet relations took a turn for the worse.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Ivanov was close to Croce's follower Alessandro Pellegrini, a Germanist whose liberal political beliefs prevented him from finding a job until World War II ended.<sup>45</sup> Pellegrini, in turn, was part of a circle of Milanese Catholic intellectuals who shared an opposition to the fascist regime, a group that Croce, despite his atheism, called part of his "*famiglia italiana*," or Italian family.<sup>46</sup> It was through this group that Pellegrini likely came into contact with the important literary journal *Il Convegno*, which would become a crucial conduit for Ivanov's work in Italy.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Il Convegno* and Liberal Christian Cosmopolitanism**

Enzo Ferrieri's journal *Il Convegno* (founded 1920) had no overt political orientation. But it attempted to establish a conversation in its pages between the best Italian and international writers—ranging from Franz Kafka to Isaac

42. See Giuliano, "Il Sole," 125–26 for a discussion of the ideological differences between Ivanov and Pastonchi. Nevertheless, the Italian poet was so taken with Ivanov that he wanted to initiate his own "correspondence" with him (*Ibid.*, 133).

43. Fascism and related movements in Europe originally developed from groups all over the political spectrum. Among historians of French fascism, Zeev Sternhell has argued that it ultimately finds its roots among leftist groups, while Robert Soucy traces its origins to the right. For an overview of this debate, see Robert D. Zaretsky, "Neither Left, nor Right, nor Straight Ahead: Recent Books on Fascism in France," *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no.1 (March 2001): 118–32; Irwin Wall, Review of Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933–39*, H-France, H-Net Reviews (March, 1996), at [www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=318](http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=318) (last accessed October 12, 2016). For a discussion of Italian fascism as a "third way" between the left and the right, see Ben-Ghiat, "Third Way."

44. See Kumpan, "Perepiska," 252. For letters discussing her political assistance to Ivanov's family and friends, see 273–75, 393–97, 401–2. In a letter from July 2, 1927, Olga Shor assured Signorelli that she had no political involvements that might cause the latter to regret assisting with her visa (274). Shor discusses (395n5) how Ivanov, desperate to secure the Italian citizenship that would allow performances of his daughter's musical compositions, suggested that Signorelli turn to Mussolini himself. See also Ivanov's appeal to Krupskaya described in n4 of the present essay.

45. See Olga Deschartes's [Shor's] note to Ivanov's letter to Pellegrini on *docta pietas* (Viacheslav Ivanov, "Lettera a Alessandro Pellegrini," in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 818).

46. Ivanov and Signorelli were also linked to this circle through friendship with one of its leaders, the Catholic liberal thinker Tommaso Gallarati Scotti.

47. See Alessandro Pellegrini, ed., *Tre cattolici liberali. Alessandro Casati, Tommaso Gallarati Scotti, Stefano Jacin* (Milan, 1972), especially the editor's introduction (11–33), and Pietro Gadda Conti's "La famiglia italiana a Milano" (307–38).

Babel to the great Italian modernist Italo Svevo, whom it debuted—and thus implicitly rejected fascism’s nationalist worldview. A member of the *famiglia italiana* later described *Il Convegno*’s board as “almost exclusively declared or potential antifascists.”<sup>48</sup> Even the cover of one of the last issues included a cryptically subversive message.<sup>49</sup> Pellegrini proposed dedicating a volume of *Convegno* (which appeared after some delay on January 25, 1934) to Ivanov. One can glean some understanding of the journal’s circumstances at this time from the fact that, as Pellegrini explained to Ivanov somewhat ashamedly, it was unable to pay its famous contributors.<sup>50</sup> It was here that “Discourse” made its first full appearance in print.

The *Convegno* issue remains true to its cosmopolitan identity by placing the Russian writer Ivanov at the center of liberal western European thought. His work appears surrounded by contributions from Curtius, Marcel, and Pellegrini. Despite contributions from Russian (émigré) colleagues that discuss Ivanov as a poet and symbolist, and although a selection of his verse appears here in translation, this issue creates a general impression of the modern Russian poet Ivanov as a latter-day Italian Renaissance humanist philosopher, and, indeed, explicitly focuses on the term “humanist.”<sup>51</sup> Even Ivanov’s fellow Slavs Faddei Zelinskii and Fyodor Stepun underline their colleague’s transnationalism by associating Ivanov with Petrarch. Zelinskii’s article, which Pellegrini indicates was meant to focus on Ivanov’s humanist legacy, explicitly presents him as a representative of a “third, Slavic” Renaissance, an assertion that Olga Deschartes repeats in her “biographical notes.”<sup>52</sup> Curtius describes

48. This man was the journalist and writer Pietro Gadda Conti. The full quotation reads: “In this climate, while the new regiments proclaimed autocracy even in the field of letters, *Il Convegno*—that had collected within itself almost exclusively declared or potential antifascists—being an assembly of free men, was destined, little by little, to die from suffocation: that is what happened in ‘35.” See Paola Ciandini, “Ferrieri Enzo (Milano 1890 luglio 7—Milano 1969 febbraio 4),” *Archivi storici—Lombardi Bene Culturali*, at [www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/archivi/soggetti-produttori/persona/MIDC000955/](http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/archivi/soggetti-produttori/persona/MIDC000955/) (last accessed August 5, 2016).

49. See Eric Bulson, “Milan the ‘Rivista,’ and the Deprovincialization of Italy: *Le Papyrus* (1894–96); *Poesia* (1905–09); *Il Convegno* (1920–40); *Pan* (1933–5); and *Corrente di vita giovanile* (1938–40)” in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Chris Weikop, eds., *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 2013), 526. This message included anti-fascist color symbolism and the use of the pre-fascist dating system. Bulson explains in a footnote that Ferrieri acknowledged in an unpublished article that this secret message was intentional.

50. See Pellegrini’s letter to Ivanov from June 24, 1933 in Andrei Shishkin “Legate intorno alla profonda realtà dell’anima umana: Iz Perepiski A. Pellegrini, T. Gallarati Skotti i P. Treves s Viach. Ivanovym i (1932–1943),” in Daniela Rizzi and Andrei Shishkin, eds., *Archivio Russo-Italiano X* (Salerno, 2015), 146–49.

51. Gabriel Marcel’s article on Ivanov and Dostoevskii does deviate from this trend by discussing “humanism” in its secular sense, and positioning both Ivanov and Dostoevskii against it (Alessandro Pellegrini, ed., *Il Convegno. Rivista di letteratura e di arte. Venceslao Ivanov XIV: 8–12* [January 25, 1934]: 279). Essentially, however, his reading of Ivanov is similar to the others mentioned here.

52. See Pellegrini’s letter to Ivanov from June 24, 1933 in Shishkin, “Perepiska,” 146–49. In his own article, Zelinskii calls Ivanov “one of the most powerful pioneers of the Slavic Renaissance,” *Convegno*, 243. Deschartes writes that “. . . he truly became a rep-

Ivanov as an embodiment of Christianity and humanism.<sup>53</sup> Pellegrini's contribution, discussed at length later in this essay, also deals extensively with humanism, and his correspondence with Ivanov suggests that this focus was intentional. In the previously cited letter, Pellegrini tells Ivanov that he has organized the issue "in such a way that the question of humanism, which has found [its] most distinguished representative in you, may be placed in the context of all your work."<sup>54</sup>

Other Italian readers also associated Ivanov's thought with their own intellectual heritage. The Russian's Italian prose style frustrated Signorelli, who described it as academic, ecclesiastic, and reminiscent of *petrarchismo*.<sup>55</sup> Scholars suggest that Cavicchioli was drawn to Ivanov because of his resemblance to the fifteenth-century humanist and synthesizer of Christianity and classical philosophy Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.<sup>56</sup> Pellegrini, reading the proofs of the *Convegno* issue, remarked to Ivanov that in re-reading the latter's words he seemed to hear "the voice of one of our fifteenth-century masters, or the [voice] of one of those who come from the Orient to bring to us the sentiment and the conscience of the ancient word."<sup>57</sup> Here Ivanov seems to be simultaneously Russian and Italian, recalling Vladimir Solov'ev's dream of reconciling the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The poet himself was unquestionably pleased by Pellegrini's comparison, even as he humbly denied its validity.<sup>58</sup>

### **"Discourse on the Orientations of the Modern Spirit" and Religious and Political Freedom: Polemics with Pellegrini**

We may therefore read "Discourse" as an introduction to Ivanov's thought for an Italian and western European audience that drew on the recently published editions (German, then French, and finally Italian) of *Correspondence*. When requesting to include the "Discourse" in *Convegno*, Ivanov explained that it related to the issues discussed in Pellegrini's article on the *Correspondence*: "[it is] not superfluous at all, since it is connected with the problems of [Pellegrini's article] 'Considerations' and moreover (apart from that fragment on Oedipus), unpublished."<sup>59</sup> Earlier in the letter Ivanov mentioned that the Oedi-

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representative of a creative and fertile humanism; in Russia he became the initiator of the "Slavic Renaissance," *ibid.*, 373.

53. ". . . the integration of Christianity and humanism that Ivanov represents and embodies," *ibid.*, 270.

54. See the same letter from June 24, 1933. Thanks to Massimo Balloni for his assistance in deciphering the original manuscript, accessed from the electronic version of Opis 5, karton 19 at the website of the of the Viacheslav Ivanov Research Center, at [www.v-ivanov.it/archiv/opis-5/karton-19/p11/op5-k19-p11-f11.jpg](http://www.v-ivanov.it/archiv/opis-5/karton-19/p11/op5-k19-p11-f11.jpg) (last accessed August 5, 2016).

55. See her letter from January 31, 1932 in Kumpan, "Perepiska," 356. Ivanov was very particular about his Italian style and consulted with experts to perfect it (*ibid.*, 338–39).

56. See Stefano Garzonio and Bianca Sulpasso, "'Cresce la messe di cui Ella sarà falciatore.' Lettere di Giovanni Cavicchioli a Vjačeslav Ivanov," in Diddi and Shishkin, eds., *Archivio Russo-Italiano VIII*, 157–58, 163.

57. Shishkin, "Perepiska," March 3, 1934 letter, 154.

58. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1934 letter, 154–56.

59. *Ibid.*, "Perepiska," November 21, 1933 letter, 152–53. See also Kumpan, "Perepiska," 389–91.

pus fragment of “Discourse” had appeared in the Catholic modernist journal *Il Frontespizio* (*The Frontispiece*) along with an advertisement for Signorelli’s translation of the *Correspondence*. Since Ivanov had already published frequently in this journal, which paid no honoraria, he first tried to place the text in other venues. In the same letter, he mentions that he also hoped to reprint it in the German-language journal *Corona*.<sup>60</sup> This attention reveals Ivanov’s interest in making this piece available beyond a narrow Catholic readership. Given that it is also linked to both his public letter to Pellegrini, which also took up the problem of freedom in connection with man’s relationship with God, Ivanov’s focus on this text may also indicate that he wished to resume with Pellegrini the conversation begun with Gershenzon, which had found such resonance in the European milieu.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, a later letter suggests this explicitly.<sup>62</sup> “Discourse” and *Correspondence* also address many of the same concerns: the role of rationalism in the mechanization and depersonalization of society, and the potential of culture (understood as art and myth) to bring mankind closer to nature and God.

“Discourse” advises a return to the natural, religious order of things. It addresses the western world, which it presumes has lost touch with God after philosophy introduced an artificial separation between “nature” and “culture.” Ivanov argues that to embrace life is to embrace God, and, like Aleksandr Blok, warns that if mankind does not redirect itself toward “the generous Sun,” nature’s suppressed strength will wreak havoc.<sup>63</sup> But he goes on to make a sharp turn away from Blok, who rejected civilization. Ivanov insists that returning to the natural and spiritual resurrects culture, that “. . . the spirit stands up and comes to life in the presence of unshaken faith, in the sacred nostalgia for eternal things, in the creative power of genius.”<sup>64</sup> Like his response to Gershenzon in *Correspondence*, this attitude stands in implicit opposition to the atheist Soviet worldview.

One particularly egregious force of atheistic “disorienting modernity” is psychoanalysis, and in Section VI of “Discourse” Ivanov establishes a polemic with Sigmund Freud by retelling the myth of Oedipus as a Christian parable. While the text itself names Freud only with reference to Jung, Ivanov extensively discusses the negative repercussions of psychoanalysis before turning

60. Ivanov presented a German version of this text in Zurich on October 30, 1934, and in Luzern soon thereafter. Viacheslav Ivanov, *Dichtung und Briefwechsel aus dem deutschsprachigen Nachlass*, ed. Michael Wachtel (Cologne, 1995), 166. However, this German translation was never published.

61. Viacheslav Ivanov, “Lettera ad Alessandro Pellegrini sopra la *docta pietas*,” in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 3:434–50. This text was first published in this *Convegno* issue.

62. See Shishkin, “Perepiska,” April 19, 1934 letter. For more on the connections between “Discourse,” “*Docta Pietas*,” and *Correspondence*, see Fausto Malcovati, “Alcune considerazioni su ‘Discorso sugli orientamenti dello spirito moderno,’” in Fausto Malcovati, ed., *Cultura e memoria: Atti del terzo Simposio Internazionale dedicato a Vjačeslav Ivanov* (Florence, 1988), 1:171–74.

63. Blok and Ivanov were frequently compared, and confused, by Italian readers at this time.

64. See Viacheslav Ivanov, “Discorso sugli orientamenti dello spirito moderno,” in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 3:468.”

to this myth.<sup>65</sup> Reprimanding modern readers for missing its sacred essence, Ivanov reads the crime of Oedipus as analogous to modern man's abandonment of God. He illustrates this notion by interpreting the Sphinx's riddle:

What is the animal that walks on four legs  
in the morning, two legs at noon, and  
three at sunset?

In other words: "What living being in the successive transformations of its existence as a species first resembles me in its still animalistic ways, and depends on me, then halfway down the road stands upright, sure of itself, and comports itself autonomously, and finally, sacrificing its own individual will before a superior universal principle, must be transformed into a receptacle for the divinity, into a tripod, the sacred seat of Apollo?"<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Ivanov's reading of Oedipus here is its obvious emphasis on the Christian interpretation of the pagan story, a shift that not only mirrored the development of his thought, but also put his message more in tune with his new audience. His interpretation predicts a positive reorientation for the human race toward freedom and life. In line with Catholic thought, Ivanov also holds that people can only achieve this reorientation through their own free will. Oedipus's recognition of his own guilt, despite the machinations of fate, affirmed man's "innate human liberty, and therefore responsibility, even in the prison of external determination," thereby linking his understanding of myth to his Christian understanding of freedom.<sup>67</sup>

Although his fundamental understanding of freedom is religious, Ivanov allows for some consideration of political freedom. This association is not an easy one for him. In "Discourse," Ivanov alludes somewhat vaguely to "catastrophe," and writes generally of the strains that history has placed on mankind: Marxism, Jacobinism, and the pseudo-atheistic Deism of the French revolutionaries threaten the human personality, especially their notions of liberty.<sup>68</sup> Ivanov touches on events in Nazi Germany by discussing Spengler's revival: "... Spengler . . . summarized the spirit of our culture as it approaches sunset in the image (that leaves its mark on Germany even today) of the Faustian man, a courageous and desperate titan facing a universe that is limitless, deaf, and mute, disunited and incoherent, without sense, without purpose, without 'the mind that moves the great mass . . .'"<sup>69</sup> Ivanov describes

65. *Ibid.*, 478–80. At one point he writes that psychoanalysis "breaks up and dissolves the personality, in flagrant contradiction of its own starting point" (*ibid.*, 454). The discussion of Jung mentioned above is also negative, describing the psychologist as one who failed to understand the essence of his own concept of *anima*, or soul. Though it cannot be determined whether Ivanov was intimately familiar with Sigmund Freud's works, it is difficult to imagine that he was unfamiliar with the latter's most famous formulation, especially given that his essay also discusses the "subconscious."

66. Ivanov, "Discorso," 474.

67. *Ibid.*

68. See Ivanov, "Discorso," 452, 454, 476–78, 480.

69. *Ibid.*, 458. In other words, without God. Ivanov's citation here comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book VI, lines 724–27. See David West's revised English translation (London, 2003), 135: "In the beginning Spirit fed all things from within, the sky and the earth, the level waters, the shining globe of the moon and the Titan's star, the sun. It was the Mind



Faust struggling aimlessly *without* Gretchen, and without any grounding in the divinely ordered universe.<sup>70</sup> The poet had earlier linked Germany with the forces of “dechristianization” during the First World War. Although he was an ardent advocate of German-language literary culture, he regarded the *regimes* that instigated the World Wars as separate from the *culture* that produced Goethe and Schiller.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, by invoking Faust, he even suggests that attending to Germany’s literary heritage helps diagnose its ills. Here, once more, Ivanov implicitly aligns “spiritual disorientation” with what he views as the increasingly anti-humanist German society of the early 1930s.

Although both these passages and *Il Convegno*’s general reputation suggest that Ivanov’s discussion of freedom here may be grouped alongside other liberal humanist tendencies, the even more liberal Pellegrini nevertheless expressed substantial disagreements with his friend over the latter’s understanding of precisely this issue. A section of their disagreement was published in the journal itself, in Pellegrini’s commentary on *Correspondence* and in Ivanov’s “Lettera ad Alessandro Pellegrini sopra la ‘docta pietas’” (Letter to Alessandro Pellegrini on ‘Learned Piety’). Indeed, in a recently published draft of the latter, Ivanov takes on an even more polemical tone and positions “freedom” directly against “humanism.”<sup>72</sup> The core of this dispute was Pellegrini’s objection to Ivanov’s insistence that adherence to Catholic dogma (*docta pietas*, or learned piety) is essential to an authentic submission to God, and therefore necessary to spiritual freedom. Pellegrini was particularly concerned that a rigid position like Ivanov’s might prevent lost souls from considering the Church a potential refuge, although he likely had wider political implications in mind as well. He even interrupts his adoring reminiscences of Ivanov in his 1947 memoir *Encounters in Europe (Incontri in Europa)* to revisit this quarrel.

### “The Laurel in the Poetry of Petrarch” and Religion, Nationalism, and Humanism: Polemics with Croce

Pellegrini recalls Ivanov’s discussion of humanism in his article “The Laurel in the Poetry of Petrarch,” an article the Russian poet wrote in 1931. “Laurel,”

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that set all this matter in motion.” In the Underworld, Anchises says this at the beginning of his explanation of the “terrible longing” souls in the underworld have for “the light,” or the surface world; given his association of the sun with God in this essay, Ivanov likely interpreted this as a yearning for God. One should note the similarities between Virgil here and the final lines of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* that Ivanov cites at the conclusion of this work. I am indebted to Michael Wachtel for bringing my attention to this reference.

70. An immediate source of this discussion was the Dresden writer Martin Kaubisch, who had recently sent Ivanov an essay on the “Faustian man.” See Wachtel, *Dichtung und Briefwechsel*, 145.

71. See Michael Wachtel, “Odi et amo: Vjačeslav Ivanovs Verhältnis zu Deutschland,” in Dagmar Hermann, ed., *Deutsche und Deutschland aus russischer Sicht—19./20. Jahrhundert: Von den Reformen Alexanders II bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2006), 669–96.

72. See Lappo-Danilevskii, “Ivanov o gumanizme,” in Lappo-Danilevskii and Shishkin, eds., *Viacheslav Ivanov. Issledovaniia i materialy*, 118–21. Lappo-Danilevskii also offers a useful discussion of this draft’s connection to *Correspondence* and to Ivanov’s more general polemic with both Pellegrini and Croce.

Pellegrini writes, describes Petrarch's brand of humanism as independent from religion—an alternative to Dante—and, despite Ivanov's own Catholic faith, links it to a secular notion of humanism. The "*charta libertatum*" of humanism, as Pellegrini describes Ivanov's interpretation of Petrarch, is humanity's right to its own paradise "equal to that of any religion"; at a distance from religion, humanism can thus transform and renew it.<sup>73</sup> By attributing this liberal position to his friend, Pellegrini seems to have hoped that Ivanov might eventually accept it. Additionally, in his *Convegno* article "Considerazioni sulla 'Corrispondenza dal un angolo all'altro'" (Considerations on 'Correspondence from Two Corners'), the Italian author traces this same issue of freedom and dogma back to Ivanov's major work. He suggests that Gershenzon's position represented liberation from the "dogma" of the old world, while Ivanov limited freedom by subordinating it to cultural tradition.

Taking the middle ground, Pellegrini invokes Croce, "a great living humanist," and, of course, a secularist, to call liberty one of culture's primary values.<sup>74</sup> In other words, he suggests that religious dogmatism inhibits true freedom, and goes on to describe it in terms similar to those he used for "Petrarchan" humanism: a power capable of criticizing "every authority, every precept, every tradition" that does not derive from culture—or, by extension, from any particular nation—but naturally occurs in every human soul.<sup>75</sup> Rather than painting Ivanov as a non-humanist, Pellegrini presents him as a wayward one. By using Croce to "correct" Ivanov's understanding of humanist tradition, he even reaffirms the link between Ivanov and Italian Renaissance culture. Indeed, in his memoirs Pellegrini writes explicitly that "the tradition of our humanism seems reborn in Viacheslav Ivanov's soul, and not through education, but through an almost spontaneous revival."<sup>76</sup>

While most of Pellegrini's summary of Ivanov's Petrarch article is accurate, the Italian writer does subtly adjust his friend's argument. The central point of Ivanov's letter to Pellegrini, *docta pietas*, is in fact a term coined by Petrarch, the fourteenth-century humanist who justified his turn from the medieval worldview towards a classical one in *religious* terms, by defining humanism's goal as "combin[ing] holiness with learned eloquence."<sup>77</sup> In other words, according to Ivanov, while Petrarch's vision of the world did fundamentally differ from Dante's "prophetic" vision, inspired by direct contact with divinity, it was also essentially religious.

After beginning his own Petrarch article with an admiring citation of the late nineteenth-century Italian poet Giosuè Carducci's mystical, poetic description of Petrarch, Ivanov begins a polemic with the great Italian literary critic Francesco De Sanctis and his secular reading of the humanist poet. In the quotation Ivanov introduces from his seminal 1870 *History of Italian*

73. Alessandro Pellegrini, *Incontri in Europa* (Milan, 1947), 142.

74. *Ibid.*, 300.

75. *Ibid.*, 314.

76. *Ibid.*, 51. At the end of his *Convegno* article, Pellegrini also insists that both Ivanov and Dostoevskii fundamentally value freedom more than dogma (315).

77. R. R. Bolgar, "Introduction" in R. R. Bolgar, ed., *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 1500–1700*, (Cambridge, Eng., 1976), 18.

*Literature (Storia della letteratura italiana)*, De Sanctis describes Petrarch's contributions in the following way: "Reality seems clear and pure on the horizon . . . ; we are finally coming away from myths, from symbols, from theological and scholastic abstractions, and we are standing in the full light of the temple of human consciousness. From now on nothing can put itself between us and the human. The sphinx has been discovered, the human being has been found."<sup>78</sup> De Sanctis's chapter on Petrarch depicts a general trend away from the religious ecstasy of Dante towards secular humanism. Since Ivanov wrote this article before "Discourse," he surely had this author's position in mind when writing the second piece as well—especially given that each evokes the Sphinx and its "riddle of the human" to his own ends. While both of Ivanov's works affirm a mythical and religious worldview, in "The Laurel," he does so in a direct reply to De Sanctis: "Instead, the medieval myth is replaced by another myth, the theological symbolism by another symbolism, the Christian Empyrean by the humanist Parnassus."<sup>79</sup>

Just as he rejected "psychologism" in "Discourse," so in "The Laurel" Ivanov rejects De Sanctis's psychological reading of the fourteenth-century master. The Italian poet's vision is instead one of "nature transfigured not in and of itself, but in the human mind."<sup>80</sup> The "human autonomy" of humanism emerges from the fact that the crucial moment of artistic inspiration occurs outside of direct contact with the divine force of nature; rather, it is a human contemplation of a divine memory. Ivanov places particular emphasis on the Apollonian element of the Daphne myth that Petrarch invokes in *Canzoniere*. After describing the neo-Platonic tradition of associating the beloved person with the "ideal," Ivanov writes: "In just such a way, Petrarch recognizes an epiphany in the person of Laura, the idea of the laurel already contemplated within his spirit. He would neither have met, nor recognized her, if he had not been called by Apollo into union with him."<sup>81</sup> Soon afterwards, Ivanov compares Petrarch's position to Plato's *Phaedrus*, according to which one falls in love with the person who most resembles one's memories of the divine. This description of Petrarch's worldview is clearly consistent with Ivanov's own, although it does present a variation on his traditionally Dionysian understanding of inspiration.<sup>82</sup> In yet another link with the themes of "Discourse," Ivanov also invokes the tragic notion of separation from God.<sup>83</sup>

A polemical line runs through both "Laurel" and "Discourse" concerning the celebrated public intellectual Benedetto Croce. Pellegrini had brought up Ivanov and Croce's intellectual differences in both "Considerations" and *Encounters in Europe*. De Sanctis, meanwhile, was Croce's intellectual god-

78. Venceslao Ivanov, "Il lauro nella poesia del Petrarca," in *Convegno petrarchesco: tenuto in Arezzo, nei giorni 11-13 ottobre 1931, a. IX.* (Arezzo, 1936), 115-16.

79. *Ibid.*, 116.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*, 119.

82. In her article "Petrarch and Viacheslav Ivanov," Donata Murredu examines in great detail the connections between Ivanov's description of Petrarch's artistic method and his own writings (see "Petrarch and Vjačeslav Ivanov," *Scando-Slavica* 30, no. 1 (January 1984): 73-94.

83. *Ibid.*, 120.

father. Profoundly influenced by his works, Croce had generated significant interest in their author by republishing them. One of these was the 1907 edition of De Sanctis's *Critical Essay on Petrarch* (*Saggio critico sul Petrarca*), for which Croce himself provided a preface, and which reprinted a version of the Petrarch essay from *History of Italian Literature*.<sup>84</sup>

Though his own text cites *History of Italian Literature* rather than *Critical Essay on Petrarch*, Ivanov must have been familiar at least with Croce's preface, since it also mentions Carducci—here, negatively—and spends several pages discussing that poet's failure to make a timely recognition of De Sanctis's genius.<sup>85</sup> In this preface Croce goes on to assert that De Sanctis had boldly defended freedom and realism from the mystical forces of romantic idealism in his interpretation of Petrarch.<sup>86</sup> He also argues that De Sanctis offered the best understanding of Petrarch as poet *per se*, rather than as humanist classical scholar. Ivanov's presentation of himself and Carducci as poets who understand their fellow poet better than the "psychologist" De Sanctis stands in clear opposition to this assertion. De Sanctis's own preface, to which Croce refers admiringly in his own introduction, makes even stronger remarks against romantic or idealist interpretations of his subject.<sup>87</sup>

Croce concludes the preface by identifying De Sanctis as one of his role models, going so far as to claim that he would immediately spring to his teacher's defense should anyone attack him in writing. Ivanov's essay seems partially motivated to provoke this response and initiate a public debate with this influential man. Despite his hopes to reprint it, however, this Petrarch essay was never widely distributed.<sup>88</sup> Croce would have been a worthy opponent. In addition to wielding considerable cultural influence, in part by editing a seminal journal, *La Critica*, Croce also was active in Italian political life and had served as both minister of education and senator. His political influence waned with the rise of Italian fascism, but he remained important enough that he was not persecuted in spite of his public opposition to Mussolini's party.<sup>89</sup>

As mentioned previously, Croce admired *Correspondence*, but had serious ideological disagreements with Ivanov and little respect for Russian philosophy in general.<sup>90</sup> For most of his life, Croce was a nonbeliever who called free-

84. See Benedetto Croce, "Prefazione del editore" in Francesco de Sanctis, ed., *Saggio critico sul Petrarca* (Naples, 1907), VI n3.

85. *Ibid.*, VIII–XII.

86. *Ibid.*, XV.

87. See his comments in Francesco de Sanctis, *Saggio critico sul Petrarca*, 17. Later on, he also refers to Platonic idealism as a "leprosy" (19).

88. See letter to Pellegrini from February 15, 1943 in Shishkin "Perepiska," 166–8. Ivanov and Croce did have a brief private correspondence, published in Caterina Cecchini, "Una lettera unedita di Vjačeslav Ivanov a Benedetto Croce," *Russica romana*, XI (Rome, 2004): 217–21.

89. For Croce's own account of his relationship with fascism, see Cecil J. S. Sprigge, *Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker* (New Haven, 1952), 62.

90. See Shishkin and Giuliano, "Vokrug vstrechi," 397–98. According to these authors, his skepticism towards Russian philosophy derived in part from the religious orientations of many Russian thinkers.

dom his religion. Despite his ties to the Catholic liberals of the *famiglia italiana*, he was hostile to the mystical strain of Catholic modernism represented by Ivanov's colleagues at *Frontespizio*.<sup>91</sup> Not surprisingly, Croce and Ivanov had very different opinions of Ernst Robert Curtius. Croce believed that scholars like Curtius should not venture beyond philology, and his negative assessment of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (*Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*)—a work that explicitly cites Ivanov as an inspiration—may have been partially responsible for its long-delayed publication in Italy.<sup>92</sup> Curtius and Ivanov, on the other hand, shared a religious understanding of humanism.<sup>93</sup>

### “Glossa Ailurica” and Nationalism: Ivanov’s Belated Response to Croce’s Challenge

Pellegrini knew that Croce and Ivanov fundamentally disagreed, and precisely for this reason he arranged a meeting between them on March 1, 1934. He reported that Croce also appreciated the conversation, and in a letter to a friend, Ivanov remembered it fondly, although he described it dealing “not so much with ‘*vinculum amoris*’ (a tie of friendship) as much as an ‘*inimicitiae vinculum* [a tie of animosity].”<sup>94</sup> Curtius initially applied the former Latin phrase, a humanist term, to his own relationship with Ivanov, and Ivanov later used it with reference to Pellegrini.<sup>95</sup> Though no detailed record of the conversation exists, scholars have gathered several fragmentary reminiscences of the event from various sources, and all agree that the main subject discussed was what Ivanov himself recalled as “*trascendenza und immanenza*” (transcendence and immanence): in other words, the differences between Ivanov’s religious worldview and Croce’s atheist idealism.<sup>96</sup> Croce began the conversation by bringing up the idea of culture addressed in *Correspondence*, and given what Ivanov had written in “Discourse” and “The Laurel,” it is highly probable that they discussed humanism.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the brief discussion of idealism and historical relativism in “Discourse” likely provides a good sense of what the Russian thinker would have said.<sup>98</sup>

Croce seems to have linked this conversation to the conflict he perceived

91. See Cecchini, “Lettera,” and Sprigge, *Croce*, 23.

92. See Shishkin and Giuliano, “Vokrug vstrechi,” 404, citing R. Antonelli.

93. *Ibid.*, 404.

94. Shishkin and Giuliano, “Vokrug vstrechi,” 400, citing a letter from Ivanov to Herbert Steiner from April 26, 1936, originally published by Wachtel, *Dichtung und Briefwechsel*, 150.

95. Wachtel, *Dichtung und Briefwechsel*, 150. For the source of the term (from Giuseppe Toffanin’s *History of Humanism*), see Curtius’ letter to Ivanov from February 5, 1934 in *ibid.*, 62–63. For Pellegrini, see Ivanov’s letter to him from April 19, 1934 in Shishkin and Cecchini, “Perepiska.” Curtius repeats the term in his brief *Convegno* piece (271).

96. Shishkin and Giuliano, “Vokrug vstrechi.” See also Ivanov’s opposition of these same terms in his discussion of his conversation in his “Letter to Charles Du Bos.” See the updated version cited in n8, 84.

97. Recalled by Cesare Angelini. See *ibid.*, 401, as well as Fausto Malcovati, *Ivanov a Pavia*, 1986, 16–17.

98. Shishkin and Giuliano, “Vokrug vstrechi,” 456, 470–72.

between nationalism and transnationalism, because Ivanov privately returned to this discussion later and reframed it specifically in these terms. In their article on Ivanov and Croce, Andrei Shishkin and Giuseppina Giuliano published a curious, undated Italian-language document from the Russian poet's archive in Rome, "Glossa ailurica."<sup>99</sup> It begins with citations from Croce calling into question the notions of a "national conscience" and a "national historian." As the article's authors point out, this question of nationhood is related to a larger debate between immanence and transcendence—the very topic Croce and Ivanov discussed—because Ivanov related true nationalism to a universal religious idea. Indeed, in the text of "Glossa ailurica" itself, Ivanov returns to his old theme of myth, now—in private—freely discussing its political significance. At one crucial point, he even writes: "What Croce says is not true, that 'the historian can never be national, for he needs to be universal and human'; on the contrary, he will be national, and exactly for this reason universal and human, if he is religious. To be religious means to be ecumenical; to be ecumenical also implies the idea of nationality!"<sup>100</sup> Paradoxically, then, Ivanov suggests that religion can be simultaneously national and transnational, just like the position he himself had tried to assume in Italy. Not only does this text take a clear stand against Croce, it also delineates how this discussion relates to questions about history, nation, religion, and especially humanism and myth. From the poet's perspective, Croce's insistence on the historian's need to be "universal and human," rather than national, dovetailed with his secular reading of Petrarch. One can also connect Croce's resistance to nationalism here to his opposition to Mussolini. Given Ivanov's general silence on political matters, his focus in this unpublished text on myth's potential both to celebrate and critique the nation that produced it is especially meaningful. Without stating so explicitly, he suggests an alternative to fascist uses of both nationalism and myth. While earlier his religious understanding of freedom as submission may have appeared compatible with totalitarianism, at least to readers like Pastonchi, here Ivanov's faith, and the transnational humanism that it implies *alongside* a devotion to national culture, becomes the foundation of his opposition to it.

In addition, the 1952 Cavicchioli article mentioned at the beginning of this essay contained a veiled critique of fascist policy that suggests Ivanov eventually understood the extent to which the regime contradicted his own spiritual convictions. Cavicchioli, who had enjoyed Mussolini's patronage when he was a young writer, seems to have grown disillusioned during the war, and at the beginning of the piece he discusses the impossibility of publishing it during that period. The potential controversy is clear enough: in addition to discussing Russia, a nation *non grata*, at the very end of the interview Ivanov

99. This text was composed as a dialogue between "Αἰλουρος," or "The Cat"—Ivanov himself—and "Catellus," or "The Puppy," against a position articulated by "Canis," or "The Dog," as well as "old cynic" (a term derived from the Greek word for "dog," as well as a reference to the philosopher Diogenes). Shishkin and Giuliano, "Vokrug vstrechi." These authors, who mistakenly translate "Catellus" as "the little cat," presume that "Catellus" refers to Ivanov's daughter Lidiia.

100. *Ibid.*, 405.

argues that religious convictions transcend racial classifications, and that intellectual lineage (*stirpe*) rather than ethnic background (*razza*) ultimately determines an individual's personality.<sup>101</sup> The significance of this comment in a country that legalized racial discrimination in 1938 is hard to overlook, especially given that in the preceding paragraph Ivanov and his friends discuss the prejudice they themselves face (not only in Italy, but throughout western Europe) as Russians.<sup>102</sup> Though likely developed separately, this conclusion stands in clear parallel to Marcel and Sartre's notion of a transnational link that is not necessarily inherent, but which has the potential to be deliberately built, between all human beings.

Even in the earlier texts, Ivanov's disputes with liberal thinkers may have been partly rhetorical. His notes to Croce and correspondence with Pellegrini indicate that he welcomed their polemic as an opportunity to publically express his ideas, just as he had earlier encouraged one with Gershenzon.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, Ivanov himself describes his disagreements with Pellegrini as fundamentally amicable. Nevertheless, given the circumstances of 1933, and especially Croce and Pellegrini's political stances, this discussion of freedom and its relationship to culture and humanism had undeniable political implications.

Ultimately, it is clear that Ivanov's primary goal in Italy—and Europe generally—was to replace the audience he had lost in Russia with a transnational one. His embrace of Catholicism, which he understood as a type of transnational faith, represented his attempt to become universal, yet was ultimately thwarted by presenting a conflict with atheists, who objected to his religious notion of freedom through submission, and fascists, whom its transnational orientation contradicted. In a letter to Pellegrini from April 1934, Ivanov laments that his work has been proscribed in his fatherland. Even if it had not been, he writes, it would have become “strange and incomprehensible to generations without Muses and without Memory.”<sup>104</sup> The values he had placed at the center of his own work, the cultural expressions that he believed formed a link between man and God, were the very ones he feared Soviet Russia had sacrificed. In Italy, he hoped that these principles, and an audience for his writings, might yet survive.

This was not to be. In 1940, after a fascist crackdown, the Italian publisher of *Correspondence* was forbidden to sell the work Ivanov had hoped would

101. See Cavicchioli's piece republished in Garzonio and Sulpasso, “Cavicchioli e Ivanov,” especially 180–81.

102. It should be noted that Ivanov's devotion to Christian universalism was connected to his prejudice against “Asian” and “Asianess.” He and Solov'ev both link these notions to nihilism and anti-Christianity. For a general discussion of Solov'ev's influence on symbolism with regard to constructions of Asia, see Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685–1922: To the Ends of the Orient* (London, 2013), 149–69.

103. Gershenzon considered Ivanov the text's primary author, but Bird argues that he exaggerated the passivity of his role in the exercise (see his article in Ivanov and Gershenzon, *Perepiska*, 91–92, 98–99).

104. Shishkin and Cecchini, “Perepiska.” See also the Ivanov's final extant letter to Pellegrini, from February 15, 1943 (*ibid.*)

deliver his ideas to the country that he considered the birthplace of both humanist culture and the Christian church.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, the rise of fascism in and beyond Italy and the events of World War Two would challenge Ivanov's conviction that universality and nationalism were compatible. While Ivanov had an impact on the European humanist movement, neither he nor humanism in general could hold back the nationalist tides of war.

But while this movement did not avert the international catastrophe it feared, it did go on to become an essential idea for those who assessed the tragedy's aftermath. Marcel and Ivanov both responded to the horrors of the twentieth century by calling for humanism, and after the war, Jean-Paul Sartre followed them by claiming the term as existentialist. Ivanov's understanding of cultural continuity was essential for thinkers like Curtius, who saw him as a "missing link" for the development of his own vision of cosmopolitan humanism, a vision he feared his country had lost under Hitler.<sup>106</sup> Heidegger, though more distant from Ivanov, also grappled with the notion of humanism in his attempts to intellectually define his difficult era. By becoming an Italian humanist the Russian poet not only linked himself to the great philosophers of the Renaissance, but also contributed to one of the most important intellectual developments of the twentieth century.

105. Indeed, all its books on philosophical subjects were banned. See Signorelli's letter from April 4, 1940, in Kumpan, "Perepiska."

106. See Wachtel, "Missing Link."