

Opponent's Report (II):

Evaluated Master Thesis: Vadym Tsykynovskyi: *Ontology of transculturality in the concept Rose of the world by Daniil Andrejev*, rkp 81 stran

University, faculty, department: University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education, Department of Studies in Culture and Religion

Study field: Transcultural communication

Thesis supervisor: Mgr. Petr Macek, Ph.D.

Thesis oponent: Lukáš de la Vega Nosek, Ph.D.

Final evaluation of thesis:

Originality and appropriateness of the topic: **B**

Thoughtful elaboration, inventiveness: **C**

Method of work: **C**

Formal treatment of the thesis: **C**

Stylistic and grammatical treatment of the thesis: **D**

Proposal for final evaluation:

Question for the defence: *I still accuse to your master thesis of very weak inventiveness, lack of synthesis or criticality. However, I understand that interpreting such a difficult book is a task beyond measure. Please summarize your conclusions in two - three points that reflect Andrejev's two - three contributions to transcultural communication.*

In More Details:

I) Originality and appropriateness of the topic (proposed evaluation B)

The present master's thesis is the second attempt which deals with an extremely interesting Russian thinker and his key work *The Rose of the World*. To elaborate - maybe better - to interpret this monument of thought is extremely challenging and difficult. The aspirant himself, as well as other authors, evaluates this work as poetic. It is an expression of inner spiritual experience and a unique and very original view of the world.

All these facts confirm again and again that interpretation is extremely demanding and requires excellent theoretical and especially methodological skills. I dare to say that the topic of this thesis is more for Ph.D. studies. The interpretation of a work presupposes not only a description of the content of analyzed work, but also a creative point of view on the work as a whole. Then deconstructing it into its individual key elements and arguing why the analysed author used these building blocks and why not others. This is followed by a possible comparison with similar works and a systematic placement in the thought framework of the world's thought heritage, and consequently with a nearby thought context (in this case, Russian philosophy and theology).

The elaborated and presented work shows a number of weaknesses that devalue not only it, but also the analyzed work and the ideas of Andrejev. But its compared to the first attempt, this work is already more compact in thought, better grasped analytically, and formally much better. The master's thesis has a great topic. Several weaknesses remain (terminologically it is confused and unclear). Philosophical reference to ontology or transcultural anchoring is still completely absent, even though these references are in the title of the thesis.

II) Thoughtful elaboration, inventiveness (proposed evaluation C)

Let's imagine the content of the work. The author presents the content of the thesis in nine chapters. First, the introduction (*1. Introduction*, pp. 9-13) introduces the basic questions, the method used, and the basic objectives. The second chapter (*2. Autor's biography and the fortune of his heritage*, pp 12-15) briefly notes the biography of Daniil Andrejev. In the third, he introduces the analyzed book *The Rose of the World* (*3. Structure of the book*, p. 15-16). Finally,

this chapter presents the book under analysis in its entirety. The author presents here a kind of central idea and structure, not only descriptively but also in terms of thought. I really like the way the author tries to think through the structure of the work based on three levels (1. *authors historical and cultural erudition*. 2. *description of authors personal visionary experience*. 3. *interpretation of historical and cultural issues from the perspective of his visionary experience*, see p. 16).

Furthermore author presents the analysis of the book from the gnoseological, metahistorical, transphysical point of view (4. *Epistemological Framework*, pp. 17-21; 5. *Metahistorical epistemology*, pp. 22-37; 6. *Transphysical epistemology*, pp. 38-55). In concluding this analysis - in chapter seven - he presents the analysis of the book from the point of view of interreligious dialogue (7. *Rose of the World and dialogue between world religions*, pp. 56-61). The eighth chapter is then dedicated to the distinctive conceit of Western modernity and Slavicity (8. *Western modernity and the destiny of Russia and Eastern Slavic nations*, pp. 62-69). The final ninth chapter is then dedicated to Christian discourse (9. *"Rose of the World" in Christian discourse*, pp. 69-77). This is followed by a short conclusion (*Conclusion*, pp. 77-78) and a list of literature (*Bibliography*, pp. 78-81).

It's a pity that looking at the thought understanding of the work in its own analysis and with its own point is what the author lacks. I repeat, it is very difficult to read Andreyev, let alone understand, comprehend, or interpret him.

I perceive three key mistakes in my thinking:

- a) too descriptive, only descriptive, without a hint of interpretive art
- b) as I said in first oral defense, for any interpretation of Andrew, an etymological and linguistic or terminological chapter in the introduction is necessary
- c) absent of any degree of criticism of Andreev

I will now submit the disputed, erroneous and unclear points:

- **whole work:** terminological confusion (ontology, transcultural, poetic, Western, transphysical, metahistorical, transcendent and transcendental, areligious, monades... and many Andreev's terms)

p. 11: „*I assume that boundary disturbances may consist cultural content through which person escapes from religious experience but at the same time it gives cultural terms for explanation of it. Awareness about disturbances make possible to understand, what elements of visionary experience are culturally-driven aberrations and what are genuinely rooted in transcendental.*“ – (a) transcendent or transcendental? (b) Gestalt therapy is based on the recognition and expression of one's inner states and emotions "here and now", refusing to speculate about their causes, isn't it?

p. 11: „*existential philosopher Fromm*“ – I am not sure if Fromm is existential philosopher? More than this he is psychologist.

p. 13: „*his poetic masterpieces*“ – I don't know if it is poetic work? The author should clarify this and argue that this is a poetic piece.

p. 13: „*During short period prior to collapse of Soviet Union, known as "Perestroika" and early 90s Russophone intellectuals expected spiritual Renaissance.*“ – collapse of USSR is Perestroika, or period prior of collapse is Perestroika?

p. 13: „*Opponents of these ideas, which historians of Russian thought call "Westerners" opposed ideas of exceptionalism claiming that Russia should choose typical European developmental cliché.*“ – really? Author claims too much black-white pictures. Does not exist another type of westerners?

p. 13: *Petr Chaadaev, the first westerner..?* – Is he slavyanofil, isn't he? However, Chaadaev also criticises the West for "political religion", spiritual emptiness, individualism and materialism. Here he sees a unique opportunity and role for Russia, which has not contracted these ills and could become a "teacher of humanity." Chaadaev's influence was thus at the origin of both

currents that have defined Russian political thought to date: loyal and authoritarian Slavophilism and more liberal Westernism.

p. 17: *„If we will acknowledge transcendental roots of religious experience as an axiom.“* – (a) Why is this statement an axiom for the author? He could have justified it. Is not religious experience psychological rather than transcendent? Does the author exclude for example buddhism? (b) transcendent or transcendental?

p. 18: *„If we will by analogue consider transcendent reality as a milieu then we can say that in consciousness of philosopher-mystic crystalizes existential phenomena of reality in which he immerses.“* – OK, but what is transcendent reality?

p. 18, n. 11: *„I’ve chosen William James because he is deemed to be one of the most influential philosopher who interested in problems of religion.“* – William James is famous and great psychologist of religion, he isn’t philosopher of religion so fundamentally, only secondarily.

p. 21: *„Limits of James and further psychological mainstream is that being able to identify prelest in sphere of human relationships it is unable to identify genuine religious experience. Probably, this dilemma is surmountable but require more dialogue between monastic mystical practitioners and psychotherapists.“* – (a) the author vaguely defines and defines the term prelest; (b) Why does the author prefer monastic mystics? The author here is speaking in a religionist perspective, hence why the over-theization? (c) this is a core of problem of religious studies

p. 23: *„There is no place for seeking of eternal meaning in temporal historical moment in philosophical systems that don’t accept possibility of new in history. But Judeo-Christian tradition especially emphasizes that our previous notions on God can be wrong, that we might be mistaken and that is why, probably, historical criticism of holy text emerged in JudeoChristian tradition.“* – I don’t agree. In my opinion a historical criticism has other roots rather than those mentioned.

p. 23: *„Metaphysics of the Rose of the World is a dualistic in the sense that there is a rivalry between God and Providential forces against Satan and his followers.“* – Again, why author didn’t explain a place and time of universe of weltanschauung of Andreev? Why in this moment he speaks about Satan?

p. 29, 31, 49-50: I don’t understand why in thesis are pictures? Why the author uses these pictures, which are not fundamentally connected with the author’s interpretation. And further the copyright infringement, when the author does not refer to where he got the pictures, graphs...

p. 39: *„Thus “soul” or manas is a part of prakriti and this thesis of Samkhya is in accord with Andreev’s confirmation that spiritual quality poses only God and monades.“* – Why author uses indian philosophy? Where is the reasoning for this comparison? What do monades mean in this sense? Is Andreev's conception of monades the same as Leibniz's monads?

p. 39: *four stages: paganistic, ascetic, scientifically-utilitarian and instinctively-physiological and transphysical... 1., 2., 3., 4., 5.* – how number is four?

p. 62: *„The same prophetic spirit he noted in Islam, which spread exhausted itself relatively rapidly because, as he finds, in Islam there was no ontological overall-humanity (онтологическая всечеловечность).“* – (a) Really? In Islam does not exist ontological overall-humanity? And what does mean brotherhood in Islam? The God as a Creator? (b) what does mean the overall-humanity?

p. 64: The similarities between the authors (Ruth Benedict and Daniil Andreev) are superficial and unfounded. It is a statement of the aspirant's feelings.

p. 69: *„Using notions of Symbolical Antropology of Victor Turner, Andreev expects from his native culture, that it would create an impulse for a worldwide communitas. Communitas is the state of society which comes at the point when society develops so many problems that it becomes unable to resolve it. In other words, it enters in a deadlock. Devaluation of institutional norms, which is communitas by its very nature helps to find a new direction. Rose of the World is a new direction which, as Andreev expected it, would come to resolve. This communitas would reframe social institutions and which is more important, cultural and spiritual paradigm. Theologically Rose of*

the World is a Revelation, anthropologically it is All-human communitas." – (a) Turner and his notion of *communitas* is linked to his term liminality; where does this term occur in the present master's thesis?? (b) I don't understand the statement that *Theologically Rose of the World is a Revelation, anthropologically it is All-human communitas*? (c) I don't know what is Andreev's Idea of Revelation.

p. 77: „*But I would not agree with Rene Girard that the only way to stop sacralization and hence – mimesis is the only way to overcome the problem of mimetism.*“ – Ok, this is very good observations, but little unclear. First of all: there is absent of deep description of Girard's theme; secondly there is absent of argumentation of this criticism of Girard.

In conclusion, main problem still remains, where is the settlement with the main idea of ontologically anchored transculturality (the title of the work refers to this)?

III) Method of work (proposed evaluation C)

The present work is still also very weak from a methodological point of view. As I said previously: the author is actually presenting an annotated uncritical description of Andreev's book. How the author describes the method he used:

p. 9: „*The subject of this research is the “Rose of the World”, a visionary masterpiece, an autobiography, a philosophical treasury written by Russian poet Daniil Andreev. It covers a broad sphere of subjects but all of them share unity in the religious experiences of the author. This is why I've find, that the “Rose of the World” perfectly fits in the framework of Transcultural studies.*“

p. 9: „*epistemological analysis because without it we wouldn't understand*“ - ok, but what exactly does the meaning of term „*epistemological analysis*“. It is necessary to present to the reader our opinion of this keyword. Obviously it doesn't just mean an analysis of Andreev's epistemology.

p. 10: „*The task of this chapter is to analyze these ideas from the perspective of Erich Fromm's concept of Biophilia and Necrophilia.*“ – Why author compares with Fromm? It's not wrong, but I don't understand why this author and these terms. It's supposed to be explained!

p. 10: „*From his point of view mission of eastern Slavic nations is to create a synthetic transculture which would unite hu-manity.*“ – So naïve! Where is the criticism of this?

p. 11: „*The methodological approach of this research is comparative studies in philosophy and religion.*“ - One sentences for describing of methodology? What is a comparative study? What is comparison? What is – in this thesis - *comparatum, comparandum, and tertium comparationis*? Author's thesis is not comparison, because he only describes! The authors whom the author mentions and occasionally intersperses his commentary with them are determined mostly at random, and their ideas are practically never presented (Fromm, Benedict, Turner, Berdyaev, Indian philosophy, Kornee, Senghor, Solovyev,...).

p. 12: „*“Rose of the World” is a relevant subject for Transcultural studies because it is concerned about universal values, new paths of spiritual development of human and articulates meaning of freedom in the variety of meanings of this word.*“ – (a) which type of transculturality meant by author? (b) Universal values are significant characteristics of transcultural view?

IV) Formal treatment of the thesis (proposed evaluation C)

The formal aspect of the work is much better than the previous version of the work. However, there are still some ambiguities and inaccuracies. But the key problems have already been corrected.

The mistake seems to be that the author did not present the question of the edition on which he based his work. Alternatively, whether there are other editions, with commentary, etc. I also regret that the author has not presented translations into world languages of this masterpiece.

A few examples:

- **5. a 5.1** – not aligned to the block
- Authors referred to by the author aren't without biographical data, that's a mistake.

- Many direct quotations in the main text are not marked with the pagination of the original text.
- **P. 1:** *Univerzity Hradec Králové - Pedagogical faculty - Cathedra of cultural and religious studies?* Exactly: University of Hradec Králové – Faculty of Education - Department of Studies in Culture and Religion.
- **P. 24:** *„Theological process as Andreev says partially consists in the “influencing through historical and biographical factors the consciousness of person, nation, race, epoch in the special way to make it perceptible to the certain aspects of truth, specific transphysical reality”.* – quotations from which page?
- **p. 28 (also p. 30):** *„There is no need to envisage the demiurge’s involtation only as a head-spinning epiphany or an in-streaming of resplendent images. On the contrary: this form of involtation – or inspiration – is quite rare.”* - quotations from which page?
- **p. 35, n. 20:** missing place of publishing
- **p. 35, n. 21:** this is periodicum, so other type of reference
- **p. 47, n. 26:** missing publisher, place of publication, or web link
- **p. 51, n. 29:** this is periodicum, so other type of reference
- **p. 67:** human^{46,47}. – twice references? Why didn’t author put in one?

V) Stylistic and grammatical treatment of the thesis (proposed evaluation D)

Stylistically, this master thesis is very complex and sometimes very confusing. The author does not guide the reader through the text at all, many chapters have only one, two or three sentences. The structure of the work is not supported by arguments and the reader often gets lost in the interpretation. The author has also chosen to include figures and graphs, but these are rather annoying as they are not justified at all and are not accompanied by the text.

However, there has been a improvement compared to the first version.

A few examples:

- In the the whole paper: *Autor / Author*
- In the the whole paper: *western / Western?*
- **p. 20:** *„Fromm y point of view, James as a scientist tends think about God in 3rd person while Andreev does it in the 2nd.”* - ?
- **p. 25 (same p. 51):** *involtaion – involation*
- **p. 23, 33, 44, 72:** *parralel / parallel*
- **p. 33, n. 17 (same 38, 23):** *foreignn – more precisely foreign*
- **p. 69:** *„Rose of the World” can be a subject of different discourses in religious studies, form New age to poetry of Russian silver age.”* – it's supposed to be from?
- **p. 27, 70, 76:** *Saint spirit / Holy Spirit / Holy spirit*

Summary evaluation:

This master's thesis is on my desk for the second time. In the first review, I wrote the thesis: *"The master's thesis has a great topic, but it is very poorly done. Terminologically and methodologically it is confused and unclear. Philosophical reference to ontology or transcultural anchoring is completely absent, even though these references are in the title of the thesis. Formally, the paper is inconsistent, the footnotes are unclear, misleading and confusing. Although the author attempts a comparison within the framework of several - it seems to me randomly - chosen thinkers, this comparison is superficial, shallow and without any arguments and reasoning."* (Opponent’s Report, p. 9)

I can now state that a number of problems have been resolved, erroneous statements, wording, missing facts, data corrected, etc... The author has resolved and advanced the thesis in content and form.

I find the biggest shift in the formal and stylistic work, but also in the more detailed structure of the analyzed book. In the first version the author had it in one paragraph. Now, finally, he has

thought the analysed work through more deeply and shown a certain degree of his inventiveness.

In my opinion, it would be a good idea to rewrite the whole thesis, approach it from a clear point of view, analyse the exact characteristics and focus on the predetermined objectives. However, this is unnecessary in this case. In my opinion, the mistake was already somewhere at the beginning of the study, in inconsistent communication between the supervisor and the author. Therefore, my recommendation to rewrite the thesis is rather for the author in the future, should he/she wish to continue the thesis and publish it, perhaps even in print.

Despite many errors and weaknesses, I consider this thesis defensible. The author does not live in his own country and must have written in another language. The analyzed author is again a typical Russian all-encompassing thinker. For these reasons, it was certainly very difficult to fit into the strictly scientific way of thinking that we promote at our universities here!

In conclusion, I recommend the thesis for defence.

In Uhlířské Janovice
10 of Auguste 2023

Lukáš de la Vega Nosek