THE CONCEPT OF DIONYSISM IN THE LEGACY OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND VYACHESLAV IVANOV

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Abstract

The article contains the study of the concept of Dionysism, starting with one of the first mature works of Friedrich Nietzsche 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music' and ending with Vyacheslav Ivanov's research dedicated to the religious myth, the Hellenic cult of Dionysus and the origin of the theatre of tragedy ('The Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God', 'The Religion of Dionysus', 'Dionysus and Pradionysism').

According to F. Nietzsche, two main, essentially antagonistic, origins – Apollonism (a contemplative sequencing origin) and Dionysism (a life-orgiastic origin) play a leading role in the formation of the spirit of high antiquity. The concept of reality of the Greek tragedy is formed and established on the way of the merger of the Apollonian and Dionysian principles. Apollo is a symbol of plasticity, beauty, measure, radiance and tranquility; Dionysus (the spirit of music) represents the impulse, passion, celebration and freedom from everyday life. The Dionysian origin restores man's connection with both nature and other people. According to Nietzsche, in the Dionysian frenzy, the ordinary limits of life are fractured and the evil of individualization disappears.

A mythologeme of Dionysus is a leading motive of the scientific legacy of V. Ivanov, whose poetic legacy is also filled with Dionysian themes. In his opinion, the tragic myth of Dionysus is the essence of Hellenism, and actually Dionysism, Dionysian frenzy experienced in dancing and choir are associated with the basic concept of Orthodoxy and Christianity in general – spiritual commonality, when in a state of the Dionysian intoxication a person experiences the mystical unity with all things in existence and the involvement in the fundamental principles of the world.

Keywords: Dionysus, origin, frenzy, spiritual, commonality

1. Introduction

The end of the nineteenth – the beginning of the twentieth century was a period of fundamental changes in the history of the development of mankind,

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which affected all spheres of life. The flowering of classical philosophy in the nineteenth century replaced antiquity in general, which was considered fantastic and incompatible with philosophical theories of scientists of the classical era. However, this view of the entire Philosophy changed until the end of the nineteenth century, when a number of scientists began to study the facts of ancient history, religion, philosophy, mythology and art.

F. Nietzsche's philosophical ideas, which have become an impetus to the breakdown of public consciousness and still remain a subject of philosophical, art and cultural research, play an important role in this process. Apollonian-Dionysian dualism is one of F. Nietzsche's philosophical concepts, which is based on the eternal opposition of two principles (Apollonian principle – logical, light, rational, and Dionysian principle – instinctive, dark, irrational), which are simultaneously inextricably linked and complement each other.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche's Dionysism - the dark side of the coin

Dionysism as an aesthetic and philosophical theory touched upon in Nietzsche's first independent work 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music' passed through his entire legacy taking on various modifications.

Let us remember that in Greek mythology Dionysus is the god of vegetation, viticulture, winemaking, a symbol of death and rebirth in nature. His other names and nicknames are as follows: Zagreus, Iakh and Bacchus. According to the Orphic myth that came from Thrace to Greece, Dionysus, a son of Zeus, the future virtuous ruler of the world, was torn to pieces and eaten as a boy by the Titans; hence his nickname is Zagreus, i.e. 'torn to pieces', and, according to Vyacheslav Ivanov's interpretation, – 'Great Hunter'. Zeus killed the Titans with lightning and from their ashes people were born, combining the evil nature of the Titans and the virtuous nature of Zagreus eaten by the Titans. Thus, Dionysus was an intermediate between man and supreme forces.

As follows from Nietzsche's work 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music', the ancient Greek Attic tragedy appeared as a result of the convergence of two origins, which were opposed to each other and simultaneously closely interrelated - the Apollonian and Dionysian origins. Nietzsche called these origins by the names of the ancient gods of arts: Apollo and Dionysus. The Apollonian origin is the art of plastic images, the world of dreaming and great joy, beautiful wisdom of the illusion of visions together with all its beauty; a state when a person is daydreaming, but, at the same time, he/she is well aware that everything he/she is experiencing at the moment is only a dream, an illusion and there should be a line that should not be crossed when dreaming. According to Nietzsche, a 'principle of individuation' (principii individuationis) is a distinctive feature of the Apollonian origin. The Dionysian origin is primarily the non-plastic art of music and the impression it produces on listeners is comparable to the state of intoxication. Certainly, Nietzsche was not the first to draw attention to the magical effect of music on people's souls. The ancient Pythagoreans recommended harmonic melody as a soul cleanser, while

Aristotle noted the educational and cleansing functions of music, through which listeners got relief and got rid of their affects while experiencing 'harmless joy'. Nietzsche also drew attention to another ability of the melodic stream: its possibility to achieve such a state in an individual, when everything subjective disappeared to complete self-oblivion and boundless horror was combined with blissful delight rising from the depths of the human soul, when music brought not 'harmless joy', but sacred thrill and painful happiness. The Dionysian origin tends to destroy the personal in man and oppose to it a mystical sense of unity with the whole community, with the rest of nature [1]. As mentioned by F. Nietzsche, the orgiastic ecstasy, when "suffering causes joy", "delight pulls out painful groans out of the soul" and "in a supreme joy a cry of horror or a melancholy complaint of an unrecoverable loss is heard" [2], reaches such a degree of strength that an individual, who has lost the "principii individuationis" at first, now ascends to the heights of the superhuman and the supernatural, and "he/she feels as being God, now he/she is walking, feeling enthusiastic and exalted..." [2, p. 62]. This ecstatic person, being in the higher phase of the Dionysian frenzy, feels an irresistible need to express his/her inexpressible state not only through "a dancing gesture rhythmizing the whole body" [2, p. 65], when "witchcraft runs his/her body movements" [2, p. 62], but also through the dithyramb that merges with the dithyramb of a fellow in a single choral hymn. In this jubilant chant, the choral community glorifying Dionysus brings a tribute to its God for the joy of discovery and the involvement in the sacrament of the orgiastic insight. "Full of such sentiments and imbued with such knowledge, the crowd of Dionysus servants rejoice and rush, since his power has changed them in their own eyes." [2]

Originally, tragedy consisted only of the chorus and there was no opposition between the chorus and the audience, since everything represented a singing and dancing community of people enchanted by the Dionysian influence. Seeing the self-reflection of the Dionysian man in the chorus, the audience sharing ecstasy takes up a single enthusiastic dithyramb. As noted by F. Nietzsche, "this process of the tragic chorus is an original dramatic phenomenon: to see oneself transformed and then act as if one really had entered another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the development of drama." [2, p. 86] As drama, according to Nietzsche, was born from such a dithyrambic chorus, from the ability of the Dionysian man to see a new vision that found its stage expression through the Apollonian world of plastic images: "drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian knowledge and effects..." [2, p. 86] Thus, these two origins – the Apollonian and the Dionysian – had finally been combined to create the ancient Greek tragedy.

Later, a division arose between spectators, people contemplating the Dionysian spectacle, and the chorus, the actors embodying Dionysus. The seats for spectators were in the form of a horseshoe covering the central round area (with a diameter of 20 m and more) – orchestra, actually 'a place for dancing', i.e. for the chorus, which always accompanied its singing with different rhythmic movements. At the centre of the orchestra there was a small elevated

area for a sacrificial altar to the god Dionysus (thymele), which emphasized the cultic basis of theatrical art [3].

After the separation of the chorus and spectators, the tragic hero stands out from the chorus community and, consequently, drama takes on an immediate action, i.e. a possibility not only to speak orally (or sing), but also to show scenically all the vicissitudes of the hero's fate.

In ancient Greek tragedy, the chorus, generating the tragic hero and commenting his actions through the symbolism of dances, sounds and words, is not directly involved in the drama action, but embodies the god, and therefore it is wise and prophetic. The wisdom of the chorus is generated by the suffering endured by Zagreus ripped by the Titans, and the prophetic foresight arises from the faithful service of Dionysus, who opens the veil of the future to the chorus as his devotees. Fascination by the Dionysian spectacle contributes to the fact that when the tragic hero appears on the scene. The audience is so imbued with the image and the suffering of Dionysus that people in the audience inadvertently bring their feelings to the actor's mask and see not a man, who is ugly disguised and dressed up as god, but Dionysus, whose anguishes are perceived by spectators as their own, they feel empathy for him. Aristotle calls this state catharsis (Greek: 'purification') and defines tragedy as purification of affects [4].

Thus, the Dionysian origin is expressed in the dithyrambic chorus, and Dionysus as a tragic hero gets his incarnation through the Apollonian art of the stage plastic image.

Recalling the myth of Zagreus, Dionysus, torn in infancy by the Titans, Nietzsche considers this myth in the context of the development of the plot of Attic tragedy. The suffering of 'split' Dionysus was a theme of the scenic content and, therefore, according to Nietzsche, Dionysus performing under various masks (Aeschylus' Prometheus or Sophocles' Oedipus) was the only and true hero for a long time up to Euripides. The fact that God hides behind these masks is proved by 'idealism' and 'titanism' of these famous figures of the ancient Greek scene: "The titanic desire to become an Atlant of all separate beings and carry them on strong shoulders higher and higher, further and further, – this is what connects the Promethean origin with the Dionysian one" [2, p. 93].

According to Nietzsche, the plot of ancient Greek tragedy 'Under the Cover of the Old Myth' is a renewed myth, a Dionysian myth, which is essentially connected with music and chorus.

Subsequently, the excessiveness considered by Nietzsche as an exclusively Dionysian feature found its logical completion and incarnation in the "Dionysian monster" [2, p. 56], whose name is Zarathustra.

Ancient Greek tragedy as the unity of life and art, real and mythological, direct and symbolically generalized, as a perfect example of the complete, organic work of art, has fallen into decay already in Euripides' works due to the formation of human individuality, since Zagreus torn into separate parts, into "individualities", represents "something worthy of condemnation" [2, p. 94], while holistic Dionysus as the embodiment of the single orgiastic community is a blessing for all mankind. Thus, individuality is conceived as a source and basis

of suffering and Dionysus acts simultaneously as both a cruel demon and a benevolent ruler of the world.

In the context of the entire philosophical legacy of F. Nietzsche, the first work written by a young philologist 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music' appears as a theme of the themes, the quintessence of Nietzsche's thought, "turns out to be an actual key to deciphering all his legacy in this regard" [5], since "Greece was only a starting point for a breakthrough into modernity, the genealogical reference point of European culture, the first world-historical experiment of cultural self-salvation and an unprecedented aesthetic cosmodicy" [5, p. 778].

3. Religious rethinking of Dionysism by Vyacheslav Ivanov

Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov (February 16/28, 1866, Moscow - July 16, 1949, Rome) was a Russian symbolist poet, philosopher, ideologue of Dionysism. Ivanov's scientific works are devoted to the religious myth ('Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God' (1904), 'The Religion of Dionysus' (1905), doctoral thesis 'Dionysus and Pradionysism' published in 1923 in Baku - the questions of the Hellenic cult of Dionysus and the origin of the theatre of tragedy). Ivanov gave in Paris (1903) a course of lectures on the Dionysian religious cult.

Dionysus was taken by Vyacheslav Ivanov, because, learning Nietzsche's Dionysian theory in general, Vyacheslav Ivanov based his aesthetic views on the 'Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God'. Vyacheslav Ivanov's deep interest in the philosophy of F. Nietzsche was not accidental, since V. Ivanov, as a classical philologist, had diligently studied the ancient Greek period of culture for a long time. Nietzsche's Dionysian views fell on a fertile ground, but, in general, learning the basic postulates of the German philosopher (music, dithyrambic chorus, myth, orchestra, community), Ivanov essentially reworked the theory of Dionysism. The Orphic myth of torn Dionysus-Zagreus and his sufferings is an initial myth, a point of repulsion for V. Ivanov. Ivanov begins to interpret the entire world historical and religious process through such Dionysus, because according to him all suffering gods (Osiris, Christ) are reflected in the image of the ancient Greek deity [6] and, consequently, one can understand and unravel the essence of religion.

Dionysus, together with his inherent musical basis, generates the dithyrambic chorus, the essence of which is the orgiastic service of one's god. It is a kind of a closely connected community of people, where each member presents to Dionysus not only his/her heart, but also the soul of the next fellow, where a person is depersonalized, he/she loses his/her individual self and strives for the universal unity with all present, which is called 'spiritual commonality' by Ivanov. The chorus is so permeated with the anguish of Zagreus (or 'Great Hunter', according to Ivanov) that perceives it as its own and begins to suffer and simultaneously sympathize with its deity; and this is expressed not only in joyous groan or in excruciating delight, but also in inspired dancing in the

forgetfulness of one's name, the past, social status and unconscious transformation. The dithyrambic chorus rises to the ecstasy (without which it is not possible) and is completely revealed only through the myth, i.e. through ancient narratives relating to the image of Dionysus in this case.

Vyacheslav Ivanov points out that initially there was a community of participants of the mysterious act that performed human sacrifices in honour of Dionysus and this ritual reproduced the suffering of Zagreus, who was represented by this victim. Subsequently, the fictitious victim showed the fate of the doomed hero, standing in the circle of the community. As pointed out by Ivanov, this is how they created such artistic image as a tragic hero, who comprised the tragic character. The identification of the hero in the chorus, who embodied the God and was opposed to the chorus community, means the beginning of the direct action, the possibility of illustrating and demonstrating all that the chorus sings, thereby attracting the attention of all present and turning them from the former ritual performers into the spectators of the festive spectacle.

These important interrelated concepts in Vyacheslav Ivanov's aesthetics (chorus, myth, action) represent drama that is considered by Ivanov as the highest type of art because of its synthetic nature, organic mix of music, chorus, plastic images, mythological nature, dialogue, action. In the opinion of the Russian writer, modern theatre should not be just an act, a spectacle, the scenic embodiment of the fate of the hero, i.e. an essentially static plastic world, but, first of all, it should acquire "that dynamic and flowing architecture, which is called music" [7], since drama subsequently developed out of music as out of the choral dithyramb.

Tracing the way a dressed man turns into a tragic hero, a mask is so thickened that the god of orgies is no longer seen through it and, thus, the mask is 'condensed' into the character. Vyacheslav Ivanov insists on the backward process when the mask is getting transparent, on providing drama with its lost synthetic unity of arts, on bringing drama "to its other pole, the pole <...> of the dithyrambic frenzy out of individual facets..." [7, p. 57] A problem of orchestra inevitably arises here: Ivanov calls for the elimination of the theatre ramp that separates the audience and the actors ("a spectator must become an actor, a participant of the action" [7, p. 206]) and the recovery of orchestra as one of the conditions for the dithyrambic ecstasy. Orchestra disappearance has led to the division of the single community into two alien worlds, "there are only an actor and only a person, who perceives the action – and no veins that would link these two separate bodies with the common circulation of creative energies" [7, p. 206-207]. Hence the categorical imperative: "The scene must step over the ramp and include the community or the community must assimilate the scene" [7, p. 207]. And two kinds of chorus - the minor chorus, the chorus of drama, which is directly connected with the stage action, and the major chorus, the chorus of spectators that can be arbitrarily multiplied by new participants, this numerous chorus invades into the action only at the moments of the highest ascent and full release of Dionysian energies – must become one in the jubilant dithyrambic ecstasy.

Thus, according to Ivanov, only the return of drama to its Dionysian source will transform it into the synthetic art. The struggle "for the democratic ideal of the synthetic Action <...> is a struggle for the <u>orchestra</u> and for the <u>cathedral word</u>" [7, p. 69]. The synthetic art is identical to a major, nationwide, true type of art, in which the subjective self of an artist is dissolved in the people's self and, consequently, the spiritual commonality is a characteristic feature of this type of art.

V. Ivanov was very interested in the process of creating a work of art and its subsequent impact on a person. He distinguishes three aesthetic origins in art: ascent, descent and chaos, which, like all his views, are closely intertwined with his central image of Dionysus. He associates the ascent with the symbol of the tragic, which begins when a hero condemned to death for his isolation stands out as an individual from the Dionysian dithyrambic chorus, from the impersonal community. Therefore, there is an element of tragedy in each case of the ascent, since tragedy is an external death and an inner triumph of human selfaffirmation. "The idea of tragedy combines the idea of heroism and the idea of humanity; and the word of this double idea is theomachy" [7, p. 24]. The ascent is the sublime, a rise of rushing and overcoming, it "appeals to the Self buried inside us" and inspires a sense of our power. According to Ivanov, "a feat of ascent is a feat of separation and dissolution, loss and bestowal, denial of one's own and self-denial for the sake of new you and for the sake of another you" [7, p. 23]. This feat consists of love of suffering, free self-affirmation of suffering. Thus, the ascent is primarily a tragic and human origin and an idea of theomachy is the main idea.

The descent is the beginning of Beauty and Kindness. "When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible, such descent I call beauty", said Zarathustra [7, p. 25]. If the ascent is conceived as break and separation, then the descent is considered as return and victory, it is a symbol of the gift. Dionysus acts here as the god of viticulture, "a moist god, who gives rain and revives the land with the ambrosian hop, cheering people's hearts with wine" [7, p. 26]. The initial ascent into the sphere of supreme power is a prerequisite for the descent. Therefore, according to Ivanov, Beauty is simultaneously the overcoming of terrestrial inertia and a new appeal to the bosom of the Earth. Ivanov emphasizes that the beauty of Christianity is the beauty of the descent. "The Christian idea gave the man the most beautiful tears: man's tears over God." [7, p. 28]

According to Ivanov, there is a descent, which is similar to the rupture, in which a completely different face of Dionysus is seen – Zagreus torn to pieces by the Titans. This is an origin of the third aesthetic excitement – a chaotic one. According to Vyacheslav Ivanov, the descent into the chaotic forces us to lose ourselves; this origin is peculiar to the dithyrambic ecstasy, in which the depersonalization and loss of the subjective take place. These three aesthetic experiences "exhale the spirit from the facets of the personal". And if the sublime, the delight of ascent affirms the superpersonal and the descent is turned

to the impersonal, then the chaotic origin revealed in the category of frenzy is impersonal, "it finally abolishes all facets" [7, p. 30]. The Dionysian ecstasy of frenzy, which brings purification and reveals the soul to the life-giving streams of spiritual commonality, is absolutely necessary, since it brings an inexpressible feeling of great unity: "everything should be perceived as it is in the great whole, and the heart should be filled with the <u>whole</u> world" [7, p. 31].

Thus, the chaotic origin ("Chaos is free, chaos is right!" [7, p. 32]) inevitably leads to the spiritual commonality, which is a characteristic feature of nation-wide art. Following F. Nietzsche, Vyacheslav Ivanov declares creativity as a "funny science" and the great, true art for him is a "funny craft", and every artist is basically a craftsman, "his psychology is the psychology of a craftsman, first of all: he needs to get orders both due to financial reasons and his spiritual needs..." [7, p. 221].

V. Ivanov calls for the liberation of art from boring mentoring ("... the writer played the role of a teacher or a preacher" [7, p. 231]) and the transformation of the artistic creativity into "smarty fun", into a "funny craft". As a consequence, according to Ivanov, the whole culture is "a smart national fun".

The whole history and culture are interpreted by the Russian "disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" from the perspective of mythmaking and the choral dithyramb: Schiller is valuable to him as a "prophetic forerunner" [7, p. 85] of the dithyrambic action, Beethoven and Wagner – as initiators of the Dionysian "universal mythmaking" [7, p. 65], he views a camp of Pushkin's 'Gypsies' as an anarchic community united by the spiritual commonality. Finally, Vyacheslav Ivanov's Dionysus is not only a category of the artistic creativity, not only the origin of the nature of art, but a source of life, the whole world process. Dionysism is conceived both as a dialectical law of the development of the universe and as the basis and condition for its existence. Consequently, the spiritual commonality rises from the aesthetic concept (the synthesis of arts, an association of people as a result of the impact of brilliant works of art on them) up to the philosophical and religious concept (universal unification of people in the anarchic community), which embraces the whole 'integrity' of public life.

4. Differences between the concepts of Dionysism by F. Nietzsche and Vyacheslav Ivanov

Nietzsche called himself "the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" [8], nevertheless, he expressed his opinion figuratively, since he was not a 'practicing' follower of the ancient Greek god. Dionysus was not his personal deity, an object of faith and religious cult, and Nietzsche had no intention to be in 'Dionysian states', especially to promote the revival of the cult of Dionysus. Friedrich Nietzsche's Dionysus is just a name from a myth that has become a symbol of anti-Christian philosophy and morality.

If Nietzsche's Dionysus eventually turns into Zarathustra, then Ivanov's Dionysus is, first and foremost, suffering Zagreus, the god who is sympathized and showed compassion and by means of which the Russian writer interpreted the whole religion - "The Christian idea gave the man the most beautiful tears: man's tears over God". But for Nietzsche the similar result – the adoption of Christianity – is simply impossible. It is known that at the end of his life Nietzsche called himself "crucified Dionysus" in one of his letters and, as noted by V. Ivanov, "this belated and inadvertent recognition of the affinity between Dionysism and Christianity that was so severely rejected before shakes to the core..." [7, p. 11]. According to Vyacheslav Ivanov, Nietzsche's tragedy is that he did not believe in the god he revealed to the world: "Nietzsche saw Dionysus – and turned away from Dionysus..." [7, p. 18]. V. Ivanov defines F. Nietzsche as "a theomachist, who rebelled against his own god" [7, p. 12].

V. Ivanov originally interpreted the Dionysian principle both as an aesthetic and religious one and in this way he was rather different from his Basel forerunner. "...Nietzsche's fault is that he did not believe in the god that he opened to the world", -V. Ivanov wrote, whereas true Dionysism requires the followers to perform "sacred action and sacrificial service" [9].

Thus, 'The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music' by Nietzsche – an aesthetic treatise – caused the birth of neopaganism in Russia, when the Greek god Dionysus, symbolizing mostly abstract principles and aesthetic categories in Nietzsche's works, acquired a lively image in V. Ivanov's works, having become an object of almost cult worship.

The reason is that V. Ivanov raised a question of fundamental renewal of religious consciousness, which should entail either the transformation of Orthodoxy or, which is closer to the truth in our opinion, the birth of a new religion in which the 'union' of Christ and Dionysus would impart the alien Dionysian spirit to Christ's image, in Church ascetic terms – 'adorable spirit'.

Somewhere playing, somewhere quite seriously, he formed a mystical community of like-minded people ('Tower' in Tauride Street of St. Petersburg), imperceptibly replacing Christ by Dionysus – both in theory and in practice. The severity of Christianity was forced out of the interpersonal relationships, replaced by 'freedom' originating in pagan orgies. It is important to note that these judgments, according to the authors of the article, are very controversial. But the aim of the work is to reflect the views of two philosophers in the framework of the subject under consideration.

Consequently, the Russian writer considered Dionysism not only and not so much as an aesthetic concept as Nietzsche did, but, first and foremost, as a philosophical and religious origin, although Ivanov admitted that "Dionysus in Russia is dangerous: he can easily become a disastrous force and destructive fury for us" [7, p. 360]. And yet, Dionysus as Zagreus has, first of all, positive impact, which leads to the universal unity, to Ivanov's favourite concept of spiritual commonality, and remains a source of both aesthetic and philosophicalreligious views. V. Ivanov does not completely recognize the individualism of the German philosopher, embodied in Zarathustra, who is viewed by him as an obvious opposite of Dionysus. Nietzsche's super-individualism is accordingly rethought by Vyacheslav Ivanov as the unconditional renunciation of the individual self, the renunciation turning into the spiritual commonality.

5. Conclusions

Nietzsche's ideas were initially taken quite seriously in Russian realities. Certainly, F. Nietzsche perceived the Dionysian and Apollonian principles not only as aesthetic concepts representing simultaneously opposing and interrelated sides of Greek tragedy (and of any literary work). F. Nietzsche's universe of Dionysus is the universe of 'joy' that unites people with each other and with the surrounding world.

Unlike Nietzsche, V. Ivanov advanced much further in the deification of Dionysus, thought of him as a real 'god' and considered the possibility of recreating Dionysian mysteries in Russia.

Thus, taking a part of Nietzsche's legacy (dionysism) as a basis for the purposes of Russian symbolism, V. Ivanov created his own aesthetic-philosophical concept and remained forever in the history of culture of the beginning of the twentieth century as a Russian 'disciple of the philosopher Dionysus', an ingenuous art theorist and a gifted poet.

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